

USS *Doyle*: Conquering the Blue Threats



Navy photo by PH1 Martin E. Maddock

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“We need to treat the threats we can control, the Blue Threats, with the same energy we approach fighting the Red Threats. Because, today, Blue Threats—our errors and poor decisions—are our deadliest enemies.” That’s the challenge Commander, Naval Safety Center, RADM George Mayer, issued.

One command that’s meeting this challenge in resounding fashion is USS *Doyle* (FFG-39). How are they doing it? In the words of the ship’s XO, LCdr. Stewart Wennersten, “We, on a daily basis, incorporate the family, team and warship philosophy the CO has ingrained in the crew.”

According to the CO, Cdr. Michael Elliott, “If each crew member on board embraces the first two elements of this philosophy or vision and lives it daily—literally ‘walking the talk, vice just talking the walk’—then the third element, warship, will take care of itself.”

The family climate that exists among the 220-member *Doyle* crew helps each to understand how the attitudes and behavior of a few can positively or negatively affect those of the entire group. The Sailors also know what they do both on and off the ship affects the family and team, so they’re always looking out for one another.

The CO believes his vision, actions, attitudes, and philosophy set the benchmark for all those around him. “The success of any ship’s safety program, in my opinion, resides predominantly with the CO and his/her ability or lack thereof to plant a seed, nurture it, and then reap the rewards,” explained Cdr. Elliott. “The seed, in this case, is an ordinary set of eyes that turns into a set of critical eyes, focused on safety.”

From the time they first set foot on board *Doyle*, crew members become acutely aware that safety is woven into everything the ship does. “Our work-day starts and ends with safety in mind,” noted

CMDCM(SW/AW) Willie Glover. Nothing is undertaken without adhering to the principles of operational risk management (ORM).

Commander Elliott emphasized, "My philosophy embraces the ideology that every single crew member is considered a 'safety expert.' Each has another set of 'critical eyes' at their disposal and, as such, has the ability and responsibility to stand up and let folks know if something doesn't look, sound or appear safe. Bottom line: If something doesn't pass the 'safety litmus test,' then the process isn't done until a meeting of the minds can agree on a safe path to pursue."

Before every shipboard evolution, Cdr. Elliott reminds all hands (over the IMC, face-to-face, or both) they have these critical eyes and have a vested interest in the safety program and the readiness of FFG-39. The result is that *Doyle* Sailors have taken full custody and accountability for the ship's safety program.

Unlike many of their fleet counterparts, *Doyle* Sailors find time to focus on technical requirements, despite today's high operational tempo. "Formal instruction like the routine training the duty sections accomplish and the periodic stand-downs required by instructions make up only part of our focus," said Lt. Chad Fella, *Doyle's* operations officer. "We constantly remind ourselves to look out for one another and to ask, 'Is this the right way to do business?'"

"We believe in the adage, 'If you're too busy to do it right the first time, you'll have to make time for it a second time,'" he continued. "It ultimately saves time to do a check according to the maintenance-requirement card, rather than speed through it, just hitting the bare minimum requirements. With the latter method, you'll spend countless hours troubleshooting a faulted component." This attitude is evidenced by the reinforcement of standards and leadership that extends from the wardroom, chief's mess, leading petty officers, and on down through the crew.

Another item stressed aboard *Doyle* is that you often only get one chance to do things right. "All it takes," said Lt. Fella, "is a poorly executed lift to permanently injure the discs in your spine and condemn yourself to a life of back pain. When a two-person lift is involved, we remind our Sailors to make sure each other is lifting properly. The same 'look out for your shipmates' mentality also applies to using PPE."

Because *Doyle* is an older frigate, there's always a tendency, according to Lt. Fella, for Sailors to declare things "beyond hope" when they break. "We avoid that mindset, though," he explained, "by making sure our crew members understand you often don't get to schedule when you'll really need a fire pump or battle lantern. It has to be a way of life for you and your shipmates to survive." ■

USS Doyle's last reported mishap occurred March 22, 2006.—Ed.

The Secrets to Doyle's Success

When a Naval Safety Center survey team visited *USS Doyle*, they witnessed several best practices firsthand. Here is a list of some you perhaps can use to improve your own command's operational readiness and crew safety.

Working aloft/harness control (combat systems).

The ship's CE Division has instituted steps to make the aloft program easy to manage. For example, the program is centrally located and controlled within CE Division. Each and every harness, lanyard and climber-safety sleeve on the ship is serialized, along with corresponding individual bags for proper planned maintenance system (PMS) performance and documentation. Only qualified individuals are allowed to distribute and use safety harnesses for related operations. Regular training is conducted during distribution and return of all harnesses.

Ready service lockers (RSLs)/magazine maintenance (weapons). These areas are kept at the highest level of combat readiness. Daily magazine inspections are conducted, with discrepancies documented in a log and tracked for completion. In addition, PMS in the RSLs is completed and documented according to the fleet's 3-M program: knife edges are free of paint, there are no visible signs of rust, drain plugs aren't seized—they're hand tight, "No Smoking" placards are posted, and rubber gaskets show no signs of water intrusion. Combining personal pride with dedication to the job contributes to the continuing success of *Doyle's* CG Division.

Hazardous-material control and management (supply). Ensuring the correct materials are on board is essential to a ship's readiness. The first step in inventory management is making sure the full inven-