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USS Carl Vinson crash and salvage team hone skills in NATTC course

PENSACOLA, Fla. – A flight deck crash and salvage team from the nuclear powered aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson (CVN 70) completed refresher training at the Naval Air Technical Training Center (NATTC) on board Naval Air Station Pensacola, Mar. 14.

During their week at the training center, team members received hands-on training in fighting flight deck fires, crash and salvage procedures, and safely lifting and moving damaged aircraft. Carl Vinson's crash and salvage team came to NATTC for the specialized training, bringing new members up to speed and refreshing veteran members' skills.

Chief Aviation Boatswain Mate (Handling) Bradley Johnson, Carl Vinson's Crash and Salvage Team Leading Chief Petty Officer (LCPO) explained that half of Carl Vinson's crash and salvage team has transferred and been replaced since the team last visited NATTC a year and a half ago for training. Johnson explained that coming to Pensacola is vital to getting all of his new members up to speed and working as a team before their upcoming deployment.

"We practice on the ship, but there is only so much you can learn from just reading the book, running drills, or just simulating something," said Johnson.

“The new team members learn so much more here where they can move actual aircraft, fight live fires, and get real hands-on experience.”

Since the Carl Vinson team last visited NATTC in 2012, the crash and salvage course has been updated based on input from the fleet, and to make the training even more realistic. Aviation Boatswain Mate (Handling) 3rd Class Devin Shughart is one of the remaining team members who was on the team the last time they came to Pensacola, and said the changes to the course have greatly increased its value.

“The course is even more hands-on this time, and the training is more realistic,” said Shughart. “We now enter the aircraft and retrieve the pilot while the fire is being fought on the outside. I think it gives the new team members a greater sense of what a real rescue will be like.”

The changes to the course are based upon fleet feedback and reflect what a crash and salvage team will actually do in an emergency. The teams now use the A/S 32 P-25 firefighting vehicle to clear a path to the cabin door on the Mobile Aircraft Firefighting Training Device (MAFTD). While hose teams fight the exterior fire on the MAFTD, a team enters the smoke filled aircraft, retrieves the simulated crewman, ‘Rescue Randy,’ and exits the plane.

Another element that has been added is that after the fires have been put out, an overhaul team goes through with a thermal imaging camera, looking for remaining hot spots that need to be extinguished and cooled.

Aviation Boatswain Mate (Handling) 1st Class Charles Ellis, an instructor at NATTC, spoke about the valuable feedback that the fleet teams provide as they go through the training. “We use the feedback each team provides to help the next team that comes through,” he said. “We will take a lesson learned or good technique from one ship and teach it to the next.”

For Ellis, being an instructor at NATTC has been personally rewarding. "I train these Sailors as they go through A-school, and then see them as they come back through as members of the crash and salvage teams. I get to watch them 'grow up' in the fleet," he added.

Since its commissioning in 1942, NATTC has been committed to delivering training and increasing readiness within the Naval Aviation Enterprise. NATTC graduates approximately 15,000 Navy and Marine students annually. The majority of the student population is made up of enlisted personnel attending "A" schools, where they are learning the skills and knowledge required to perform as apprentice-level technicians in the fleet. The center also provides airman apprenticeship training, personal financial management, and shipboard aircraft firefighting training.

NATTC's advanced schools provide higher level technical knowledge for senior petty officers, and technical training for officers in aviation fuels, carrier air traffic control center operations, amphibious air traffic control center operations, aircraft launch and recovery equipment, and shipboard aircraft fire fighting.

Additionally, NATTC supports the fleet by providing team training to ships personnel during their pre-deployment work-ups, to ensure that shipboard personnel have the proficiency required to take their ship on deployment, after a prolonged period in port.

For more information about Naval Air Technical Training Center, visit their web site at <https://www.netc.navy.mil/centers/cnatt/nattc/Default.aspx>.

Information on the Naval Education and Training Command can be found on the NETC website: <https://www.netc.navy.mil>.

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