# *GW*, CVW 5 complete Super Hornet fighting force

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*USS GEORGE WASHINGTON*, At Sea - The "Dambusters" of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 195 returned to the flight deck aboard *USS George Washington* (CVN 73) June 17, after completing the transition from the F/A-18C Hornet to the new and more advanced F/A-18E Super Hornet.

The return of VFA 195 make *George Washington* and Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 5 the first and only completely Super Hornet-equipped team in the Navy.

*George Washington* now returns to sea with a total of four Super Hornet squadrons; 44 jet fighters in all.

"Having an all Super Hornet airwing definitely makes the CAG 5 and *George Washington* team a more lethal combination. These newer aircraft incorporate the latest in aviation technology. It's an honor to be this airwing's commander," said Capt. Daniel Cave, CVW 5 commanding officer.

The Super Hornet squadrons are now equipped with a broad arsenal of technologically advanced avionics including the faster APG-79 Active Electronically Scanned Array (AESA) radar.

With a quick radar beam that can be steered at close to the speed of light, the new and improved system offers superior performance capabilities and makes the Super Hornet an even more powerful precision strike platform, providing revolutionary capability in favor of the *George Washington*/CAG 5 carrier strike group.

"There are some pretty significant upgrades in capabilities on these Super Hornets," said Cmdr. David Culpepper, VFA 195 commanding officer "The self protection, countermeasures capabilities and radar are much better than that of the legacy Hornets. I get to fly in the newest and best airplane out here, and you can't help but feel good to be the user of a very significant tax payer effort. That really is pretty cool. It obviously shows just how important the role of the *George Washington* and CAG 5 airwing is in the region. We are without question the most capable airwing in the Navy right now."

**An F/A-18E Super Hornet assigned to the Argonauts of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 147 prepares to make an arrested recovery on the flight deck aboard the aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76) June 12.**

**U.S. Navy photo by MC3 Shawn J. Stewart**

The transition to the new Super Hornets has a trickle-down effect for the Aviation Intermediate Maintenance Department (AIMD) personnel working below decks.

With the arrival of new Super Hornets, their days have become a little less difficult.

"The transition has definitely made the AIMD workload lighter because now that all of the squadron's are flying Super Hornets, we only have to deal with one type of aircraft maintenance," said Aviation Electronics Technician 3rd Class Gregory Shaw Jr. "It has shortened the back log of repairs by reducing the time it takes to get the parts and [it has] minimized training time for personnel. The transformation to an all Super Hornet airwing is definitely making life a little easier."

For the younger Dambuster pilots who started their naval aviation careers in the older Hornets, the transition to the Super Hornets is like taking a step into the 21st century; a quantum leap they are thrilled to make.

"I think it's something special to be a part of this squadron and the CAG 5 airwing," said Lt. Brad Thomson, VFA 195 Super Hornet pilot. "We're forward-deployed and conducting operations in a strategically important part of the world, and now we have the most technologically advanced aircraft making us the only all Super Hornet airwing.

"It's just a good feeling to know there are very important people in Washington making sure we have the best assets possible to do this job."

# Enlisted Retention Board brief keeps Sailors informed

**By MCSN Justin E. Yarborough, USS George Washington Public Affairs**

*USS GEORGE WASHINGTON*, at sea – Command Career Counselors aboard the aircraft carrier USS George Washington (CVN 73) (*GW*), now underway in the western Pacific for its summer patrol, briefed fellow Sailors about the Navy's recently announced Enlisted Retention Board (ERB), June 19.

The ERB is a review board that will look at the service records of approximately 16,000 Sailors from 31 overmanned rates and select 3,000 for separation from active duty service.

Of the 5,500 Sailors currently aboard *GW*, more than 130 Sailors could be affected by the board's findings.

To inform and advise those Sailors, a meeting was held in the ship's forecastle.

"We know that this is a difficult situation for many Sailors, who have a passion for serving their country," said *GW* Commanding Officer Capt. David Lausman, who attended the briefing. "We are here for you and will do everything possible to help you through this process."

Among the topics discussed were the criteria the ERB is using to evaluate Sailors when reviewing their record, options available to Sailors under review and why the ERB is being held in the first place.

"This ERB is being conducted because we have 31 rates that are so overmanned they are holding up the Perform-To-Serve system," said Senior Chief Navy Counselor (SW/AW) Tyrone Jiles, one of the brief's presenters.

Enlisted Sailors aren't the only ones in danger of being cut loose from the Navy; an undetermined number of officers will also be dismissed. Currently there are approximately 328,000 active-duty personnel and 100,000 reservists serving in the Navy around the world and officials believe those numbers are just too high.

"So this is not something that is just being felt in the lower ranks, the Navy all over is feeling the effects of being overmanned," said Jiles.

For those who are not selected to remain on active duty in the Navy, their options include joining the reserve or transferring to the Army through the "Blue to Green" program.

There is one other option for Sailors in overmanned rates who want to stay Navy, put in a rate conversion package for a career field that is not overmanned.

Sailors with more than six years of active duty service who are involuntarily separated are entitled to involuntarily separation pay.

No set amount has been determined yet as each Sailor's situation is different. For example, if someone is involuntarily separated but during their time on active duty, they accumulated a PRT failure, they will not be eligible for the full amount.

Whatever the amount is, it is expected to be a one-time allotment.

"I don't really agree with the decision to have an ERB, but I guess it's one of those things that has to be done," said Aviation Technician (AW) 2nd Class Jose Leal, one of the Sailors who attended the briefing. "And it's good that they have opportunities for those who are selected to separate."

Phase one of the ERB is scheduled to convene Aug. 22 with E-4 and E-5 records under review. Phase two for E-6 to E-8 starts Sept. 26.