

A TEACHER BECOMES THE STUDENT

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A Teacher Becomes the Student



We had just finished our sixth week of deployment and were reenergized after four days of liberty in Greece. It was the middle of the afternoon on a day just like any other and we were preparing to move a helicopter in the hangar for maintenance. We got our move crew together, which encompassed a team of qualified personnel except for one Sailor who would be under instruction (U/I). Even though I had only been qualified for two weeks, I assumed I was up to the task of ensuring he performed the job correctly.

We hooked the helo up to a dolly, a tractor that connects to the tail end of a helicopter and tows it around the hangar, and prepared to move an embarked squadron's MH-60R. As we began, I was standing on the port side of the dolly so I could stay out of the director's way, who was responsible for the entire move evolution.

The move proceeded as normal, and we started to spin the helo to put it on its final spot. In an aircraft carrier's hangar bay, the volume of aircraft and equipment located around you is very high. Our MH-60R was getting very close to other aircraft, so I stood where I would not obstruct anyone's view. Unbeknownst to me, my position created a blind spot where I could not see certain aspects of the Sailor U/I. While we were holding our positions to confirm the aircraft's final location, the Sailor U/I inadvertently repositioned his arm on a button, causing the dolly to lift the aircraft's tail. The dolly is very loud and the lifting arms move slowly. Without direct attention, this went unnoticed. Due to where I was standing, I never saw the error.

We continued the evolution, and as we started to move again, the base of the front part of the helicopter began scratching the hangar bay deck. At this point we all blew our whistles and tied down the aircraft to assess the situation. The Sailor U/I had raised the tail end of the aircraft enough for the helicopter's nose to drag against the hangar bay deck.

Luckily, the damage was minor, but after the incident, I took stock in what I could have done differently. I should have put myself in a position to see everything the Sailor U/I was doing. Before attempting to teach, I could have watched and learned from a more senior operator instructing the person U/I. Above all, this incident has given me more situational awareness regarding trainees' knowledge of the hazards of what they are doing.

While I could have helped prevent the mishap, mistakes allow us to better ourselves and prevent future accidents. These lessons have taught me what it means to shadow a Sailor U/I, and I will use them to provide better training and increase my skills as a leader.