After unscheduled trip to sea, *George Washington* returns home

By MCSA Erin Devenberg,
***USS George Washington* Public Affairs**

YOKOSUKA, Japan - The aircraft carrier *USS George Washington* (CVN 73) (*GW*) returned to its forward operating port of Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka after almost one month at sea, April 20.

"Even after being at sea all this time, we are still ahead of our maintenance schedule and it's because of you," said *GW* Commanding Officer Capt. David Lausman during an all hands call on the ship's flight deck the afternoon prior to the ship's return to Yokosuka. "The Sailors aboard this ship, our hard working crew, you are our real secret weapon."

Under normal circumstances, it would take nearly three weeks to get *GW* ready for sea while in the middle of a routine maintenance period. Following the Japan earthquake, the crew got the ship underway in an unprecedented time frame of just six days.

"That is your legacy… this is your ship, you did this, you deserve all the credit," added Lausman.

Continuing maintenance at sea was an unscheduled hurdle for the ship but one *GW* was able to overcome with the help of 466 shipyard workers from Puget Sound and Norfolk Naval Shipyard and 116 Japanese contractors from Ship Repair Facility-Japan Regional Maintenance Center Yokosuka.

"Our continued work at sea allowed us to complete more than 1,000 jobs on the ship plus 500 to 600 jobs in the plant," said Lt. Cmdr. Stephen Pomeroy, maintenance manager for *GW*. "We still have work to do, but we couldn't have gotten this far without their full support."

***USS George Washington* (CVN 73) Commanding Officer Capt. David Lausman addresses the crew during an all hands call on the flight deck April 19. *George Washington* returned to the ship's forward operating port of Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka after almost exactly one month at sea, April 20.**
U.S. Navy photo by MCSN Cheng S. Yang

During the short underway, the ship pulled into port twice, both times in Sasebo, Japan, to pick up supplies and transfer personnel. On the second visit, however, the crew of *GW* also had a chance to get off the ship an enjoy two days of liberty. Among those going ashore were more than 50 Sailors who volunteered their time at the Sakura Challenged Home, a facility for the physically and mentally handicapped.

"This particular community service event was an excellent opportunity to give our Sailors a chance to meet with some of the local people and help the community," said Lt. Cmdr. Jose Pimentel, a command chaplain assigned to *GW*.

"This project also gave them a chance to interact with people of a capacity that they may not be use to interacting with or may not be comfortable interacting with," added Pimentel.

Now back in Yokosuka, *GW* will continue her routine maintenance. For the crew, their time at sea and experiences since the earthquake has given them a newfound perspective on life.

High retention, shifting missions prompt focused retention board

From Chief of Naval Personnel Public Affairs

WASHINGTON - The Navy announced April 14 that it will conduct a focused enlisted retention board (ERB) in August for 31 specific ratings.

The ERB will be conducted as a result of record high retention and low attrition among active duty Sailors and to meet current and future planned end strength controls.

Currently, the Navy is overmanned in 31 of its 84 ratings, and as a result, many ratings have limited Perform-to-Serve (PTS) quotas available, resulting in increased competition and reduced opportunity for strong performing Sailors to reenlist. In order to enable the PTS program to work as designed to shape the force, Navy leadership has determined it is necessary to increase the opportunity for top performing Sailors to compete for a quota.

"Programs like Perform-to-Serve and selective reenlistment bonus have been effective tools at optimizing and stabilizing our force strength. Retention behavior, coupled with the shift of 6,800 billets back to sea and development of our capabilities in key areas such as ballistic missile defense (BMD), cyber and information dominance has necessitated the establishment of the enlisted retention board to meet congressionally mandated end strength and to rebalance the force," explained Chief of Naval Personnel Vice Adm. Mark Ferguson.

The board will review the records of selected third class petty officers (E-4) through senior chief petty officers (E-8) in the 31 overmanned ratings with greater than seven but less than 15 years of cumulative service as of Oct. 1 2011, and will be conducted in two independent phases -- Phase I will review E-4 to E-5 Sailors and will convene Aug. 22, 2011. Phase II will review E-6 to E-8 Sailors and will convene Sept. 26, 2011.

The board will exclude Sailors whose soft expiration of active obligated service (EAOS) date is in FY12 because they will be considered in PTS. The board will also exclude those who advanced to their current paygrade in cycles 208 (E-4/5/6), 209 (E-8/9), 210 (E-7), or 211 (E-4/5/6), are nuclear qualified, Joint Special Warfare Command enablers and those currently enrolled in the Navy's Safe Harbor program.

This quota-based board is anticipated to review roughly 16,000 records and will identify approximately 3,000 Sailors who will not be retained on active duty. In essence, this board will review roughly 6percent of the force to separate approximately 1 percent. Separation quotas will be developed by individual rating, pay grade and years of service, and will be published once the board convenes.

In an effort to provide maximum opportunities for conversion ahead of the board, eligibility requirements will be adjusted to allow eligible Sailors to convert to an undermanned rating prior to the board convening. Those Sailors approved for rating conversion prior to the board will be exempted. Procedures to apply for rating conversion will be published by May 1 and the applications must be received by June 15, 2011.

Those Sailors not selected for retention will need to separate by June 30, 2012, but qualified Sailors will be afforded the opportunity to compete for a Selected Reserve quota via PTS. The Career Transition Office (CTO) will be available to assist Sailors who desire to make this transition into the Reserve Component.

Sailors separated by this board will also have access to the Navy's transition assistance programs which includes the Transition Assistance Management Program (TAMP), employment assistance, relocation assistance for separating members stationed overseas, and other benefits for members who are involuntarily separated. Members will also be eligible for involuntary separation pay.

"Navy values the service of every Sailor. The decision to establish this board was made after careful consideration, and will allow Navy to keep our very best Sailors in these overmanned ratings, improve advancement opportunity, and enable PTS to maintain this balance into the future. We also strove to afford Sailors the opportunity to shift ratings prior to the board and to affiliate with the reserves should they not be continued on active duty."

To read the ERB announcement, NAVADMIN 129/11, visit the website www.npc.navy.mil.

Navy overmanned in 31 of 84 ratings

Currently, the Navy is overmanned in 31 of its 84 ratings. The overmanned ratings are:

- Aviation Boatswain's Mate Fuels (ABF)
- Aviation Machinist's Mate (AD)
- Aviation Electrician's Mate (AE)
- Aerographer's Mate (AG)
- Aviation Structural Mechanic (AM)
- Aviation Support Equipment Technician (AS)
- Aviation Electronics Technician (AT)
- Aircrewman Mechanical (AWF)
- Aircrew - Tactical Helicopter (AWR)
- Aircrew – Avionics (AWV)
- Aviation Maintenance Administrationman (AZ)
- Builder (BU)
- Construction Electrician (CE)
- Construction Mechanic (CM)
- Engineering Aide (EA)
- Electrician's Mate Surface (EMSW)
- Equipment Operator (EO)
- Electronics Technician, Surface Warfare (ETSW)
- Fire Controlman (FC)
- Gas Turbine Systems Technician, Electrical (GSE)
- Machinist's Mate, Surface Warfare (MMSW)
- Mineman (MN)
- Machinery Repairman (MR)
- Operations Specialist (OS)
- Parachute Rigger (PR)
- Personnel Specialist (PS)
- Religious Program Specialist (RP)
- Ship's Serviceman (SH)
- Sonar Technician Surface (STG)
- Steelworker (SW)
- Utilitiesman (UT)