USS Gerald R. Ford Returns to Sea



The aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford departs Huntington Ingalls Industries' Newport News Shipbuilding on Oct. 25 to conduct sea trials. U.S. Navy

NEWPORT NEWS, Va. – The aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford got underway Oct. 25 for sea trials from Huntington Ingalls Industries' Newport News Shipbuilding division following a 15-month pierside maintenance period.

"I am proud of the crew's efforts to get USS Gerald R. Ford back out to sea," Navy Secretary Richard V. Spencer said. "The Navy has diligently tackled issues associated with this first-in-class ship and will continue to do so. All are eager to demonstrate Ford's capacity to deliver combat power. There is more work to do, but this is a great milestone."

Prior to getting underway, the Ford conducted a multiday, pierside "fast cruise," where the crew worked through simulated at-sea operating scenarios. Gerald R. Ford then departed NNS and headed into the Atlantic Ocean for sea trials, putting into practice lessons learned from the fast cruise and starting a critical phase of underway testing.

While at sea off the Virginia coast, the crew, in cooperation with NNS engineers and shipyard employees, will run through a comprehensive sequence of evolutions to test and validate systems maintained or modified during the extended maintenance period, known as a post-shakedown availability (PSA).

The PSA included combat systems installations, throttle control system improvements, propulsion train component repairs and corrections to discrepancies identified during prior testing and completion of 304 berthing spaces. The

Huntington Ingalls NNS team also completed construction of four advanced weapon elevators (AWE), upgraded advanced arresting gear (AAG) water twisters and fully outfitted all galley spaces.

“After a challenging post-shakedown availability at Newport News Shipbuilding, the crew is excited to turn their hardhats in and get Warship 78 back out to sea,” said Capt. J.J. Cummings, Ford’s commanding officer.

“I am extremely proud of our Sailors and the remarkable work ethic they have demonstrated over the last 15 months. It is their energy, enthusiasm and grit that has gotten our ship to this point, and it will be their motivation and resiliency that will fuel our success during post-delivery test and trial.”

Sea trials are the culminating event prior the Ford returning to Naval Station Norfolk, Virginia. The carrier will then enter a post-delivery test and trials period to certify fuel systems, conduct aircraft compatibility testing, certify the flight deck and test the combat systems installed aboard the ship.

As a first-in-class ship, the Navy is actively incorporating lessons learned from the Ford to improve the design and construction processes of future ships in the class.