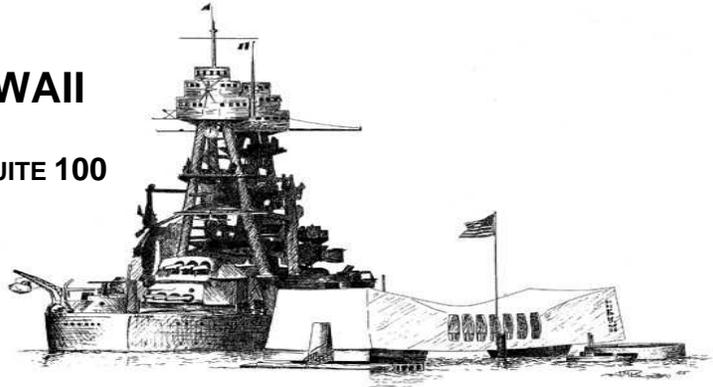


MEDIA ADVISORY

NAVY REGION HAWAII

PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE
850 TICONDEROGA STREET SUITE 100
PEARL HARBOR, HI 96860

Tel: (808) 473-2888
Fax: (808) 473-2876
www.cnic.navy.mil/hawaii



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
POC: Chief Bart Bauer, 590-8363

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USS O’Kane and USS Hopper deploy

PEARL HARBOR, HAWAII – Guided-missile destroyers, USS Hopper (DDG 70) and USS O’Kane (DDG 77) will depart Pearl Harbor Monday, Sept. 14 for independent deployments to 5th Fleet and 7th Fleet’s areas of responsibility in the Middle East and Western Pacific, respectively.

USS Hopper will be deploying in support of ballistic missile defense (BMD) to the 5th Fleet. Her crew of about 28 officers and 241 enlisted Sailors will conduct integrated operations with various carrier strike groups and coalition partners deployed to the Middle East region.

Cmdr. Timothy J. Kott, Hopper’s commanding officer, also expects to support the wider mission areas of Maritime Interdiction Operations (MIO) and Theatre Security Cooperation (TSC). “The Middle East is a complex area of operations, and our crew is trained and ready to participate in a wide variety of operations and exercises. They have worked hard in preparing for this deployment over the past four months and are ready for tasking,” said Kott.

Cmdr. Timothy Steadman, O’Kane’s commanding officer, will oversee integrated training while operating in the Western Pacific. Operating with the USS George Washington Strike Group will afford the crew of O’Kane the opportunity to improve their operating proficiency and seamlessly integrate into Seventh Fleet’s Naval Presence and Theater Security Cooperation missions.

O’Kane will be conducting a Naval Surface Fire Support (NSFS) exercise while in the Seventh Fleet’s operating area. This exercise improves the gunnery team’s proficiency in shore bombardment to support troops on the ground.

They will also participate in an annual exercise with the Japanese. This exercise tests and supports our anti-submarine warfare/anti-surface warfare/ballistic missile defense working relationship with the Japanese.

O’Kane is deploying under the Middle-Pacific Surface Combatant (MPSC) deployment concept, in which Pearl Harbor-based ships deploy to support operations in the Fifth and Seventh Fleet operating areas.

Hopper and O’Kane are under the command of Destroyer Squadron 31 led by Commodore Richard L. Clemmons Jr., and are two of eighteen U.S. ships — three cruisers and 15 destroyers — fitted with the full Aegis BMD capability in the Navy, allowing them to detect, track and engage enemy ballistic missiles.

The destroyers are embarking on separate missions but both will support maritime ballistic missile defense, a core capability of the Navy that will enhance deterrence by providing an umbrella of protection to forward-deployed forces and friends and allies, while contributing to the larger architecture planned for defense of the United States.

Hopper and O’Kane help provide deterrence, promote peace and security, preserve freedom of the seas and humanitarian/disaster response within 3rd Fleet’s 50 million square mile area of responsibility in the Eastern Pacific as well as supporting the Navy’s Maritime Strategy when forward deployed.

Media interested in covering the ships’ departure must contact Chief Bart Bauer, Navy Region Hawaii Public Affairs Office, by 3 p.m. Friday, September 11, 2009, at 473-3788 or 590-8363. Media will be met at the Pass and ID parking lot adjacent to the Nimitz Gate at 8:15 a.m. on Monday, September 14, 2009, to be escorted onto the pier.

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