

USS The Sullivans Completes Historic Deployment



The Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer USS The Sullivans (DDG 68) returns from a seven-month world deployment with the HMS Queen Elizabeth Carrier Strike Group, Nov. 24. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Austin G. Collins*

MAYPORT, Fla. – The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS The Sullivans (DDG 68) returned to Naval Station Mayport, Nov. 24, marking the end of a seven-month world tour deployment to the U.S. 2nd, 5th, 6th and 7th Fleet areas of operations as part of the U.K. Carrier Strike Group 2021 (CSG 21) and Operation Fortis, the U.S. 2nd Fleet said Nov. 24.

CSG 21 was led by aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth (R08) on her first deployment and was comprised of multi-national forces, including The Sullivans, U.S. Marine Corps Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA) 211 and The Netherlands frigate HNLMS Evertsen (F805).

U.S. Navy Cmdr. James Diefenderfer Jr., commanding officer of The Sullivans, regards the integrated deployment as a step forward for the long-standing maritime alliance between the United States and the United Kingdom.

"The Sullivans was fortunate to complete a seven-month deployment with a United Kingdom carrier, marking the culmination of a decade-long bilateral carrier coordination effort," Diefenderfer said. "The Sullivans' crew proved again and again they have the grit and professionalism it takes to represent the U.S. Navy and the memory of the Sullivan brothers while deployed."

The crew navigated over 50,000 nautical miles through four U.S. fleets, transiting the Strait of Gibraltar, Suez Canal, Bab-el Mandeb, Strait of Malacca and across the equator. The Sullivans also conducted 29 underway replenishments and 18 sea and anchor details during port visits to Portsmouth, England; Gaeta, Italy; Limassol, Cyprus; Guam; Yokosuka, Japan; Souda Bay, Greece; Toulon, France; and Rota, Spain.

The Sullivans, the only U.S. surface ship in CSG 21, supported U.S. 2nd, 5th, 6th and 7th Fleet commanders across 20 warfare areas ranging from surface to ballistic missile and air defense.

While operating with CSG 21 in Operation Fortis, The Sullivans was tasked to escort HMS Queen Elizabeth around the world, providing multi-threat defense. Operation Fortis was executed in six phases across four different areas of operations, demonstrating interoperability with more than 15 different

allied and partner nations. The Sullivans also provided layered defense and command and control for the entire carrier strike group in support of air defense missions to ensure stability and security across the globe.

“USS The Sullivans has been an integral part of the U.K. CSG for over a year,” said Royal Navy Cmdr. Steven Moorhouse, commander, CSG 21. “It was a pleasure working with The Sullivans, and I thank each and every member of the ship’s company for their loyalty, professionalism and great humour along our journey. The ship’s motto says it all: ‘We stick together.’”

CSG 21 spent nearly half of the seven-month deployment in the U.S 6th Fleet area of operations, participating in four major multinational exercises, including Steadfast Defender and Strike Warrior 2021.

After departing U.S. 6th Fleet, CSG 21 transited to the Indian Ocean where they participated in the Indian Navy Exercise Konkan. The crew trained to aggressively advance surface, anti-submarine and anti-air warfare tactics while strengthening interoperability with their foreign partners.

The strike group then entered U.S. 7th Fleet and began a string of exercises in the Indo-Pacific, demonstrating seamless interoperability with allies and partners. Exercise Noble Union, conducted in the Pacific Ocean, fully integrated CSG 21 and Expeditionary Strike Group (ESG) 7 and marked the beginning of a three-month tactical training with the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF). The strike group also trained with Republic of Korea’s Surface Forces on communication, search and rescue, replenishment capabilities, and cross-deck aviation evolutions.

CSG 21 met the Ronald Reagan Carrier Strike Group (CSG 5), the Carl Vinson Carrier Strike Group (CSG 1) and the JMSDF Carrier

Strike Group to conduct quad carrier operations. Squadrons from different air wings operated in concert with the 17-ship force, representing six participating nations and demonstrating a commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific.

After concluding operations in U.S. 7th Fleet, The Sullivans and CSG 21 re-entered the Indian Ocean to participate in the Maritime Partnership Exercise in the Bay of Bengal with Australia, India, Japan and CSG 1.

The Sullivans detached from CSG 21 in the Indian Ocean and sailed independently through U.S. 5th Fleet, after a farewell visit from Cdre. Moorhouse and U.S. Marine Corps Brig. Gen. Simon Doran, U.S. Senior National Representative to the United Kingdom's CSG.

The Sullivans participated in one final exercise with the Tunisian Navy in the Mediterranean Sea, the first time conducting high-level integrated operations together.

"The crew worked extremely hard over the last year and a half preparing for and executing a deployment as dynamic as this one," Diefenderfer said. "I am grateful for the love and sacrifice that the Sailors and their families displayed through a global pandemic leading into a deployment. The crew came together to accomplish every operational tasking as a team."