

NSWCDD graduates first students from in-house Wartime Readiness Short Course



DAHLGREN, Va. – Professor C.A. “K-Jack” Krajacich, director of Maritime Staff Courses at the U.S. Naval War College, teaches the first Naval Surface Warfare Center Dahlgren Division (NSWCDD) Wartime Readiness Short Course to a room full of Sailors and civilians. The course is designed to provide perspective on how maritime operations centers support the fleet. (Matt Lyman/NSWCDD Photo)

By Matt Lyman, NSWCDD Corporate Communications, April 24, 2026

DAHLGREN, Va. – The U.S. Navy, in times of competition, conflict, and contingency or combat operations, leverages Maritime Operations Centers to equip commanders and staff with the resources needed to execute

responsibilities as a component, Fleet and/or Maritime Component Commander.

Naval Surface Warfare Center Dahlgren Division is applying the Maritime Operations Center doctrine, and in concert with the U.S. Naval War College, offered the first NSWCDD Wartime Readiness Short Course at the Innovation Lab March 24-26, 2026, in Dahlgren, Virginia.

Susan Botkin, the workforce development lead for NSWCDD, said the course ensures employees and military members understand how their work fits into larger Navy decision cycles and crisis-response frameworks.

The inaugural class included about 24 students, comprised of Sailors and government civilians from NSWCDD and other Warfare Centers. They attended the course to begin building a common operational language across NAVSEA and the warfare center enterprise, enabling more effective collaboration, faster problem-solving, and better alignment with Fleet priorities.

“It’s essential because it strengthens the workforce’s ability to think, plan, and operate in the same environment our Fleet commanders face every day. NSWCDD’s technical excellence must be paired with operational understanding,” added Botkin.

Instructors from the U.S. Naval War College taught the class, giving students direct access to professors who routinely teach senior officers preparing for command and major operational roles. This exposure accelerates learning, ensures our workforce receives instruction grounded in real-world operational experience, and allows students to ask questions and get on-the-spot feedback.

“The primary intended takeaway was a better understanding of how the Fleet plans and how the system commands accelerate support in a crisis. Despite cultural and institutional differences, there are many similarities between what the

SYSCOMs do and how the Fleet conducts missions,” said Eric Dukat, associate professor, director of operations at the College of Maritime Operational Warfare, Naval War College.

That fact was not lost on the students who came from other Warfare Centers across the United States to attend the course.

“For the Warfare Center Enterprise, this training was about moving from technical support to operational partnership. We are already experts at the *how*, but this course helped us better understand some of the *why*,” said Andria Wenz, the wartime readiness coordinator for NSWC Crane.

Students will graduate from the short course with a deeper understanding of how the Navy plans, fights, and executes operations. They will have insight into the Maritime Operations Center construct and how decisions are made at the operational level.

“By understanding MOC structures and the Navy Planning Process, we can go from being a reactive help desk to a proactive part of the Navy’s ‘Foundry’,” added Wenz.

They will leave with a stronger ability to align their technical work with Fleet needs, improved communication skills when working with operators, sponsors, and senior leaders and a broadened perspective on how NSWCDD and other warfare center capabilities contribute to deterrence, crisis response, and wartime execution.

“This signals to higher headquarters and to the Fleet that we take this seriously and that we are trying to prepare for crisis and/or conflict, because if we’re better, everyone’s better,” said Capt. Joe Oravec, commanding officer for NSWCDD.

Increased activity across the globe, cyber threats, unmanned system proliferation, and the pace of technological warfare

highlight the importance of preparing civilians to support the Fleet during crisis or conflict and have driven warfare centers, including NSWCCD, to refocus on Wartime Readiness.

“Real-world events, the increased Navy presence around the world, rapid technological change and the fast-moving “era” of artificial intelligence, and contested maritime domains, have underscored the need for a workforce that understands operational readiness,” said Rob Ward, wartime readiness lead for NSWCCD.

Students are expected to bring an enhanced toolkit back to their respective workspaces to help coworkers gain operational context and thus improve the quality and timeliness of technical solutions.

They will also support more informed decision-making during tight deadlines from the Fleet, all while enhancing warfare center credibility. Setting the warfare centers apart as workforces, specifically committed to technical excellence, who are always willing to be there to support the Sailors and the Fleet.

“Wartime Readiness is not just a short course; it is an investment in the Navy’s future. NSWCCD’s technical workforce plays a critical role in shaping the systems, tools, and capabilities the Fleet depends on,” said Ward.

“To design for the fight, we must understand the fight. This training builds that bridge. It equips our workforce with the operational mindset needed to anticipate Fleet needs, accelerate innovation and deliver solutions that matter in the moments that matter most. By empowering our people with this knowledge, NSWCCD strengthens its role as a trusted, operationally relevant partner to the warfighter,” added Ward.