

Navy's Second Ford CVN to Join the U.S. Pacific Fleet



MEDITERRANEAN SEA (Oct. 11, 2023) The world's largest aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) refuels from the underway replenishment oiler USNS Laramie (T-AO 203) in the eastern Mediterranean Sea, Oct. 11, 2023. The second Ford-class CVN, the future USS John F. Kennedy (CVN 79), will become a unit of the U.S. Pacific Fleet. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Jacob Mattingly)

By Richard R. Burgess, Senior Editor

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Navy's second Gerald R. Ford-class aircraft carrier, the future USS John F. Kennedy (CVN 79), will become a unit of the U.S. Pacific Fleet when it makes its first deployment.

Captain Brian Metcalf, the Navy's program manager for the Ford-class aircraft carriers, speaking Nov. 28 in a panel of the American Society of Naval Engineers' Technology Systems

and Ships seminar, said the Kennedy would be delivered to the Navy in 2025. After commissioning and training work ups, the carrier would make a deployment to the Indo-Pacific region and arrive at its new homeport on the U.S. West Coast, he said.

Metcalfe said the Kennedy is 90% complete at HII's Newport News shipyard.

He said that his program office plans to complete much of the Kennedy's Post-Shakedown Availability (PSA) work – that on the USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) was completed during its own PSA and added a year of delay to delivery to the fleet – would be completed on the Kennedy during its construction before commissioning and would enable the Kennedy to enter its basic training phase on time.

The lead ship, Gerald R. Ford, is deployed to the eastern Mediterranean Sea and has had its deployment extended twice because of the Israel-Hamas War. Metcalfe said the Ford's systems, including the Electro-Magnetic Aircraft Launch System and the ship's once-controversial weapon elevators were performing well.

He said that maintenance and modernization work on the Ford planned for early 2024 would have to wait, given the Ford's deployment extensions.

The next two Ford-class CVNs—Enterprise (CVN 80) and Doris Miller (CVN 81)—did not start as a two-ship procurement but since have been combined as a program to achieve cost reductions. Metcalfe said that his program office is working within the current Future Years Defense Plan to ensure that procurement of CVN 82 and CVN 83 is a two-ship procurement.