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SWOS graduates first enlisted surface navigator; awards new 0202 NEC

NEWPORT, R.I. – The Surface Warfare Officers School Command (SWOS) Surface Navigator Course graduation on March 20 included its first-ever enlisted Sailor.

Quartermaster 1st Class (SW) Peter Hill from the USS Gettysburg (CG 64) was the first enlisted surface navigator graduate, and in another milestone, he is also the first to be awarded the new Assistant Navigator Navy Enlisted Classification (NEC 0202).

SWOS expanded the Surface Navigator Course from four weeks to five as of February 2015 in order to better prepare Officers for the challenging role of ship's navigator. SWOS also added eligibility for the course to senior quartermasters assigned to the role of ship's assistant navigator as part of a continuum of quartermaster training.

The Surface Navigator Course represents the 'master's level' training for the Navy's enlisted navigation specialists. In the near future, revisions to the apprentice-level Quartermaster "A" School and a journeyman-level course prior to a quartermaster's second sea tour will also be introduced.

For enlisted graduates of the Surface Navigator Course, the Assistant Navigator NEC was approved by Navy Manpower Analysis Center (NAVMAC) and formalizes classification of the special skills, training, and qualifications required for an enlisted quartermaster to serve as assistant navigator on Navy ships.

According to Lt. Andrew Groh, lead surface navigation instructor for SWOS, prospective navigators and senior quartermasters participating in the same course provides continuity and consistency to navigation training, which in turn will increase confidence and competence of navigation watch teams. The combined class format also provides opportunities for extensive interaction between officers and quartermasters before they meet at the chart table aboard their ships.

"Being a prior navigator and watching this class evolve over the last few months makes me realize that the fleet is more prepared than ever to address the contemporary challenges of navigation and seamanship," said Groh. "With our ever-evolving reliance on technology for maintaining navigational situational awareness, it is crucial for commanding officers and navigators to have that forceful back-up that derives from implementing the Assistant Navigator NEC."

As the first graduate of the Surface Navigator Course, Hill was thrilled.

"It feels amazing. I realize that I represent my community and graduating this course is such an honor," said Hill. "Now I feel even more confident to take what I learned and lead quartermasters in the fleet."

Capt. David Welch, SWOS commanding officer, emphasized the importance of the restructured training.

"Navigation is a core competency and critical to the safe operation of our ships," said Welch. "Petty Officer Hill's graduation is an important milestone in providing standardized navigation training from seaman recruit to captain. As news of this course spreads across the fleet, I hope and expect to see a steady increase in senior quartermaster participation in this course. We seek to instill the highest professional standards in our officers and enlisted mariners."

Hill advises that potential enlisted surface navigators not take the Assistant Navigator Course lightly.

"Prepare, study, and know the basics of navigation. This class is so fast paced, and once you get behind, it is difficult to catch up," said Hill. "Put in the extra time if you need it, prepare prior to coming to this class, and don't be afraid to ask for help. The instructors were all very helpful and ensured that everyone has the tools to succeed."

For more information about Surface Warfare Officers School, visit <https://www.netc.navy.mil/centers/swos/>.

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