

Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group Commences Multi-Week Exercise to Fully Certify as Combat-Deployable U.S. Warship



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ATLANTIC OCEAN – The Sailors, ships, squadrons and staffs of the Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group (GRFCSG) commenced their final deployment certification exercise, Composite

Training Unit Exercise (COMPTUEX), March 2.

“The GRFCSG demonstrated to the world what high-end naval warfare and integrated NATO interoperability looks like when it sailed on its inaugural deployment in 2022,” said Rear Adm. Greg Huffman, Commander, Carrier Strike Group (CSG) 12. “Now, the strike group is initiating its final step in fully certifying as a combat-deployable warship. COMPTUEX will further demonstrate that our carrier strike group is a combat-ready naval force capable of conducting a full spectrum of integrated maritime, joint, and combined operations.”

The crew of the first-in-class aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) man the rails as the ship returns to Naval Station Norfolk, Nov. 26, following the inaugural deployment with the Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group (GRFCSG). More than 4,600 Sailors assigned to Ford operated in U.S. 2nd Fleet and 6th Fleet, increasing interoperability and interchangeability with NATO Allies and partners. Throughout the deployment, the GRFCSG sailed more than 9,200 miles, completed more than 1,250 sorties, expended 78.3 tons of ordnance, completed 13 underway replenishments and hosted more than 400 distinguished visitors. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Jackson Adkins)

Orchestrated by CSG 4 staff, COMPTUEX is designed to test and push the limits of the first-in-class aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) through a thorough, multi-week scenario that will prepare the crew for high-end warfighting.

“It is an honor to lead our awesome team through this challenging exercise, and I am confident our Sailors will deliver,” said Capt. Paul Lanzilotta, Ford’s commanding officer. “Gerald R. Ford Sailors and those hard-working professionals on our extended team, Carrier Air Wing Eight and embarked staffs have worked diligently toward this goal for years, learning and mastering an array of new systems. Their fortitude and resiliency inspires and humbles me every day.

After we complete COMPTUEX, Ford and our crew will be fully integrated with the carrier strike group as a cohesive, multi-mission fighting machine, ready to sail over the horizon to support national tasking.”

Focused on a range of simulated combat situations, including aircraft, submarine and missile attacks, ship casualties and engineering and communication drills, COMPTUEX’s scenario will evolve and mirror the real-world geopolitical environment to prepare the GRFCSG for its upcoming deployment.

“Going into COMPTUEX, the capstone training event prior to deployment, every warrior in Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 8 is looking forward to getting underway to further hone our tactical edge while operating from the sea onboard the world’s most advanced and capable aircraft carrier, the USS Gerald R. Ford,” said Capt. Dan Catlin, Commander, CVW 8.

This will be Ford’s first COMPTUEX. This training will allow the carrier strike group to increase staff proficiency across various warfighting functions and provided a unique experience to exercise naval interoperability.

“The Greyhounds are excited for the challenges we’ll face during COMPTUEX to prepare ourselves to deploy as part of the Gerald R Ford Strike Group,” said Capt. Mac Harkin, Commander, Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 2. “We are excited to be a part of this team along with Ford, CAG 8, IWC and Normandy as we train and prepare for our upcoming deployment.”

The GRFCSG includes the staffs of CSG 12, CVW-8 and DESRON 2 stationed in Norfolk, Va. Participating units include the aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford, Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Normandy (CG 60), and Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers USS Ramage (DDG 61), USS McFaul (DDG 74) homeported in Norfolk, Va. and USS Thomas Hudner (DDG 116) homeported in Mayport, Fl. CVW-8 squadrons include strike fighter squadrons VFA-213, VFA-31, VFA-37 and VFA-87 stationed

in Norfolk, Va. at Naval Air Station Oceana; electronic attack squadron VAQ-142 stationed in Whidbey Island, Wash. at Naval Air Station Whidbey Island; airborne command and control squadron VAW-124 stationed in Norfolk, Va. at Naval Air Station Oceana; fleet logistics support squadron VRC-40 stationed in Norfolk, Va. at Naval Air Station Oceana; helicopter maritime strike squadron HSM-70 stationed in Jacksonville, Fl. At Naval Air Station Jacksonville; and helicopter sea combat squadron HSC-9 stationed in Norfolk, Va. at Naval Air Station Oceana.

USS Gerald R. Ford is the U.S. Navy's newest and most advanced aircraft carrier. As the first-in-class ship of Ford-class aircraft carriers, CVN 78 represents a generational leap in the U.S. Navy's capacity to project power on a global scale. Ford-class aircraft carriers introduce 23 new technologies, including Electromagnetic Aircraft Launch System, Advanced Arresting Gear and Advanced Weapons Elevators. The new systems incorporated onto Ford-class ships are designed to generate a higher sortie rate with a 20% smaller crew than a Nimitz-class carrier, paving the way forward for naval aviation.

CSG 4 is a team that consists of experienced Sailors, Marines, government civilians and reservists, who mentor, train and assess U.S. 2nd Fleet combat forces to forward deploy in support and defense of national interests. CSG 4's experts shape the readiness of U.S. 2nd Fleet Carrier Strike Groups (CSG), Expeditionary Strike Groups (ESG), Amphibious Readiness Groups (ARG) and independent deploying ships through live, at sea and synthetic training, as well as academic instruction. Along with its subordinate commands, Tactical Training Group Atlantic (TTGL) and Expeditionary Warfare Training Group Atlantic (EWTGL), CSG 4 prepares every Atlantic-based CSG, ARG and independent deployer for sustained forward-deployed high-tempo operations.

For more information about the USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78), visit <https://www.airlant.usff.navy.mil/cvn78/> and follow

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