Sailors, aviators celebrate 68th birthday of VFA 115 Eagles

By MC3 Charles Oki, *USS George Washington* Public Affairs

Sailors and aviators of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 115 celebrated the squadrons 68th birthday in the VFA 115 ready room on board the aircraft carrier *USS George Washington* (CVN 73) (*GW*).

An F/A-18E Super Hornet assigned to Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 115 "Eagles" makes a successful landing on the flight deck of *USS George Washington* (CVN 73) during flight operations. VFA 115 celebrated its 68th anniversary Oct. 10, commemorating its rich history of military service dating back to World War II.
U.S. Navy photo by MC3 Devon Dow

The celebration included a cake-cutting ceremony and speech by VFA 115 Commanding Officer Cmdr. Trey Sisson and was attended by members of the squadron as well as members of Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 5, Commander Task Force 70 and *GW*.

The squadron was commissioned October 10, 1942 as Torpedo Squadron (VT) 11 in San Diego, flying patrols during World War II off Guadalcanal. By the end of the war the squadron had been involved in raids over Hong Kong, the Philippines, Okinawa and the former French Indo-China. VFA 115 maintains itself as the 3rd oldest active VFA squadron in the U.S. Navy.

"It's definitely been an honor to be a part of the ceremony," said 19-year-old Airman David Ramos of Harrison, Tenn. who cut the cake as the youngest Sailor in the squadron. "It's hard to believe this squadron is as old as it is and has been around since World War II."

Following the war, VT-11 became known as the "Eagles" and the "Arabs" and had its designation changed to VFA 115 in 1996. Over the decades, the squadron has seen many upgrades in terms of technology and avionics; VFA 115 flew five different aircraft in their 68-year history from the TBF Avenger torpedo bomber over the waters of the pacific during World War II to the F/A-18E Super Hornet multi-role fighters in the skies over Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

"Birthday parties are always a lot of fun especially when we have the whole squadron here and other members of the air wing," said the 40-year-old Sisson, the oldest member of the squadron. "The celebration also gave us the opportunity to show everyone our heritage from our earliest days in World War II to now and how far we've come in 68 years."

The Eagles replaced the "Golden Dragons" of VFA 192 in December 2009, after a transpacific flight from Lemoore, Calif. VFA 115 is currently assigned to Naval Air Facility Atsugi, Japan.

GW is the Navy's only permanently forward-deployed aircraft carrier and operates from Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka in Yokosuka, Japan.

President Obama proclaims November as Military Family Month

By American Forces Press Service

President Barack Obama signed a proclamation designating November 2010 as Military Family Month. Here is the text of the president's proclamation:

"We owe each day of security and freedom that we enjoy to the members of our armed forces and their families. Behind our brave service men and women, there are family members and loved ones who share in their sacrifice and provide unending support.

"During Military Family Month, we celebrate the exceptional contributions of our military families, and we reaffirm our commitments to these selfless individuals who exemplify the highest principles of our nation.

"Across America, military families inspire us all with their courage, strength and deep devotion to our country. They endure the challenges of multiple deployments and moves; spend holidays and life milestones apart; juggle everyday tasks while a spouse, parent, son or daughter is in harm's way; and honor the service of their loved ones and the memory of those lost.

"Just as we hold a sacred trust to the extraordinary Americans willing to lay down their lives to protect us all, we also have a national commitment to support and engage our military families. They are proud to serve our country; yet, they face unique challenges because of that service.

"My administration has taken important steps to help them shoulder their sacrifice, and we are working to ensure they have the resources to care for themselves and the tools to reach their dreams. We are working to improve family resilience, enhance the educational experience of military children and ensure military spouses have employment opportunities, despite the relocations and deployment cycles of military life. Our historic investment to build a 21st-century Department of Veterans Affairs is helping to provide our veterans with the benefits and care they have earned.

"We are also standing with our service members and their families as they transition back into civilian life, providing counseling as well as job training and placement. And, through the Post-9/11 GI Bill, our veterans and their families can pursue the dream of higher education.

"However, government can only do so much. While only a fraction of Americans are in military families, all of us share in the responsibility of caring for our military families and veterans, and all sectors of our society are better off when we reach out and work together to support these patriots.

"By offering job opportunities and workplace flexibility, businesses and companies can benefit from the unparalleled dedication and skills of a service member or military spouse. Through coordination with local community groups, individuals and organizations can ensure our military families have the help they need and deserve when a loved one is deployed. Even the smallest actions by neighbors and friends send a large message of profound gratitude to the families who risk everything to see us safe and free.

"As America asks ever more of military families, they have a right to expect more of us - it is our national challenge and moral obligation to uphold that promise. If we hold ourselves to the same high standard of excellence our military families live by every day, we will realize the vision of an America that supports and engages these heroes now and for decades to come.

President Barack Obama talks on the phone in the Oval Office. The president signed a proclamation designating November 2010 as Military Family Month.
Official White House photo by Pete Souza

"Now, therefore, I, Barack Obama, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim November 2010 as Military Family Month. I call on all Americans to honor military families through private actions and public service for the tremendous contributions they make in support of our service members and our nation.

"In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-ninth day of October, in the year of our Lord two thousand ten, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-fifth."