USS George Washington 'anchors in' on safety

By MC3 Kaitlyn R. Breitkreutz,
USS George Washington
Public Affairs

A joint team of Sailors from the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier *USS George Washington* (CVN 73), American contractors from Puget Sound Naval Shipyard and Japanese shipyard workers safely completed a preventive maintenance evolution onboard to help lengthen the life and preserve the integrity of the ship's anchor Feb. 10.

The chain and anchor are removed during availability periods to complete maintenance on the detachable links and preserve the rest of the chain and anchor.

The two-day, high-risk evolution was completed on time, on task and safely involving approximately 60 personnel.

Although the evolution was completed in only 48 hours, the planning and coordination for the task took more than two months.

"It's not just the anchor being dropped, it's coordinating how many contractors we need, getting the barge and the dry dock set up and preparing the anchor for maintenance," said Lt. j.g. Nhan Nguyen from Dexter, Maine.

"We have had countless meetings and departmental quarters about this evolution," said the Forecastle Petty Officer in Charge Boatswain's Mate 3rd Class Donte Ruffin from Yonkers, N.Y. "We also had two briefs with the ship's captain, security reaction force members and the civilian workers in which we discussed the seriousness of being safe during this dangerous procedure."

Sailors stationed aboard *USS George Washington* (CVN 73) remove the ship's starboard anchor and anchor chain and safely lay them on a barge Feb. 8. The anchor and chain were removed for maintenance and preservation work which includes removing rust and painting to increase its life span.
U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Alexander W. Cabrall

The process of setting out the anchor is a slow and tedious one. The 60,000 pound (30 ton) anchor must be lowered carefully and positioned at the right angle to ensure that it remains still and safely secured during maintenance.

After the anchor is in place, seven shots (630 ft.) of the anchor chain must be laid out without tangle and set out near the anchor.

The anchor and chain are then carefully transported to the dry dock area where they will begin a month-long maintenance process.

Before the task was even started, the entire crew involved in the evolution was given a mandatory safety brief by the *George Washington*'s safety experts on the hazards and dangers they may face.

"Everyone plays a role in the safety of the evolution," said Boatswain's Mate 2nd class Justin Brewer from Tulsa, Okla.

"Doing the anchor evolution when we clean the anchor can be pretty simple, but this is the first time in my three years aboard the *George Washington* that we ever attempted to disconnect the anchor from the actual ship," said Ruffin. "It feels great that we didn't have any casualties or mishaps. We did everything by the book and everything went well."

Dropping and preserving a ship's anchor can be an extremely dangerous task, but thanks to extensive planning and coordination, along with numerous safety measures in place, *George Washington* Sailors and their civilian counterparts completed the maintenance safely and efficiently.

DoD announces more military positions opened to women

From Department of Defense

WASHINGTON – The Department of Defense (DoD) announced changes to its assignment policy Feb. 9 which will result in more than 14,000 additional positions being opened to women.

"Women are contributing in unprecedented ways to the military's mission. Through their courage, sacrifice, patriotism and great skill, women have proven their ability to serve in an expanding number of roles on and off the battlefield," Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta said. "We will continue to open as many positions as possible to women so that anyone qualified to serve can have the opportunity to do so."

In a report required by the 2011 National Defense Authorization Act, the department notified Congress it intends to make two changes to rules in place since 1994 governing the service of female members of the armed forces: first, occupations will no longer be closed to women solely because the positions are required to be co-located with ground combat units; and second, a sizable number of positions will be opened to women at the battalion level in select direct ground combat units in specific occupations. The services also will continuously assess their experience with these changes to help determine future changes to the 1994 rules.

"The services will continue to review positions and requirements to determine what additional positions may be opened, ensuring the mission is met with the best qualified and most capable, regardless of gender," Panetta said.

The 1994 Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule articulated five basic elements informing decisions on the service of women in the military: direct ground combat; berthing and privacy; co-location; long range reconnaissance and special operations forces; and physically demanding tasks.

The 1994 DoD policy allowed women to be restricted from some occupational specialties if those specialties were physically co-located with direct ground combat units. Because the modern-day battlefield is non-linear and fluid, with no clearly defined front line or safer rear area, combat support operations are dispersed throughout the battlespace. Removal of the co-location exclusion will result in 13,139 Army positions being opened to women, in specialties such as tank mechanic and field artillery radar operator.

Additionally, the 1994 policy prohibited women from being assigned below brigade level to units whose principal mission was to engage in combat. The Army, Marines and Navy have been granted exceptions to policy to allow select positions at the battalion level in specialties already open to women, opening 1,186 additional positions. These exceptions to policy will help the services assess the suitability and relevance of the direct ground combat unit assignment prohibition, and inform future policy decisions.

Regarding other policy restrictions, the department recognizes there are practical barriers that require time to resolve to ensure the services maximize the safety and privacy of all service members while maintaining military readiness. Building upon analysis and experience, the services will develop gender-neutral physical standards for use by all members.

"Gender-neutral physical standards ensure all members can meet the physical demands of the duties they are assigned, ultimately contributing to higher states of readiness through an increased understanding of the demands we place upon our members and by preventing injuries," acting Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness Jo Ann Rooney said.

Panetta directed the services to update him in six months on assignment policy implementation and the progress made developing gender-neutral physical standards.

As required by law, these changes to policy will take effect after 30 days of continuous session of Congress, which is expected to occur later this spring.