USS Wasp Departs 7th Fleet Area of Operations



Wasp leads its expeditionary strike group last April. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Richard L.J. Gourley

OKINAWA, Japan – The amphibious assault ship USS Wasp (LHD 1) departed U.S. 7th Fleet area of operations as part of a scheduled homeport shift on Sept. 4, the ship's public affairs office said in a release.

Wasp, which replaced USS Bonhomme Richard (LHD 6) in the U.S. 7th Fleet area of operations in January 2018, operated with U.S. Marine Corps forces from the III Marine Expeditionary Force and helped expand the relationships the U.S. military maintains with allies and partners in the region.

"The performance by the Wasp crew has quite simply been superb," said Rear Adm. Fred Kacher, who is commander of Expeditionary Strike Group 7.

"Over the last two years, no ship in the Navy has been asked to do more than USS Wasp, and the ship delivered in every way. The officers and crew rose to every challenge, and we could not have asked for a better flagship to operate in the most important and dynamic area in the world."

As part of the U.S. 7th Fleet's forward deployed naval forces in Japan, Wasp made history as the first U.S. Navy ship to deploy with the the F-35B Lightning II strike fighter, which began operating onboard with the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit in March 2018.

"It has been a profound honor for Wasp and her crew to serve 7th Fleet and its ancillary commands during this time," said Wasp's commanding officer, Capt. Gregory Baker. "Our Sailors have embraced the experiences and opportunities available in this part of the world and are more operationally prepared to continue supporting and executing the missions we are presented with. I couldn't have asked for a more dedicated or capable crew."

President Trump visited the ship and crew during his tour of Japan, becoming the first U.S. president to visit the ship, and he extended accolades to the crew for their accomplishments. Wasp participated in exercise Balikatan with the Philippine military and exercise Talisman Sabre with the Australian Defence Force and additional forces from Japan, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. The ship also engaged in partnership missions designed to enhance interoperability with numerous partners and allies supporting security and stability in the Indo-Pacific region.

“What our Wasp Sailors have accomplished here over almost two years, given the operational tempo, and the nature of our multipronged mission, is overwhelming, and it’s difficult not to constantly shine with pride,” said Wasp Command Master Chief Kevin Guy, who also noted that more than half the ship’s company had been geo-bachelors during the ship’s tenure in Japan.

“When you consider that we have a large number of Sailors thousands of miles away from their families and friends – their level of dedication under these circumstances truly exemplifies the Navy core values of honor, courage and commitment.”

The Navy announced earlier this year that Wasp will be replaced by the amphibious assault ship USS America (LHA 6), which will be accompanied by dock landing ship USS New Orleans (LPD 18). USS America is scheduled to become part of the U.S. 7th Fleet forward-deployed naval forces in Sasebo, Japan, later this year.

The 7th Fleet spans more than 124 million square kilometers, stretching from the international date line to the India/Pakistan border, and form the Kuril Islands in the north to the Antarctic in the south. Encompassing 36 maritime countries, about 50 percent of the world’s population also falls within its area of responsibility.