

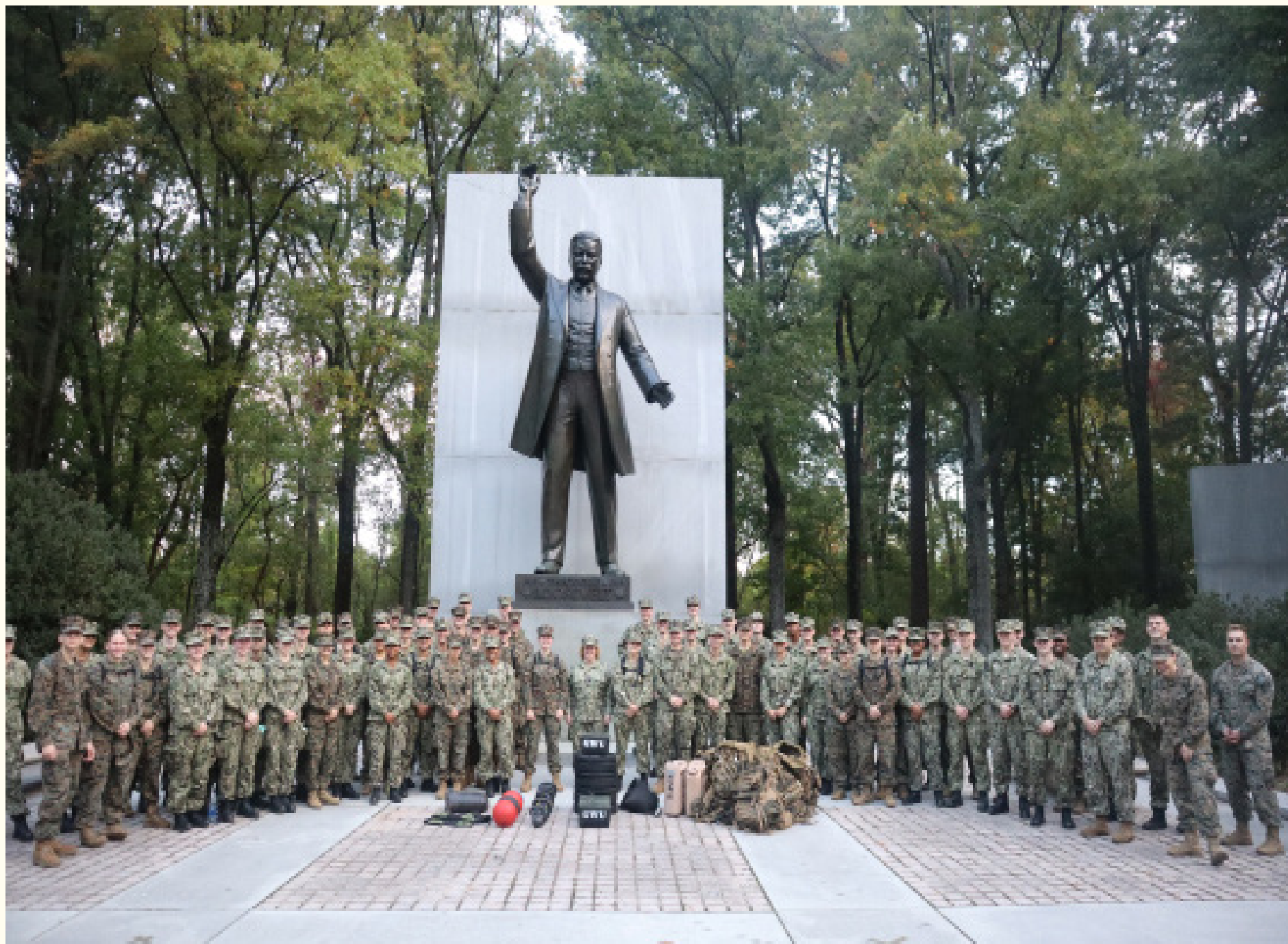
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# BEARINGS

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GWU NROTC Newspaper — Fall 2023

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## An Introduction to the Bearings Newspaper

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Welcome to the newly reestablished edition of the Bearings Newspaper. Bearings was once a regular tradition of the Capital Battalion. However, some time ago, the paper was discontinued. As we entered the Fall 2023 semester, we have set out to restart this tradition.

The newspaper's purpose is to record unit achievements and experiences so that midshipmen, staff, alumni, and guests can learn about the Capital Battalion. In Bearings, we bring you coverage of the accomplishments of the unit and its midshipmen, regular unit operations, and first hand accounts of NROTC experiences. The team hopes that Bearings can be seen as a tool to bring the battalion closer together.

There have been several events within the unit that have occurred over the past fall semester, including professional development activities, fundraising events, new leadership, and midshipmen returning from their summer cruises. These are all displayed to offer a more transparent view of the Capital Battalion.

The Bearings team has worked diligently to publish this newspaper for its readers to enjoy.

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# Welcome, Captain Jean Sullivan

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CAPT Sullivan, the new commanding officer of the GWU NROTC unit.



A Marine CH-46E Sea Knight lands at the U.S. Embassy in Monrovia to evacuate civilians during the country's civil war. Photo by JO2 William G. Davis III, NHHC Photograph Collection.

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This past June, the Capital Battalion bid farewell to its former commanding officer, CAPT Kevin Meyers. CAPT Meyers' career spanned an impressive 35 years; in his last years, he led the development of dozens of Naval and Marine Corps officers. His successor, CAPT Jean Sullivan, has assumed his duties as the new commanding officer. She arrives at a time when nearly all of the battalion's staff billets have turned over. But those who know CAPT Sullivan know that she is more than prepared to face the challenge.

CAPT Sullivan is the daughter of two Foreign Service officers, who gave her the opportunity to see the world at a young age. She spent her youth traveling between her parents' diplomatic assignments, in Saudi Arabia, Liberia, and Indonesia, all before she graduated high school. When her parents were assigned to the US Embassy in Monrovia, Liberia, the family found themselves in the middle of a brutal civil war. CAPT Sullivan and her brother were sent off to Rome to pursue their education safely, while her parents remained in Monrovia. However, it was the evacuation of the US Embassy in 1990 that made a lasting impression on her life. Rebels attacked the embassy, prepared to kill the Americans who worked there, including CAPT Sullivan's parents. If not for the swift rescue conducted by the Navy and the Marine Corps, the event would be remembered much differently. Her father, a Navy radioman in the Korean War, remembered the faces of the Marines who saved him that day. They were young and nervous but unwavering and strong.

"Going around the world has made me a better American. I'm proud to be a part of a military that defends [our] way of life," said CAPT Sullivan. Her family's experience led her to make the decision to join the Navy. She received an NROTC scholarship at the University of Rochester in upstate New York. There, she studied political science, eventually earning a commission as a Surface Warfare officer.

She started her career amongst the first crew of the guided missile destroyer USS Winston Churchill (DDG-81), where she spent her 30-month tour as an anti-submarine warfare officer and a damage control assistant, and then as its repair division officer. From the Churchill, she went to the crew of the USS Forrest Sherman (DDG-98). On the Sherman, she was Officer of the Deck as it launched Tomahawk Missiles during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Aside from her experience underway, CAPT Sullivan has several interesting posts ashore. She served as a military advisor to the Senate, and then received her masters degree in Operational Management at the George Washington University. She worked on the Joint Staff for the then-Pacific Command, and, amongst her proudest achievements, was appointed Director of Women's Policy in the Navy. "Never let fear stop you," said Sullivan. "When an opportunity opens, go through. Don't let fear stop you from trying something."

Now, as the commanding officer of the Capital Battalion, she will educate and inspire the next generation of officers in the United States Navy and Marine Corps. She is excited to lead its midshipmen and develop them into individuals worthy of the fleet and the challenges it faces. "At this stage, it's not about what you know or what you can do. The most important thing I want midshipmen to [have] is a positive attitude to try. Young people are very hard on themselves and expect an outcome before they even learn. I want midshipmen to have an attitude of curiosity and willingness to try even though you don't know how things are going to turn out. That curiosity and willingness to try will create opportunities," said Sullivan.

# Midshipmen Memorialize 9/11 Heroism with a Lincoln Memorial Stair Climb

On Sept. 10, midshipmen joined with other DC-area organizations in remembrance of the 9/11 terrorist attacks by participating in a 9/11 Memorial Stair Climb. “I thought it went really well,” said MIDN 3/C Nicholas Barrett, who oversaw the event. “We had great participation, great effort, and everyone was there to remember what had happened and come together.”

During the climb, which began at 8:30 Sunday morning, participants completed 38 laps up and down the steps leading up to the Lincoln Memorial. This was equivalent to 2,200 steps, representing the number of steps found in the 110-story Twin Towers before their destruction on September 11th. Midshipmen pushed themselves physically, completing the event in around 2 hours. “We had people come with weight vests, and we had people pushing each other to complete repetitions faster,” said Barrett. “We really wanted to have some semblance of understanding of the physical exertion first responders were going through.”

In addition to the physical challenge, the stair climb also offered a chance for midshipmen to reflect on the events of that day, and how the tragedy and heroism on display there have affected the country in the years since. “If you were here that day, you could have seen Flight 77 hit the Pentagon, so it was really important for us, being in D.C, to remember those people that we lost,” Barrett said. At various points throughout the run — points corresponding to the times of major events on the morning of September 11th, such as Flight 11’s collision with the North Tower at 8:46 am—participants stopped and had a short moment of silence, to recognize those who were lost at that very moment.

Midshipmen were joined in this event by organizations from across the D.C. area. GW Veterans, the organization responsible for advocating for military-affiliated students at the George Washington University, had several members join in. Associate Dean Stephen Murphy, Catholic University’s Director of Military and Veteran Student Services, also attended, as did cadets from the Hoya Battalion Army ROTC. Members of Engine Company 23, a DCFD unit which serves the Foggy Bottom area, provided support to the event with one of their fire engines. “They actually presented us with this great photograph of their actions on 9/11, which was fantastic,” said Barrett. “We have it saved in the wardroom now.”

Ultimately, the event provided an opportunity for midshipmen to remind themselves of the sacrifices made by private citizens and first responders alike on September 11th, while pushing themselves physically in concert with other military organizations from around D.C. “Just a huge thank you to everyone who showed up,” says Barrett. “Even to those who couldn’t show up, but who helped pass the word along, or did something else that day to commemorate the lives lost.”

# Capital Battalion Visits USS George Washington (CVN 73)



Midshipmen and officer staff observe the presentation of the ceremonial plaque for the ship’s bust of George Washington and the dedication speech by MIDN 3/C Suchyta. Photo by PAO MIDN 3/C Pascucilla.

On Sept. 28, midshipmen visited Naval Station Norfolk to visit the namesake of their home university: the USS George Washington (CVN-73), a Nimitz-class nuclear-powered aircraft carrier. While visiting, they had the privilege of learning about both the CVN’s history and its routine operations.

The day started with a ceremony on the hangar deck to rededicate the ship’s bust of George Washington. The George Washington University donated the bust to the carrier in 1997 as a symbol of good faith. Twenty six years later, the Capital Battalion’s commanding officer, CAPT Jean Sullivan, presented the carrier with a plaque for the bust, which had previously been stored at the unit. The commemoration included speeches from members of the Capital Battalion and LCDR Wilking, the USS George Washington’s command chaplain, who said the rededication symbolized a “new beginning for our mighty warship.” The rededication was especially important after the ship’s mid-life refueling process kept it stuck in port for six years. MIDN Suchyta referenced the impressive history of the ship, and emphasized to his peers that it is “up to us to continue the legacy of the Sailors and Marines who have sacrificed so much.”

Midshipmen also had the opportunity to listen to Public Affairs Officer LCDR Patricia Kreuzberger. LCDR Kreuzberger talked about the role of public affairs and information in preserving democracy and holding the military accountable. She stated that it is a “difficult balance to strike between adhering to operational security regulations and providing the public with substantive information; being transparent is key to allowing citizens to effectively participate in our democracy.”

Midshipmen continued their learning experiences on the flight deck and at the Surface Warfare School Command (SWSC). At SWSC, midshipmen had the opportunity to see the types of training junior officers must complete before deployment, including a man overboard drill. On the flight deck, MIDN 4/C Torres said she could “finally understand how big an aircraft carrier truly is,” and expressed that she believed the flight deck’s 4.5 acre size “represented power.”

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## Marine Option Midshipmen Conclude FEX

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Marine Option midshipmen concluded the fall semester's first field exercise (FEX) on Marine Corps Base Quantico. During their time at Quantico, midshipmen had the chance to practice their fieldcraft, such as setting up a defense, creating a bivouac site, land navigation, and other pertinent military skills. The goals of FEX differed depending on the class of the midshipmen. Underclassmen practiced skills learned during tactics class. Upperclassmen specialized their training to prepare for either Officer Candidate School (OCS) or The Basic School (TBS.)

The exercise began when midshipmen arrived at landing zone Thrush, the first of eight landing zones on the base. Upon arrival, a bivouac site was selected by midshipmen leadership, while 4/C were taught basic fieldcraft. Midshipmen then worked together to construct the actual bivouac. Midshipmen then lined up for compass calibration, immediately followed by night navigation. Night navigation was a graded event for midshipmen, who had to submit a card with their marked points afterwards. Immediately after night navigation, midshipman received a watch brief and then were dismissed to guard the bivouac and get some sleep. At varying points in the night, midshipmen took contact from various MECEPs (Marine Enlisted Commissioning Program). The MECEPs took rifles and gear from midshipmen throughout the night to simulate an enemy presence. Because of this midshipmen had a 0237 muster to get full accountability and have all their rifles and gear returned, while learning a valuable lesson about watchstanding and setting up a proper defense.

In the morning, poor weather prevented midshipmen from safely training on the obstacle course; instead, midshipmen completed a PT session led by Assistant Marine Officer Instructor Gunnery Sergeant Lindsey. The workout was of high-intensity, including push ups, burpees, low crawls, bear crawls, and backward crawls. Afterwards, they received the base order for the enemy situation, and then conducted day land navigation. All the while, the rain continued to be a challenge. Maps became wet, pens wouldn't write, socks became soggy. The Marine Officer Instructor, Captain Rocha, referred to this as "character building." After day land navigation, 1/C midshipmen evaluated underclassmen in simulated combat scenarios. The 1/C midshipmen, who had recently graduated OCS, created very realistic scenarios for the midshipmen. The scenarios included casualty evacuation, intel gathering, and frontal attacks. Midshipmen had the opportunity to practice their operations order to prepare for future leadership.

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## Inside the SPECWAR Club

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The Special Warfare (SPECWAR) Club is firmly rooted in using physical and mental exercise to develop midshipmen interested in pursuing a career in Naval Special Warfare (NSW) or Marine Corps Special Operations Command (MARSOC.) Every Sunday, members meet to workout in intense team-building exercises. Physical training ranges from swimming to intensive PTs and long distance rucks. In every case, the most important aspect is the planning behind each evolution, ensuring it goes smoothly and safely.

Behind the scenes, the Club's leadership plans every semester in advance. "The fall semester was more exploratory," MIDN 2/C Clayton Sands said. "The intent behind it was to see how the 4/C meshed into the club and together as a team." The fall semester has therefore consisted of a wide variety of exercises, introducing new members to what they can expect. "Whether it's a swim PT at Catholic University at 7am or a hard workout at Georgetown at 6," Sands said, "It's planned out based on the connections we have with the schools and who is actually available at the time."

But the SPECWAR club is not just intense workouts. An equally important part of growth is "M2" or Mental, Moral events. On Wednesdays, the club meets online to learn about topics pertaining to a healthy lifestyle. "Culture is the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves. With the crazy workouts that we do, it's about the struggle and perseverance that allows us to pass down those memories," said Sands. Everything is centered around creating a club culture and imbuing it within new members. Consistency, repetition, and planning are key to building the mindset to push midshipmen past their limits.

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## Capital Battalion Hosts Pull-Up Competitions

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On the last Friday of October, midshipmen hosted the first of two pull-up competitions to raise money for the unit and awareness of its activities. For one dollar, students could challenge a midshipman to a pull-up competition. If the student won, they could use a paper plate and whipped cream to pie the midshipman in the face.

There was impressive turnout from across the battalion. MIDN 2/C Bush, who organized the event, stated that it was a great opportunity to raise money for the battalion and further enhance involvement with the college community.

# Summer Cruise 2023

## Aviation

Midshipman 1/C Katelyn Roberts went on an aviation cruise this summer with the Jolly Rogers (VFA-103), an F/A-18F Super Hornet squadron out of NAS Oceana, VA. “It was the most educational experience I have ever had in NROTC,” Roberts said. “And that’s because I got to talk to, and see, so many people who were all doing the job that I wanted to do.”

For Roberts, cruise was an opportunity to gain increased exposure to the aviation community. “Cruise is always what you make of it,” Roberts said. “It wasn’t very structured. We’d be somewhere in the squadron, and a JO would approach us and ask if we wanted to do something.” MIDN Roberts organized a flight in the backseat of an F/A-18F. “I got my flight on the last day I was there,” she said. “There’s a million hoops to jump through, and it was our job to figure out how to jump through it.”

The fluid structure also enabled Roberts to understand exactly how aviation units operated in their day-to-day environment. “It was super nice to hang out with the pilots,” Roberts said. “Even if we didn’t fly at all, I would have been fine, because we just learned so much about [aviation].” MIDN Roberts also had the chance to wear aviation’s signature flight suit as the UOD. “It’s definitely the most comfortable uniform ever,” she said.

Ultimately, MIDN Roberts’ experience confirmed her desire to service select as a Naval Aviator this past September. “I realized I really enjoy this,” she said. “Aviators are really cool, and being one is really something I want to aspire to. Cruise is definitely the best experience I’ve had in ROTC.”

## Submarine

This summer, MIDN 2/C Marrione experienced a submarine cruise aboard the Virginia class fast attack submarine, USS Colorado (SSN-788) out of Groton, Connecticut. “It was something I wanted to experience because it might be the only chance I have to be on a submarine depending on what community I am selected for,” he said.

For MIDN Marrione, stepping aboard the submarine was like stepping into a completely alien environment. It is small, heavily industrial, extremely quiet and somewhat disorienting. There were drills nearly every hour and the whole crew was always working diligently.

While aboard, MIDN Marrione was given full access to the submarine with chances to work alongside both officers and enlisted, all of whom were exceptionally receptive to his questions. “I came aboard with a litany of questions and I felt the whole crew was more than happy to talk to me about their experiences. From the most junior enlisted to the commanding officer, I was able to receive incredibly detailed insight.” MIDN Marrione spent time learning from and often participating in active drills and maintenance evolutions as well. “The camaraderie onboard was spectacular. The crew treated each other with support and the utmost respect. You need to be extra considerate of your shipmate down there because the work is highly stressful and technical,” he said.

For MIDN Marrione, his experience on the submarine was exceptional and has contributed heavily to his service selection ambitions. “Overall, I learned that if you want to be a submariner, you need to be willing to work extremely hard, but also stay humble. The community is very tight, but that is because of the high level of professionalism and mutual respect its members have.”

## Surface Warfare

Midshipman 1/C Matthieu Forgeas participated in a surface warfare cruise this summer, onboard the USS Rafael Peralta (DDG-115) out of Yokosuka, Japan. “I wanted to know what being a SWO (surface warfare officer) would be like, and make sure I’d like it,” said Forgeas. “I wanted to be abroad too, because I felt that would be pretty exciting.” For Forgeas, the cruise provided a chance to understand exactly what his day-to-day life as a division officer in the Navy’s surface fleet would be like. “I was attached to the Strike Officer, who’s in charge of the Tomahawks and the VLS (vertical launch system),” said Forgeas. “I wanted to get as much out of it as I could, so I stood every watch with him, both on the bridge and in the CIC (combat information center).”

MIDN Forgeas spent just under four weeks in June onboard the USS Rafael Peralta, during which the ship cruised through the Western Pacific with a rotating series of foreign ships. “We had an exercise with the Nimitz, the Reagan, a couple of Japanese ships and a French ship, to demonstrate combined operations,” said Forgeas. They then headed to the South China Sea, supporting the USS RONALD REAGAN (CVN-76) and the JS IZUMO (DDH-183.) “Pretty much immediately upon entering we had a Chinese ship trailing us. If you’re gonna be on SWO cruise out in 7th Fleet, be on watch as often as you can, because you will see some crazy stuff that’s really fun to see.”

After sailing with the carrier strike group (CSG), the USS Rafael Peralta split off and headed to Bangkok, where MIDN Forgeas and the other summer cruise midshipmen disembarked. “The Navy made it so our flights were three days after arriving,” he said. “We had two and a half days in Bangkok, which was awesome.” MIDN Forgeas does have one bit of advice for midshipmen interested in a surface warfare cruise: “The thing with the SWO cruise is that it’s really what you make of it. You don’t technically have obligations, and there’s nothing they’ll make you do, so what you do is up to you.”



The USS RAFAEL PERALTA (DDG-115) exercises with the USS NIMITZ (CVN-68), USS RONALD REAGAN (CVN-76) and their associated Strike Groups, as well as the JS IZUMO (DDH-183) and FS LORRAINE (D 687). Photo by MIDN 1/C Forgeas.

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# Project GO

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Midshipmen from the Capital Battalion participated in the DoD initiative Project Global Officer, more commonly known as Project GO. Project GO is an immersive study abroad opportunity in countries all around the world. Its intent is to improve the language ability and intercultural communication skills of future military officers.

MIDN 2/C Bush traveled to Vilnius, Lithuania to study Russian, a subject he also studies at The George Washington University. The study abroad in Lithuania included daily classroom instruction, followed by an hour of conversation with a language partner, and several trips throughout the Baltic region. MIDN Bush made connections with other midshipmen and cadets from other units in the program, as well as individuals that are native to the region.

MIDN 2/C Langhurst and MIDN 2/C Doyle went to Taiwan, to develop the Mandarin language skills which are highly sought after by the DoD. Langhurst had the opportunity to visit historical sites around the island, including locations of past conflict between the People's Republic of China and Taiwan. Doyle visited cultural landmarks, such as the Chiang Kai Shek memorial, and various night markets where he enjoyed Taiwanese cuisine.

MIDN 2/C Langhurst, MIDN 2/C Doyle, and MIDN 2/C Bush were a few of the many midshipmen from the Capital Battalion who have participated in Project GO in recent years. Overall, they would highly recommend midshipmen studying a foreign language to pursue the program.

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# Acknowledgements

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From the staff of the Fall 2023 Bearings newspaper, thank you for reading this edition. It's been our pleasure to report on the battalion and its midshipmen have done in a few months; we hope you enjoyed reading Bearings as much as we enjoyed creating it. A few notes of gratitude:

To our commanding officer, CAPT Sullivan, thank you for helping reestablish the newspaper and being a consistent advocate for our work. The newspaper would not be possible without your strong support.

To MIDN 3/C Pascucilla and MIDN 3/C Vecchio, the PAO and APAO respectively, thank you for providing the beautiful photos found in this newspaper, and for helping our staff report on unit events.

To those interviewed, thank you for providing your time and energy to inform the battalion of your stories. These stories could not be communicated without your active support.

And to our readers, thank you for supporting this newspaper and the Capital Battalion. We hope you enjoy what we've created!

Very Respectfully,

MIDN 2/C Ryan Marrione, Chief Editor  
MIDN 3/C Chett Huff, Writing Editor  
MIDN 3/C Peyton Austin, Design Editor  
MIDN 4/C Nichole Poltinnikov, Writer  
MIDN 4/C Marcelo Calderon, Writer

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# Photo Highlights

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The battalion, guests, and cadets from the Hoya Battalion and other NROTC units pose for a photo at the sixth annual Capital Conference. Photo by APAO MIDN 3/C Vecchio.



Midshipmen conduct drill practice in The George Washington University's U-Yard, in preparation for the battalion's annual drill competition. Photo by PAO MIDN 3/C Pascucilla.



Members of the unit take on the Hoya Battalion Army ROTC unit in a tug-of-war match during their biannual Joint PT. Photo by PAO MIDN 3/C Pascucilla.



Thank You for Your Support of the Capital Battalion!

