

Theodore Roosevelt Rides the Waves Again



Aviation Ordnanceman Airman Andrew Halford holds the American flag on the flight deck of the aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt as the ship departs Apra Harbor, Guam, on May 21. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Pyoung K. Yi

ARLINGTON, Va. – Sidelined pier-side for nearly two months after an outbreak of COVID-19 infected 1,100 crew members, hospitalized several and killed one, the USS Theodore Roosevelt sailed from Naval Base Guam on May 21 on a test run to ensure the carrier's aircraft and personnel are ready to resume their mission.

The Nimitz-class aircraft carrier, the first Navy warship to endure an outbreak of the virus at sea, is underway to begin a 10- to 14-day "shakedown cruise type of activity" that includes recertifying Carrier Air Wing 11, the ship's flight deck and the crew, Pentagon spokesman Jonathan Rath Hoffman told media assembled there.

[See: More Returning Theodore Roosevelt Sailors Test Positive for COVID-19](#)

After the air wing completes carrier qualification flights, the Theodore Roosevelt will return to Guam to pick up remaining crew members who have been quarantined while recovering from the virus, Hoffman said, adding that there's been no change in the carrier's mission to the Indo-Pacific.

The Navy has learned a lot about social distancing, the wearing of face coverings, frequent testing and temperature surveillance since the first cases appeared aboard the carrier in March, Hoffman said, but "no one going into this believes this is the last we've seen of [the] coronavirus."

Nevertheless, “We’re not going leave our ships in port. We’re not going stand down. We’re going to continue to sail, continue to patrol,” he added.

After moving nearly 4,000 crew members off the ship and cleaning the entire vessel from bow to stern, hundreds of crew, enough to operate the ship while it is underway, have returned from quarantine after passing rigorous return-to-work criteria. Scaled-back manning allowed the ship to bring on board the right makeup of personnel required to safely operate and complete a particular mission requirement, according to a Navy statement.

“We are scaling our manning on board based on our mission requirement,” said Capt. Carlos Sardiello, the Theodore Roosevelt’s commanding officer. “Carrier qualification requires fewer personnel than other missions and bringing fewer Sailors on board will enable enhanced social distancing while underway,” he added.

In addition to social distancing, Sailors aboard will execute Navy COVID-19 prevention and mitigation policies, including all required lessons learned from a safety stand down last week and a simulated underway earlier this week.



The aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt departs Apra Harbor following an extended visit to Guam in the midst of the COVID-19 global pandemic. U.S. Navy/Engineman 1st Class Thomas N. Turner

During the simulated underway, known as a “fast cruise,” the crew walked through routine and emergency procedures while executing COVID-19 mitigation measures, including wearing masks, medical surveillance of 100% of the crew, adjusted meal hours, minimizing in-person meetings, sanitizing spaces and a simulated medical evacuation.

“It feels great to be back at sea,” said Rear Adm. Stu Baker, commander of Carrier Strike Group 9.

“Getting Theodore Roosevelt and Carrier Air Wing 11 one step closer to returning to their mission in the Indo-Pacific is a great achievement for the crew,” Baker said.