

USS Carney: a Destroyer at War



USS Carney (DDG 64) fires a Standard Missile (SM) 2, Oct. 19, 2023, to defeat a combination of Houthi missiles and unmanned aerial vehicles in the Red Sea. (MC2 Aaron Lau)

From Austin Rooney, Dec. 4, 2024

On Oct. 19, 2023, USS Carney (DDG 64) was involved on in the most intense combat engagement by a U.S. Navy warship since WWII.

WASHINGTON – October 19, 2023, started out as a routine day underway for Sailors aboard USS Carney (DDG 64) as the ship steamed through the Red Sea on its scheduled deployment to the 5th Fleet area of responsibility. However, starting at around 4 p.m. local time, things abruptly changed.

“We were in berthing and heard [an announcement over the ship’s 1MC intercom system] ‘clear the weatherdecks,’ and I

remember thinking, 'what does that mean? I've never heard that before,'" recalled Fire Controlman (AEGIS) 2nd Class Justin Parker, a SPY radar technician assigned to Carney.

Immediately after hearing the announcement, Parker said he heard the unmistakable sound of missiles being fired off the ship, as well as the destroyer's main 5-inch gun being fired. With no scheduled live fire drills that day, he said he instantly realized something was wrong.

"We had never done anything like this before – we had only trained to it," said Gunner's Mate 1st Class Charles Currie, a Mk. 45 gun technician assigned to Carney. "There was a lot of adrenaline going on – this was real-world now."

By the end of what became a 10-hour standoff, Carney had shot down 15 drones and four land-attack cruise missiles fired by Houthi rebels in Yemen, marking the most intense combat engagement by a U.S. Navy warship since WWII.

Carney departed for deployment Sept. 27, 2023, before the now-infamous Hamas terror attack on Israel Oct. 7. Looking back, crewmembers said they had no idea what was in store for them as they departed their homeport of Naval Station Mayport, Florida.

"I've only heard stories, but I expected to pull into ports and party a little bit," laughed Fire Controlman 2nd Class Kameron Miller, a Mk. 160 gun console technician onboard, for whom this would be his first deployment. "That was not quite the case."

On Oct. 7, after the deadly terror attack that killed more than 1,200 people in Israel, crewmembers said they realized that the situation in the region would potentially be more complicated than they had anticipated, although the prospect of actual combat still wasn't on their minds.

"The XO told us flat out what the situation was, and what we

could be facing,” recalled Currie. “At that point the crew just started to get ready.”

Following Israel’s response to the Hamas attacks and its subsequent military operations in the Gaza strip aiming to free hostages and destroy the terror group responsible, the Iran-backed and Hamas-aligned Houthi rebels in Yemen began a terror campaign against civilian mariners and cargo shipping in the Red Sea, aiming to disrupt international trade to leverage an end to the operation in Gaza.

National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby called the attacks “a clear example of terrorism and a violation of international law” and pledged that the U.S. and its allies would “do what we need to do to counter these threats and protect these ships.

After the initial combat engagement on Oct. 17, Carney spent much of the remainder of its deployment on high alert, closing out its time in the Red Sea with a total of 51 combat engagements.

“The entire crew definitely fell back on their training, starting from the very beginning,” said Lt. j.g. Haven Vickers, the Anti-Submarine Warfare Officer assigned to Carney. “Every single training experience we did before deployment – that’s what we fell back on.”

Vickers said she credits the intensity of the crew’s training along with the camaraderie shared among her shipmates with the success they experienced in combat. While many admitted to being nervous at first, she said as time went on, they fell into a rhythm and were able to effectively react to and defend the ship from threats.

“As nervous as you get, it’s not about you,” said Ens. William Hinckley, the Administrative/Legal Officer onboard Carney. “It’s about keeping everybody else safe. Thinking about everybody else and not just yourself is crucial.”

Upon returning to their homeport following deployment May 10, 2024, the entire crew was awarded the Combat Action Ribbon (CAR), the first time a Navy crew has received the decoration since 1991 in the Gulf War.

“I could not be more proud of what the Carney team has done since September,” said Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Lisa Franchetti, who attended the ship’s homecoming. “It has been eye-watering to watch; you truly are America’s Warfighting Navy in action.”

For some of the crew, they said the impact of the deployment still hasn’t fully set in.

“It’s really neat to know that we made history,” said OSC Noah Wicks, the Air Intercept Controller assigned to USS Carney (DDG 64). “Even though we’re a small ship, we had a very big impact on the world.”

For the young crewmembers like Miller, who’s expectations of a routine deployment were shattered, he said the experience was a stark reminder of why he joined the Navy in the first place.

“It was probably one of the most rewarding experiences I’ll ever have in my entire life,” said Miller. “It wasn’t just about traveling the world; it was about saving people’s lives and getting a job done.”