

Hospital Ship Comfort Departs NYC, Prepared for Future COVID-19 Response



The Navy's Blue Angels and the U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds fly over the hospital ship USNS Comfort on April 28 to honor frontline COVID-19 relief workers with formations over New York City, Newark and Trenton, New Jersey, and Philadelphia. The Comfort left New York on its return to Norfolk, Virginia, on April 30. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Kleynia R. McKnight

NEW YORK – The hospital ship USNS Comfort departed New York City on April 30 after supporting the Pentagon's COVID-19 response assistance to New York and New Jersey residents during the novel coronavirus outbreak, according to a U.S. 2nd Fleet news release.

The Comfort has been at Pier 90 in New York City for a month,

providing relief to a health care system stressed by the surge of COVID-19 patients. Even as the ship departs New York, the Comfort and its embarked medical task force remain prepared for future tasking. The U.S. Navy, along with other U.S. Northern Command-dedicated forces, remains engaged throughout the nation in support of the broader COVID-19 response.

[See: Navy Provides Medical Care to Infected Sailors of USS Kidd, Will Disinfect Ship](#)

[See: Navy Opens Deeper Inquiry Into Theodore Roosevelt; Move Delays Decision on Captain's Reinstatement](#)

"USNS Comfort arrived in New York City to provide relief to frontline health care providers, and each patient who was brought aboard ensured one more bed was available in a local hospital," said Vice Adm. Andrew Lewis, commander of the 2nd Fleet and Maritime Component Element-East. "While the ship is departing New York City, make no mistake, the fight is not over, and we stand ready to support the response to COVID-19 in whatever capacity we are needed."

Comfort, which arrived in New York City March 30, was originally tasked with providing care to non-COVID patients, bringing the first aboard on April 1. It quickly became apparent that to be of help to the city, the Comfort needed to treat all patients, regardless of their COVID status.

On April 6, after being directed to accept COVID-positive patients and following a thorough assessment of the existing design of the ship, Military Sealift Command civil service mariners physically separated the hospital from the rest of the ship by cordoning off doors and ladder wells on the main deck, reconfiguring the ship to admit and treat all patients.

"This amazing crew of over 1,200 people treated 182 patients, of which approximately 70% were afflicted by COVID-19," said Capt. Patrick Amersbach, commander of the

Comfort's medical treatment facility. "We were dedicated to providing the highest quality of care to each person who arrived to our hospital."

In the Comfort's intensive care units, critical care nurses and respiratory technicians worked together to provide constant care to many complex, high-acuity COVID-19 patients. Many of these patients suffered from rapid, multi-system organ failure that required them to be put on ventilators.



Sailors transport the last patient off the Comfort on April 28 for relocation to a local hospital for follow-up care. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Scott Bigley

"It is truly an honor and I am humbled to lead a team of world-class medical professionals," Amersbach said. "We came together from different units across the nation and were able to quickly adapt to the rapidly changing environment."

More than 110 surgical procedures such as appendectomies, bronchoscopies, chest tube insertions, laparoscopic procedures

and tracheotomies were performed aboard. Additionally, the Comfort's radiology technicians performed more than 540 X-rays and CT-scans, while the pharmacy department prepared more than 1,300 intravenous and oral medications for patients aboard. The ship's supply department ensured the distribution of ample personal protective equipment (PPE) for all personnel, which were procured via a robust logistics system.

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"The success of this mission in New York City hinged on coordination with FEMA, state and local officials and the partnership between Comfort, the Javits [convention center] and hospitals across New York and New Jersey," said Capt. Joseph O'Brien, mission commander of Task Force New York.

"We all worked towards the common goal of ensuring that every patient who required care was able to receive it. The Comfort team is proud to help during these unprecedented times."

The Comfort is scheduled to return to Naval Station Norfolk, Virginia, where the ship will return to a "Ready 5" status to remain ready for tasking for COVID-19 operations in support of the Federal Emergency Management Agency.



The Comfort departs New York Harbor on April 30 after a month of treating patients in New York and New Jersey. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Brendan Fitzgerald