

USS Ronald Reagan Departs After 9 years as FDNF-Japan Carrier



TOKYO INLET (May 10, 2024) Sailors stand in formation to form Japanese hiragana characters spelling “dewa mata,” which translates to “see you again,” on the flight deck of the U.S. Navy’s only forward-deployed aircraft carrier, USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76), in the Tokyo Inlet, May 10. (U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Charlotte Dudenhoeffer).

By Petty Officer 2nd Class Timothy Dimal, May 16, 2024

YOKOSUKA, Japan – The U.S. Ambassador to Japan Rahm Emanuel, Japanese Government officials and leaders from the U.S. Navy and Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) bid farewell to USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76) before the ship departed Yokosuka, Japan, for the last time as the U.S. Navy’s forward-deployed aircraft carrier, May 16.

Ronald Reagan's departure from Japan marks the beginning of the ship's final scheduled Indo-Pacific patrol.

"We have a debate in the United States about who constitutes the 1 percent. The true measure is not in how much wealth you acquire, but in how much you give in service to something bigger than yourself," said Emanuel. "So, to the sailors and aviators of the USS Ronald Reagan, who devote their lives to preserving and protecting the freedoms we all enjoy, it is you and your fellow service members who make up America's true 1 percent. After nine years of deployment to Japan, the USS Ronald Reagan and her 6,000 crew deserve our heartfelt appreciation for their selflessness, their service, and their sacrifice in keeping the Indo-Pacific safe, secure, and stable."

Departing with Ronald Reagan were the Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Robert Smalls (CG 62) and the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Howard (DDG 83).

"On behalf of the strike group, I want to express my gratitude to the people of Japan and city of Yokosuka. You are our friends, family and our close and trusted allies," said Rear Adm. Greg Newkirk, commander of Carrier Strike Group (CSG) 5. "Our relationship with Japan and the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force has never been stronger. Whether it's aboard USS Ronald Reagan today or USS George Washington in the future, we will continue to strengthen those ties at all levels, on-shore and at-sea."

As the ship pulled away from the pier and made its final transit through Sagami Bay, hundreds of CSG 5 Sailors manned the rails in their summer dress white uniforms.

Ronald Reagan is scheduled to turn over with USS George Washington (CVN 73), and then transit to Bremerton,

Washington, later this year.

“For nearly nine years, thousands of Ronald Reagan Sailors have lived and worked here in Yokosuka, and have deployed throughout the region to uphold the international rule of law and maintain a free and open Indo-Pacific along with our allies and partners,” said Capt. Daryle Cardone, Ronald Reagan’s commanding officer. “And as forward-deployed naval forces, we had the privilege of living in Japan. Japan has been an incredible host and a second home for the crew. And for this, I am very grateful to the Japanese people, the City of Yokosuka, and the Japanese government for their support and for welcoming us as citizens.”

In 2011, while deployed near the Korean Peninsula, Ronald Reagan was heavily involved with the humanitarian assistance and disaster relief mission during Operation Tomodachi. Following the March 11 earthquake and tsunami in Japan, the ship and its crew was instrumental in refueling JMSDF ships, transporting soldiers and Marines, and providing food, water and supplies to affected communities. In addition, Ronald Reagan’s embarked airborne assets flew reconnaissance missions.

In 2015, Ronald Reagan arrived to Japan as part of an historic tri-carrier hull swap.

In 2021, the Nimitz-class carrier deployed to the Middle East in 2021 to assist in Operation Allies Refuge providing safety and security to more than 7,000 U.S. citizens and evacuees in Afghanistan.

“While the crew and I are sad to bid Japan farewell, the Ronald Reagan’s strong relationships with the JMSDF and rich history with the Japanese people assure me that we shall see each other again,” added Cardone.

CSG 5 is forward-deployed under U.S. 7th Fleet, the U.S. Navy's largest forward-deployed numbered fleet, and routinely interacts and operates with allies and partners in preserving a free and open Indo-Pacific region.