

After 3 Explosive Events of its Shock Trial, USS Gerald R. Ford Will be on Track for Operational Tasking in 2022, NAVSEA Says



USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) successfully completed the second of three scheduled explosive events for full ship shock trials (FSST), July 16, 2021. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communications Specialist Seaman Jackson Adkins*

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. – With a third and final Explosive Event of a Full Ship Shock Trial (FSST) to go, and after an analysis and repairs if needed, the U.S. Navy's newest aircraft carrier, USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78), will be ready for operational tasking by 2022, according to a Program Executive Office – Carriers official.

Upon completion of the last Explosive Event later this summer, Ford will enter a planned incremental availability for six months of modernization, maintenance and repairs prior to its operational use.

The Ford, the first of a new super carrier class, currently cannot accommodate the Navy's carrier-based F-35C Lightning II joint strike fighter without upgrades. The Navy plans to complete the upgrades for the F-35C before the carrier is scheduled to operate with the aircraft.

Last year, the Navy announced F-35C modifications to the future USS John F. Kennedy (CVN 79), the second Ford-class carrier, under a contract employing a single-phase acquisition strategy, instead of the originally planned two-phase strategy.

The Navy previously planned to build CVN 79 in two phases, putting the ship's combat systems in "at the last minute to avoid obsolescence," said Kevin Cormier, deputy program manager, PE0 Aircraft Carriers told an exposition floor briefing at the Navy League's Sea-Air-Space Expo in National Harbor, Maryland, Aug. 3.

After considering the combat systems' delivery schedule, however, "the Navy made a decision that it was more prudent" to deliver a whole ship in 2024, Cormier said. "Right now, we are on track for 2024 delivery with the new Enterprise Air Surveillance Radar (EASR) and new Joint Strike Fighter models."

Cormier said the next Ford-class carrier, CVN 80, is about 10% complete with keel laying expected in February 2022. CVN 80, slated to be the future USS Enterprise, is part of a two-ship one buy Cormier said saved taxpayers \$4 billion. The next Ford carrier, CVN 81, is "tracking for a 2032 delivery," he said.