Fleet Activities, Yokosuka, Japan

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# Quantico, Kinnick students share graduation

**By Joe Schmitt, CFAY Public Affairs**

Nile C. Kinnick High School seniors who participated in the voluntary departure in March graduated with seniors from Quantico High School in Virginia June 3.

The seniors left Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka after the earthquake and tsunami struck Japan March 11. The place they relocated to was called a "safe haven" location. The students either enrolled in an online "virtual high school" or found a high school that would enroll them in their safe haven location.

Some of the students were not able to return to Japan because of a Permanent Change of Station (PCS) rule. PCS happens when a service member completes their tour at a duty station and elects to move somewhere else. If the students were part of families who are in their "PCS window," then they would not be able to return to Kinnick for graduation.

"We had 3,800 students relocate and I was brought over to help meet any need they might have," said Wendy Cooley, Kinnick assistant principal. "Initially, the students were told that they would not be able to graduate with their class. They would have to be either a guest student or a visiting student and they would not receive a diploma from that school. They students had gone so far with the DoDEA (Department of Defense Education Activity) school system that they would get a DoDEA diploma. So, we wanted to see if we could get a real graduation ceremony for these students."

**Students from Kinnick High School students (right) pose with students from Quantico High School (left) and the first lady of the United States, Michelle Obama. The Kinnick High School students graduated at the Quantico High School after participating in the voluntary departure in March.**

**Photo by Robert Gonzalez**

Quantico High School was chosen as the location for the students to have their graduation ceremony and receive their diplomas.

"It was a natural fit. The school had the latest graduation schedule of all of the DoDEA schools," said Cooley. "We missed our deadline but, we could get the students to this one because it was a longer schedule. Also, the school was in a central location. So, more than half could simply drive to the school for the ceremony."

The commencement speaker at the graduation was first lady of the United States, Michelle Obama.

"Michelle Obama honored our students in her speech," Cooley said. "They did a lot of fact gathering before the speech. They wanted to know how many students there were, how many times they've been deployed and in what countries they've gone to school. They took all of that and integrated it into her speech. It was a real honor to hear her acknowledge our Kinnick students."

The students got their diplomas, flipped their tassels, took photos and graduated with their friends in front of teachers and families just like their classmates did at Kinnick thousands of miles away.

"It highlights the DoDEA commitment to service members and their families," said Cooley. They might have to sacrifice some things when they join the military but, their child's education will not be one of those sacrifices. They are risking their lives for our country and we say that whether you are in the states or serving overseas, your children will have access to a quality education."

# *USS George Washington* conducts carrier qualifications

**By MC3 Jacob D. Moore,**
***USS George Washington* Public Affairs**

*USS GEORGE WASHINGTON*, at sea - Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 5 pilots returned to *USS George Washington* (CVN 73) (*GW*), now underway in the Western Pacific, for carrier qualifications (CQ) as a kickoff to the carrier's 2011 Summer Patrol, June 16.

"Landing on the ship can be very dangerous and takes a lot of practice," said Commander, CVW 5 Capt. Daniel Cave. "We do CQ so we can get everyone up to speed and proficient in landing on the carrier."

Since December 2010, *GW* has been pier side at its forward operating port Commander, Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY), Japan, undergoing maintenance. It has been more than six months since the CVW 5 pilots have landed on a carrier at sea. CQ gives those pilots time to hone their skills at landing on a pitching flight deck.

"To qualify, they have to make two successful touch-and-go's and two traps," said Lt. Cmdr. Eric Harrington, *GW* flight deck officer. "Once they do that, they then can come out at night where they have to make two more traps to be fully qualified."

Before landing on board *GW*, the pilots had to complete field carrier landing practice (FCLP) on the small island of Iwo To, formerly known as Iwo Jima. There, the pilots practice landing procedures, perform touch-and-go's on land, and are graded on their performance by landing signal officers.

Due to the unique, forward-deployed schedule of *GW*, CQ puts Sailors from the ship's Air department in a high pressure environment.

What may take other carriers a few weeks to do, *GW* has to complete in just a matter of days.

"We can get this done; qualify all the pilots in just three days," said *GW* Flight Deck Leading Petty Officer Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handling) 1st Class Reginald Hobson, from San Antonio, Texas. "In two words, it's controlled chaos. It makes things a little more stressful and busy, but with a few long days, a little hard work and great teamwork, every pilot in the air wing is now qualified."

The return of CVW 5 also marks a new chapter in naval aviation history. *GW* is now the first carrier in the fleet to transition completely from the F/A-18 Hornet to the F/A-18 Super Hornet.

"The aircraft availability will go up with newer aircraft being on board," said Cave. "The Super Hornet is definitely more survivable and more capable."

*George Washington* began its summer patrol departing CFAY June 12..

*see related story pg. 8*

**An F/A-18E Super Hornet assigned to the Eagles of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 115 conducts a touch-and-go landing aboard the aircraft carrier *USS George Washington* (CVN 73). *George Washington* is conducting a summer patrol in the western Pacific Ocean.**

**U.S. Navy photo by MC3 Adam K. Thomas**

## INSIDE

### 7th Fleet, Indonesian navy expand partnership

**Commander, U.S. 7th Fleet said June 17 the U.S. Navy will expand its "strong and growing" friendship with the Indonesian Navy.**

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### Celebrating the birthday of the United States of America

CFAY will hold an Independence Day celebration July 4 from 3 to 7 p.m. The event will include carnival games, petting zoo, food booths and a youth bike parade and ice cream social.

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