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Never Forget – SWOS honors 9/11 fallen

NEWPORT, R.I. – On Sept. 11 just after noon, nearly 400 staff and students from across Naval Station Newport gathered outside Memorial Hall at the Surface Warfare Officers School (SWOS) to pay tribute to those who lost their lives on that same date 13 years earlier.

Patricia DeConto, whose son Capt. Gerald Deconto, along with five other Surface Warfare Officers lost their lives in the Pentagon on 9/11, was the guest of honor at the ceremony.

The Newport Navy Choristers sang at the event, moving the audience with The Star Spangled Banner. Capt. Dave Welch, SWOS commanding officer and keynote speaker for the event, offered words of remembrance and hope.

“It is an honor to host this memorial service today,” said Welch, “A day on which we as a nation pause to remember those lost, and pay tribute to the heroes who selflessly ran to danger to provide aid and comfort to survivors

of the horrific terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. There are transcendent events in life; transcendent because the world is different after they occur. Sept. 11, 2001 is one such date."

Welch went on to explain that memorials allow us to tell the story again. He told the story of the courage and resolve in response to 9/11 and described three ships that were the truest examples of these attributes: USS New York (LPD 21), whose hull is made from 20 tons of steel pulled from the wreckage of the World Trade Center; USS Somerset (LPD 25), whose hull is partially made from the steel of a power shovel used by recovery personnel at the sight of the crash of United Airlines Flight 93; and finally USS Arlington (LPD 24), which honors first responders and the 184 victims who died in the Pentagon on that fateful day.

He closed by stating the importance of 'being there' as a Navy when we are called.

"Being here matters too," he concluded. "Thank you so much for taking the time to be here today. God bless the victims of 9/11, God bless their families and loved ones who carry a special burden of memory, God bless the heroes who rushed to aid, God bless the survivors who live with vivid memories of that fateful day. And God bless the United States of America."

The chief petty officer selectee honor guard solemnly read the names of the surface warfare officers who lost their lives in the Pentagon on 9/11, and rendered a single stroke of the bell for each one. Following a prayer of remembrance by Cmdr. Carl Trost, 1st Sgt. Cliff Soares of the 88th Army Band of the Rhode Island National Guard played Taps to close the ceremony.

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

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By Lt. Jason Bilbro, SWOS Public Affairs