VFA-115 joins *George Washington*, CVW-5 team

By MC3 David Cox, *USS George Washington* **Public Affairs**

When Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 5 embarked aboard *USS George Washington* (CVN 73) for the ship's carrier qualifications, they brought a new partner to the fight, the Eagles of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 115.

Though most VFA-115 Sailors today are new to CVW-5, for the squadron, returning to the forward-deployed naval forces is more of a homecoming after a 13-year absence.

In 1996, the Eagles left CVW-5 for Lemoore, Calif. to transition from A-6E Intruders to F/A-18C Hornets, an airframe they flew for only a short period before again transitioning to the F/A-18E Super Hornets, the airframe they still fly today. Since then, they have distinguished themselves in flying combat operations and earning two Battle "E" awards during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"Besides the combat experience the squadron has had during major combat evolutions, we are better known for our professionalism and teamwork, and we are looking forward to carrying that on while working with CVW-5 and the *George Washington*," said Cmdr. Trey Sisson, VFA-115 commanding officer.

"We've got 11 fantastic airplanes with the latest and greatest in F/A-18E [Super Hornet] technology, but what we've really got that's even better are some fantastic Sailors who are excited about being here," said Sisson.

According to the squadron's website, the squadron's 11 jets surpassed 70,000 hours free of Class "A" mishaps during their transpacific flight to Japan.

Though VFA-115 joined CVW-5 in December 2009, *George Washington*'s carrier qualifications mark the first time they have deployed together.

"I don't consider our transition complete until we've fully integrated into the *George Washington* and CVW-5," said Sisson.

An F/A-18C Hornet assigned to the Dambusters of Strike Fire Squadron (VFA) 195 lands aboard the aircraft carrier *USS George Washington* (CVN 73) May 19. *George Washington* returned from its deployment June 9, after completing carrier qualifications in the western Pacific Ocean.

Photo by MCSN Danielle A. Brandt

According to VFA-115 Sailors, that integration, with other squadrons on board, is already happening.

"It's amazing how efficiently we are able to come together to get the job done," said Aviation Machinist's Mate 3rd Class Joe Normil.

"We're here to support the air wing and our guys are team players, our Sailors are hard workers and honest, they believe in honor, courage and commitment, and are glad to be apart of this great ship," said VFA-115 Command Master Chief (AW/SW) Domingo Soto.

Soto also mentioned that due to the long absence from Japan that many of the Sailors will now have to adapt to a forward-deployed environment.

"Some of our Sailors have never been forward deployed. Japan is a whole new area, so we're trying to get them used to the carrier and sea life. We're really depending on our experienced personnel and the rest of the air wing to help them adapt," said Soto.

USN, JMSDF oceanographers celebrate United States, Japan security pact anniversary

By Naval Oceanography Antisubmarine Warfare Center Public Affairs

Naval Oceanography Antisubmarine Warfare Center (NOAC), Yokosuka, Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) Oceanographic Command (OGC) and JMSDF Antisubmarine Warfare Center (ASWC) celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan with a friendly day of sports May 26.

"Everyday NOAC works side by side with JMSDF oceanographers from Antisubmarine Warfare Center and Oceanographic Command to provide the best support USN and JMSDF in order to enhance regional stability and improve war fighter effectiveness," said Commanding Officer Naval Oceanography Antisubmarine Warfare Center Cmdr. John Okon. "But, today we took a broader view, and reflected on what our two great countries have accomplished together over the past 50 years and had some fun doing so."

NOAC welcomed Sailors from ASWC and OGC with an American-style barbecue, horseshoes, volleyball and softball. JMSDF OGC Commander Capt. Yoshufumi Sakai, and JMSDF ASWC Commanding Officer Capt. Shigetaka Nishimura threw out the ceremonial first pitch of the softball game, which ended in a hard fought battle with NOAC claiming a 17-9 victory over ASWC/OGC.

Other Senior JMSDF Officers present included OGC Chief Staff Officer Capt. Sumio Nagai, Weather Support Unit Commanding Officer Cmdr. Chitoshi Matsuyama, , ASWC Executive Officer Cmdr. Yoshiyuki Nakagama and OGC Operations Officer Cmdr. Akira Kuninaka.

NOAC participates in numerous bilateral events with JMSDF OGC and ASWC throughout the year including quarterly oceanography working groups, American and Japanese style social events, personnel exchanges, table-top exercises, and operational meteorology and oceanography war fighter support workshops and briefings.

"We are just trying to do our part for this historic anniversary to reflect on the rich history of our two countries and to forge a stronger friendship for the future," said Okon. "These diverse events bring us closer together. They serve as productive venues to enjoy friendship with our host nation, share American culture and discuss bilateral and mutually cooperative areas in oceanography and meteorology.

JMSDF and NOAC personnel participate in a game of horse shoes during a sports day, May 26.

Photo by AGAN John Bullington

"This was just the first of many celebrations we have planned throughout the year. Our next bilateral celebration between the three oceanography commands will be on the top of Mt. Fuji the first week of August"