

USS Minnesota Completes First Forward Deployment



The submarine USS Minnesota returned to its home port at Naval Base Guam July 29, after completing its first deployment since becoming the Navy's first forward-deployed submarine.

"[The] Minnesota's return marks a significant milestone for the Pacific submarine force and demonstrates the Navy's ability to sustain and employ advanced Virginia-class capabilities in the Pacific," said Navy Capt. Christopher Carter, Submarine Squadron 15 commander. "Operating from Guam, this crew demonstrated the readiness, endurance and advanced capabilities the Virginia-class platform brings to the strategic outpost in the Western Pacific."

The Minnesota participated in the multinational Exercise Valiant Shield 26 and made port visits to Okinawa and Sasebo, Japan. The Okinawa visit demonstrated the Navy's ability to

sustain undersea capabilities at a variety of locations throughout the Pacific region.

“This homecoming marks the successful completion of [the] Minnesota’s first deployment from Guam,” said Navy Cmdr. Jeffrey Cornielle, USS Minnesota commander. “The crew performed superbly while executing missions vital to the defense of the homeland and strengthening our alliances and partnerships.

“The experience they gained operating throughout the Western Pacific will shape [the] Minnesota’s continued success for years to come,” he continued. “I am proud of every sailor and deeply grateful to our families, whose strength and support made this deployment possible.”

During the deployment, two officers and 20 enlisted sailors earned their submarine warfare insignia. The insignia signifies qualification to operate at the highest standards of the undersea force and reflects mastery of submarine systems, watch stations and mission execution.

“The sailors aboard [the] Minnesota represented the Navy with pride and professionalism, no matter the task,” said Navy Master Chief Petty Officer Joshua Garrett, the Minnesota’s chief of the boat. “Every time a challenge stood before them, they answered the call with discipline, character and an unwavering commitment to one another. Their readiness and effectiveness were evident throughout this deployment, and I could not be prouder of what this crew accomplished.”

The homecoming included the Navy’s traditional first kiss and first hug, awarded to Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Jose Salazar and Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Jaccor Blakley, respectively.

Since arriving in Guam November 2024, the USS Minnesota has visited Western Australia, where the crew conducted at-sea

operations in support of the Submarine Command Course and participated in Exercise Lungfish, a tactical development exercise between the U.S. Navy and Royal Australian Navy.

The ship also visited Darwin, Australia, in support of bilateral engagements. These accomplishments add to the Minnesota's growing list of milestones and demonstrate its ability to deliver credible combat power from a forward-deployed location in the Pacific.