



From left: CAPT Paul Hammer, RADM Elizabeth Niemyer, CAPT Scott Johnston



## CARRY ON!

BY CAPT. SCOTT L. JOHNSTON, MSC, USN  
INTERIM DIRECTOR, NCCOSC

As the Naval Center for Combat & Operational Stress Control enters its third year of operation, we are missing a familiar face and a spirited voice in our hallways.

Capt. Paul S. Hammer, who had the vision and determination to establish NCCOSC in early 2008, recently assumed duties as the director for the Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury (DCoE), a Department of Defense enterprise committed to improving all facets of mental health for our warriors and their families.

Anyone who has worked with Capt. Hammer knows he will transfer the energy, commitment and focus he devoted to guiding NCCOSC — where efforts are directed to our Sailors and Marines — to the challenges of addressing psychological health issues across all branches of the armed forces. He will always have an unwavering dedication to help restore our nation's warriors to the great patriotic individuals they were before they were injured.

Under Capt. Hammer's leadership, NCCOSC has had many achievements. They include development of standardized clinical programs for quality mental healthcare, the design of evidence-based teaching materials for line leaders and warriors to build psychological resilience, and assistance to scores of military and civilian clinicians with mental health research. It is our pledge to him — and you — that these projects will be vigorously continued and, indeed, expanded.

I have a strong personal connection to the NCCOSC mission. Like Capt. Hammer, it has been my honor to serve with our Marines during two deployments to Iraq. I have been there when our warriors have been injured, and I have held their hands when they died. I have helped those who survived learn to say goodbye to their brothers in arms.

All war fighters know that you cannot go through combat without it changing you, and my combat experiences greatly changed me. Upon returning from deployment, I developed stress illness symptoms.

*It is our pledge to him — and you — that these projects will be vigorously continued and, indeed, expanded.*

Fortunately, I sought treatment. I know firsthand that treatment works and that seeking treatment did not damage my career.

It is this knowledge that continually underscores my deep passion to care for the psychological needs of our nation's most brave individuals and the families who love them.

I am very privileged to now direct the outstanding work under way at NCCOSC. Yes, we have made considerable progress in educating our service members and their leaders about psychological health and its role in mission readiness, but much still needs to be done. ■



# A VIEW FROM THE NIMITZ

On any given day, life on board a Navy aircraft carrier is challenging. The work is difficult, dangerous and as exhausting as it is exhilarating. Mental stress often can become the plan of the day.

Over a recent 18-month span, USS *Nimitz* (CVN 68) faced an especially demanding schedule:

- A six-month deployment was extended to eight.
- A return to homeport in San Diego was followed by the intense ramp-up for INSURV, the Navy's rigorous inspection and survey to ensure a ship's readiness for combat. Mandated by Congress, INSURV involves every crew member and every inch of the ship.
- At-sea training cycles of a few weeks each for tests, inspections and qualifications added up to five months of the seven the ship was in San Diego.

Throughout, arrangements were under way for the *Nimitz* to relocate to Naval Base Kitsap in Bremerton, Wash., for a year of maintenance. It was not known at the time where the carrier would be homeported after that.\*

"All in all, it was a lot for the crew to wrap their heads around and adjust to," says Lt. Cmdr. Arlene Saitzyk, the psychologist on board the *Nimitz*.



Capt. Paul O. Monger, commanding officer of the *Nimitz*, knows the importance of building psychological resilience in his Sailors and addressing stress issues before they become stress injuries. He recently spoke with *Mindlines* about how he and other senior leaders approached the multiple and protracted stresses facing the carrier's crew.

**"It all comes down to knowing which of your people are at risk," Monger says. "I tell leaders to know their Sailors' personal lives and what affects them as individuals."**

"Communicating clear expectations also is very important. Make certain that at every appropriate opportunity, you give the 'expectation talk.' Look the troops in the eyes and tell them what your expectations are. Look for the three Sailors who seem to have the most potential to get into trouble and give them some extra attention."

Monger stresses the importance of ensuring that the crew understands the mission and that the mission is presented in a positive manner. The carrier's extended deployment, which involved the *Nimitz* providing air support to troops in Afghanistan, was easy to explain to the Sailors, he adds.

"I told them that if we're not there, there will be 30 percent fewer sorties. If we're not there, some ground troops are going to lose their lives. Once the crew understands the mission, they are given a sense of responsibility and also a sense of great accomplishment when the mission is achieved."

**Shipmates Helping Shipmates** Monger also gave full support to SAM, Sailors Assisting Members, a program designed by the ship's medical department and the chaplains' office.

Every division and department appointed a SAM representative, who received additional training in stress awareness and stress management and then passed that training on to their Sailors.

"We're not trying to get Sailors to diagnose one another," Monger says, "but we want them to be able to recognize the signs of stress and point someone in the right direction to get help. It's another option for them."

As the *Nimitz* was preparing for INSURV (for which it eventually would receive a very successful rating), Monger invited specialists from the Naval Center for Combat & Operational Stress Control to train SAMs in Operational Stress Control (OSC). NCCOSC trainers also addressed the chiefs' mess and the wardroom.

"INSURV became the vehicle to do something official about OSC," the captain says. "It wasn't something to worry about, but it was something we knew we needed an approach for, and we understand the value of calling in the experts when they're needed."

The homeport change for the *Nimitz* involved 13 months of planning and dissemination of as much information as possible to help Sailors make critical decisions regarding such issues as relocation of families, housing and schools.

"The year in Bremerton will be much different than a mainstream deployment," Monger says. "It's our job to keep the focus strong and keep reminding the crew of the mission — which is to ensure that the ship is combat ready and even more capable in 2012."

The CO also is making some operational changes that will boost morale. He arranged, for example, for the crew to live in barracks at Bremerton rather than stay on barges, where cell phones and computers don't work.

"Having that accessibility and connectivity will make a huge difference," he says. "It gives us more ways to keep the lifelines open at home and keep the support networks going."

"At the end of it all, we know the bulk of support for our Sailors comes from the family." (Continued p. 4)

\*Upon arrival in Bremerton, the Navy announced that the *Nimitz* would be homeported across Puget Sound at Naval Station Everett after the year in drydock.

## GETTING THE WORD OUT

*"I believe the message about the importance of stress management is taking hold. As I walk around the ship I see more people reaching out, asking shipmates what's going on, telling their direct supervisors that they need to talk about a problem."*

*"I was in the hangar bay one day and looked very distressed. Several Sailors came up to me and asked if they could help. I had only badly stubbed my toe but they thought I was having some sort of an emotional problem. It was a very touching experience."*

— Lt. Cmdr. Arlene Saitzyk, the psychologist assigned to the *Nimitz*

## THE COMMUNICATION CONCEPT

*"I teach people how to properly display anger. Basically, it's learning how to be assertive. Rather than get mad, explain what it is that's causing you to be upset. It's all about communication."*

*"I tell Sailors I can teach them how to handle issues, but I can't make the issues go away. I can teach people to not react in a negative way. I tell people it takes practice. And they have to remember that you cannot change other people."*

— Petty Officer Randy Lianoz, an x-ray technician on the *Nimitz* who teaches the principles of Operational Stress Control at ship indoctrinations.

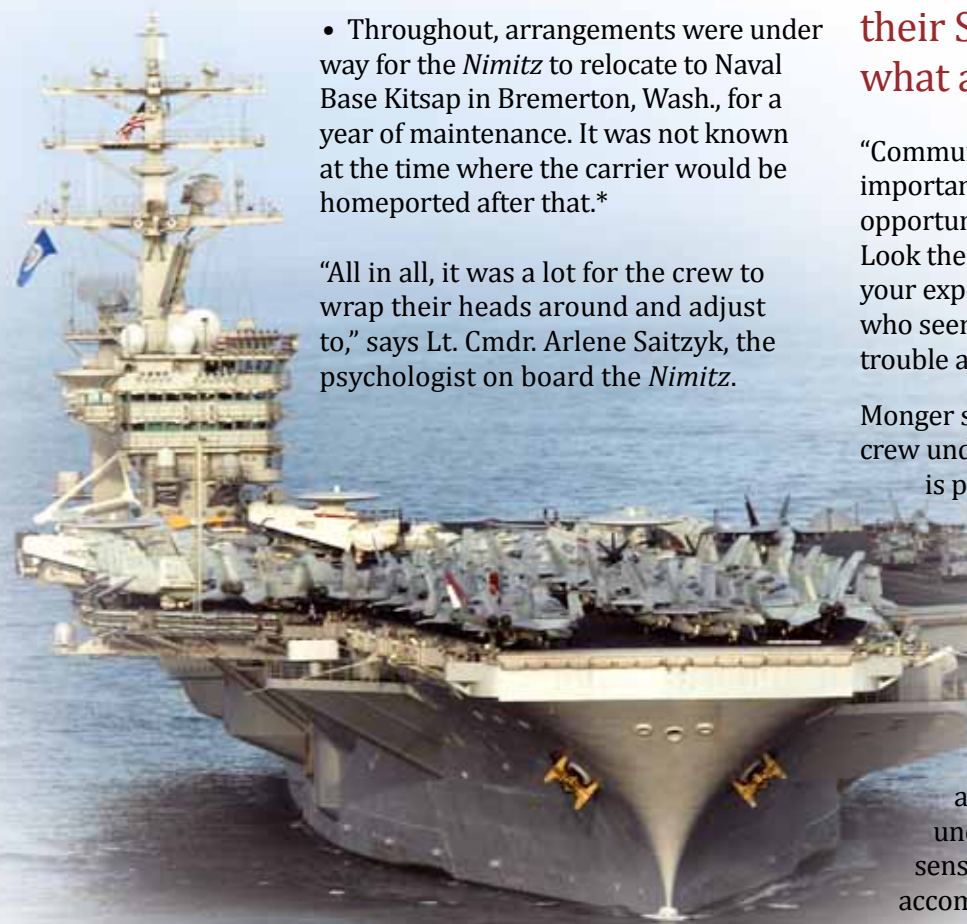


## COMBATING STIGMA

*"A highlight of the session came from a petty officer who spoke up. He said he had once been on a sub, with a top-secret clearance, and had become suicidal. He went to medical and got treatment. He never lost his clearance."*

*"Personal stories like that are often the best way to combat stigma. Circumstances vary but getting psychological help does not necessarily mean you lose your career."*

— Tom Pickel, NCCOSC educational specialist, recounting a suicide-prevention class he taught on board the *Nimitz*.





# 2011 COSC CONFERENCE

**“The Critical Role of Junior Leaders”** is the theme of the Navy and Marine Corps Combat & Operational Stress Control Conference 2011, set for April 26-29 in San Diego.

“Junior leaders usually are the first to recognize stress in Sailors or Marines, and their actions greatly influence how they will handle that stress,” says Capt. Scott L. Johnston, interim director of the Naval Center for Combat & Operational Control (NCCOSC), which is hosting the conference.

“They are prominent role models, and the conference will focus on how to best assist these leaders in promoting resilience and psychological health.”

The conference will offer practical tools to improve efforts in prevention, identification and early intervention to maximize force preservation and readiness. Leaders at all levels will learn new ways to strengthen our force, recognize stress injuries and tackle the challenges of overcoming any stigma that keeps service members from seeking treatment.

Four conference tracks are available: leadership, research, clinical best practices and family programs. Sessions will be of interest to line leaders, chaplains,

medical personnel, ombudsmen, mental health professionals, case managers and military family members.

As with last year’s conference, the 2011 event will be held at the Town & Country Resort & Convention Center. Online conference registration and hotel reservations may be made at the NCCOSC website, [www.nccosc.navy.mil](http://www.nccosc.navy.mil).

## COMING SOON!

**2011 COSC CONFERENCE: “THE CRITICAL ROLE OF JUNIOR LEADERS”**

## And the honor goes to...

Awards will be presented at the Navy and Marine Corps Combat & Operational Stress Control Conference 2011 to exemplary Sailors and Marines who have demonstrated excellence in executing any of the **Five Core Leader Functions** of combat and operational stress control — *strengthen, mitigate, identify, treat, reintegrate* — within their units.

Award categories are the Junior and Senior Epictetus Leadership Award and the Junior and Senior Caregiver NCCOSC Peabody Award. Descriptions of the categories, as well as the nomination procedure, are available at the NCCOSC website. ■



## NIMITZ: MONGER

(Continued from p. 3)

So how does the commanding officer of an aircraft carrier personally handle stress?

Says Capt. Paul Monger, skipper of the USS *Nimitz*:

“I try to work out as much as I can, but that’s not always possible. I talk to my wife every day about stuff that’s going on, and I talk problems over with leadership.

“Most of all, I don’t worry. If there’s a problem, I just want to find a way to fix it.”

On that last strategy, the captain likes to quote the namesake of his ship, Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz.

“Nimitz always said his grandfather taught him three important rules: Learn all you can. Do the best you can. And don’t worry about things you can’t control.” ■

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Naval Medical Center San Diego  
34960 Bob Wilson Drive, Suite 400,  
San Diego, CA 92134-6400

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**Public Affairs Officer**  
Amy Rohlf

**Writer and Editor**  
Margery Farnsworth

**Designer**  
Ellen Duris

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