Gerald R. Ford Crew Demonstrates Resilience, Readiness During Extended Deployment



Photo: U.S. Navy.
From U.S. Fleet Forces Command

NORFOLK, Va. – More than eight months into an extended deployment, the Sailors of USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) continue to demonstrate resilience, professionalism, and sustained morale while serving far from home.

Gerald R. Ford departed Naval Station Norfolk on June 24, 2025. Since that time, the ship and Carrier Strike Group 12 have continued to operate at a high state of readiness. Navy

leaders acknowledge that extended time away from families carries real and measurable sacrifice.

“Extended deployments demand endurance,” said Adm. Daryl Caudle, Chief of Naval Operations. “They ask Sailors to miss births, anniversaries, and everyday moments at home. They ask families to shoulder additional responsibility. That sacrifice is real, and we do not take it lightly. The nation relies on these Sailors to remain forward and ready, and they continue to meet that responsibility with professionalism and pride.” Caudle emphasized that sustained readiness begins with people and empowering them to succeed.

“The morale aboard Gerald R. Ford remains strong because leadership is engaged, systems are operating, and Sailors understand the importance of their mission,” he said. “This crew is experienced, disciplined, and committed to one another. That cohesion matters during long deployments.”

Caudle has been in constant contact with Rear Adm. Paul Lanzilotta, commander of Carrier Strike Group 12, who said maintaining morale requires deliberate daily attention and frequent communication.

“Long deployments are challenging,” Lanzilotta said. “Fatigue accumulates and time away from home weighs on Sailors. Our responsibility as leaders is to ensure they are supported — with reliable shipboard services, clear communication, and consistent engagement. I have walked the decks of Gerald R. Ford repeatedly during this deployment. What I see is a crew that remains focused, capable, and proud of the work they are doing.”

In recent weeks, media reports have raised concerns regarding shipboard systems, including sanitation. Navy officials state that Gerald R. Ford’s systems are operating within expected parameters for a Ford-class aircraft carrier with more than 4,000 personnel embarked.

During this deployment, Gerald R. Ford's vacuum collection, holding, and transfer (VCHT) system has processed more than six million toilet flushes. Ship leadership reports that clog incidents are addressed promptly by trained damage control and engineering personnel, with minimal downtime.

"On a ship this size, with this many Sailors, clogs will occur," said Capt. David Skarosi, commanding officer of USS Gerald R. Ford. "What matters is how quickly they are resolved. Our maintenance teams respond immediately, and the system continues to function as designed with no impact to operational readiness or our ability to meet our mission. I am engaged daily with any concerns regarding the health, wellbeing, and morale of the crew."

"In most instances," Skarosi added, "clogs are the result of items being flushed that should not be introduced into the system. When Sailors follow proper procedures, the system performs reliably. We continue to train new Sailors and reinforce those standards across the crew."

Beyond sanitation systems, Gerald R. Ford continues to emphasize and sustain quality of life conditions. The ship's reverse osmosis systems produce more than 400,000 gallons of potable water daily, supporting hot showers, laundry, food preparation, and drinking water requirements. The Supply Department has served more than four million meals since departure, supported by consistent underway replenishment operations delivering fresh produce, frozen goods, and dry stores.

Bandwidth availability for morale, welfare, and recreation internet access has expanded during the deployment through commercial satellite augmentation, including Starlink capability. That increased connectivity has improved Sailors' ability to communicate with families, access news, and utilize approved streaming services during off-duty hours.

“Connectivity and routine matter,” Lanzilotta said. “When Sailors can speak with their families, read trusted news sources, maintain physical fitness, and rely on stable shipboard systems, it strengthens resilience.” Command-sponsored initiatives throughout the deployment have included morale and holiday events when operationally feasible, physical fitness competitions, movie nights, educational advancement programs, and expanded chaplain and counseling availability. Leadership routinely inspects berthing and workspaces to identify and correct quality of life concerns early.

“Our Sailors understand the importance of their service,” Caudle said. “They are away from home longer than planned because the nation needs them forward and ready. I want them to take great pride in that calling. The American people should be confident that USS Gerald R. Ford remains ready, and they should be proud of the men and women serving aboard her.”

Gerald R. Ford recently completed a port call to Souda Bay, Crete for a routine, scheduled resupply of food, fuel, and ammunitions. While in port, Sailors had the opportunity to rest and enjoy recreational activities on the island, serving as a significant morale boost.

USS Gerald R. Ford is the lead ship of her class and incorporates an advanced flight deck design, state-of-the-art launch and recovery systems, enhanced electrical capacity, and quality of life features designed to support sustained operations at sea. The new systems incorporated into Ford-class ships, such as the Electromagnetic Aircraft Launch System (EMALS) and advanced arresting gear (AAG), are designed to deliver greater lethality and joint interoperability. While the Navy is still analyzing the data, preliminary reports from the Sortie Generation Rate test program show that the flight deck design in conjunction with EMALS and AAG have contributed to an increased sortie generation rate compared to that of a

Nimitz-class carrier. As of today, these systems are operating as designed, and the Ford continues with scheduled mission tasking.

Carrier Strike Group 12 includes USS Gerald R. Ford, embarked Carrier Air Wing Eight, and assigned guided-missile destroyers. The strike group remains fully mission capable and committed to maintaining the highest standards of safety, professionalism, and Sailor well-being.