USS George Washington returns to Yokosuka

By Lt. Cmdr. James Stockman,
***USS George Washington* Public Affairs**

The only forward-deployed U.S. Navy aircraft carrier returned to its forward-operating port at Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka July 26 to conclude the first-half of its 2012 patrol.

USS George Washington (CVN 73) and its embarked air wing, Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 5, traveled more than 10,800 nautical miles; conducted exercises and operations with the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) and Republic of Korea (ROK) navy; and visited Busan, ROK and Hong Kong, since departing Yokosuka two months earlier.

"The real story today is not about the awesomeness or immenseness of this great warship; it's more importantly about the men and women who own, maintain and operate the equipment day in and day out," said *George Washington* commanding officer Capt. David A. Lausman. "The Sailors are the true secret weapon and heartbeat of this aircraft carrier. They are the reason for *George Washington*'s sustained success and ability to quickly answer our country's call 365 days a year. The crew continues to impeccably represent the ideals and strength of our country's forward deployed naval force to every country they visit."

George Washington successfully conducted a tri-lateral (TRILAT) exercise with the JMSDF and ROK Navy in the East China Sea June 21-22.

The event marked the first exercise involving all three countries and a carrier strike group. This TRILAT was followed by operations with the ROK navy in the waters west of the Korean peninsula, June 23-25.

The TRILAT and ROK navy operations reinforced regional security and stability and increased interoperability, operational proficiency and readiness.

The exercise and operations included integrated helicopter operations; visit, board, search and seizure (VBSS) exchanges and demonstrations; communication links; dynamic ship maneuvers; and liaison officer exchanges.

"We have and will continue to demonstrate our commitment to our long-standing allies in the western Pacific," said Lausman. "The U.S. Navy is dedicated to helping enhance the security and stability in the Asia-Pacific region, and our forward presence activities and engagements in this region strengthen our alliances and partnerships."

The Nimitz-class aircraft carrier and its crew also commemorated the 20th anniversary of the ship on July 2. The crew celebrated this momentous event with a "steel-beach picnic' on the flight deck, and a talent show and cake cutting ceremony in the hangar bay.

George Washington was commissioned on July 4, 1992 and became a full-fledged U.S. warship capable after six years of construction, 40 million man-hours and $3.5 billion.

"This was a great way for our Sailors to get away for a little bit and mingle with the crew," said *George Washington* Command Master Chief Shaun Brahmsteadt, at *the* anniversary ceremony. "Twenty years is a long time for a vessel. It's a huge milestone and a great birthday to make for the crew; we're looking forward to 25."

George Washington hosted receptions for more than 900 ROK and Hong Kong military and civilian dignitaries, conducted 23 ship tours for more than 2,000 guests, and participated in 25 community service (COMSERV) projects and 23 Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) tours.

"These [COMSERV] projects help give our Sailors a sense of unity and compassion for the people they serve. They go out and help people who are in need and it gives them a sense of responsibility," said Lt. Cmdr. Young Song, principle assistant of the *George Washington* Command Religious Ministries Department. "As for the people who are receiving this assistance, they realize that we are here for their well-being because they do not expect help from military members. It is a conduit to build a great nation-to-nation relationship, and it is extremely important for us to create a strong image while representing U.S. forces abroad."

LS3 Michael Lawney, from Clearfield Penn., meets his new born son for the first time after the U.S. Navy's forward-deployed aircraft carrier *USS George Washington* (CVN 73) returned to its forward operating port of Yokosuka, Japan. The Nimitz-class aircraft carrier departed Fleet Activities Yokosuka on May 26 to begin its 2012 patrol.

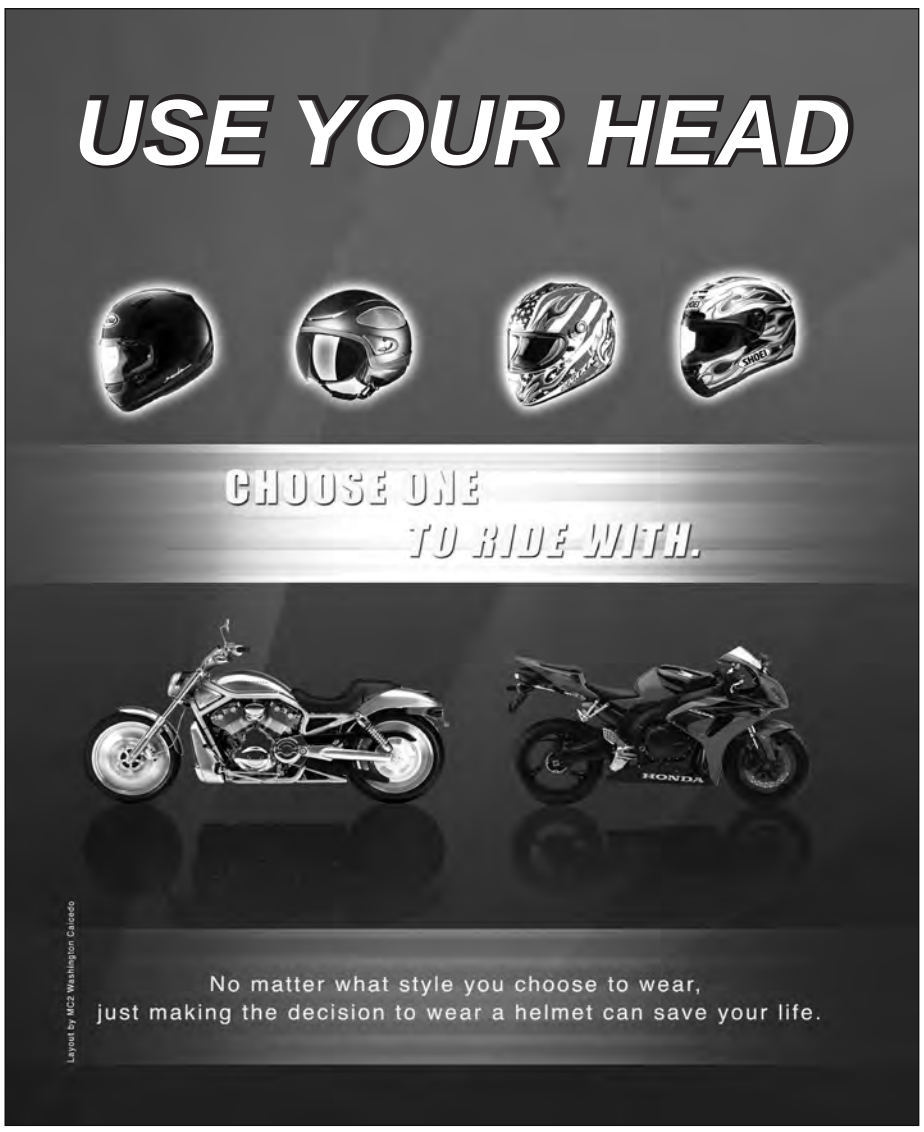
U.S. Navy photo by MC3 Sean La Marr

Additionally, *George Washington* hosted 25 Midshipmen from 14 Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps units throughout the U.S. as part of the summer cruise program. Midshipmen participate in these annual summer training cruises to enhance their professional development.

They observed, or participated in, shipboard evolutions, which included General Quarters drills, Captain's Mast, Rigid-Hull Inflatable Boat operations, replenishment-at-sea, weapons familiarization and qualifications, and underway bridge watches.

"The assignment of these Midshipmen to operational fleet units provides them with valuable motivational and instructional experiences not attainable in their normal classroom environment," said Lt. Cmdr. Patrick Callan, *George Washington*'s training officer.

Other highlights from the first half of *George Washington*'s 2012 patrol, include first aircraft carrier to deploy with a full EA-18 Growler squadron, completed its 150,000th arresting recovery June 16 and hosted four Australian maritime warfare officers.

During its mid-patrol break, the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier will conduct a Board of Inspection and Survey from Aug. 5-10 to ensure that it is properly equipped for prompt, reliable, sustained mission readiness at sea.

George Washington will also conduct a change-of-command ceremony on Aug. 11, where Capt. Gregory Fenton will relieve Lausman as commanding officer.