



All Evolutions Should Incorporate ORM

Editor's note: VAdm. Timothy W. LaFleur, ComNavSurfPac, recently sent the below message to Pacific Fleet commanding officers and unit commanders. It is being reprinted for Fathom readers by permission.

Since the events of Sept. 11, 2001, the focus of our naval surface forces has been on increased vigilance, improvements in combat readiness, and waging war on worldwide terrorism. We have seen significant disruptions to our deployment plans, with battlegroups and ARGs deploying weeks and months ahead of pre-war schedules. We have executed these changes professionally and without reduction in the IDTC training evolutions considered necessary to properly prepare our forces to go into harm's way.

As always, our Sailors have gone the extra mile and demonstrated why we are the best Navy in the world.

As our operational tempo increases, it is important we not lose sight of our fundamental core competencies of seamanship and navigation, and our day-to-day shipboard operations. We must make sure standards are being maintained in every seamanship and navigation evolution, as well as other special evolutions we conduct, and that we—as surface warriors—continuously conduct self-assessments of our procedures and practices. Each watchstander on the team, regardless of seniority, must understand he or she could be the key person who breaks the chain of events leading to a mishap in any evolution, no matter how routine. Safety is always paramount, and no one is ever too junior to speak up when safety is at stake.

Operational risk management procedures should be used for every evolution, no matter how routine and regardless of how often that evolution has been executed. Watchstander complacency has been the root cause of many a seamanship disaster. Navigation briefs prior to each seamanship and



VAdm. Timothy W. LaFleur, Commander,
Naval Surface Force U.S. Pacific Fleet

navigation evolution—with all watchstanders present—are a must. Frequent training on, and review of, commanding officers' standing orders, navigation instructions, and rules of the road must be mandatory for all watchstanders.

I am confident we will win the war we are waging against terrorism. Commanders and commanding officers must make sure our ships sail safely into harm's way.

Be vigilant, and keep smiling. 🇺🇸