

HONORING THE CREW OF USS COLE



On 19 October aboard NS Norfolk, Va., the nation saluted the 17 personnel killed and 39 injured on board Cole (DDG 67), damaged by a terrorist bomb in Yemen a week before. Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen summed up: "No one should ever pass an American in uniform without saying, 'Thank you, we're grateful,' always mindful that they are prepared to risk all their dreams so that all of us can reach and realize ours."

Lt. Brandon Floyd, of HSL-42 aboard Hawes (FFG



PH2 Leland Comer



PH2 Chris Pastol

It wasn't until a few days ago that we started doing something I feel may be the first thing I've seen in my short naval career that has truly made a difference. Right now, we're supporting USS *Cole* and her crew in Aden. When the attack occurred, we were a day away. Just by luck we happened to be on our way out of the gulf, headed towards the Suez and could get here in a relatively short amount of time. I know what you all have seen on CNN, because we have seen it, too. I just want you all to know that what you see doesn't even scratch the surface. I'm not going to get into it for obvious reasons, but I will tell you that right now there are 250+ Sailors just a few miles away living in hell on earth. I'm sitting in a nice air-conditioned stateroom; they're sleeping out on the decks at night.

You can't even imagine the conditions they're living in,



Opposite, clockwise from top, *Cole* (DDG 67) is moored to a platform after the terrorist attack on 12 October in the industrial harbor of Aden, Yemen, during a scheduled refueling; one of the injured Sailors is assisted from a C-141 *Starlifter* transport on the tarmac at Naval Station Norfolk, Va., by CINCLANTFLT Adm. Robert J. Natter, who, along with families and friends, welcomed the personnel as they

were flown home from Germany; this poignant scene was typical during the homecoming as an injured Sailor shares a tearful reunion with her mother. Above, an aerial view of the port of Aden shows the activity around the disabled *Cole* (foreground). Left, during a memorial service on Pier 12 at NS Norfolk, a member of the Disabled Veterans of America places American flags on wreaths honoring the 17 Sailors killed on board *Cole*.

PH2 Joshua Treadwell



and yet they are still fighting 24 hours a day to save their ship and free the bodies of those still trapped and send them home. As bad as it is, they're doing an incredible job. The very fact that these people are still functioning is beyond my comprehension. Whatever you imagine as the worst, multiply it by 10 and you might get there. Today, I was tasked to photo rig the ship and surrounding area. It looked so much worse than I had imagined, unbelievable really, with debris and disarray everywhere, the ship listing, the hole in her side. I wish I had the power to relay to you all of what I have seen, but words just won't do it. I do want to tell you the first thing that jumped out at me: the Stars and Stripes flying. I can't tell you how that made me feel . . . even in this God forsaken hell hole, our flag was more beautiful than words can describe. Then I started to notice the mass of activity going on below, scores of people working nonstop in 90-plus-degree weather to save this ship. They're doing it with almost no electrical power and they're sleeping (when they can sleep) outside on the decks, because they can't stand the smell or the heat or the darkness inside. They only want to eat what we bring them because they're all scared of eating something brought by the local vendors. Even with all that, the *Cole* and her crew is sending a message, guys, and it's that even acts of cowardice and hate can do nothing to the spirit and pride of the United States. I have never been so proud of what I do, or of the men and women that I serve with, as I was today. There are [17] confirmed dead Sailors who put it on the line for all of us. Please take a minute to pray for their families and say a word of thanks for their sacrifice—one made so that we can live the lives that we do.

All of you who serve with me, thank you. All of you who have loved ones that serve, thank you.

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RAdm. Mike McCabe
Director, Air Warfare

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Director, Naval Historical Center

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