

Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group visit underscores Lakehurst's enduring partnership with the fleet



Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J. – After a historic 11-month deployment that took them from South America to the Middle East, senior leaders from USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) visited NAWCAD Lakehurst on July 15 to thank the New Jersey personnel for their support and explore new ways to work together before the ship returns to sea.

The delegation included Rear Adm. Gavin Duff, commander of Carrier Strike Group 12; Rear Adm. Todd “Toad” Evans, NAWCAD commander; and Gerald R. Ford commanding officer Capt. David Skarosi.

“Throughout our most recent, record-breaking 326-day deployment that covered more than 86,000 miles, we launched and recovered over 11,000 fixed-wing aircraft flights,” Duff

said. "NAWCAD Lakehurst was with the ship's aircraft launch and recovery every step of the way. Whether in-person or at the far end of a phone line 24 hours a day, the committed professionals of Lakehurst are instrumental in our success. They help our Sailors operate, maintain and advance the reliability of these key systems."

The visit began with a meet and greet where Lakehurst personnel had the opportunity to ask questions and hear directly from the officers about how Lakehurst's work extended across the globe during the deployment. The group then toured several Lakehurst labs, including the Carrier Analysis Lab, the Advanced Arresting Gear (AAG) Software Support Activity, and the Electromagnetic Aircraft Launch System (EMALS) Software Support Activity.

From there, the guests traveled to the Prototype and Manufacturing Division, where they got a firsthand look at the facilities and team members who develop, repair and upgrade the equipment the crew uses every day. The tour concluded with visits to the EMALS test site and the Runway Arrested Landing Site.

Duff said that with Gerald R. Ford serving as the flagship for Carrier Strike Group 12, there are countless examples of Lakehurst's contributions directly supporting the warfighter and advancing technology. Those contributions range from the development of EMALS and AAG, to manufacturing critical safety items such as barricades and cross-deck pendants, to operating the "schoolhouses" where Sailors train on the systems that enable the ship's power projection capability.

With more Ford-class carriers planned in the years ahead, Duff said he sees many opportunities for the relationship between the fleet and Lakehurst to expand.

"As the Ford-class continues to grow, the partnership we have with NAWCAD will remain strong and pivotal to advancing the

warfighting excellence of Gerald R. Ford and improving the already superior performance of EMALS and AAG,” Duff said.

NAWCAD Lakehurst Executive Director Sean Brennan called the visit an opportunity for our dedicated civilian, contractor, and military workforce to hear feedback from our Fleet customers.

“Rear Adm. Duff drew the direct connection between the work we do every day and the Strike Group’s ability to perform their mission and come home safely,” Brennan said. “I couldn’t be more proud of our NAWCAD workforce and the critical combat capabilities they provide the nation.”

For Duff, the visit was also a homecoming. He grew up in neighboring Toms River, took school field trips to the Lakehurst installation and later attended the United States Naval Academy to begin his Navy career. He recalled sailing on the Toms River and Barnegat Bay and meeting people who fueled his passion for the water and his desire to serve his country at sea.

“Those experiences, the schools and of course my parents all developed a foundation of hard work, relationships, love of learning, drive, leadership and adventure, which remain core elements that I believe are important for success,” Duff said. “Once I became a naval aviator, the impact of Lakehurst, and the individuals who serve there, grew with each passing tour.”