

# DV embarks provide rare look at Navy operations at sea

Part 1 of a 2-part series

By Fifi Kieschnick & Jon Gagné  
NAS Kingsville Public Affairs

On any given day the Navy is deployed in every region of the world, carrying out a wide variety of operations, from conducting humanitarian assistance or training to deterring aggressors.

The Navy has more than 321,000 active duty personnel on the rolls today and nearly 109,000 ready Reservists, 4,500 of which are currently mobilized. In its inventory, the Navy has more than 3,700 operational aircraft and 287 deployable battle force ships, 40 percent of which are underway.

People without an affiliation with the Navy often don't know what Sailors do day in, day out, making it difficult to understand the Navy's unique role in the "big picture" of the United States' national security.

Often, people can only guess from what they see on television, read in the paper, or hear from friends talking about their sons, daughters, nephews, nieces, husbands or wives.

"The Navy today is engaged around the globe, supporting the nation's interest whenever and wherever needed," said Vice Adm. David Buss, commander, Naval Air Forces.

Some can see Navy operations first-hand through the Distinguished Visitor (DV) Embark Program.

The DV Embark Program places leaders from all "slices" of society – corporate, civic, government, education and non-profit – aboard an aircraft carrier operating at sea.

The DV Embark Program is designed to increase the public's understanding and appreciation for the Navy by providing a rare opportunity to see Sailors in action. The visitors are flown to the ship via Carrier On-board Delivery (COD) aircraft. They spend a day or two meeting with the ship's leaders, interacting with the crew, touring the ship and observing a full spectrum of operations, from fleet aircraft conducting day-to-day flight missions, to Navy and Marine Corps training aircraft conducting carrier qualification training.

"The Distinguished Visitor Embark Program is an extremely important program for the Navy," said Rear Adm. William Sizemore, chief of Naval Air Training. "It gives our distinguished visitors the opportunity to observe first-hand what it takes to operate an aircraft carrier at sea.

"Words and pictures cannot sufficiently capture the professionalism, dedication, hard work and teamwork of everyone involved – from the Sailors who operate and maintain the ship to the air crew and aviation maintenance specialists who operate and maintain the aircraft," Sizemore added. "It is an astoundingly complex and exhausting effort that requires a total team effort.

"After our distinguished visitors see and experience a carrier at sea, they will tell their



Pictured left, aircraft handling officer Lt. Cmdr. Tommy Edgeworth discusses flight deck operations with distinguished visitors from Australia in flight deck control aboard Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson (CVN 70). (Photo by MC2 Benjamin Stevens) Below, a group of distinguished visitors observe an F/A-18F Super Hornet assigned to Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 32 land on the flight deck of the aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75) during flight operations. (Photo by MCSN Lorenzo J. Burluson)



friends, families, colleagues and communities about the professionalism and dedication of the Sailors who serve in their Navy, as well as what their Navy is doing every day for freedom and prosperity at home and around the world."

Sizemore added that the Navy benefits from the DV embark program in several ways.

"First, the visitors have the opportunity to observe the amazing performance, dedication and responsibility of their nation's Sailors first-hand in one of the most demanding and unforgiving environments,

while operating one of the world's most complex and effective weapons systems," he said.

Additionally, the visitors have the opportunity to interact and provide morale-boosting feedback to our Sailors at sea. And, the visitors have insights to tell their communities about what they experienced and learned aboard an aircraft carrier at sea and what the Navy can provide in the way of exciting and rewarding career opportunities.

"A billion-dollar warship, with all its advanced technology and hardware, is nothing

without a dedicated, talented and diverse crew to operate it. While aboard, our DVs meet the best young men and women America has to offer," said Buss.

#### Editor's Note:

In part two of this series on the DV Embark program in our next issue, we'll show how distinguished visitors from throughout South Texas have gained a new appreciation for the flight training program at NAS Kingsville and Training Air Wing TWO by participating in the DV Embark Program.

Part 2 of 2-part series

# DV embarks provide inside look at the Navy

By Jon Gagné & Fifi Kieschnick  
NAS Kingsville Public Affairs

*Note: In our first installment of this two-part feature about the Navy's Distinguished Visitor (DV) Embark Program, we focused on the various programs at the upper levels of the Navy designed to provide nationally known DVs or VIPs with a unique look at Navy operations at Sea to further understanding of the Navy mission as a Global Force for Good. In this installment, we'll look at how offering DV Embarks to local and regional DVs and VIPs can be a win-win for the local command and community, as well as the Navy and Marine Corps.*

When it comes to sharing the Navy story with local civic, educational and business leaders, few opportunities can compare to the Navy's Distinguished Visitor (DV) Embark Program.

This program, whether at the national, regional or local level, provides a unique look at Navy operations at sea aboard an active Navy aircraft carrier. It's a rare glimpse at today's Global Navy Force at work, and a program that truly is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for those who are fortunate enough to participate.

Most communities are well aware of how important military installations are to the local economy. But often times the roles these commands play in the bigger picture of today's Navy and Marine Corps' Global Force is misunderstood. The Navy DV Embark Program is specifically designed to give these influential leaders a firsthand look

at how the Navy operates.

Participants are nominated for the program by local commanders. There are a number of factors that come in to play before being officially approved for participation, but the leading factors include holding a position of influence within their communities, and having little or no prior exposure to the Navy. Each participant pays all expenses of the program, including travel, berthing and meals.

"The DV Embark Program provides a unique opportunity to increase the public's understanding and appreciation for the Navy," said Suzanne Speight, who coordinates the regional DV Embark Program for Navy Region Southeast, headquartered at NAS Jacksonville, Fla. "Reaching out to key influencers in communities where we operate in the southeast region, and offering them the chance to see the work our young men and women are doing day-in and day-out, gives them a better understanding of how important the Navy is in protecting this country and our freedoms."

These individuals, in turn, Speight added, make positive contributions to the public understanding of the roles and missions of the Navy by having their experience promoted through their own circles of influence.

"DV's return to their communities and speak to civic groups, family members, business leaders and others, telling the Navy story to the American public," Speight added. "Programs like this are an essential tool in creating public support and understanding of the operations, mission, and requirements of the Navy. We live and work in these



This photo is posted on Jeff Kane's facebook page with the following comments: "Yes that's a teenager at the wheel of a \$6.2 BILLION aircraft carrier. Confident, professional, courteous, and capable. You want the face of today's Navy? This is it." (Courtesy photo)

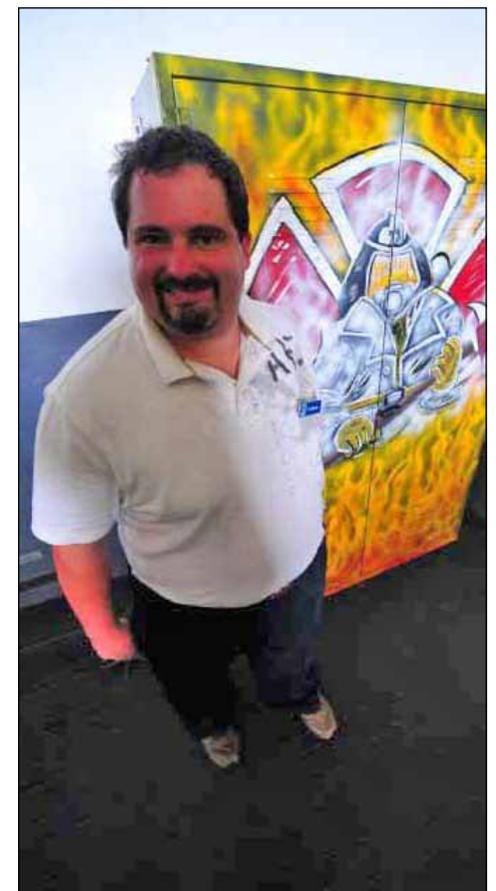
communities, so anything we can do to foster good relations is a win-win situation."

NAS Kingsville and Training Air Wing TWO have taken advantage of the Navy DV Embark Program in the past to show how Navy and Marine Corps Student Naval Aviators complete the final evolution of jet/strike training en route to earning their coveted "Wings of Gold" and the designation as Naval Aviators. To "carrier qualify," students must successfully complete 14 landings and 10 arrested landings aboard the carrier.

"Carrier 'quals' are the highlight of jet training for our student pilots," said Capt. Joe Evans, Commander, Training Air Wing TWO. "Carrier quals not only provide the students their first experiences of taking off and landing aboard an aircraft carrier at sea, but it also is a final exam!

"It's a very big deal when they obtain their carrier qualifications, for both the students and the command. Sharing this experience with leaders from the local community through the DV Embark program provides Navy leadership the opportunity to show how their individual mission connects to the overall mission of the Navy."

Dick Messbarger, executive director of the Kingsville Economic Development Council, has helped line up potential participants for the DV Embark Program for NAS Kingsville and Training Air Wing TWO. He is an avid supporter of the program and fully understands its value to local business owners, educators and civic leaders.



This photo of Jeff Kane in one of the passageways aboard USS Bush (CVN 77) is also posted on his facebook page. (Courtesy photo)



This photo of Monica Pena-Moore, left, Tripp Batey and Marilyn Bartlett on board USS Bush (CVN 77) is posted on Marilyn's facebook page. (Courtesy photo)

see *Embark* on next page



**Wings of Gold** -- Two winging ceremonies were held in December -- Friday, Dec. 14, and Saturday, Dec. 15. Bravo zulu to all the Student Naval Aviators who earned their coveted Wings of Gold. Pictured above are leadership and students who were winged on Dec. 14. From left are: (front row) Cmdr. Darren Guenther, Training Squadron 22 commanding officer; Capt. Joe Evans, commander, Training Air Wing TWO; 1st Lt. Karl Bronk; Lt.j.g. Brendan Kelly; Lt.j.g. Zachary Huff; 1st Lt. Andrew Williamson; Capt. Mark McLaughlin, NAS Kingsville CO; Cmdr. Rey Molina, TW2 chief staff officer; Cmdr. Charles Stahl, VT-21 executive officer; (back row) Maj. Joshua Zager, TW2 senior Marine; Lt. Cmdr. Robert Hanvey, VT-21 operations officer; 1st Lt. Kevin Smith; Lt.j.g. Jarom Gunderson; Lt.j.g. Richard Packer; 1st Lt. Sean McHugh; Maj. Michael Anderson, VT-21 senior Marine; and Maj. Wesley Deaver, VT-22 senior Marine. Pictured right are leadership and students who were winged on Dec. 15. From left are Deaver; Evans; Lt.j.g. Nicholas Murray; Lt.j.g. Christopher Jibilian; Capt. Patrick Parker, of VT-22; Lt.j.g. William Revell; Lt.j.g. Bryan Kauffman; Guenther; and Stahl. (Photos Richard Stewart, CNATRA Public Affairs)

### *Embark from previous page*

“The Navy is the largest economic engine for Kingsville and the Coastal Bend (of South Texas),” Messbarger said. “Having an opportunity to witness first-hand operations on an aircraft carrier, including getting an arrested landing and catapult launch aboard the ship, provides a better understanding of the what and the why of NAS Kingsville. You have an opportunity to meet and talk with everyone from the 19-year-old Sailor working on the flight deck to the ship’s commanding officer, and piece together the training at NAS Kingsville with the actual operations on the carrier.”

Messbarger added that the takeaways from this experience far outweigh any negatives.

“Participation in this program provides DVs a snapshot look at how the 5,000 highly-trained personnel that live and work on a floating city do their job in all kinds of weather, under all possible conditions - and do it in a very professional manner. Watching 19-year-old Sailors wearing different colored shirts coordinating the high-intensity activity on the flight deck is nothing short of amazing and inspiring.”

Participants return from these visits, Messbarger added, with a new sense of respect for role the Navy plays in the defense of freedom.

“Whether these people share their experience with civic

groups or with other individuals, the message is the same: our Navy and the nation’s defense is in very good hands.”

Jeff Kane, vice president for marketing for Sam Kane Beef Processors of Corpus Christi, is one of most recent participants in the DV Embark Program for Training Air Wing TWO. Up until the time of his embark aboard USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77), his contact with the Navy had been limited to attending special events and ceremonies at NAS Corpus Christi. What he took away from the program, in his words, was “simply incredible.”

Kane made the trip “to the boat” along with three other South Texas professionals that included Dr. Marilyn Bartlett of Texas A&M University-Kingsville; Tripp Batey, a Corpus Christi business owner; and Monica Pena-Moore, a member of the South Texas Chamber of Commerce. Kane said he was surprised at how receptive the ship’s command was to their visit.

“From the full-throttle arresting wire landing in the C2-A Greyhound aircraft, to the catapult shot off the flight deck the next day, my time aboard the carrier can accurately be described as a whirlwind,” Kane said. “Capt. DeWolfe Miller, Bush commanding officer, spent individual time with each of us to explain the critical mission of the ship and how important it was that every member of the crew

worked together. I could write pages about what amazing aspects of carrier life we saw, yet it was this personification of the ‘Mission Critical’ concept that most awed me.

“I fully expected that the captain, executive officer and other officers would understand and embody this 100 percent,” Kane added. “What I didn’t expect was that everyone -- from the 18-year old Sailor doing ‘Human Chain’ resupply from a COD down to cold storage, to the shiny-cheeked 20-year old Sailor manning the helm of our multi-billion dollar conveyance -- would embody the ‘Mission Critical’ aspect as well. It’s an indescribable pride and determination; an innate knowledge that every task to be performed, no matter how menial, is crucial to defending the United States of America.”

Kane said of all the incredible sights, sounds, and experiences the group witnessed; from watching the massive flight deck catapults in action, to watching NAS Kingsville pilots conduct carrier qualifications, nothing matched the humbling pride and dedication of those serving our carrier and country.

“As I was told,” Kane added, “this was the trip of a lifetime as the Navy only lets an individual participate once. That’s a shame, as I’d proffer some vitals for the chance to go again.”