



AUGUST 2024



# The Lucky Bag

**RICHMOND, VA COUNCIL NAVY LEAGUE OF THE UNITED STATES**

## WELCOME HOME USS GRAVELY (DDG-107)

On Sunday July 14, 2024, after 275 days apart, families, friends and loved ones joyfully reunite after **USS Gravelly** returns to Naval Station Norfolk after a nine-month deployment. Welcome home Sailors!

The Arleigh-Burke guided-missile destroyer **USS Gravelly (DDG-107)** is one of the ships of the Eisenhower Carrier Strike Group. (see **USS Gravelly** ship report on page 7 for more information about their homecoming). 🚢



Council members Welcomed Home *USS Gravelly*: Courtney Mustin (*USS Gravelly*'s Liaison), James D'Amico and George Feitig (*USS Normandy*'s Liaison).



One of the many Sailors welcomed home (photo on Adriyana's Facebook post).



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By: **Vaughan F. Dize**



Greetings Fellow Richmond Council Navy League Members and Friends. Even though it's the Dog Days of Summer, there is still a lot going on.

On July 14<sup>th</sup>, one of our adopted ships, **USS Gravely** returned home to Norfolk, as part of the Eisenhower Carrier Strike Group. **Gravely** had been deployed for nine months in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea where it defended ships by downing many missiles and drones. Several of our Navy League members were there on the dock to welcome the sailor's home, along with many of their friends and families.

On July 25<sup>th</sup>, members of the Navy League attended a Change of Command ceremony for another one of our adopted ships, **USS Normandy**. Captain Errol Robinson was relieved by Captain Nathan P. Diaz.

The Houston-Holicky-Sitter Forum will take place on August 13th at noon, at the Publix at John Rolfe Parkway,

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*The Lucky Bag* is published monthly, except Jan. & Feb. Issues which are combined.

2250 John Rolfe Parkway Henrico, Virginia. CDR Paul Giarra USN (Ret.) is their guest speaker and will be speaking on Naval Tactical Nuclear Weapons Tactics and Strategy. I encourage our members and readers of *The Lucky Bag* to attend.

Lastly, please be reminded of our upcoming golf outing, September 18<sup>th</sup> at the Hollows Golf Club. This is our annual primary fundraiser. We need sponsors and golfers. Come join us! ✍

## CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

*Chaplain John A. Harler, M.D.*

### DON'T GET CAUGHT OFF GUARD



**"Guard your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the issues of life." (Proverbs 4:23).**

Southern Baptist revivalist and author, Vance Havner, said, "What's down in the well comes up in the bucket." King Solomon is saying essentially the same thing, but I am sure that their focus was not on physical issues in either case. Matthew 12:34 says, "...for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks."

The spoken words and our actions express the true beliefs and feelings of our spiritual hearts, metaphorically the seat of our emotions. To "guard your heart with all diligence," suggests the heart tends to stray away from staying the course. Prophet Jeremiah expresses the same belief by writing, "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" (Jeremiah 17:9).

A faulty physical heart will alert a per-

### WELCOME ABOARD !

The Richmond Council Navy League is proud to welcome you as a member. In the weeks ahead, when you attend one of our Navy League events, please let the person at the registration desk know that you are a new member attending your first function.

### NEW MEMBER

David B. Craft  
Terry W. Jarreau  
James W. Thorp  
Donald M. Cosgrove

son by sending warning signals: shortness of breath or chest pain as a sign that attention is needed. Our Creator God gives His Word on how one can know for certain if the spiritual heart needs attention. When personal relationships begin to deteriorate, when stress levels rise and peace is absent from our lives, then perhaps God is trying to let us know it is time to seek help.

The author of the Book of Hebrews writes: "For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12).

For the best functioning of the physical heart, seek a physician. For the best functioning of the spiritual heart, seek the Great Physician by the reading and doing of His Word. Do not wait for a heart crisis before getting help. Stay in God's Word and you will never be caught off-guard. ✍

(Partial content borrowed from Sherry Sharp's Sweet Monday Message with permission).

### SAVE THE DATES

#### **September 18**

Council's Annual Golf Fundraising Event

The Hollows Golf Club  
Montpelier, VA

#### **October 16**

Sea Services Luncheon

Honoring our U.S. Marines,  
Navy, Coast Guard and U.S. Flag  
Merchant Marines

Willow Oaks Country Club  
Richmond, VA

**Guest Speaker:** Rear Admiral  
Philip E. Sobeck, Commander,  
U.S. Military Sealift Command

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## CDR THEODORE G. ELLYSON SUMMER LUNCHEON

The Richmond Council Summer Luncheon convened at 1130 on 19 June 2024 with a social time of greeting and fellowship. At 1200, President Vaughan Dize welcomed a group of 75 members and guests, one of the largest luncheon gatherings for many years. Vaughan then recognized the following distinguished guests:

- VADM John B. Mustin, Commander U.S. Navy Reserve Force (our speaker)
- LCDR Lazaro Cardenas, Jr. (VADM Mustin's Aide)
- RDML Michael Curran, USN (Ret.)
- RDML John Heckman, USN (Ret.)
- CDR Amy Thomas, CO Navy Reserve, Richmond
- CDR Seth Harbin, CO NTAG (Navy Recruiting, Richmond)
- CDR Justin Strock, CO USCGC *Legare*
- LCDR L. H. Deatrich, XO USCGC *Legare*
- ENS Mike Pinto, USCGC *Legare*
- BMC Cody Johnson, COB USCGC *Legare*
- CAPT Cameron Rountree, USNR
- CAPT Father William Bartz, CHC, USN (Ret.)
- CAPT John Paul Jones, USN (Ret.)

Admiral Mustin then gave a wonderfully informative presentation of the United States' global maritime position and strategy, stating that, *"Our taxpayers, like you, can sleep soundly at night knowing the Navy Reserve Force will be lethal, resilient, sustainable, survivable, agile, and responsive. The Navy Reserve is ready to face this reality, both at home and abroad."*

During the Q&A, the Admiral was asked how the Navy League can best achieve its third mission of being an advocate for the Sea Services. He responded that our best means of advocacy is to educate our members and the public about the fact that we are a bicoastal maritime nation and require a strong Navy for our national security and to encourage them to communicate the same to their legislators in Congress.

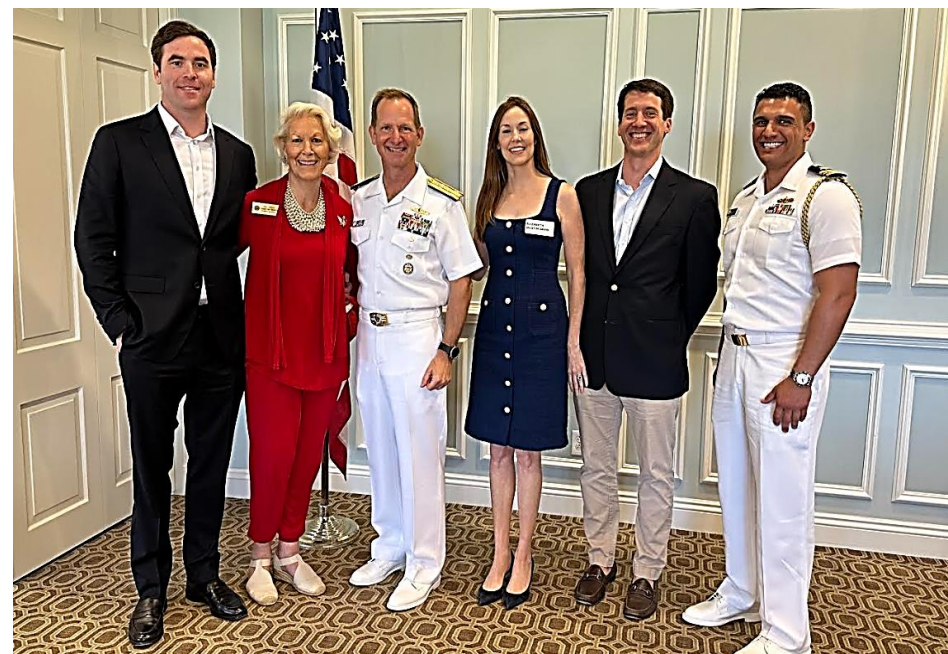
Finally, we would like to express our deepest gratitude to Admiral Mustin, and his aide, LCDR Lazaro Cardenas, for making the trek from the Pentagon to Richmond, on a very hot summer day, to speak to us about this important subject. We also thank all those who attended to make this a wonderful luncheon! 🍷



Guest Speaker Vice Admiral John B. Mustin, Commander U.S. Navy Reserve Force.



President Dize with daughter, Laura Dize Sutherland, RN; Sheila Dize, wife of Vaughan's cousin, Jesse Dize, WO1 USA (Ret.).



Three generations of the Mustin family attended. Pictured Left to Right: Townsend Mustin (Courtney Mustin's son); Navy League Member & USS *Gravelly* Liaison, Courtney Mustin; VADM John B. Mustin; Courtney's daughter Elizabeth Mustin Davis; Elizabeth's husband, Christian Davis and LCDR Lazaro Cardenas, Jr. (VADM Mustin's Aide).



Guests of Honor table: L to R: Duncan Owen, III (USNA Classmate of VADM Mustin); CDR Eric Wynn, N34 Director for Force Protection; CDR Amy Thomas, CO Navy Reserve, Richmond; LCDR Lazaro Cardenas, Jr., (VADM Mustin's Aide); VADM John B. Mustin, Commander U.S. Navy Reserve Force; RDML Michael Curran, USN (Ret.); Mr. Francis William (Bill) Curran and RDML John Heckman, USN (Ret.).



Adopted ship, USCGC *Legare*, was well represented at the luncheon. Left to Right: Tom Jennings, Assistant Liaison; Executive Officer LCDR L.H. Deatrich; Commanding Officer CDR Justin Strock; BMC Cody Johnson; ENS Reid; Tom Hassell, Liaison and Pat Harris, USS *Gravelly* Assistant Liaison.

## D-DAY'S 80<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY

June 6, 1944 – June 6, 2024

By: Thomas T. Hassell, Jr.

On June 6, 2024, we commemorated the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of D-Day. We remember the fallen and honor the legacy of those who changed the course of history.

The vast scope of D-Day far surpasses the ability to capture its entirety in a newsletter article. Therefore, the focus here is on two aspects of the invasion, both of which illustrate the courage and flexibility of American servicemen.

Chronologically, the airborne invasion was first, as it occurred pre-dawn. Paratroops of the 82nd and 101st airborne divisions were met with withering Nazi anti-aircraft fire as they entered French airspace. The C-47 pilots, in numerous cases, got off course or lost their nerve, resulting in the Paratroops to be ordered to jump, so the plane could turn back. They

jumped into total darkness, having no idea where they were. All prior planning had to be abandoned. Those fortunate enough to make it to the ground, went into hiding, having only a metal clicker for communication. These were used in an attempt to locate fellow troops. Many were killed or wounded by Nazi troops as they descended. Others were killed as they dangled helplessly from tree limbs.

One unusual case involved Private John Steele of the 82nd Airborne. He descended in the dark and ended with his parachute snagged on a church spire in the village of Sainte-Mere-Eglise (a commune in the northwestern French department of Manche, in Normandy).

The Germans saw him, cut him down, and took him prisoner, but with American courage and savvy, he escaped and was able to connect with other American troops.

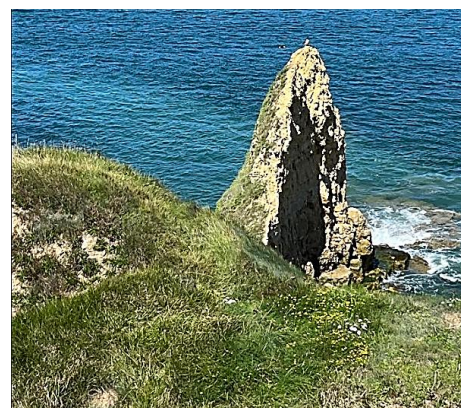
A noteworthy and critical part of the sea invasion involved the 2nd Ranger

Battalion under the command of Lieutenant Colonel James Rudder and got the name, "Rudders Rangers". They were given the unenviable task of scaling both sides of Pointe du Hoc, an area on the western end of Omaha Beach and having cliffs 100 feet high. Upon reaching the top they were to knock out German guns and troops. They succeeded with the help of rocket fired grapnel hooks attached to long ropes. They also used ladders loaned to them by the London Fire Department. The climb was made against heavy German gunfire and potato mashers (grenades) being rolled down on them.

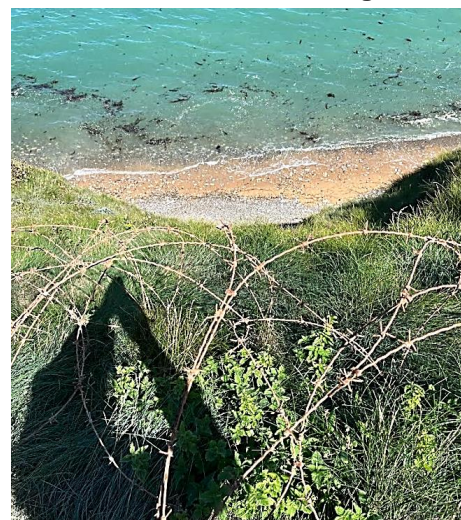
In 1964, at the 20th reunion of the Ranger Battalion, General Rudder stood at Pointe du Hoc, looked down at Omaha Beach and said, "*How in the hell did we do it?*". The answer to his question involves American courage, honor, and commitment. ✍



A replica of WWII veteran U.S. Army paratrooper John M. Steele hangs from a church in Sainte-Mere-Eglise, France, June 2, 2011. The figure was created for the 67th anniversary of the Allied invasion of France. Steele was a paratrooper with the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division. He pretended to be dead for two hours but was eventually taken prisoner by German troops, later escaped and rejoined his regiment.



The 2<sup>nd</sup> Range Battalion scaled both sides of Pointe du Hoc, an area on the western end of Omaha Beach with cliffs 100 feet high.



At the 20<sup>th</sup> reunion of the Ranger Battalion, General Rudder said, "*How in the hell did we do it?*"



## Commonwealth of Virginia

### Office of the Lieutenant Governor

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

July 19, 2024

**Press Contact:**

[press@ltgov.virginia.gov](mailto:press@ltgov.virginia.gov)

## Virginia Legislature Passes Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP) Funding Bill

RICHMOND, VA – In a breakthrough decision, the Virginia Senate and House of Delegates have passed a bill to fully repeal recent cost-cutting measures, ensuring the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP) receives full funding. This important legislation will provide tuition-free college education to the spouses and children of military members and first responders who were killed or disabled as a result of their service.

For weeks, military families and advocates for veterans have called for the immediate reversal of cost-cutting measures that threatened the integrity of WMSDEP. Today, their voices have been heard and answered with decisive action from the General Assembly. The Lieutenant Governor, a steadfast supporter of veterans, first responders and military families, has been a vocal advocate for the bill's passage, urging both the Senate and the House of Delegates to prioritize this essential program.

The Lieutenant Governor expressed heartfelt gratitude and support for the passage of this bill, stating, "As a veteran, I understand the sacrifices made by our military families. Ensuring tuition-free education for the spouses and children of those who have given their all for our country is the least we can do. This program is a small token of our immense gratitude and a promise to better the lives of those who have suffered the ultimate loss."

The WMSDEP will play a pivotal role in upholding Virginia's commitment to its military and first responder families providing them with the opportunity to pursue higher education and improve their lives. By securing this funding, Virginia demonstrates its unwavering dedication to honoring the sacrifices of its first responders and servicemen and women.

The passage of the VMSDEP funding bill is a significant victory for military and first responder families across the Commonwealth. It ensures that Virginia remains true to its promise to support and uplift those who have borne the brunt of loss and hardship in service in our country.

###

Lieutenant Governor Winsome Earle-Sears is the 42<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia. She served as Vice President of the United State Board of Education (2011-2015) and in the Virginia House of Delegates. She is also a United States Marine.

**APPLY** online at [www.dvs.virginia.gov](http://www.dvs.virginia.gov)

**CONTACT** Department of Veterans Services; Veterans Education, Training and Employment Richmond, VA **Phone: (804) 225-2083 Email: [VMSDEP@dvs.virginia.gov](mailto:VMSDEP@dvs.virginia.gov)**



## RICHMOND COUNCIL NAVY LEAGUE

### Our Mission

Educate. Advocate. Support.

At our recent Summer Luncheon, VADM John B. Mustin encouraged us to explore how we can carry out our mission of advocating with our legislators for a strong Sea Service for our national security. Richmond Navy League member RDML Mike Curran, USN (Ret.) heard that call and has offered to take the lead as he explains in the following message:

The USNL Richmond Chapter is in the forming stages of a Legislative Affairs Committee led by RDML (Ret.) Mike Curran. The vision of the Legislative Affairs Committee is to advocate for Naval/Maritime issues at the federal, state, and local levels that are in line with USNL's advocacy mission objectives. As we are located in the Capital of the Commonwealth, we are uniquely positioned to interact with the Virginia State Legislature to educate, advocate, and seek support from State Senators and Representatives. Some of the issues we can influence are further reduction of state taxation of military retirements, protecting the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP), and funding for climate-resilient base infrastructure in Hampton Roads.

As we are in the beginning stages, USNL National HQ has offered to provide a one-hour training session on Legislative Affairs (LA). Once we gather the names of interested members, we will schedule training. We are seeking members to participate in the training and serve as members of the committee. Any amount of time and effort committee members can provide will be greatly appreciated. Once our

committee is in place with our agenda of advocacy issues, we will partner with USNL National HQ LA for support and coordination with other chapters and military-affiliated groups.

If you are interested in participating, please email RDML (Ret.) Mike Curran at [curranrva2268@gmail.com](mailto:curranrva2268@gmail.com) by Friday, August 16th. Thank you very much for your support and interest. ✍️

## AMERICA DIVISION SEA CADETS



**Naval Sea Cadet Corps presents Cadet Smith with certificate for graduating from Sea Cadet Training hosted by Military Sealift Command. Bravo Zulu!**



**Navy League Cadet Corps presents Petty Officer Burns with the "Honor Cadet" Award for Medical Training in Kentucky. Bravo Zulu!**

(pictures obtained from AMERICA Division USNSCC / USNLCC Facebook)

## MILITARY SEALIFT COMMAND

The commanders of U.S. Transportation Command and Military Sealift Command joined hundreds of maritime industry leaders, May 22, to celebrate National Maritime Day during a ceremony hosted by The Propeller Club, Port of Norfolk, aboard the former battleship **USS Wisconsin (BB-64)**.

National Maritime Day is a time-honored tradition that recognizes one of the country's most important industries. Each year, ceremonies and celebrations throughout the country recognize National Maritime Day and the people the maritime industry depends on.

MSC Commander, Rear Admiral Sobbeck, spoke highly of the thousands of Merchant Mariners serving on vessels globally.

*"Whether in peacetime or conflict, it is American merchant mariners who deliver essential goods to far-reaching corners of our globe. These seafarers bravely face threats to include combatant's pirates, disease outbreaks, and natural disasters yet they consistently heed the call to serve their fellow Americans. Today, and every day, we honor merchant marines past and present."*

RADM Sobbeck thanked the Mariners for all they had done to support MSC, our Navy, and the defense of our nation over the past 75 years.

*"National Maritime Day marks the date in 1819 that the **SS Savannah** set sail on the first transoceanic voyage under steam power, and the maritime industry's remarkable contribution to this event," said USTRANSCOM Commander Gen. Jacqueline Van Ovest.*

The ceremonial event concluded with the reading of the National Maritime Day proclamation, and a wreath laying from the CROMO, a local historic dive vessel, in remembrance of mariners who died in service to The United States. ✍️

(article extracted from *Sealift* newsletter July 2024)

## ADOPTED SHIPS UPDATE

(Note: these reports may be edited to fit space available)



**USS Normandy (CG-60)**  
CO: CAPT Nathan Diaz  
XO: CDR Adam J. Samson  
CMC: CMDCM Andrew Conover

George L. Feitig, Jr., Liaison  
Dennis Biggs, Ass't Liaison

Ahoy Richmond Navy League!

**USS Normandy** is moored pier side at her homeport of Norfolk, VA conducting a maintenance availability as she prepares to go out to sea again in the coming weeks.

**Normandy** returned on July 13th from a two-and-a-half-month service deployment to the Sixth Fleet Area of Responsibility. While on her service deployment **Normandy** returned to her namesake of Normandy, France where the ship commemorated the 80th Anniversary of the D-Day Invasion. Additionally, while in the European Theater, **Normandy** made two port calls to Naval Station Rota, Spain and one port call to Rotterdam, Netherlands. While in the Netherlands sailors had the opportunity to take a quick train ride to the city of Amsterdam.

Prior to **Normandy's** Dutch port call, she ventured to the Norwegian Sea where she conducted a PHOTOEX with USS Tennessee (SSBN 734), an E-6B Mercury, and a P-8 Poseidon.

On July 25<sup>th</sup>, 2024, CAPT Nathan P. Diaz took command of **USS Normandy**. Team **Normandy** would like to extend a huge welcome to CAPT Diaz and wish CAPT Errol Robinson fair winds and following seas as he continues his career at the Pentagon. 🚩

Very Respectfully,  
LTJG Dane R. Hamilton, PAO  
First Lieutenant



**USS Carter Hall (LSD-50)**  
CO: CDR Steven E. Grey

XO: CDR Brittany N. Lynn  
CMC: CMDCM Benjamin Cruz

Pat Robson, Liaison

**USS Carter Hall** is currently in port



**USS Gravely (DDG-107)**  
CO: CDR Brian C. Sanchez  
XO: CDR Greg Piorun  
CMC: CMDCM Timothy Bickerton

Courtney Mustin, Liaison  
Patrick Harris, Ass't Liaison

Homecoming for **USS Gravely** with the Eisenhower Strike Group

*By: Courtney Mustin, Liaison*

Temperatures and emotions ran very high on July 14th as family, friends and onlookers watched **USS Gravely** sail up the Elizabeth River and into its berth on the pier at Norfolk Naval Station after nearly nine months' deployment. There was a great swell of love, relief, pride and gratitude among the crowd as all waited with anxious anticipation of the first embrace of their loved ones after so long a time.

Welcoming home the sailors was a section of the Navy band playing familiar tunes on the pier to raise the spirits even higher. A tent with music, food and drinks were set up to lessen the oppressive heat and give people a chance to wait more comfortably. As the tugboat guided **Gravely** to its docking station banners, balloons, flowers and cameras were all raised to capture the moment it was tied up with the entire crew manning the rail. It was a beautiful sight, and one that marked the dedication and the sacrifices Navy sailors, and their families make to keep our country free and safe.

A motorcade of dignitaries proceeded down the pier to the ship to greet and escort the CO back to the base after which sailors began to disembark in search of their loved ones there to welcome them home. Anyone fortunate enough to witness this homecoming was bound to realize in that experience what a privilege it is to be an American. 🚩



**USCGC Legare (WMEC-912)**  
CO: CDR Justin Strock  
XO: LCDR L.H. (Hank) Deatrach  
COB: BMC Cody Johnson

Thomas T. Hassell, Jr., Liaison  
Thomas A. Jennings, Ass't Liaison

**USCGC Legare (WMEC 912)** has officially been delivered to Baltimore, Maryland, and handed over to the Coast Guard Yard for the Service Life Extension Program (SLEP). The crew has officially transitioned to operating as **USCGC Spencer (WMEC 905)**. The upcoming inport period will primarily focus on the new hull, currently in drydock. While preparations to reach this stage was time-consuming, the challenges ahead promise to be equally demanding, if not more so. Nevertheless, the team is fully prepared for the task.

Following the conclusion of our Proficiency Patrol, a much-needed stand-down period began. This was immediately followed by an intensive two-week SLEP preparation phase. In a concerted effort involving all hands, nonessential materials were systematically offloaded via a daisy chain process and transferred to conex (container express) boxes for long-term storage.

After this offload phase, **Legare** embarked on a two-day transit up the Chesapeake Bay to Curtis Bay, near Baltimore. Along the way, the ship anchored twice: once in Cape Charles, VA, and later by the US Naval Academy in Annapolis, MD. Approaching Baltimore, we crossed over the remains of the Francis Scott Key Bridge and observed heightened Coast Guard activities as MV Dali (Neopanamax Container Ship) prepared for a dead ship tow to Portsmouth, VA.

Upon arrival at the Coast Guard Yard, **Legare** launched into another phase of offloading gear and other equipment to clear the ship's remaining supplies. Every space was emptied of tools and inventory, with that material stowed in additional conex boxes.

By week's end, all items were removed from the ship, and most of the crew had returned home port. Sixteen engineers remained to lay up all machinery and formally sign **Legare** to the

**USCGC Legare** cont. on page 8

USCGC *Legare* cont. from page 7

Coast Guard Yard. Though *Spencer* is currently drydocked, it now belongs to our crew. Over the next few months, we will provide support to other Cutters, and seek opportunities to gain qualifications that will assist with our reconstitution onboard *Spencer* this fall.

As always, *Legare Spencer* remains grateful for the unwavering support. Your generosity has played a pivotal role in ensuring that *Spencer* continues to uphold the highest standards of service and readiness. We look forward to sharing more updates as this journey unfolds! ✍

Very Respectfully,  
ENS Lea Walker, POA



**USCGC *Northland* (WMEC-904)**  
**CO: CDR Brian C. Gismervik**  
**XO: LCDR Patricia Green**  
**COB: GMC Matthew Winters**

**Vaughan F. Dize, Liaison**

**USCGC *Northland* is in port in Portsmouth, VA.** ✍

## USS *NORMANDY* (CG-60) CHANGE OF COMMAND CEREMONY

On a rainy Thursday, 25 July 2024, Vaughan Dize (President), George Feitig, Jr. (Liaison) and Dennis Biggs (Assistant Liaison) drove down to Norfolk to attend *USS Normandy's* Change of Command Ceremony, which was held aboard the ship.

Captain Nathan Diaz relieved Captain Errol Robinson as the crew and dignitaries looked on. ✍



The tent of dignitaries included Chaplain LTJG Shenaz Halverson; Commander, Carrier Strike Group Twelve, Rear Admiral Tom Moninger; Guest Speaker, Rear Admiral James Aiken; Captain Errol Robinson, Captain Nathan Diaz; Executive Officer CDR Adam Samson and Command Master Chief Andrew Conover.



L to R: Dennis Biggs, Rear Admiral James Aiken and George Feitig.



Command Master Chief Andrew Conover receives a Navy League hat from Dennis Biggs (on left) and George Feitig (on right).



George Feitig gives new Commanding Officer CDR Nathan P. Diaz Navy League Challenge Coin.



L to R: George Feitig, XO CDR Adam J. Samson and Dennis Biggs.



# Thank You Sponsors!


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**UNITED STATES COAST GUARD  
CELEBRATES ITS 234TH BIRTHDAY  
ON AUGUST 4, 2024.**

THIS IS A DAY TO RECOGNIZE THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO  
HAVE DEDICATED THEIR LIVES TO PROTECTING  
AMERICA'S MARITIME INTERESTS .  
WE APPRECIATE ALL THEY DO FOR US!



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NAVY LEAGUE OF THE U.S.  
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RICHMOND, VA 23230**

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*Thanks for jumping on board !!!*

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