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GW takes break from annual patrol, returns home to Yokosuka

Family members and friends welcome home Sailors from the aircraft carrier *USS George Washington* (CVN 73) (*GW*) after a deployment in the western Pacific Ocean. *GW* departed in May and returned Nov. 1 for a short holiday break during her summer and fall patrol.

U.S. Navy photo by MC3 David A. Cox

By MCSN Marcos Vazquez, *USS George Washington* Public Affairs

After more than 130 days at sea, the *USS George Washington* (CVN 73) (*GW*) Carrier Strike Group (CSG) is taking a break from its annual patrol of the 7th Fleet area of responsibility by returning home to Yokosuka, Japan, Nov. 1.

"We are thrilled to be back in Japan today and back with our families and friends," said Capt. David A. Lausman, *GW* commanding officer. "While we were away, our Sailors did an outstanding job carrying out their orders to help maintain peace across the region."

The *GW* CSG, commanded by Rear Adm. Dan Cloyd, is comprised of Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 5, Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 15 and guided-missile cruisers *USS Shiloh* (CG 67) and *USS Cowpens* (CG 63).

Departing Yokosuka May 18, *GW* has been patrolling the waters of the western Pacific Ocean to help enhance security, stability and prosperity across the region. A big part of that mission falls on the pilots of CVW 5, who maintain ship mission readiness with a total of 6,798 catapult launches.

While underway, *GW* Sailors spent countless hours training for a variety of incidents that could occur in port and at sea. General quarters drills were conducted routinely, totaling 460,000 man-hours. These drills helped to strengthen the crew's damage control readiness by teaching and reinstating knowledge of firefighting, dewatering and damage control techniques.

At the beginning of the patrol, *GW* participated in an undersea warfare exercise (USWEX) with Japanese naval forces from the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF). The exercise focused on training and coordination of anti-submarine warfare efforts between the maritime partners. During the exercise, JMSDF sailors were embarked aboard *GW* and were tasked with locating, tracking and completing simulated engagements with allied submarines in their vicinity.

"This exercise afforded us the opportunity of working side by side with our JMSDF counterparts," said Lt. Justin Santos, a surface operations officer for DESRON 15. "They were standing watch in the same spaces we were and holding briefs throughout the day alongside us as well. Having them on board was a benefit to the success of this exercise."

MM3 Matthew Sandlin holds his newborn daughter for the first time upon his return after being underway for six months aboard *USS George Washington* (CVN 73).

U.S. Navy photo by MC3 David A. Cox

Later in the patrol, *GW* also took part in Invincible Spirit, a four-day combined alliance military exercise with the Republic of Korea (ROK). Invincible Spirit combined U.S. and ROK military forces for operations in the waters east of the Korean peninsula and throughout Korea, further enhancing their readiness and interoperability in joint surface, air and sea operations.

"What has unfolded here in the sea, shore and over the skies of ROK is a very strong and powerful signal to those who threaten the security and stability of our special alliance and this region," said Cloyd, following the exercise. "On behalf of my staff, I would like to thank everyone for their overall participation in making this exercise a complete success. The U.S.- ROK alliance is strong; this exercise is a testament to that bond."

When the exercise began, *GW* embarked members of the U.S. and international media on board, proving a platform for their coverage. This unique opportunity for the media gave them the chance to see firsthand the working environment of *GW* Sailors. Coverage of Invincible Spirit resulted in more than 4,000 news stories and was called the most covered naval exercise in more than a decade.

The ship also hosted official visits during the exercise, which included such distinguished visitors as the ROK minister of national defense and the ROK chief of naval operations.

GW then participated in the joint military exercise Valiant Shield, an exercise in which the Marine Corps and Air Force also participated. Operations were conducted to train the participants in command and control, maritime interdiction, antisubmarine warfare, intelligence surveillance, reconnaissance and personnel recovery.

Valiant Shield brought approximately 20 U.S. Navy vessels together, including a nuclear powered aircraft carrier, a large deck amphibious assault ship, four guided-missile destroyers, four nuclear-powered submarines, two guided-missile frigates, two minesweepers and one guided-missile cruiser manned by approximately 10,000 Sailors from bases in Japan, Guam, Hawaii and San Diego.

More than 2,200 Marines from the Marine Corps' 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, as well as 150 aircraft from the 13th Air Force Expeditionary Wing took part in the exercise.

"I believe Valiant Shield went exceptionally well, all of the training objectives and exercise objectives were accomplished... and then some," said Cloyd. "Valiant Shield was designed to be a multidimensional warfare exercise, and that's exactly the way it was executed. It touched almost every facet of our war-fighting centric missions from air warfare, surface warfare to subsurface warfare and even information dominance and cyber warfare. As a unilateral exercise, it provided our forces the opportunity to train and prepare for the many bilateral exercises we have with our coalition partners in the Western Pacific."

During the summer and fall patrols, *GW* visited the Republic of Korea, Singapore, the Philippines and Thailand. At each liberty port, *GW* Sailors devoted some of their free time to lend a helping hand through various community service projects that strengthened and reestablished the connections between the United States and the western Pacific nations.

Proving to be the hottest ticket in town when in port, hundreds lined up to get a firsthand look at the Navy's only permanently forward-deployed aircraft carrier when *GW* was opened for public tours and receptions.

"It was a great opportunity for both the citizens to see what we do and for our own Sailors to showcase their pride we all share in this warship," said Chief Master-at-Arms Raymond Wendt, one of the tour guides in the Philippines. "It helps you appreciate the ship even more by seeing the excitement in the tourist's faces."

GW traveled more than 44,000 miles since the ship got underway in May 2010. Culinary specialists served a total of 3,280,000 meals while Sailors in the ship's laundry processed more than 180 tons of bulk laundry and pressed 33,000 items. Sailors also used 60,000 rolls of toilet paper.

"While we are back in our forward-deployed port of Yokosuka, this doesn't mark the end of our time at sea," said Lausman. "*GW* is always on patrol as the Navy's permanently forward-deployed carrier, and we constantly stand ready to execute our next set of orders."

INSIDE

FISC diversity celebrated with annual event

An all-volunteer multi-cultural committee with Fleet and Industrial Supply Center Yokosuka, staged its annual Hispanic-American Heritage event Oct. 15.

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SECNAV designates November as Warrior Care Month

In ALNAV 068/10, released Nov. 2 to all Navy and Marine Corps personnel, secretary of the Navy (SECNAV) designated November 2010 as Warrior Care Month.

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