



JAN-FEB 2021



The Lucky Bag

RICHMOND COUNCIL, NAVY LEAGUE OF THE UNITED STATES



Photo credit: Blacklions PAO LT Levi Moyers and XO CDR Bryan Pinckney

THEY SERVE – WE SUPPORT

This remarkable photograph of a F-18 Super Hornet was recently provided by the Strike Fighter Squadron Blacklions of Naval Air Station Oceana in Virginia Beach. VFA-213 is led by Commanding Officer CDR Leslie Mintz and Executive Officer CDR Bryan Pinckney.

Council appreciates the BLACKLIONS and what they do for all of us. As part of our relationship with them as one of our adopted or supported units, we reached out to them in 2020 with our COVID Relief project. They suggested that we contact the Navy Marine Corps Relief Society with a branch office in Virginia Beach and whose assistance was for any unit on the whole flight line. This article is continued on page three along with reports of some of the activities of BLACKLIONS at Mountain Home AFB, Idaho and Nellis AFB, Nevada and on the **USS GERALD R FORD (CVN-78)**. ✍

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Adam J. "Jay" Fiedler, M.D.



Ahoy!

This is my first briefing as your new president, and I am truly honored that you elected me.

Harvey has been exceptional in this position and I hope I can even come close to filling his boots.

This past year has been a challenge for all of us personally and for the Council. Hopefully, we can return to a more normal lifestyle in the near future. I look forward to planning trips and meetings with all of you.

Recently, I've attended a virtual funeral of a close friend and the Pearl Harbor Remembrance by the Virginia War Memorial. Wish we could have been more involved in the latter. Such a thing is wrought by the pandemic.

A special thanks to board members, volunteers, program chairs, trip chairs, and all others who have pitched in. I look forward to working with you all.

✍️

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

Chaplain John A. Harler, M.D.

Many have expressed the feeling that they cannot wait for the year 2020 to end and understandably so. Consider this, we have been in a 9-month period of pandemic-related confinement as 2020 comes to a close. Medically speaking, Webster defines *confinement* as the lying-in of a woman in childbirth, from onset of labor to the newborn child. As the year 2020 ended, we celebrated the birth of the Savior, Christ the Lord. Perhaps, the Lord is about to birth a new thing in 2021. The Bible says we should forget former things and do not dwell on the past...something new is coming. Isaiah 40:31 says, *but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.* Sounds like a good way to start the New Year with renewed hope and strength! ✍️

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Due to COVID restrictions currently in effect, our Annual Business Meeting was held via Zoom. Limited groups were held at St. Giles Presbyterian Church and the Navy League office, while others joined from home.



Council's new President, Jay Fiedler, gets sworn into office by Sr. Vice President and Judge Advocate, Tom Hassell.



Vice President, John Harler, Past President, Harvey Lankford & Council's new President, Jay Fiedler.

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F/A-18 Super Hornet from Blacklions Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA-213) flying high with the American Flag displayed in the cockpit.

We hope that our contribution helped some families weather the storm by providing help with emergency travel, visiting nurses, education loans and grants, new baby programs, disaster relief, financial assistance, and more. The pandemic currently prevents us from in-person contact but we want the BLACKLIONS to know that we are thinking of them and their mission. Their Change of Command is in March so we would like to give our best wishes to CDR Mintz as she is relieved by CDR Pinckney. ✍

BLACKLIONS ABOARD USS GERALD R. FORD

USS GERALD R. FORD (CVN-78) has been in and out of port as the Navy continues to wring out the bugs from the new technologies on the next-generation carrier. While progress is steady, the program still has several milestones to achieve before it is ready for its inaugural deployment.

The **FORD** crew is already operating at about the same efficiency that a Nimitz-class carrier would be during its basic training. During recent at-sea operations, the carrier has had about 35 planes aiming to conduct about 50 sorties a day. The **FORD** class was built to conduct about 30 percent more sorties than the **NIMITZ** class.

Blacklions Strike Fighter Attack Squadron (VFA-213) Weapons Systems Officer LCDR Kyle Terwilliger said three F/A-18 Super Hornet squadrons and one E-2 Hawkeye squadron participated in recent flight operations on the carrier. ✍

Adapted from USNI News report Nov 24, 2020

STRIKE FIGHTER SQUADRON BLACKLIONS EXERCISES

The Fighting Blacklions of Strike Fighter Squadron TWO ONE THREE (VFA-213) have been hard at work maintaining currency and lethality. Since August, the Blacklions have supported both joint and coalition exercises across the country. The squadron detached with eighteen aircrew to Mountain Home AFB, Idaho to support the 2020 Gunfighter Flag exercise hosted by the 366th Fighter Wing. During the exercise the Blacklions honed their skills in air-to-surface and air-to-air scenarios integrating heavily with a variety of different aircraft including F-15s, F-35s, A-10s, C-130s, HH-60s, and E/A-18Gs. The exercise included forces from the U.S Navy, Army, and Air Force along with our Singaporean partners.

The squadron used their unique joint qualification of Recovery Mission Commander and led multiple Combat Search and Rescue events. During one such event LCDR Jayson "Bobble" Trembath completed his Carrier Air Wing EIGHT Air Interdiction Mission Commander qualification.

Only a month later the Blacklions set out west again to support the USAF A-10 Weapons School for two weeks of Close Air Support (CAS) training in Nellis AFB, Nevada. They demonstrated their lethality in a variety of CAS scenarios including the urban environment, pre-planned strikes, and live weapon employments in the desert just outside the city of Las Vegas. The demanding exercises involved A-10 Thunderbolt II, MQ-9 Reapers, CH-47s, Navy SEALs and Joint Terminal Air Control (JTAC) stu-

dents for two weeks of advanced training and tactics, techniques, and procedures development.

Starting at the end of August, the squadron, as part of Carrier Airwing EIGHT, officially shifted to Commander Strike Group TWELVE (CSG-12) and is attached to the **USS GERALD R FORD (CVN-78)**. The Blacklions are currently embarked on the **FORD** to conduct Independent Steaming Evolution (ISE) 13. ✍

December report to Council from XO of Blacklions, CDR Bryan Pinckney.

ADOPTED SHIPS UPDATE

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



USS NORMANDY (CG-60)

CO: CAPT Charles Hampton

XO: CDR Theresa L. Kaylor

CMC: CMDCM Douglas Newman

Adam J. Fiedler, M.D., Liaison

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

AHOY Richmond Navy League!

NORMANDY had a busy month of November, hosting both our Strike Group Admiral and the Commander of US Fleet Forces for visits. Both were an excellent opportunity to showcase the great work going on in the shipyard aboard **NORMANDY** and also discuss some of the challenges we face.

Unfortunately, with the rise in COVID-19 cases in the region, the Navy re-instated strict health and safety guidance, in turn we were forced to scrap our golf outing.

I hope that everyone has a safe and happy Thanksgiving holiday and that as we continue through the holiday season you all remain safe, and healthy.

Again, thank you for the continuing outreach you provide us. ✍

Warm regards,
CAPT Charles Hampton
Commanding Officer

ADOPTED SHIPS REPORTS

continued from page 3



USS CARTER HALL (LSD-50)
CO: CDR Matthew R. Shellock
XO: CDR LaDonna M. Simpson
CMC: CMDCM Adam Singleton

Pat Robson, Liaison

Greetings from the FIGHTIN 5-0!

December is now just a memory and the year that was "2020" is now in the books. For many it was a year they'd rather soon forget. We of the **CARTER HALL** are choosing to look forward, not backward, and press on towards brighter days ahead. This past month has been broken up by time underway (proving once more that our crew stands ready and willing to perform brilliantly, both individually and as part of our collective ARG (Amphibious Ready Group) and time pier side (undergoing timely maintenance in view of coming days while also reconnecting with loved ones and friends during a much needed holiday leave block). December has also reaffirmed several lessons that we are steadily incorporating, and should be the better for, going forward. One such lesson that stands out in many respects is the depth of value added by those who support us from the sidelines: families, friends, and organizations who partner with us in preparation for future operations are force multipliers.

The Richmond Navy League has been, time and again, key supporters of the **CARTER HALL** crew and families. Your kind gifts and friendship continue to bridge key gaps that keep us "Ready for War" as we remain focused upon "Working for Peace". The CAPT charges the crew to "*Be there for your ship and shipmates when she/they need you...*". I do not think it a coincidence that the men and women of the Richmond Navy League have added so much to our readiness and welfare because they have championed this very same effort. Thank you for all that you do, but more importantly, for why you do it! You help to keep the FIGHTIN' 5-0, fighting! Here's to you, to a promising new year, and to the seas the **CARTER HALL** will cross over in the days to come.

We are: Working for Peace, Ready for War!



Very Respectfully,
LT Chaplain Block, CHC, USN



USS GRAVELY (DDG-107)
CO: CDR Corey Odom
XO: CDR Hunter Washburn
CMC: CMDCM Dion C. Dupree

Patrick D. Harris, Liaison Alan Palmer, Consultant

Happy New Year from **USS GRAVELY!** Since our last update, we conducted a multi-day total ship Readiness Assessment that evaluated our core systems to move, shoot, and communicate. By the time you read this, we will be underway and making way somewhere in the Atlantic Ocean.

First, we would like to wish a belated birthday to Mrs. Gravely who turned 99 years young on December 22, 2020!

Congratulations to our newest frockees who were pinned on January 8, 2021! 29 of our stellar Sailors will assume the duties and responsibilities of their new rank prior to their actual promotion date.

Your **GRAVELY** sailors are hard at work as we continue through the Basic Phase. One by one, we are training in our mission areas to be able to perform operations as a ship. While underway, we are running Damage Control drills, executing seamanship and navigation evolutions, conducting underway replenishments, landing helicopters, and making way towards certifying **GRAVELY** for deployment.

The 56th Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer, **USS GRAVELY** is homeported in Norfolk and named after Vice Adm. Samuel Lee Gravely, Jr. Adm. Gravely became the first African-American to command a U.S. Navy warship, the first African-American to command an American warship under combat conditions, the first African-American to command a major naval warship, the first African-American admiral, the first African-American to rise to the rank of vice admiral, and the first African-American to command a U.S. Fleet. Adm. Gravely was highly decorated with the Legion of Merit, Bronze Star, Meritorious Service Medal, and Navy Commendation Medal.



Facebook: www.facebook.com/DDG107/

Official Navy Website:

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Very Respectfully,
Christina Y. Jones, LTJG, USN, PAO



USCGC NORTHLAND (WMEC-904)

CO: CDR Patricia M. Bennett
XO: LCDR Joshua DiPietro
COB: GMC Robert Boyer

Thomas T. Hassell, Jr., Liaison Vaughan F. Dize, Assistant liaison

Happy New Year from **USCGC NORTHLAND!**

As **NORTHLAND** nears her upcoming Winter Patrol, the crew continues to finish up in-port projects to ensure a successful patrol. During this inport, the cutter implemented improvements that will result in the cutter being more successful and improving the general living conditions for the crew. A few of these projects included a new dishwasher for the galley, a top end overhaul of the number two Main Diesel Engine to increase efficiency and longevity of the engine, a complete overhaul of the hangar, and a flight deck nets replacement. The resilience, flexibility, and work ethic of the crew was truly shown through these projects and the entire inport.

Through the pandemic, **NORTHLAND** has done very well in limiting the spread of COVID-19 on board the cutter, properly following protocol to reduce the overall number of cases. The pandemic continues to provide new challenges to the crew, but with every challenge, the **NORTHLAND** continues to get the necessary work done in a healthy and safe way. Some of our boat crews and boarding teams and our corpsman were able to receive the COVID vaccine, in preparation for our patrol. This will help us reduce the possibility of a COVID threat vector associated with the many boarding's we anticipate on the upcoming patrol.

In addition, the **NORTHLAND** continued to find ways to stay operational and ready for the upcoming patrol. In December, this included crewmembers attending Range Week to qualify in pistol and rifle, attending a fisheries-based Law Enforcement seminar for boarding teams, conducting Ion Scanner Operator training with other units so multiple units know how to use the machine that detect drugs, and running shipboard drills to ensure the crew know how to handle emergencies on the cutter. Conducting all this training in a COVID-19 environment proved to be difficult, but the resilience of the crew showed yet again and proved the dedication to the mission.

With the holiday season and New Year just behind us, **NORTHLAND** revs up for another exciting patrol, while trying to stay healthy and COVID free to the best of our ability. We are gratefully taking the extra time with family, but are also very excited to get back out to sea and conducting the mission. As always, thank you for the continued support! Happy New Year! 🚩

Very Respectfully,
XO LCDR Joshua DiPietro

COVID RELIEF PROJECT CONTINUES

In 2020 our goal was to support Sea Services personnel and families in ways that were related to COVID. Our adopted **USCGC NORTHLAND** did not need assistance for its own personnel, but others did. In December Richmond Council donated to Coast Guard Mutual Assistance (CGMA). YNC Kyle Chavez informed us that they had assisted over 50 families from the Portsmouth branch office.

On an average single day nationwide, CGMA does the following: provides \$12,230 of financial assistance to 14 clients; sends 2 "Welcome Baby" gifts to expectant Coast Guard families; issues 5 zero-interest loans to help with emergencies; equips at least one member with \$2,600 of rental assistance; pays caregivers for 4.5 hours of respite care for special needs families; helps 36 students through on-line tutoring sessions; puts 46 books into the hands of college students; funds \$900 for emergency travel so members can be with their immediate family at crucial times. These benefits can be for Coast Guard Active Duty Members, Auxiliary Members, Immediate Family Members, Reserve Members, Retired Personnel, CG Public Health Service Officers and Chaplains, and Civilian CG Employees. Well done CGMA! 🍀

THANK YOU FROM COAST GUARD MUTUAL ASSISTANCE

Dear Richmond Council Navy League:

With 2020 behind us, I wanted to take a minute and say thank you for being part of a historic year for CGMA support. We provided nearly \$9 million in assistance, a record \$5.5 million in grants in over 12,000 transactions. The majority of our focus was in pandemic relief - in part possible because of your gift. Thank you so much. We are happy to honor the **USCGC NORTHLAND**. 🍀

Cari Batson Thomas,
Rear Admiral USCG (ret)

Chief Executive Officer Coast Guard Mutual Assistance & member Northern Virginia Council Navy League



USCGC EAGLE (WIX-327) is a training cutter for future officers of the U.S. Coast Guard.

COUNCIL RESTARTS ACTIVITIES IN 2021!

Richmond Council **USCGC NORTHLAND** liaisons broke the COVID spell! Commanding Officer CDR Patricia Bennett and XO LCDR Joshua DiPietro gave permission for Tom Hassell and Vaughan Dize to drive onto

the dock alongside the ship in Portsmouth. While not allowed onboard, they were able to deliver Care Packages for the crew and distribute Council Challenge Coins.

We look forward to vaccinations, easing of the pandemic and re-establishing personal contact in 2021.



Care Packages being taken aboard USCGC NORTHLAND. Pictured above, Tom Hassell, XO LCDR Joshua DiPietro and CO CDR Patricia Bennett. (Vaughan Dize not pictured).



XO LCDR Joshua DiPietro, Tom Hassell and CO CDR Patricia Bennett.

Thank You Sponsors!

Your Financial contribution to the Richmond Navy League provides Funds for programs supporting those serving in the United States Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard and Council's Youth Programs; The Naval Sea Cadet Corps and the Local Navy and Marine JROTC Units.



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