

“It’s Different Over Here”
VFA-115 Begins its Second Deployment in CVW-5

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Since VFA-115’s Change of Command in January, the Eagles have taken part in some remarkable events. The 9.0 magnitude earthquake that hit Japan on 11 Mar 2011 and subsequent tsunami and Fukushima nuclear disasters that followed, devastated Japan’s population and infrastructure like nothing since the closing months of WWII. The confluence of disasters was a game changing event to the Japanese people and the immediacy of the situation served to reinforce our nations close ties as partners and allies. The United States Navy and Japanese first responders worked hand in hand to provide Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief (HADR) across the Miyagi prefecture. A crucial part of this effort was the forward staging of supplies and relief personnel at VFA-115’s home station, NAF Atsugi. With ramp space at a premium and the rising fears of



possible nuclear fallout, all CVW-5 tactical aircraft were ordered to evacuate to Andersen AFB in Guam and the USS George Washington (CVN-73) discontinued its SRA and unexpectedly set to sea.

Simultaneously the United States State Department issued a voluntary evacuation order for all military dependents and civilian employees. Within just a few hours of the military evacuation order, all but one of VFA-115’s jets were airborne enroute to Andersen AFB and a squadron-wide pack out was underway. The results of this effort were remarkable. Less than 4 days after the no-notice evacuation and with the HADR mission the priority for airlift support, VFA-115 was able to reconstitute 1300 miles away, resume training sorties, and be combat ready in Guam. With adversity comes opportunity, so rather than adopt a sustainment posture, VFA-115 capitalized on the

chance to gain some valuable training to maximize our combat readiness. While in Guam, we took full advantage of the phenomenal airspace and targets that are not available in Japan. In short order, our Training Officer, Dallas “Gomer” Jamison and the



OPS Officer, Adrian “Catfish” Jope fashioned an impromptu training plan that resembled a weapons school SFARP. The results were impressive. At the conclusion of our 5 weeks in Guam, the FDM bombing range north of Andersen AFB was the

willing recipient of over 130,000 lbs of live, inert and practice ordnance and we successfully qualified our aircrew in the highly perishable skill of night strafing. It was not just about air-to-ground training, as the Eagles also led the charge honing air-to-air skills by executing multiple large force strikes with the rest of CVW-5. At the completion of our unexpected Guam detachment, the Eagles were ready for deployment, which turned out to be right around the corner.

As the HADR relief effort and the nuclear fears subsided, VFA-115, CVW-5, and the USS George Washington (CVN-73) were given the all clear to return home. The Eagles were happy to be able to return home and reunite with families who also returned from all points across the globe. After only a few short weeks getting our dependants resettled and kids back in school, it was time to turn our attention to FCLPs, Carrier Qualifications, and Blue Water Certification.

In short order, VFA-115 began preparing for another FCLP detachment in Iwoto (Iwo Jima). Yet again, powered by hard work and superb maintenance, the Eagles were able to complete FCLPs and get all our pilots ready for carrier qualifications in only 3 days. Despite many challenges and the sub-tropical weather conditions, our maintenance





detachment was able to provide excellent jets on time, every time! While there was not much downtime available, some members of the squadron still managed to explore the island and see some of WWII's most historic battlegrounds. It is a rare opportunity not afforded to many, but the Talons were able to visit sites such as Invasion Beach and Mt. Suribachi. While the jets were

busy in Iwo, work also continued back in Atsugi where the home guard was busy packing the squadron and ensuring the Eagles were ready to deploy.

The Eagles now find themselves embarked aboard the USS GEORGE WASHINGTON (CVN 73) and are looking forward to another exciting, challenging, and rewarding summer deployment, where the Air Wing routinely operates in a blue water environment. To those ends, the Eagles find themselves reassuming the role of a tanker squadron. Our Pilots and maintainers have embraced this mission again with gusto and have quickly proven they are among the best at providing tankers to support the Air Wing.



As our deployment continues to unfold, the Air Wing is Blue Water Certified and is cruising south of the equator. The next challenge on the horizon is TALISMAN SABRE 2011. This exercise is designed to test the GW Strike Group's joint interoperability with both the U.S. and Royal Australian Air Forces. These exercises are significant in the fact that they will reinforce the strong ties we share with our Australian allies and better prepare both our nations for any real world WESTPAC contingency operations. There will surely be many challenging days ahead, but the men and women

of Strike Fighter Squadron ONE ONE FIVE continue to rise to meet any challenge presented to them. The Eagles look forward to proving once again that they are the “Best Fighter Attack in WESTPAC!” **EFR!**