

USS George Washington Celebrates Historic Aircraft Milestone



After 34 years of continuous service projecting American sea power, the aircraft carrier USS George Washington achieved a major aviation milestone by recovering its 200,000th fixed-wing aircraft while underway in the Indian Ocean, Aug. 18.

Navy Lt. Steven Frazier, a pilot assigned to Strike Fighter Squadron 147, received the historic honor by landing on the ship in an F-35C Lightning II fighter jet after flying routine operations in the U.S. 7th Fleet area of operation.

Frazier emphasized that the successful aircraft recovery was a team effort.

“For the George Washington, more than anything, it shows consistency over the last 34 years to be able to complete whatever mission the country calls upon it to do,” he said. “For me personally, it shows that if this aircraft carrier

launches me off of the ship, I'll be able to come back and land on it."

Each aircraft recovery – or "trap" – consists of fixed-wing aircraft safely landing on the ship by catching a thick, steel arresting gear cable with its tail hook. The carrier can land one aircraft on deck per minute and typically lands 70 aircraft across several events throughout the day.

"Two hundred thousand traps is not just a number – it is a testament to the enduring strength of American naval aviation and the unmatched professionalism of the sailors who make it possible," said Navy Rear Adm. Jeffrey L. Heames, Carrier Strike Group 5 commander. "This milestone reminds the world that U.S. carriers remain ready to launch and recover aircraft anywhere, anytime, in defense of freedom and our allies."

For more than three decades, thousands of USS George Washington sailors have played a vital role in safely launching and recovering aircraft. These daily evolutions by the countless warfighters who served aboard the ship led to this historic achievement.

"I am immensely proud of every sailor who has served aboard [the] George Washington over the past 34 years," said Navy Capt. Nicholas DeLeo, the ship's commander. "The 200,000th trap belongs to the arresting gear teams, the yellow shirts, the maintainers and every watchstander who ensures this afloat airfield stays full mission capable. Our ship continues to deliver combat power from the sea, and this milestone is proof that [we are] ready for whatever the nation asks of us."

Each successful trap represents seamless teamwork among pilots, landing signal officers, flight deck crews, arresting gear operations below deck, and maintainers who keep the complex hydraulic and mechanical systems ready day and night, in all weather. For more than 34 years, the George Washington has recovered aircraft ranging from F-14 Tomcats, F/A-18

Hornets and Super Hornets, EA-18G Growlers, E-2 Hawkeyes and F-35C Lightning IIs.

“Every trap is a high-stakes ballet of skill, trust and precision. Reaching 200,000 on [the] George Washington is a shared achievement between the air wing and the ship’s company,” said Navy Capt. Brian Kesselring, Carrier Air Wing 5 commander. “All-hands, past and present, who served aboard [the] George Washington played a part in reaching this monumental historical milestone.”

As the USS George Washington continues its service well into its fourth decade, the 200,000-trap mark celebrates past excellence and lays the foundation for the tens of thousands of traps still to come.

By USS George Washington, Aug. 20, 2026