Ford Weapons Elevators Set for Completion by Summer 2021 Shock Trials



Huntington Ingalls Industries-Newport News Shipbuilding division contractors aboard the aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford test a lower-stage weapons elevator. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Apprentice Riley McDowell

ARLINGTON, Va. – The installation and turnover of the advanced weapons elevators on the aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford is proceeding well, with the goal to complete the work by summer 2021, a top U.S. Navy official said.

"We need to get all of the elevators up and running prior to her full-ship shock trials planned for [summer 2021]," James. F. Geurts, assistant secretary for research, development and acquisition, told reporters during an April 16 teleconference.

He said that the carrier had just returned from 32 days at sea where it conducted carrier qualifications for fleet and student pilots, logging 1,352 catapult launches and arrested landings – “generating readiness for the fleet” – and that one lower elevator had completed testing.

“I’m pleased with the performance of the shipyard,” Geurts said. “Ford in the [post-delivery testing and trials] period deployed at least 50% of the time. I have been very proud of the shipbuilder’s creativeness in getting the elevators worked on while the ship is underway. We’re ahead slightly of the schedule. My main focus is getting these first two lower elevators turned over [to the crew] because that will allow full access from the magazine all the way to the flight deck.”

Geurts said the priority is to give the crew access to the magazines and the second is adding redundancy and capacity. He said a lesson learned during the elevator installation was to have elevator specialists among the shipbuilder’s work force.

“You can’t just have any trade work on the elevators,” he said. “What the shipbuilder has done is create essentially an elevator trade [with] a separate schoolhouse. We’re essentially using Ford to build the teams that will then continue and flow all the way through [the subsequent carriers, CVNs 79 through 81]. There is work being done on those follow-on carriers.

“They’re also going to have to improve their efficiency at getting the work done.”