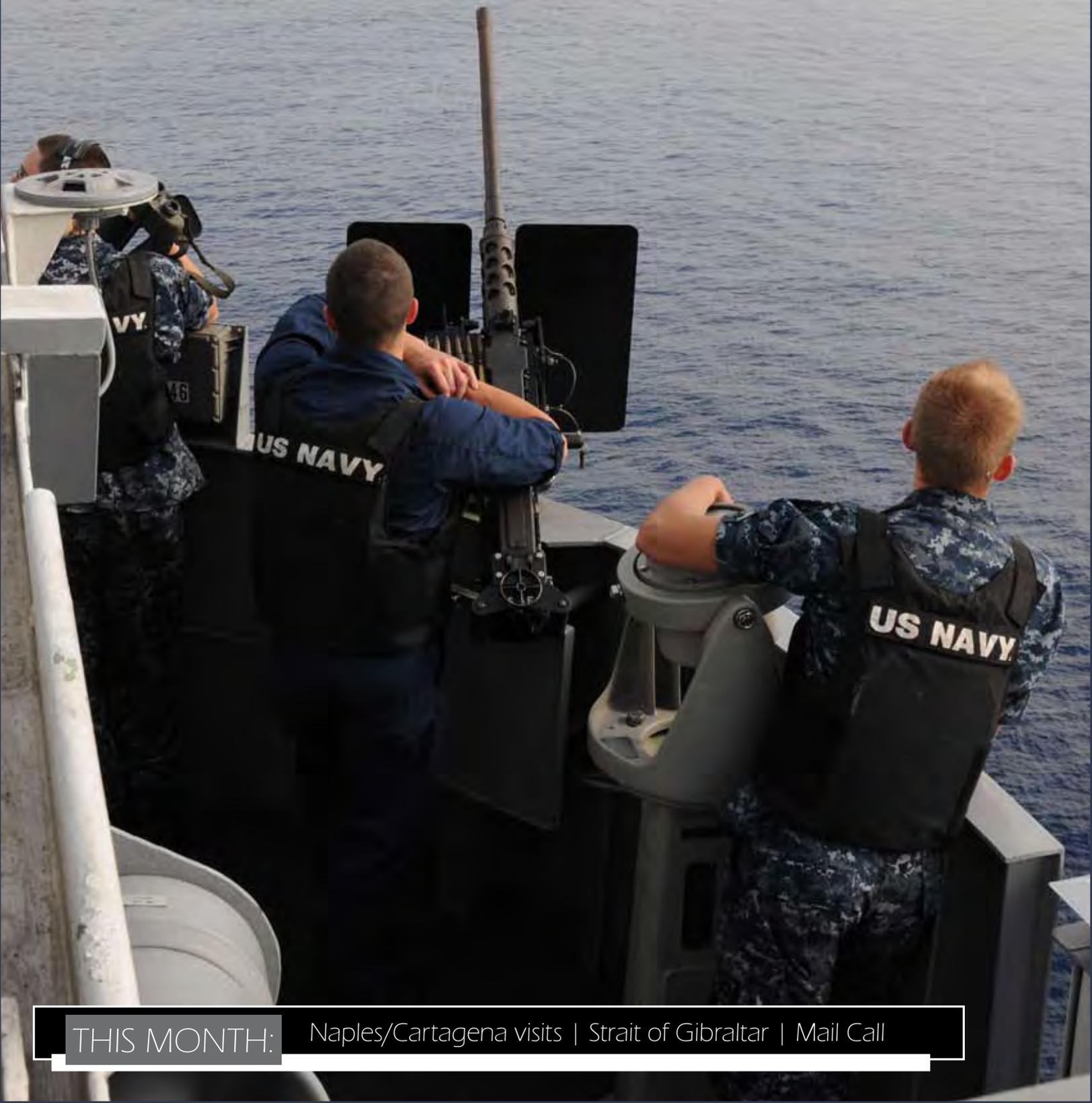


USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77)

# THE AVENGER

Volume 2, Issue 5

June 2011



THIS MONTH:

Naples/Cartagena visits | Strait of Gibraltar | Mail Call

## From the Commanding Officer



Greetings GHWB families and friends!

Your Sailors completed two successful port visits this month in Cartagena, Spain, and Naples, Italy. They have been brilliant ambassadors -- representing our country and its newest aircraft carrier with honor and distinction. We hosted receptions in each port for hundreds of local dignitaries and high ranking military officials. Everyone stepped up to help make every guest's experience on board the GHWB unforgettable. I am still getting 'thank you' e-mails and letters from our Spanish and Italian friends. They were impressed with

the professionalism of our Sailors and were in awe of our mighty ship.

Over the last few weeks we've also safely transited four straits. For many on board, it was the first time they experienced the Strait of Gibraltar, Strait of Messina, Suez Canal, and/or the Bab El Mandeb (BAM). When possible, Sailors went topside to capture these moments with their personal cameras.

USS Enterprise (CVN 65) greeted us during the BAM transit. We have successfully relieved her and are well into our mission in the 5th Fleet area of responsibility (AOR). While here, our job is to deter aggression and ensure freedom of the seas. Like I told the crew over the IMC, "It's game time now."

Despite the heat, Sailors continue to push themselves to improve their physical fitness levels and lifestyle choices. More than 300 Sailors are participating in the 77-Day Warrior Challenge. The challenge is a comprehensive underway health and wellness contest that incorporates all areas of the Navy and Marine Corps Health Promotion Program. Contestants focus on improving cardiovascular health, muscular strength, cardiovascular endurance, and everyday lifestyle choices. If you know anyone who is participating, please encourage him or her to stick with it.

This month I also promoted/frocked 229 of our shipmates to their next pay grades (Senior Chief Petty Officers, 1st Class Petty

Officers, 2nd Class Petty Officers and 3rd Class Petty Officers). I challenged the crew to promote 250 over the next promotion cycle. Please continue to encourage your Sailor to study and set professional and educational goals. You all play a vital role to the success of our team.

I also want to remind you all about the importance of proper Operational Security (OPSEC). OPSEC is extremely important during this phase of our deployment. Communication between Sailors and family members may become more restricted so I encourage you to take advantage of resources available to you in Norfolk. Command ombudsmen and our Family Readiness Group (FRG) are available to answer questions and offer support. They can point you in the right direction for relief or counseling. There will be times when we will not be able to communicate off the ship via email or phone for extended periods. I assure you that we will restore lines of communication as soon as safely possible.

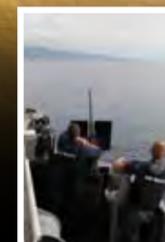
Lastly, I want to wish all of you a happy and safe 4th of July. Your Sailors are working hard to support the vision that became a reality over 200 years ago. I hope between the softball and the barbeque, and the picnics and the fireworks, each of you will take a few moments to send a prayer of thanks-- thanks to our forefathers for their vision and thanks to those who stand the watch on board USS George H.W. Bush today.†

Sincerely,

Capt. Brian "Lex" Luther  
Commanding Officer

### ACCOMPLISHMENTS FROM JUNE:

- Successful completion of two port calls: Cartagena, Spain, and Naples, Italy
- First replenishment-at-sea of deployment
- Four successful strait transits: Strait of Gibraltar, Strait of Messina, Strait of Bab El Mandeb, Strait of Hormuz
- More than 300 Sailors began the 77-Day Warrior Challenge
- 229 Sailors frocked to 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Class Petty Officers; 11 Senior Chiefs promoted



### On the cover:

Aviation Ordnanceman 3rd Class (AW) Levi P. Warner, left, and Aviation Ordnanceman Airman Matthew Howe stand watch aboard the Navy's newest aircraft carrier as it passes through the Strait of Messina, June 14. Photo by MC2 Joshua Horton.

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COMMANDING OFFICER  
Capt. Brian E. Luther

PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER  
Lt. Cmdr. Linda Sweeney

EDITOR  
MC2 Timothy Walter

AVENGER STAFF  
MC3 Michael Smevog  
MCSN Jessica Echerrí MC3 Derrick Noack

"The Avenger" is produced by the Media Department of USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH (CVN 77). The editorial content of this newspaper is edited and approved by the Media Department of USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH.

"The Avenger" is an authorized publication for the members of USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH (CVN 77) and their families. Its contents do not necessarily reflect the official views of the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense or the U.S. Navy and do not imply the endorsement thereof.

## STRAIT OF GIBRALTAR: THE FIRST TRANSIT

Story and layout by MC2 Timothy Walter



Sailors look at the rock of Gibraltar as the Navy's newest aircraft carrier sails through the Strait of Gibraltar. Photo by MCSA Brian Read Castillo.

The Navy's newest aircraft carrier, USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77), transited the Strait of Gibraltar and entered the Mediterranean Sea for the first time, June 5.

George H.W. Bush was joined by guided-missile destroyer USS Truxtun (DDG 103), guided-missile cruiser USS Gettysburg (CG 64) and Spanish frigate ESPS Almirante Juan de Borbón (F102) as it navigated the strait which separates Spain in Europe from Morocco in Africa by eight miles at its narrowest point.

"George H.W. Bush and the entire strike group did a remarkable job completing the first strait transit of the deployment," said Lt. Adam Lane, Officer of the Deck for George H.W. Bush during the transit. "The team did well in preparing and executing the plan."

Part of that plan involved stationing additional personnel around the ship for both navigational and force protection purposes. On the ship's bridge, the navigation team was augmented by the navigation evaluator, who is required to be stationed anytime the ship is in restricted waters or within 30 miles of land.

Around the edges of the ship, sentries stood various posts looking for low-flying planes or surface ships

which might have posed a threat.

Although the waters of the strait are not considered particularly dangerous, navigation evaluator Lt. Jerry Ragadio said the additional traffic, particularly the ferries traveling between Morocco and Spain, required caution.

"The only way to get from the Atlantic Ocean to the Mediterranean Sea is through this choke point," Ragadio said. "We don't always know who is good and bad."

Chief Aviation Ordnanceman (AW/SW) Robert Flake, from the ship's Weapons Department, said the Strait of Gibraltar is a great opportunity to practice for future choke points. As he stood on the bridge looking out at the African coast for the sixth time in his career, he said just experiencing the event is helpful since the atmosphere of the ship changes during such a maneuver, particularly for the newer Sailors.

"The senior Sailors are calm but the junior Sailors are excited because they have never seen anything like this before in their lives," Flake said.

Those Sailors not on watch were able to enjoy a rare opportunity to see two continents at once, even though the sky was slightly hazy

and winds reached 50 knots at one point. After clearing the majority of the shipping traffic, the ship was able to slow its speed and reduce the wind over the flight deck. Hundreds of Sailors quickly hurried there to get a photo in front of the famous rock of Gibraltar.

Quartermaster Seaman Floyd Magalit stood Quartermaster of the Watch in the ship's bridge and he enjoyed a birds-eye view of the transit.

"I've been on this ship for two years waiting to go somewhere and here I am," Magalit said. "I can go home to my brother and tell him that I've been through the Strait of Gibraltar and seen Morocco. I just might re-enlist because of this."

George H.W. Bush left its homeport of Norfolk, Va., on May 11, and entered the 6th Fleet area of responsibility on May 17.

George H.W. Bush Strike Group consists of USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77), Carrier Strike Group (CSG) 2 staff, Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 8, Destroyer Squadron 22 staff, guided-missile cruisers Gettysburg and USS Anzio (CG 68), and guided-missile destroyers Truxtun, USS Mitscher (DDG 57) and Almirante Juan de Borbón. †

# Secretary of the Navy



From USS George H.W. Bush Public Affairs

# ...Arriving

Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus visited the Navy's newest aircraft carrier off the coast of Spain, June 6.

USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77) was anchored off the coast of Cartagena, Spain, for the second liberty port call of the ship's first overseas deployment. The ship has been operating in the 6th Fleet area of responsibility since May 17.

After spending the day meeting Spanish defense officials and military leaders June 6, Mabus joined U.S. Ambassador to Spain Alan Solomont for a sunset social aboard George H.W. Bush. He mingled with more than 100 Spanish dignitaries and local sailors, as well as many Bush Sailors.

"These strike groups are symbols of freedom, and they project freedom's power, never more so then when we are joined by a country that we have had such a long and deep history with," Mabus said.

The ship has been operating closely with the Spanish navy over the past ten months, with the Spanish frigate ESPS Almirante Juan de Borbon (F102) fully integrated into George H.W. Bush Carrier Strike Group for Tailored Ship's Training Availability/Final Evaluation Problem in October 2010; Composite Unit Exercise/Joint Task Force Exercise in January and February; and the United Kingdom-sponsored exercise Saxon Warrior.

"It was great to have the ambassador



Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus has his picture taken with Sailors during a reception held on board the Navy's newest aircraft carrier June 6. Photo by MC2(SW/AW) Rex Nelson.

to Spain and his wife on board. It was an honor to have the Spanish sailors on board after working with them over the past ten months. It was a great way to bring to a close our relationship with Borbon," said Rear Adm. Nora Tyson, George H.W. Bush Carrier Strike Group commander.

"The reception went exceptionally well. I think the Spanish guests, the ambassador and the secretary were impressed with the friendliness and politeness of our Sailors and how forthcoming they were when they introduced themselves and shared their stories," said Capt. Brian Luther, USS George

H.W. Bush commanding officer.

Cartagena was USS George H.W. Bush's second European port visit. The crew previously enjoyed four days in Portsmouth, England, May 27-31. During the ship's visit to Spain, the crew participated in two community relations projects and a variety of Morale, Welfare and Recreation program-sponsored events, including a day at Terra Mitica, a local amusement park, and trips to botanical gardens, wineries and castles.

George H.W. Bush left its homeport of Norfolk, Va., on May 11. †

# Naples Port Visit

Story and Layout by MC3 Derrik Noack

USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77) departed Naples, Italy, June 14 after a three-day port visit.

Throughout the visit, Sailors enjoyed historic Italian sites through Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) sponsored tours. Several Sailors volunteered at a local soup kitchen and refugee shelter. The ship hosted a reception for 600 guests and dignitaries in the hangar bay, and more than 350 visitors toured the ship over two days.

Sailors benefited from the MWR tours, including trips to Rome, Florence, and Pompeii allowing them to see famous sites such as the Colosseum, Michelangelo's David, and the leaning tower of Pisa.

"I had never been to Italy before," said Yeomen 2nd Class (AW) Diana Melton, who visited Pompeii. "It was a nice town and all of its history was very interesting."

Sailors who explored Italy made memories they will never forget and the cuisine will top the list for many.

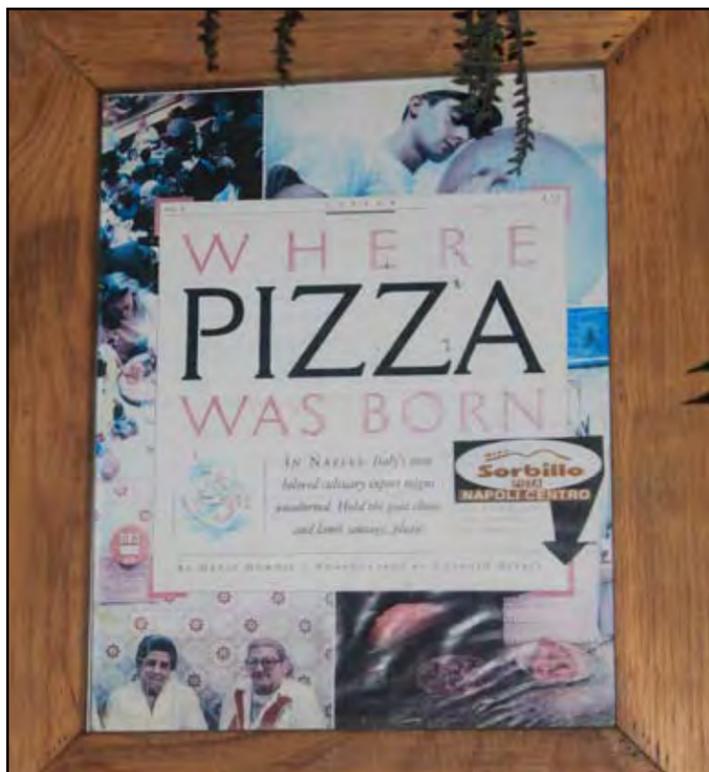
"I'll always remember the amazing pizza," said Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handling) 1st Class (SW/AW) Edwin Perez. "The people were nice and the food was great."

Several Sailors dedicated their liberty to volunteer at the Missionary Sisters of Charity, a local men's shelter and soup kitchen that provides free meals and housing to homeless men. Approximately 20 volunteers prepared food in the morning, while 20 more served food and helped clean up in the evening.

Nearly 50 Sailors spent five hours clearing an overgrown soc-



Sailors pose in front of grape vines in a vineyard near Mt. Vesuvius, Italy, June 13. Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) Services Program offered the wine tour and tasting. Photo by MC3 Kasey Krall.



A sign in front of a Naples restaurant speaks to the history of the city and its cuisine. Photo by MC3 Billy Ho.

cer field at Centro Laila, which provides shelter for refugees and their children.

When community service opportunities were announced, Sailors were eager to help others. All slots were filled within an hour, and so many Sailors offered to help that waiting lists had to be made.

"Everyone worked hard," said Yeoman 1st Class (AW) Ivy Cyphers. "We helped clean, wash dishes, and put together beds to prepare the Missionary Sisters of Charity for the afternoon. Afterwards they were so grateful and gave each one of us a booklet signed by Mother Teresa and a Patron Saint Medallion blessed by one of the nuns."

Guests who attended the reception on June 11 spent two hours conversing with members of the crew and touring the Navy's newest aircraft carrier.

"This was a great opportunity to see the Bush on her maiden deployment," said Col. John Migyanko from Joint Force Command Naples. "This ceremony really highlights the Italian-NATO partnership."†



# GEORGE H.W. BUSH Sailors climb in rank

Story and layout by MCSN Jessica Echerrri

Marking a milestone in their Navy careers, 229 USS George H.W. Bush Sailors were frocked as first, second and third class petty officers in a ceremony held in the hangar bay during the ship's transit through the Strait of Gibraltar June 5.

George H.W. Bush commanding officer Capt. Brian Luther praised the command for collectively promoting more Sailors during the March cycle than the previous September cycle. He said this type of result is what he expects for the future.

"This next cycle, we're going to get more than 250 Sailors promoted," he said to applause from the crew.

Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Tony Dupree said he worked hard during his two years in the Navy to be advanced to petty officer. He said he appreciated being recognized during

the frocking ceremony. "It was a really great experience to be standing with everyone else who got promoted," Dupree said. "It's something we all worked really hard for, so it feels good to be congratulated."

Eleven George H.W. Bush chief petty officers were also advanced to senior chief petty officer. Command Master Chief (SW) David Colton placed a cover with the senior chief insignia on their heads and they each had their mentors pin their new anchors onto their collars.

Luther said in his speech that all the promoted Sailors will have new responsibilities to their ship and their Sailors. He said he believes they will work hard to help the ship fulfill the ship's mission of "Freedom at Work."†



Newly-promoted George H.W. Bush Sailors line up in the ship's hangar bay to receive their frocking certificates from commanding officer Capt. Brian Luther June 5. Photo by MC3 Jeffrey Richardson.

# ABF1(AW/SW)

## Aviation Boatswain's Mate of the Year, Atlantic

Story and layout by MCSN Jessica Echerri



Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Fuel) 1st Class (AW/SW) Frankie Alvarado, Aviation Boatswain's Mate of the Year, Atlantic, assists Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Fuel) Airman Cliffmon Motley, from Air Department's V-4 division, in de-fueling aircraft on the flight deck. Photo by MCSN Jessica Echerri.

# Frankie Alvarado

While her career has not been easy, Alvarado has been fortunate to have leadership who helped her to become Aviation Boatswain's Mate of the Year, she said. Her chain of command has always challenged her to excel.

"I've seen her drive," said Master Chief Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Fuel) (AW/SW) James Vaughan, another mentor to Alvarado. "I gave her all the knowledge I had and made sure she was qualified in both sides of the ABF rate, the flight deck and below decks. She needed to be the all-around best."

Alvarado's drive also extends outside her rate and her

command. After several years of working towards advanced education, she earned her bachelor's degree in occupational safety and health in April. The school work and online classes while underway were tedious, but worth it, she said. She is now enrolled in a program to get her master's degree.

"Why stop?" she asked. "There's always something else to learn."

After winning Aviation Boatswain's Mate of the Year, Alvarado's next career goal is to be advanced to Chief Aviation Boatswain's Mate.

"There are very few female AB chiefs," Vaughan said. "I'm very confident she'll be a chief soon." †

Since I was an airman, I've been training to be a leader.

Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Fuel) 1st Class (AW/SW) Frankie Alvarado

Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Fuel) 1st Class (AW/SW) Frankie Alvarado, leading petty officer of George H.W. Bush Air Department's V-4 division, was recently selected Commander, Naval Air Forces Atlantic 2011 Aviation Boatswain's Mate of the Year for sustained superior performance among her peers throughout the year.

In May, Air Department selected Alvarado from the more than 60 aviation boatswain's mates on the ship to compete for the award against Sailors from 13 other sea commands in the Atlantic Fleet.

While the credentials in Alvarado's submission package only applied to the past year, she said she has been working toward this achievement her entire Navy career. She enlisted in the Navy 11 years ago and has consistently strove for personal and professional improvement.

"Since I was an airman, I've been training to be a leader," Alvarado said. "I saw what my leaders were doing and I picked up what I liked and threw away what I didn't like."

Alvarado said she favors a hands-on leadership style where she gets to know her Sailors' personalities and attitudes. It allows her to understand her Sailors and allows them to come to her with any questions.

"It helps me know what's going on with them," she said. "I can't help them if they don't ask and it's a comfort that they can talk to me at anytime."

Senior Chief Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Fuel) (AW/SW) Kenneth Wright, V-4 division leading chief petty officer and Alvarado's mentor, says her leadership style is how she acquired

the nickname Mama Grape. "Grape" comes from the purple jerseys fuel aviation boatswain's mates wear and "Mama" comes from the care and attention she gives to her Sailors.

"She has provided outstanding guidance and mentorship for the young ladies in Air Department," he said. "They try to emulate her performance. She's a true testament to someone who is on the clock 24 hours."

Alvarado said she feels a commitment to be a good role model to other females in her division, especially since they are fewer in number. She said at her first command, USS Wasp (LHD 1), she was one of only three females in her division.

"I've had a few girls say they're proud of me," she said. "I think it gives them hope. Even my male Sailors ask me how I did it."

Alvarado also extends her mentoring towards the community. While George H.W. Bush is in home port, she makes regular visits to Woodrow Wilson High School in Portsmouth, Va., to mentor students in the Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps program.



Alvarado (second from right) and other George H.W. Bush Sailors participate in a foreign object debris (FOD) walk-down on the flight deck, June 15. Photo by MCSN Jessica Echerri.



# Cartagena Spain



Layout by MCSN Jessica Echerri

1. Sailors, tourists and local residents walk past Cartagena's city hall June 6. Photo by MC3 Kasey Krall.
2. Sailors pose on a street in Cartagena, Spain, June 6. Photo by MC3 Leonard Adams.
3. Sailors from George H.W. Bush and USS Gettysburg (CG 64) ride a roller coaster at Terra Mitica in Cartagena.
4. A Sailor does yard work during a community relations

5. Sailors ride a roller coaster at Terra Mitica in Cartagena, June 8. Photo by MC2 Tony Curtis.
6. George H.W. Bush anchors off the coast of Cartagena, June 8. Photo by MCSN Molly Treece.
7. Sailors gather around a tour guide at a vineyard in Bullas, Spain, during a wine tour May 7. Photo by MC1(SW/AW) Molly Burgess.

# JEA CELEBRATES FOUR YEARS OF SERVICE

Story and layout by MC3 Derrik Noack



LN3(SW/AW) Tiffany Williams waxes the floor inside Operations Department's training classroom June 3. Photo by MC3 Michael Smevog.



Members of the JEA help with the replenishment-at-sea June 4. Photo by MCSN Gregory Wilhelmi.



ABHAN Vanessa Pierson serves chow in the galley during the JEA Father's Day mess deck relief effort June 19. Photo by MCSN Gregory Wilhelmi.



The JEA moves supplies during a replenishment-at-sea on June 20. Photo by MC3 Jeffrey Richardson.

USS George H. W. Bush (CVN 77) has been out to sea for a little more than a month and already the Junior Enlisted Association (JEA) has dedicated hundreds of hours helping others on board.

They have relieved the mess deck crewmembers; created a program to assist Sailors on liberty risk; offered a helping hand in transporting the stores on-loaded during the two recent replenishments-at-sea; and still found time to strip and wax the floors in Operations Department's training classroom and the brig vestibule.

"Both decks look amazing," said Master Chief Master-at-Arms (SW/AW/SS) David Bowman from Operations Department.

JEA offers a similar service to any department that enters their monthly drawing.

Members of the association have little spare time, but they choose to help those who have even less. To show the mess deck staff that their hard work and long hours are appreciated, the JEA took pleasure in giving them some time off.

"For women's appreciation month, we

filled in for the females working in the galley," said Logistics Specialist 2nd Class (SW/AW) William Norman, the JEA president. "For Father's Day, we relieved all of the fathers. We have a great time doing it and are happy to help out."

"Working in the galley can be stressful," said Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Equipment) Airman Jesse Iverson. "The break from the JEA allowed me to get some extra rest and come back at peak performance."

Before a port call the JEA submits a list to the command master chief of members willing to be liberty buddies for personnel on liberty risk.

During the last two replenishments-at-sea, JEA members spent hours breaking down pallets and moving food throughout the ship in order to help those in Supply Department and the Sailors selected for the working party.

"They all should be recognized for volunteering to help Supply Department load stores," said Bowman. "They are true shipmates."

As the JEA celebrates four years of service, they hope to keep growing and welcome anyone who would like

to join. Meetings are typically held the first and third Thursday of each month at 7 p.m. in one of the training classrooms, and last approximately one hour.

Members are divided into three committees. The social committee organizes the efforts to relieve the mess decks and beautify the ship. The sports committee helps with MWR sport events like dodge ball and the mentorship committee handles the Liberty Risk Program. The mentorship committee will also start conducting Basic Military Requirement (BMR) classes.

"The Chiefs normally instruct the BMR classes," said Norman. "We want to help them out and show that the JEA doesn't help out only E5 and below. We want to contribute to the whole ship."

Future plans include steel beach picnics and a home port event.

"It's easy for anyone to get involved," said Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handling) (AW) Airman April Gist. "I love being in the JEA, it feels like family." †



JEA members pose for a photo after a meeting on the aft mess decks June 18. Photo by MC3 Derrik Noack.

# R. A. S.



An Aviation Boatswain's Mate signals to the pilot of an MH-60S Sea Hawk during a replenishment-at-sea aboard the Navy's newest aircraft carrier. Photo by MC3 Jeffrey Richardson.

Story by MC2 Timothy Walter

Layout by MCSN Molly Treece

USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77) completed its first replenishment-at-sea of its first overseas deployment, June 4.

George H.W. Bush received 1.2 million gallons of fuel from the fleet replenishment oiler USNS Leroy Grumman (T-AO 195) and approximately 32,000 pounds of dry and frozen food, repair parts and mail from the dry cargo/ammunition ship USNS Sacagawea (T-AKE 2) during the four-hour operation.

A replenishment-at-sea consists of either a connected replenishment (CONREP), which involves fuel and cargo transmission via hoses and wires, or a vertical replenishment (VERTREP), which relies on helicopters to transmit web-strapped pallets from one vessel to the other. George H.W. Bush performed both types simultaneously during the operation, employing two Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 9 MH-60S Sea Hawks from Sacagawea for the VERTREP.

High above the flight deck in an observation room known as Primary Flight Control (PRI-FLY), Logistics Specialist 2nd Class (SW) Shoshana Chowdhury from the ship's Supply Department, watched closely to ensure an accurate count of each pallet lowered on the flight deck. She maintained a real-time log in order to assist the ship's Principal Assistant for Logistics (PAL), who keeps track of the operation and status of the helicopters — each hovering in a precisely timed circle between the ships.

Chowdhury, who normally spends her

days receiving parts in a windowless room, enjoyed the opportunity to take in the sight of the replenishment-at-sea for the first time and perform a crucial role in the operation.

"It's pretty great," she said. "I'm just counting pallets but it is important."

Logistics Specialist 1st Class (SW/AW) Jilienne Commerford, from George H.W. Bush Supply Department's S-1 Division, said it is normally not necessary to load cargo so soon after a port call but since the ship was anchored at sea, food supplies needed to be replenished. She said this VERTREP of 217 pallets was smaller than the usual 400-600 pallet shipments that can be expected in the future, since this is the first time the operation has occurred during the deployment.

"This is a test run to see how it goes," she said as she waited for the loaded pallets to be transported from the flight deck to hangar bay via one of the ship's elevators. Commerford, who started off her Navy career as a Postal Clerk, began to smile when she heard that the VERTREP may contain postmarked packages.

"I'm just excited that we might get mail," she said, adding that in the future most mail will be delivered during replenishment-at-sea.

George H.W. Bush left its homeport of Norfolk, Va., on May 11, and entered the 6th Fleet area of responsibility on May 17.



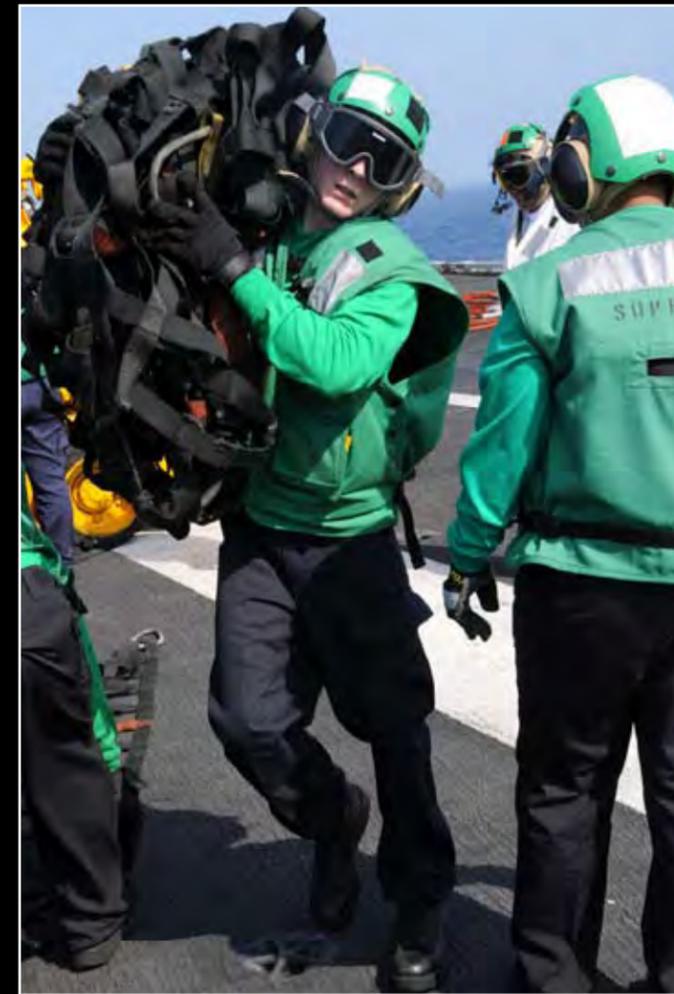
Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Fuel) 3rd Class Adam J. Sethre takes a fuel sample during a replenishment-at-sea. Photo by MCSN Gregory M. Wilhelmi.



Quartermaster 3rd Class (SW/AW) Brad Barber prepares to signal USNS Leroy Grumman (T-AO 195) during a replenishment-at-sea. Photo by MCSN Gregory M. Wilhelmi.



Sailors wait to pick up supplies during a replenishment-at-sea on the flight deck. Photo by MC3 Jeffrey M. Richardson.



A Sailor moves cargo netting during a replenishment-at-sea on the flight deck. Photo by MC3 Jeffrey M. Richardson.



Sailors from George H.W. Bush Weapons Department prepare to shoot line from the flight deck to USNS Leroy Grumman (T-AO 195) in preparation for a replenishment-at-sea, June 4. Photo by MCSN Gregory M. Wilhelmi.

# Italy



ROME



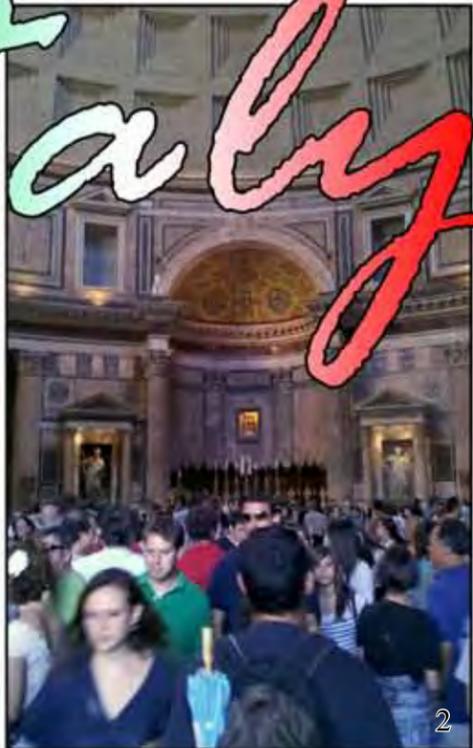
MT. VESUVIUS



NAPLES



POMPEII



2



3



1

- 1. Sailors pose for a photo with an actor in front of the Arch of Constantine in Rome, June 13. Photo by MC1(SW/AW) Molly Burgess.
- 2. Sailors, tourists and residents tour the Pantheon in Rome, June 14. Photo by MC2(SW/AW) Nicholas Hall.
- 3. Sailors pose in front of grape vines in a vineyard near Mt. Vesuvius, Italy, June 13. Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) Services Program offered the wine tour and tasting. Photo by MC3 Kasey Krall.



4

- 4. Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handling) Airman Alonzo Garza (right) and Religious Programs Specialist 3rd Class Nabel Rogers eat authentic Italian pizza and pasta at a restaurant in Naples, Italy, June 11. Photo by MC3 Kasey Krall.
- 5. Sailors climb Mt. Vesuvius in Italy, June 12. MWR arranged transportation to and from the mountain with a tour package sold to Sailors for a discounted price. Photo by MC3 Kasey Krall.



5

# MAIL CALL!

USS GEORGE H W BUSH  
June 10  
CVN 77

Story and layout by MC3 Michael Smevog

USS George H.W. Bush Logistics Specialists sort mail in the ship's post office.



Photo by MCSN Jessica Echerri



Photo by MC3 Michael Smevog



Photo by MCSN Jessica Echerri

Just as the crew of USS George H.W. Bush is embarked on a journey, so too are the care packages sent to the Sailors by loved ones back home. When family members send packages from the U.S., they must travel thousands of miles over land, on the seas, and through the air to reach the intended Sailor. They have to be processed through multiple locations, touched by dozens of hands, and carried by many Sailors until they find the addressee.

A care package sent from home first goes to Norfolk Regional Mail Center in Norfolk, Va. From there it travels to John F. Kennedy National Airport in New York, and then to Joint Military Postal Activity in New York. Mail and packages are then moved across the water to the Military Mail Processing Center nearest to the ship's location. Logistics specialists assigned to USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH (CVN 77) stand by at beach detachments to coordinate with the naval air base closest to the ship, and get the mail sent to the base and then flown to the ship.

Sailors assigned to the GEORGE H.W. BUSH S-1A

Division are responsible for making sure these morale-boosting packages get into their owners' hands as quickly as possible.

"In two days we processed 11,000 pounds of mail," said Logistics Specialist 3rd Class (SW) Dejuan O'Neal.

He said normally the crew is in a routine with flight operations and the mail is being steadily delivered. However, after a shortage of flight operations due to either the ship's schedule or uncooperative weather, deliveries can be delayed, creating a backlog of several weeks.

Recently, the backlog totaled 600 pieces. O'Neal said this may occur a few times during the deployment. Usually a package will take between a week or two to get to the ship, but might get delayed due to weight limitations on the aircraft or other factors.

"A [C-2 Greyhound] can only handle so much weight," O'Neal said. "Of course things like aircraft parts are going to take priority."

Once the mail arrives on board the ship, Sailors in the

ship's post office sort the mail into departments and divisions. At this point, the mail's label will determine how fast it will reach the Sailor. If a package simply says Air Department without a division, it will be delayed while the additional information is researched, O'Neal said.

"It can make the difference of two or three days sometimes," said O'Neal.

Another factor in mail delivery is the size, said Logistics Specialist 1st Class (SW) Thaddeus Berry, leading petty officer of GEORGE H.W. BUSH Supply Department's S-1A Division, and legacy postal clerk. The maximum weight limit for a package is 70 pounds. A package can be up to 130 inches in length and girth combined, and 108 inches for priority mail.

Berry said that the most unique package he saw during his 12 years in the rate was a cooler filled with treats and sodas. The cooler tested the weight limit, weighing in at 67.8 pounds. Surprisingly, it remained completely intact after traveling half way around the world.

Other packages did not fare as well. The most damaged

box he has seen was one filled with candy and Gatorade. The liquid leaked out and saturated the box so much, that the box disintegrated down to a little pile of nothing, he said.

Berry said it's not a good idea to send liquids, as they tend to leak and destroy the packaging. Also, reused boxes do not usually remain stable for the thousands of miles they must travel.

"We got a package with four bottles of liquid, and all four of them busted and just destroyed the box, and everybody else's around it," he said.

To avoid delays, Berry recommended sending mail before traditionally high traffic days, such as Christmas.

"If you send it during the holidays then you're competing with everyone in the states," Berry said. "There's nothing wrong with sending a package a little early."

There are several different-sized boxes, in regular and priority mail, available in the ship's post office. The cost is by weight, and insurance is available to cover any damages that occur to the packaged contents. †

# July 2011 Fleet and Family Support Center Calendar

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>			<b>1</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>5</b> <b>Couples Workshop</b> Little Creek 4:30-7 p.m. <b>Career Planning</b> Little Creek 9 a.m.-noon <b>Job Search Strategies</b> Little Creek 1-4 p.m.	<b>6</b> <b>Money Management</b> Yorktown 8 a.m.-4 p.m. <b>Career Planning</b> Northwest 1-4 p.m.	<b>7</b> <b>Changes</b> Norfolk 1:30-3:30 p.m. <b>Federal Employment System</b> Little Creek 9 a.m.-noon	<b>8</b>
<b>11</b> <b>Couples Workshop</b> Northwest 9-11:30 a.m.	<b>12</b> <b>Home Ownership</b> Yorktown 8:30 a.m.-2:30 <b>Couples Workshop</b> Little Creek 4:30-7 p.m.	<b>13</b> <b>Banking and Financial Services</b> Norfolk 8:30 a.m.-10 a.m. <b>Federal Employment System</b> Norfolk 8:30-11:30a.m.	<b>14</b> <b>Changes</b> Norfolk 1:30-3:30 p.m. <b>Fed. Emp. System</b> Oceana 9 a.m.-noon	<b>15</b> <b>Effective Resume Writing</b> Newport News 8:30-11:30 a.m.
<b>18</b> <b>Couples Workshop</b> Yorktown 4-6:30 p.m.	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b> <b>Retirement Planning</b> Norfolk 1-2:30 p.m. <b>Savings &amp; Investments</b> Norfolk 8:30-10 a.m. <b>TSP</b> Norfolk 10-11:30 a.m.	<b>21</b> <b>Changes</b> Norfolk 1:30-3:30 p.m. <b>Couples Workshop</b> Norfolk 4-6:30 p.m.	<b>22</b> <b>Money Management</b> Little Creek 8 a.m.-4 p.m.
<b>25</b> <b>Couples Workshop</b> Yorktown 4-6:30 p.m. <b>Job Search Strategies</b> Northwest 1-4 p.m.	<b>26</b> <b>Home Ownership</b> Little Creek 6-9 p.m. <b>Effective Resume Writing</b> Oceana Northwest 9 a.m.-noon	<b>27</b> <b>Money Management</b> Norfolk 8 a.m.-4 p.m. <b>Car Buying Strategies</b> Norfolk 10-11:30 a.m.	<b>28</b> <b>Money Management</b> Oceana 8 a.m.-4 p.m. <b>Federal Emp. System</b> Northwest 1-4 p.m.	<b>29</b> <b>Retirement Planning</b> Little Creek 1-2:30 p.m. <b>Finances for Newlyweds</b> Norfolk 8:30-10a.m.
<b>Career Planning</b> Oceana Northwest 9 a.m.-noon	<b>Interview Techniques</b> Northwest 1-4 p.m. Norfolk 8:30-11:30 a.m. <b>Job Network</b> Oceana noon-1 p.m.	<b>Credit Management</b> Norfolk 8:30-10 a.m. <b>Home Ownership</b> Little Creek 6-9 p.m.	<b>Changes</b> Norfolk 1:30-3:30 p.m. <b>Couples Workshop</b> Norfolk <b>Job Search Strategies</b> Oceana 9 a.m.-noon	<b>Savings &amp; Investments</b> Little Creek 8:30-10 a.m. <b>TSP</b> Little Creek 10-11:30 a.m.

To Register, contact: FFSC Oceana: 443-2923, FFSC Norfolk: 444-2102,  
FFSC Yorktown: 887-4606, FFSC Northwest: 421-8770, FFSC Little Creek: 462-7563