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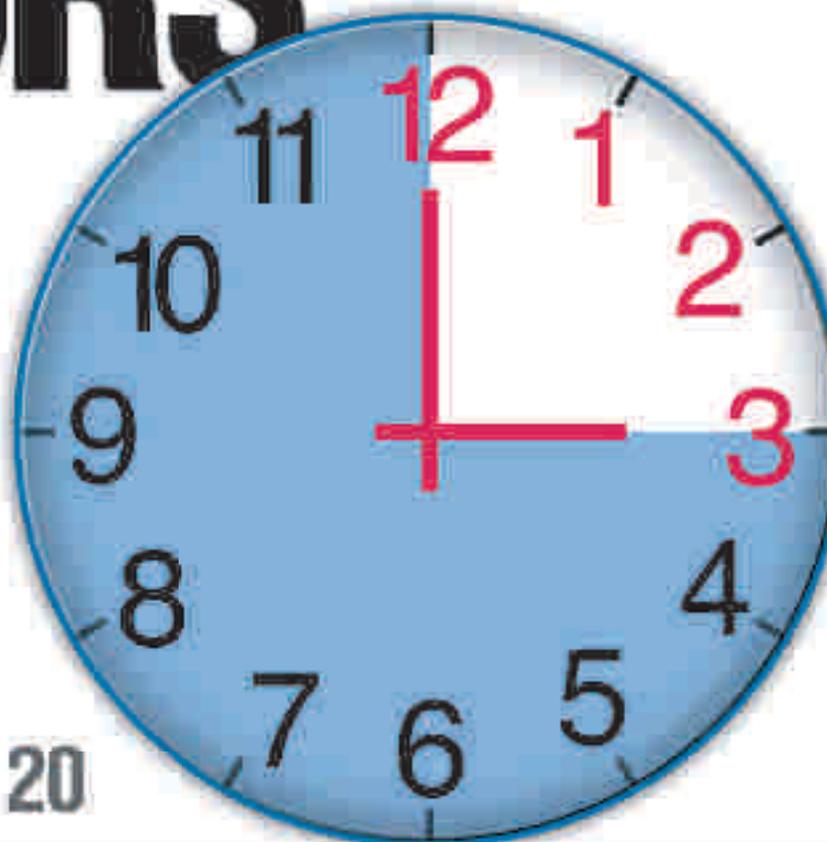
**Fired ERB sailors** Lawmaker: Let them retire **24**

**Academy admissions** Navy stats are misleading **25**

**Consolidate your debt** The right way to do it **OFFduty 10**

# 3 HOURS ON 9 HOURS OFF

The new, better watchbill that sailors love. So why isn't every ship using it? **20**



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## 'CULTURE OF HAZING'

**COB, XO, CO HAMMERED IN ANTI-GAY SCANDAL**  
**16**



**BATTLE 'E' TURNAROUND**  
**BUSTED SHIP IS NOW BEST IN CLASS** **22**

**DFC FAKER?**  
**NAVY CHARGES COUNTRY-SINGING RECRUITER** **16**



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# A better watchbill

Crews on test ships praise the 3-and-9 schedule, but will it go fleetwide?

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Sailors in the Navy's surface fleet are spending 80-plus hours a week on the job, according to researchers, and it's taking a severe toll. A sailor at sea is already forced to balance multiple job-related tasks, and when you factor in exercise, meals and any career-advancing projects you've got going, there's little time for shut-eye.

The problem can have far-reaching consequences, with a bleary-eyed sailor not only posing a threat to himself, but the entire ship and the mission.

So, what's the secret to keeping sailors well-rested and alert?

The answer may be adopting a new watch schedule that better matches a 24-hour day, according to findings in a new study out of the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, Calif. It would also require a shift in Navy culture, said Lt. Matthew Yokeley, a surface warfare officer who led study efforts for his thesis.

"We pride ourselves in getting as little sleep as possible," Yokeley said. But "your personnel cannot



MC2 DAVID HOLMES/NAVY

## TELL US

What do you think about your ship's watch schedule? Does it allow you enough sleep? Email us at [navylet@navytimes.com](mailto:navylet@navytimes.com).

function like this."

Yokeley, working with Nita Shattuck, a human performance researcher at NPS, conducted a recent experiment aboard the Norfolk, Va.-based destroyer Jason Dunham. The ship used an alternative watch schedule of three hours



on and nine hours off over two weeks while in a pre-deployment training cycle. Some crew members were using a five-on, 15-off schedule, and others were using a "five and dime" — five hours on, 10 off.

Dunham's trials were dubbed largely a success, so much so that the ship's commanding officer, Cmdr. David Bretz, will continue to use the three-and-nine schedule when his ship deploys this summer as part of the Eisenhower Carrier Strike Group. Shattuck said she will be logging six months' worth of data from Dunham's deployment.

While not everyone on board has been able to adopt that preferred watch schedule, those who are on it told Navy Times it's afforded them more sleep and made them more alert during watch.

"The more sleep you get, the better your performance is," said Shattuck, who has studied the impact of fatigue on sailors for the past 12 years and with 14 ships.

Poor sleep reduces creativity, dulls memory and decision-making, slows reaction time, affects moral judgment, degrades health and makes people cranky, Shattuck said. It can take up to two weeks to fully recover, she said.

The Dunham experiment reiterates what several previous tests aboard the cruiser San Jacinto and amphibious assault ship Kearsarge found: More sleep and shorter watches are good for the fleet.

The Naval Safety Center, whose mission includes advising the chief of naval operations on safety matters, is closely watching Shattuck's research. So, why haven't watch schedules that mirror a 24-hour day become more widespread?

It's not an easy answer.

Unlike in the aviation community, where flight hours and aircrew workdays are restricted and rest is mandated under rules designed to reduce fatigue, no similar restrictions are in place for ship crews.

Senior surface leaders, who are on the record saying they are taking steps to beef up crews after years of shrinking them, haven't issued any guidance or directives regarding watch schedules that ship COs must follow.

"The CO is ultimately responsible for everything aboard the ship," said Lt. Rick Chernitzer, a Naval Surface Forces spokesman in Coronado, Calif.

Navy officials were hesitant to discuss the watch study, or how it

might impact future operations.

"The crew rest study is still in its preliminary stage and has not been forwarded to leadership for review," said Navy spokesman Lt. Matt Allen.

One big reason, according to sailors aboard Dunham, is you need to have qualified sailors capable of manning the various watches on the ship. If you don't have the manpower to staff the four sections needed for a three-and-nine watch schedule, the watches still need to get stood. That means more work for the few who are qualified.

"It is a fairly short watch turnover time ... by the time they gain situational awareness it's time for them to go off watch," added Lt. Cmdr. Robin Marling, operations officer of the Norfolk-based amphibious transport dock San Antonio, which has been using the new rotation since August and plans to continue to do so.

"I think the true test is how it works on deployment."

### 'You're fresh, you're ready'

For the Dunham study, Yokeley collected data from 32 crew members — a mix of officers and enlisted — in operations, combat



COLIN KELLY/STAFF

Sailors on the amphibious transport dock *San Antonio* have been on a new watch rotation since August. Those on the cruiser *San Jacinto*, left, also took part in studies testing a three-hours-on, nine-hours-off schedule.

systems, engineering and navigation. While only these sailors were tested, many other crew members participated in the new watch schedule, sailors said.

Participants wore watches that tracked their activity, and each one took a three-minute reaction test at the end of every watch.

Researchers expected to see benefits from fitting the schedule into a 24-hour day — more in line with the body's natural rhythms — rather than a 20-hour workday, where “we are already at a disadvantage,” Yokeley said.

Sure enough, nearly everyone reported they benefited from more sleep, feeling more rested and able to sleep, and most liked the three-hours-on, nine-hours-off rotation, he said.

“The crew felt like they really owned their schedule,” he said.

Ensign Julia Kranz is a bridge watchstander on *Dunham* and oversees enlisted sailors conducting some of the ship's daily functions. She sees clear value in a three-and-nine schedule versus the

“five and dime” that she had been operating under on the destroyer.

“You're fresh, you're ready to go and, in some respects, you're excited for watch,” said Kranz, an operations information division officer. “The general consensus was that it was a good idea.”

Aboard *Dunham*, the command tweaked the ship's routine as well, Yokeley said. It eliminated the morning meeting, which often requires crew who pulled night watch or had little sleep to attend. The “XO's Call” meeting moved from morning to afternoon, which let department heads prepare and interact with their personnel before meeting, he said. Division officers and leading chief petty officers also had to “plan ahead more than a day,” he said.

Lt. Joshua Oakes, a weapons officer for *Dunham*, stands watch as the tactical action officer in combat. He acknowledged that schedule changes did pose a challenge for leaders and a shift in planning. But he added there were “a lot of

# Submariners also testing new watch rotations

By Sam Fellman  
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Sleep problems extend beyond the surface fleet. On a patrol, a submarine crew exists in a wholly artificial world, deprived of space, natural light — even a 24-hour day.

Underway, sub crews typically work an 18-hour day, with three rotations: six hours on watch, six hours of work and six hours off.

With lots of watches to stand and a smaller crew than that aboard most ships, submariners habitually struggle with limited rest.

The submarine force continues to study alternatives to the 18-hour day. In recent years, researchers conducted studies on ballistic-missile subs *Rhode Island* and *Maryland* and Los Angeles-class attack subs *Pittsburgh*, *Annapolis* and *Newport News*

with an eye to see whether the 24-hour day is viable.

One option under consideration is extending watches by two hours into an eight-and-16 rotation. Researchers with the Naval Submarine Medical Research Laboratory experimented with this on *Newport News* in 2009, said Submarine Forces spokeswoman Cmdr. Monica Rousselow. The following year, Annapolis piloted an eight-four-four-eight watch rotation with two watch teams for high-tempo operations.

“Different options for conducting the daily at-sea routine onboard submarines have been examined,” Rousselow said. “To date, none have resulted in an increase in performance over the current system, which has more than 40 years of operational experience in the submarine force.”

Crews that have experienced the

pros” to the new schedule, the biggest of which was that sailors had a set rhythm for each day and better work resulted from it.

The command also adjusted meal times, starting breakfast a half-hour earlier at 5:30 a.m. while dinner started an hour later, at 6 p.m.

The crew “enjoyed having the dinner meal later in the day,” Yokeley said.

For Master Chief Fire Controlman (SW) John Miller, the schedule meant he had more time, but not necessarily for sleep.

“As a senior enlisted, it gave me a lot more time to be able to do my general duties and collaterals — being able to take care of sailors,” said Miller, a combat information center watchstander.

Miller was not alone in using his free time to get other work done. Many sailors on *Dunham* also worked out more, he said.

Overall, watchstanders liked the new schedule, Yokeley said; “nobody thought” the five-and-15 or five-and-10 were superior.

Sailors on *Dunham* said the problem for any ship looking to go to the three-and-nine schedule, or any variation of a 24-hour day, will be manning issues.

“One of the major things that any ship, including us, will have to adapt to is the qualifications of the personnel,” Miller said. “If you don't have the personnel qualified, they can't stand the watch.”

The problem is further complicated when there is a major event — an exercise, for example — and schedules have to be adjusted off the three-and-nine.

“Ships need to be flexible enough to handle the situation,” Oakes said.

Not everyone aboard *Dunham* is touting the three-and-nine as the next big thing in watchstanding.

Gas Turbine Systems Mechanic 1st Class (SW) Dwayne Williams said he's served five-and-dime schedules, as well as four-and-eight.

“I've been in the Navy awhile now,” said the 37-year old sailor with 18 years of service. “All the schedules are pretty much the same. ... Whatever comes along, I just have to deal with it.”

Based on the mostly positive feedback he's gotten, Bretz plans to stick with the three-and-nine rotation for as many watches as possible through their upcoming deployment.

“The crew has responded posi-

24-hour day — broken into eight hour blocks of time — have been generally positive, saying that they felt healthier.

“If you can get eight hours of sleep down, you go through more of the [rapid eye movement] cycle,” Cmdr. Robert Clark, then-CO of the ballistic-missile sub *Rhode Island*, said after a six-week trial in 2010. “Theoretically, people should be more alert and aware.”

Still, the 24-hour-day presents new challenges. Some *Rhode Island* sailors felt the longer eight-hour watches made it harder for more sedentary watchstanders to stay alert. Others noted that the three-section rotation locked them into standing watch at the same time each day, meaning some sections saw more drills and training than others. If not adjusted for, this could exacerbate differences between the various watch teams, crew members said.

Despite these issues, the *Rhode Island*'s crew was positive about the six-week trial. The chief of the boat estimated that, after the initial frustration of the schedule shift, 70 percent of the crew came to prefer the 24-hour day. □

tively with an increased ability to plan their day, attain consistent sleep patterns, complete PQS, train, work out, and prepare for watch,” he said. “Additionally, I witnessed increased watchstander alertness as a result of the three-and-nine rotation.”

## The sleep problem and culture

Shattuck said she is looking for additional ships willing to test her three-and-nine schedules. She has also experimented with four hours on, eight hours off, which allows for a 24-hour schedule on a three-section watch and a longer turnover between watches. She said one hour less of down time is significant though it does merit more study.

The Naval Safety Center is following her progress closely, said Capt. Lee Mandel, the center's command flight surgeon.

The professor's previous research was “instrumental” in fatigue analyses involving aviation mishaps, Mandel said, and to ignore her current findings would be “foolish.”

Fatigue must be mitigated in any “dangerous environment,”

See WATCHBILL next page

# San Antonio battles back

## Amphib's 'E' shows results of a turnaround years in the making

By Sam Fellman  
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**ABOARD THE AMPHIBIOUS TRANSPORT DOCK SAN ANTONIO** — Being a crew member on this ship means dealing with a bad reputation.

On the waterfront, the ship's rap sheet is long. After what proved to be a premature delivery to the fleet in 2005, the first of the then-newest amphib class struggled with countless engineering flaws and the ensuing training issues that arose from not getting underway.

Its only deployment in six years of service was marred by a plant breakdown that required a month of repairs, which was followed three months later by a sailor's accidental death during a small boat launch. After returning to Norfolk, Va., it spent 18 months pierside getting repairs at a four-star's order, where it earned the nickname "Building 17." Another San Antonio-class LPD, Mesa Verde, deployed in its place on what turned out to be a 10½-month-long cruise.

The crew, with basic training for their 2013 deployment behind them, hopes to dispel their reputation with a new distinction: a freshly painted white letter "E" on their bridge wing from the Battle Effectiveness award they earned in March.

"To me, it's showing the rest of the Navy and the world that the San Antonio, despite its mishaps in the past, as a crew we're able to get over any hurdle, anything that's thrown in our way," said Engineman 2nd Class (SW) Paris Pharisien, who has been onboard since August 2007.

"We took a broken ship and made it excel," added Operations Specialist 2nd Class (SW) Pamela Melillo, who has been onboard 3½ years and said the crew "kicked ass" to get the award.

To commemorate it, Melillo painted a mural on a passageway leading to the well deck. It features four words that motivated the crew as it worked toward the award: "focus, teamwork, ownership, pride."

The Battle 'E' — given annually to the top performing ship in each squadron — is the latest signal that this crew, with enormous help, has mounted what appears to be a remarkable turnaround. The crew participated in the large-scale amphibious exercise Bold Alligator early this year and passed the rigorous Board of Inspection and Survey in April.

"The tide has definitely turned," said Cmdr. Neil Koprowski, the ship's commanding officer, as he ticked off a list of recent accom-

plishments in a June 7 interview. "We are a normal ship. We are a normal crew who has pride and ownership in its ship to complete any mission tasked."

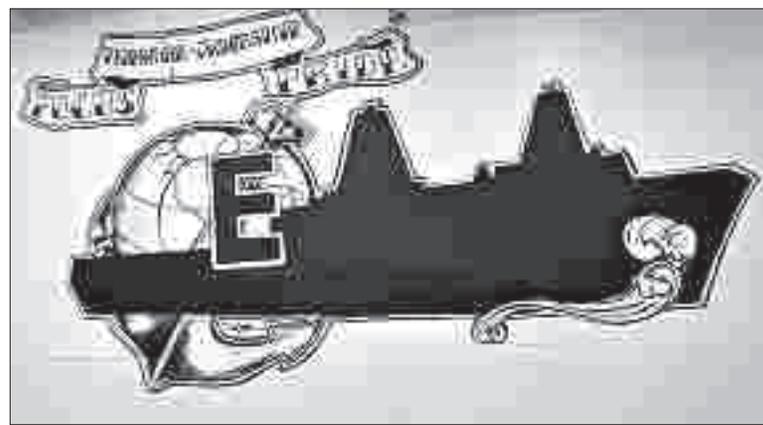
### Accepting ownership

That change didn't come easily, said Koprowski, who explained that the crew returned from the 2009 deployment upset with the plant design problems, including lube oil leaks, faulty electrical wiring, poor welds and piping problems.

"The crew felt slighted in that 'Hey, we went on deployment with this ship and we had all these mechanical problems so therefore it must be a contractor problem,'" he said. "So when they were going through the shipyard, a lot of the mentality was the shipyard's got to fix this — which was true. But there was a piece of the ownership part of this where ... we need to fix what we can fix."

Building the crew's sense of ownership was essential. In the plant, the chief engineer came up with way to encourage his snipes: Just as pilots gets their call signs painted on their aircraft, engineers could stencil their names on the equipment they maintain, said Lt. j.g. Nicholas Artabazon, the main propulsion officer.

The other major hurdle was getting the departments — which had been trying to solve a number of problems on their own — to work together, Koprowski said.



COLIN KELLY/STAFF

**Operations Specialist 2nd Class (SW) Pamela Melillo painted this mural aboard the amphibious transport dock San Antonio to commemorate the ship's Battle "E" honor.**

"Combat systems kept their own. Engineering kept their own. ... There were definite problems and issues that they wanted to keep to themselves and wanted to fix, but it wasn't in a cohesive, team effort," Koprowski said. "The ship can't survive in this stovepipe environment."

The most troubling legacy the crew must overcome are the conditions that led to a shipmate's accidental death on the maiden deployment. Engineman 1st Class (SW) Theophilus Ansong drowned Feb. 4, 2009, after the 11-meter small boat he was in capsized. Navy investigators determined that poor seamanship and supervision led to Ansong's death, which occurred while the boat was being launched off the port side into the Gulf of Aden.

Asked about the lessons from this incident, Command Master Chief (SW/AW) Michael Hart, who was not aboard at the time, replied: "How we operate here on the San

Antonio is, chiefs are involved in every evolution." There are 28 chiefs on the ship, Hart said.

"Chiefs are there, hands-on, working side-by-side with all the crew members during evolutions to ensure that we're not only doing it safely, we're following standard operating procedures, we have people qualified in each and every watch station," Hart continued, emphasizing each point.

After some more pre-deployment maintenance, the ship will begin training with the Kearsarge Amphibious Ready Group in September and the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit in preparations for their upcoming deployment. Pumped up by the Battle 'E,' crew members say they're ready.

"It really is our Cinderella story — our return to the fleet as a ship ready for tasking," said Lt. Cmdr. Robin Marling, the ship's operations officer. □

## Watchbill

From previous page

Mandel said, and he said a ship definitely qualifies.

"It's probably a good idea to look at some potential [watch schedule alternatives] and see if they do work," Mandel said. "And if they do, proceed on."

From 2000 to the present, there have been at least 67 Navy mishaps, excluding aviation, where fatigue or sleep loss were specifically listed as a factor, according to John Scott, safety data manager at the Naval Safety Center. Of those, 52 occurred on a ship. The total number is likely higher because the data is reliant on proper coding of the events, Scott said. Three of these incidents were labeled Class A mishaps — resulting in death or permanent total disability, or

damages of at least \$2 million.

Though not in the data Scott provided, there's a 2009 example in which the cruiser Port Royal hit a sandbar and went aground on a coral reef in Hawaii, causing \$40 million in damage and months in dry dock. The skipper was fired and the extensive damage was bad enough to prompt Navy leaders to retire the ship in 2013, much earlier than planned.

There was a combination of factors leading to the mishap, according to the official investigation, but they included too few sailors available to stand as look-outs and a lack of sleep among the crew. "Lean manning at sea means one thing: sleep deprivation," a junior sailor assigned to a cruiser told Navy Times at the time.

Adding a few hours of sleep to sailors' routines pays off big, Shattuck said. One study found extending recruits' sleep at Great

Lakes, Ill., from six to eight hours a night boosted their grades "significantly," she said.

But eight hours of sleep, which doctors and scientists recommend, is a scarce luxury in the Navy. A study aboard the destroyer Chung-Hoon found 85 percent of the crew worked more than 81 hours a week, far above the "standard" Navy workweek, Shattuck said. Fifty percent of sailors surveyed counted 95 hours or more at work each week.

The surface fleet needs to change its mindset about sleep, but changing the attitudes about fatigue and adjusting watch schedules won't be easily done, conceded one former skipper.

"This problem has been around a long time," said retired Capt. Peter Leenhouts, who commanded the ocean minesweeper Pledge and frigate Rodney M. Davis. However, "I don't think we should be stuck on the old ways of doing things."

Part of the problem lies in the surface fleet itself. "There's the black-shoe mentality that I could suck it up," Leenhouts said.

When he took command, Leenhouts said he "froze the watches between each port," in part to give the crew a little consistency. It wasn't easy, though, as some sailors grumbled at the temporary changes in their daily schedules.

Perhaps the surface fleet should look at what naval aviation has done, Leenhouts said.

Sleep-driven fatigue "doesn't rise to the level to some of the things the fleet has to deal with on a daily basis," he said. "It just has to be inculcated in the force at a junior level."

That may require buy-in from senior leadership in order for things to change and improve.

"You have to tackle it from both ends," he said, "and you have to have a champion on it."

Shattuck said her hope is to expand use of the 24-hour day and come up with "strategic guidance" for COs.

"COs don't want to do the wrong thing," she said. "They want their ship to work well. I think sometimes they don't know the right way to implement this. We want to give them evidence that says not only are sailors going to be happy with this, but the ship is going to work better."

Yokeley said Dunham's skipper "sought out help to make a change," and the crew's buy-in also made a difference. But the bigger cultural mindset across the surface force remains an obstacle, he said.

"Sometimes people are going to be sleep-deprived; there is no way we should put this on ourselves if we don't have to," he said, adding that he hopes the Navy will develop a commander's guide "to help our people do better." □