US Navy Identifies Missing Sailor as HSC-5 Commanding Officer



Cmdr. Gabriel Edwards. Photo credit: U.S. Navy.

NORFOLK, Va. – The U.S. Navy identified Cmdr. Gabriel

Edwards, commanding officer of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 5, as the missing Sailor following a helicopter's emergency landing in the Arabian Sea, July 1.

"The thoughts and prayers of every member of the Carrier Strike Group 10 team are with the Edwards family. While we are far from home, our heartfelt support remains at your side," said Rear Adm. Todd Cimicata, commander, Carrier Strike Group (CSG) 10. "Gabe's legacy as a husband, father, friend and fearless leader will never be forgotten. We are thankful to each who carry a unique and indelible part of Gabe's memory with us as we continue this important mission."

After more than 102 hours of continuous search and rescue efforts covering over 14,000 square miles, the U.S. Navy suspended search efforts in the Arabian Sea on July 5. The extensive search involved ships and aircraft from two carrier strike groups, two Patrol and Reconnaissance Squadrons (VP) flying P-8A Poseidon aircraft and multiple U.S. Air Force aircraft.

"Commander Gabe Edwards was the epitome of selfless leadership, who dedicated himself to service and sacrifice for the last 20 years," said Capt. Matthew Lewis, commander of Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 7. "Our deepest gratitude and sympathy go out to his family, who should know that Gabe led his squadron, the HSC-5 "Nightdippers," with integrity and fortitude, building a cohesive organization that will continue to embody the exceptional standards he set while in command and throughout his naval career."

Gabriel Edwards, a native of Oakland, Oregon, graduated in 2006 from Norfolk State University with a Bachelor of Science degree in physics and commissioned through the Naval ROTC. He earned his aviator "Wings of Gold" in 2008 as a helicopter pilot and served with HSC-22, the "Sea Knights;" HSC-84, the "Red Wolves;" Naval Special Warfare Group (NSWG) 4 as the air-to-ground fires office and Joint Terminal Attack Controller;

HSC-85, the “Firehawks;” and assumed command of HSC-5, the “Nightdippers,” in July 2025.

Edwards is survived by his wife, Rebecca, two children, a large extended family, and brothers and sisters in the naval aviation community who will forever carry his memory in their hearts.

“We are profoundly grateful to every Sailor, aviator, and Airman who devoted countless hours, extraordinary skill, and unwavering determination in the effort to bring Gabe home,” said Rebecca Edwards. “Gabe has dedicated his life to serving his country with honor, courage, and commitment. He led with humility, integrity, and compassion, always putting his people before himself. To those who served alongside him, he was a respected leader and mentor. To our family, he is the love of my life, an extraordinary father to his children, and the foundation of our home. His greatest joy was always his family.”

The Edwards family expressed their appreciation for the outpouring of prayers, messages, and support from their family, friends, the HSC-5 Nightdippers, the naval aviation community, and people around the world.

“As we begin to face the difficult road ahead, we respectfully ask for privacy as we grieve together as a family,” said Rebecca Edwards. “We find comfort in knowing that Gabe lived a life of extraordinary purpose, devoted to his country, his squadron, and above all, the family he loved so completely.”

Edwards assumed command as the Commanding Officer of HSC-5 in July 2025 and was selected for promotion to Capt. by the Fiscal Year 2027 O-6 Line Officer Promotion Board.

Edwards accumulated more than 2,000 flight hours in the SH-60F, HH-60H, and MH-60S helicopter airframes. His personal awards include the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal (three awards), Navy and

Marine Corps Achievement Medal (two awards), and various unit and campaign awards.

HSC-5 is currently deployed in the Middle East embarked on the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77) as part of CVW-7. Mental health professionals and counselors, chaplaincy, and religious program support advocates are actively supporting the squadron and ship’s crew.

The search involved USS George H.W. Bush’s HSC-5 and Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron (HSM) 46, fixed wing aircraft from CVW-7 and 9, Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln’s (CVN 72) helicopter squadrons HSC-14 and HSM-71, Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers USS Ross (DDG 71), USS Donald Cook (DDG 75), USS Higgins (DDG 76), USS Mason (DDG 87), and USS John Finn (DDG 113) with HSM-51, two VP squadrons, and multiple U.S. Air Force aircraft.

The cause of the incident remains under investigation. There is no indication the emergency was caused by hostile action.