

Winston S. Churchill Returns to Homeport after 9-Month Deployment



The guided-missile destroyer USS Winston S. Churchill (DDG 81) steams in the Arabian Sea. Winston S. Churchill is deployed to the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations in support of naval operations to ensure maritime stability and security in the Central Region, connecting the Mediterranean Sea and Pacific Ocean through the western Indian Ocean and three critical chokepoints to the free flow of global commerce. *U.S. Navy / Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class John Philip Wagner, Jr* NORFOLK, Va. – The guided-missile destroyer USS Winston S. Churchill (DDG 81) returned to homeport in Naval Station Norfolk March 19, after nearly nine months deployed in the U.S. 5th and 6th Fleet areas of operation, U.S. 2nd Fleet Public Affairs said in a March 19 release.

Winston S. Churchill participated in important training

exercises with international partners to foster positive relationships while encouraging freedom of navigation and maritime security.

"I'm so proud of the Churchill Team, the crew and their families are the most resilient people I have ever come across," said Capt. Timothy F. Stanley, commanding officer of Winston S. Churchill. "Returning today is almost nine months since the crew was last with their friends and family."

Winston S. Churchill, along with the embarked Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron (HSM) detachment, traveled nearly 60,000 miles during the deployment and completed 26 strategic choke point transits, escorting a total of 23 vessels over 14 of those transits. She transited the Strait of Gibraltar twice, the Suez Canal twice, the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb 14 times (nine transits with escort duties), and the Strait of Hormuz eight times (five transits with escort duties).

"Churchill has nearly completed the equivalent of three laps around the Earth meeting important fleet tasking, all the while consistently meeting mission requirements, and keeping sea lines of communication open through the majority of the world's key straits," Stanley said.

Winston S. Churchill participated in a 14-Day Restriction of Movement on June 22, 2020, prior to getting underway for pre-deployment exercises and training in order to combat the effect of COVID-19 on ship's readiness. It officially deployed on Aug. 10, 2020.

Winston S. Churchill conducted a landmark port visit in Port Sudan, Sudan, the first U.S. Navy warship to do so in over 30 years. The visit served to build a foundation of military cooperation between the U.S. and Sudan. Additionally, Winston S. Churchill visited Souda Bay, Djibouti, and Bahrain, where the crew was restricted to the pier.

"Amongst a global pandemic, these sailors have met their

personal and professional goals, making themselves and the Navy better,” Stanley said. “This team onboard has been galvanized through this deployment, and I’d argue is the best, most synergized, and resilient tactical-level force in the Navy.”

Churchill conducted counter-smuggling operations with embarked Advanced Interdiction Team, comprised of U.S. Coast Guardsmen, U.S. Army Soldiers and U.S. Navy Sailors. AIT boarded two stateless dhows flying no flags in international waters off the coast of Somalia in accordance with international law. A large cache of weapons was discovered while conducting maritime security operations in the U.S. Central Command area of operations. The weapons disposed of included thousands of AK-47 assault rifles, light machine guns, heavy sniper rifles, rocket-propelled grenade launchers and crew served weapons. Other weapon components disposed of include barrels, stocks, optical scopes and weapon systems.

The only U.S. warship named after a Briton, Winston S. Churchill worked with the Royal Navy HMS Trent in the Eastern Mediterranean. The cooperation demonstrates the long-standing high-end warfare capabilities of the Alliance, which will culminate in the deployment of the international Queen Elizabeth Strike Group this summer.

While in the Mediterranean, Winston S. Churchill also sailed with the Tunisian navy, reinforcing the commitment to African Maritime security.

After disembarking the HSM-70 detachment to its homeport at Naval Air Station, Jacksonville, Florida, Churchill will return to homeport in Naval Station Norfolk.