USS Washington Returns from Deployment



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From Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Cameron Stoner

NORFOLK, Va. – The Virginia-class fast-attack submarine USS Washington (SSN 787) returned to its homeport at Naval Station Norfolk after successfully completing a scheduled deployment, Dec. 15, 2023.

Under the command of Cmdr. Clint Christofk, Washington, also referred to as 'Blackfish', returns from a six-month deployment where it executed the Chief of Naval Operations' maritime strategy by supporting national security interest and maritime security operations.

“The crew onboard Blackfish fought hard through a difficult deployment, showing the tenacity that submariners are known for,” said Christofk. “I am immensely proud of the crew for their grit, drive, and dedication to the mission, which allowed Blackfish to complete a historic deployment.”

Washington’s return to Norfolk is just in time for the holidays, which had the crew, friends and families more excited than usual for the boat’s return.

“We are all happy to be back in Norfolk to rest and celebrate the holidays with loved ones,” said Christofk before saying Washington’s battle cry. “Fear the Blackfish!”

Lt. j.g. Remya Wiley, Washington’s communications officer, shared Christofk’s sentiment.

“It feels amazing to feel the sun on my face and to know I’m home,” said Wiley. “I’m going to miss the down times after a long day of watch and working a lot where the crew got to spend time together, but everyone is definitely more relaxed and happier that they’re now home with their families in time for the holidays.”

If being home in time for the holidays was not enough to be excited for, Culinary Specialist (Submarine) 1st Class Joel Huffman was one of the first Sailors off the boat to greet his significant other with the traditional first hug.

“If feels so good to be back home and to have the opportunity to be one of the first crewmembers off that boat that I almost can’t put it into words,” Huffman. “We’re all very much looking forward to relaxing and distressing over the holidays after all the hard work we did.”

During the deployment, Washington garnered more days on

station that any east coast deployment on record, had the first chief intelligence specialist to earn the submarine warfare qualifications, known as ‘dolphins’, and had the most women ever deployed on a fast-attack submarine, including one chief petty officer.

Washington steamed more than 37,000 nautical miles with the crew supporting diplomatic relationships by conducting port visits in Faslane, Scotland, and Grotsund, Norway.

Forty-four enlisted Sailors and five officers earned their submarine warfare qualification, known as ‘dolphins,’ 10 officers promoted, and four Sailors reenlisted.

Fast-attack submarines are multi-mission platforms enabling five of the six Navy maritime strategy core capabilities – sea control, power project, forward presence, maritime security, and deterrence. They are designed to excel in anti-submarine warfare, anti-ship warfare, strike warfare, special operations, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, irregular warfare and mine warfare. Fast-attack submarines project power ashore with special operations forces and Tomahawk cruise missiles in the prevention or preparation of regional crises.

The Virginia-class submarine is 377 feet long and 34 feet wide, and weighs about 7,900 tons when submerged. Underwater, it can reach speeds in excess of 25 knots.