



Battle Stations 21 Trainer Commissioned at RTC Great Lakes

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By Bill Couch, Naval Facilities Engineering Command Midwest Public Affairs, and Scott A. Thornbloom, Naval Service Training Command Public Affairs

GREAT LAKES (NNS) -- The design and construction team for Battle Stations 21 at Recruit Training Command (RTC) officially opened the Navy's newest and most elaborate recruit trainer June 18.

USS Trayer (BST 21) made the transition from construction project to active-training facility in a ceremony styled after real-life ship commissionings, and was declared ready to begin serving as a capstone training event for all Navy recruits.

Representatives from Naval Facilities Engineering Command (NAVFAC) Midwest, Naval Air Systems Command and James McHugh Construction Co. were joined by U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk, Vice Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Patrick Walsh, Commander of Naval Education and Training Command Rear Adm. Gary Jones and other Navy and local officials to mark the occasion.

"America needs a combat-ready Naval force capable of winning wars, deterring aggression, preserving the freedom of the seas and promoting peace and security," said Jones. "[Thanks to facilities like Trayer and those who work here], we are and will remain a warfighting, seagoing service."

"This is such a great milestone," said NAVFAC Midwest Commanding Officer Capt. Bob Gibbs. "Today we're turning over to the Navy a training tool of unmatched value for our Navy's newest Sailors. I'm so proud of the partnership forged in this project. Its success is directly tied to the imagination, flexibility and can-do spirit of everyone involved—contractor and Navy personnel alike."

Trayer is a 3/4-scale, 210 feet long mockup of an Arleigh Burke-class destroyer enclosed within a 157,000-square-foot building on board RTC. The trainer uses Hollywood-style special effects to create challenging and realistic training scenarios for recruits. Recruit divisions work through a 12-hour Battle Stations 21 experience as a comprehensive test of the skills and teamwork learned during their eight weeks of basic training at RTC.

One of Trayer's training facilitators, Chief Aviation Electronics Technician (AW/NAC) Tim McKinley, called it a rite of passage from recruit to Sailor.

"It's 12 hours of anything that can happen aboard a ship at sea, from missile attacks that can cause fires to flooding caused by exploding undersea mines," said McKinley.

Battle Stations 21 uses lessons learned from actual events. The terrorist attack on USS Cole (DDG 67) in Yemen in 2000, mine damage to USS Tripoli (LPH 10) in Desert Storm in 1990 and the missile strike on USS Stark (FFG 31) in the Persian Gulf in 1987 have all been incorporated into the scenarios aboard Trayer. The training also simulates conditions similar to historic at-sea mishaps, like the fire on board USS Forrestal (CV 59) in 1967.

Former command master chief of USS Cole, retired Command Master Chief James Parlier, was instrumental in putting together the training syllabus for Battle Stations 21.

"The designers and McHugh contractors and engineers of Trayer were very keen to listen to what I had to say about Cole and how Trayer should be built with similar scenarios and simulations," said Parlier. "Hopefully there will never again be a Cole incident or similar attack of one of our ships. If there is, the training received here on Trayer will make one heck of a difference."

Trayer is outfitted inside and out with salvaged gauges, pipes and electrical gear from decommissioned ships. Inside, compartments are outfitted as berthing spaces, engineering control rooms and bridges. There are also special controlled areas where magazine spaces flood and compartments are engulfed in flames, all in a carefully controlled manner that balances realism with safety.

"It's so real that it stops me in my tracks," said Lt. Andrew Bond, officer in charge of Battle Stations 21. "If she had another side, she'd be ready for sea."

"This vision (Trayer and Battle Stations 21) has resulted in a multi-sensory simulator incorporating the best special technology from industry. If I did not know better, I would think I was standing on a pier in Norfolk instead of inside a building in Illinois," said Walsh during his remarks.

"We'll now be able to give these new Sailors a chance to see what real battle damage, real flooding and a real on-board fire can do and what it takes to fix it, stop it or put it out," said Senior Chief Quartermaster (SW) Anthony A. Kachinsky, who raised the ship's commissioning pennant from the quarterdeck.

"It meant a lot to me to be part of this ceremony," said Kachinsky. "I felt honored hoisting the commissioning pennant, but no less honored knowing that I play a part in teaching the Navy's newest Sailors. Trayer and Battle Stations 21 is the best way I can give each recruit the needed tools to help them handle a hazardous situation at sea."

Completion of BST-21 is part of a 10-year, \$763 million recapitalization of the Navy's recruit training facilities at RTC.

For more news on Battle Stations 21, visit www.nstc.navy.mil/battle_stations_21_New.htm.

For more news from Naval Facilities Engineering Command, visit www.news.navy.mil/local/navfacho/.

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070618-N-8848T-005 GREAT LAKES, Ill. (June 18, 2007) - Sailors salute while manning the rails of USS Trayer (BST 21) during the commissioning ceremony for the Navy's newest simulator. Trayer, along with Battle Stations 21, is the culmination of all training received at the Navy's only boot camp. The simulator is a grueling 12-hour test of a recruit's skills in several shipboard evolutions, including fighting fires and stopping floods. The final evolution, now held entirely in the Arleigh Burke-class destroyer simulator, marks a recruit's final rite of passage into the Navy. U.S. Navy photo by Mr. Scott A. Thornbloom (RELEASED)

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