

Reassure and Deter: George H.W. Bush Carrier Strike Group Completes Historic Deployment



[Release from U.S. Second Fleet](#)

23 April 2023

NORFOLK — The George H.W. Bush Carrier Strike Group (CSG) — comprised of the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77), Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 7, Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 26, the Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Leyte Gulf (CG 55), and the Information Warfare Commander — returned to Norfolk, April 23.

The strike group arrived in the European theater in August of last year, projecting U.S. and Allied power and deterring aggression by training and operating with allies and partners for nearly eight months.

Further showcasing the U.S.'s ironclad commitment to NATO, George H.W. Bush CSG hosted NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg while under NATO command for the vigilance activity Neptune Strike (NEST) 22.2.

"This carrier sends a powerful message of Allied deterrence every day," Stoltenberg said during his visit. "A perfect example of the transatlantic bond – Europe and North America working together in NATO."

Stoltenberg said the George H.W. Bush CSG's participation in the vigilance activity demonstrated our ability to rapidly reinforce our Allies and project power across the Alliance.

He added, "NATO's strength helps to prevent any miscalculation by sending a clear message: NATO will protect and defend every inch of Allied territory."

In addition to NEST 22.2 and NEST 23.1, the strike group played a key role in major events with allies and partners throughout deployment including:

- dual and tri-carrier operations five times in theater with ESPS Juan Carlos I, ITS Cavour, and the French Carrier Strike Group with FS Charles de Gaulle;
- exercise Mare Aperto 22-2;
- exercise Juniper Oak, the largest U.S.-Israeli military exercise in history in support of U.S. Central Command and U.S. 5th Fleet while assigned to U.S. 6th Fleet;
- exercise Hemex Orion;
- exercise Dynamic Manta;

- shipboard exercises and events with ITS Caio Duilio, HRV Dubrovnik, ALS Butrinti and ALS Lissus, ITS Carabiniere, ITS Virginio Fasan, and TCG Gungor Durmas;
 - two iterations of the Spanish Tactical Leadership Program (TLP) for Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 7 personnel;
 - the Athens International Air Show;
 - the EURONAVAL Trade Show in Paris;
 - Thirty-five key leader engagements, five major receptions and protocol events in Crete, Croatia, Italy, France, and Greece which included more approximately 1,536 visitors to the aircraft carrier alone;
-
- and multiple press conferences in NATO port visits to reassure host nation audiences and reinforce existing relationships for future maritime operations and international stability

Rear Adm. Dennis Velez, commander, George H.W. Bush CSG, and his major commanders and subordinate units continuously engaged senior military and civilian leaders throughout the region to increase unity of effort within the Alliance through 21st Century Maritime Diplomacy.

“Since the beginning of our Navy, we have been seagoing diplomats. I have operated that way throughout my entire career, and our Sailors represented U.S. and Allied interests incredibly well throughout deployment,” Velez said. “The trust our strike group built with our Allies and partners is our competitive advantage as an Alliance. Our teamwork increased our collective capability and deterred our adversaries, which I believe helped prevent expansion of war into NATO territory.”

George H.W. Bush is the flagship of CSG-10, George H.W. Bush CSG. CSG-10 is comprised of George H.W. Bush, CVW-7, Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 26, the Information Warfare Commander, and

the Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Leyte Gulf (CG 55).

The ships of DESRON-26 completing deployment with CSG-10 are the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers USS Nitze (DDG 94), USS Truxtun (DDG 103), and USS Delbert D. Black (DDG 119).

The squadrons of CVW-7 embarked aboard the George H.W. Bush are the "Sidewinders" of VFA-86, the "Jolly Rogers" of VFA-103, the "Knighthawks" of VFA-136, the "Pukin Dogs" of VFA-143, the "Bluetails" of Airborne Command and Control Squadron (VAW) 121, the "Patriots" of Electronic Attack Squadron (VAQ) 140, the "Nightdippers" of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 5, and the "Grandmasters" of Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron (HSM) 46.