Fitzgerald Returns to San Diego Two Years After Fatal Collision



The USS Fitzgerald arrives at Naval Base San Diego following more than two years of restoration and modernization at Huntington Ingalls Industries' Ingalls Shipbuilding's Pascagoula, Mississippi, shipyard. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Kevin C. Leitner

SAN DIEGO – The guided-missile destroyer USS Fitzgerald arrived back at its homeport in San Diego on July 2 following more than two years of restoration and modernization after the warship was damaged in a collision in 2017.

"Returning Fitzgerald to the fleet has truly been a team effort," said Cmdr. Scott Wilbur, the Fitzgerald's commanding officer. "I'm incredibly proud of what this crew has done over the last few years, bringing our ship back to the fleet. We're happy to be home in San Diego to continue our training. I'm excited for what lies ahead."

In the early morning hours of June 17, 2017, the Fitzgerald was involved in a collision with the containership MV ACX Crystal, seriously damaging the destroyer. Seven of the Fitzgerald's crew were killed. Several others were injured, including the ship's commanding officer at the time, Cmdr. Bryce Benson.

The Fitzgerald's crew completed multiple training and certification events, such as navigation assessment and light off assessment (LOA), to ensure the crew was at peak readiness to operate the ship. The crew also completed 140 simulator hours. The Fitzgerald already completed three of the 23 certifications – search and rescue, medical and anti-terrorism – required for all surface ships prior to

operational tasking.

While in San Diego, the crew will continue to conduct simulator and at-sea training. The ship will complete extensive training and certification through basic, advanced and integrated phases.

To restore the impacted spaces to full operations and functionality, various hull, mechanical and electrical (HM&E), combat system and command, control, communications, computers and intelligence (C5I) repairs were completed. These repairs ranged from partial to complete refurbishment of impacted spaces, to replacement of equipment such as the radar and electronic warfare suite; the ship also received HM&E, combat system and C5I modernization upgrades.

Due to the extent and complexity of the restoration, both repair and construction procedures were used to accomplish the restoration and modernization efforts.

“The Huntington Ingalls team in coordination with Naval Surface Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet and Naval Sea Systems Command has ensured USS Fitzgerald is a repaired, modernized and capable warship,” said Capt. Jay Clark, commander of Destroyer Squadron 1, where Fitzgerald is assigned. “The Fighting Fitz crew is resilient, competent and ready to succeed in the extensive system validations, training, and certifications needed for follow on high-end operations.”

Prior to departing Pascagoula for San Diego, Fitzgerald’s crew began a pre-movement sequester on May 23 in accordance with Navy pre-deployment rules – compliance with Navy and CDC guidance minimizes the spread of COVID-19.