EMALS, AAG Hit 8,000 Aircraft Recoveries, Launches on Ford

Chief Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Equipment) Louis Mountain Jr., assigned to USS Gerald R. Ford's (CVN 78) air department, signals the electromagnetic aircraft launch system (EMALS) to launch during no load testing on the ship's flight deck. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Zachary Melvin*

PATUXENT RIVER, Md. – The Advanced Arresting Gear (AAG) and Electromagnetic Aircraft Launch System (EMALS) achieved 8,000 aircraft recoveries and launches aboard USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) on April 19, during the final independent steaming event of her 18-month Post Delivery Test & Trials (PDT&T) period, the Naval Air Systems Command said in an April 26 release.

Capt. Kenneth Sterbenz, Aircraft Launch and Recovery Equipment (ALRE) program manager (PMA-251) for EMALS and AAG, said ALRE finished PDT&T strong, and they are ready for the next step, as Ford prepares for Full Ship Shock Trials, which is scheduled to begin summer 2021.

"ALRE's support of EMALS and AAG was admirable throughout the rigorous testing of PDT&T operations," said Sterbenz. "On the way to reaching 8,000 launches and recoveries, we saw many Ford crew trained, learned a great deal about the systems, and laid invaluable groundwork for future Ford-class ships."

As CVN 78 moved through PDT&T, ALRE had the opportunity to directly support the fleet, as 351 Naval aviators were qualified using EMALS and AAG throughout 2020 and 2021. Time and training also enabled a great increase in the efficiency of flight operations. More than 7,000 of Ford's total launches and recoveries were completed in the last 18 months.

Cmdr. Lindsey Buzzell, PMA-251 Deputy Program Manager for Ford CVNs, said ALRE's accomplishments are the product of years of dedication, expertise, and professionalism.

"PDT&T proved extremely valuable for ALRE, as it allowed for extensive test and evaluation, and the opportunity to expose useful learning opportunities," said Buzzell. "As we move forward, we'll continue building on our experience, increase confidence in EMALS and AAG, and do our part to support the warfighter by preparing the systems for whatever Ford's future deployments bring to the table."

The Navy's newest aircraft launch and recovery technology, the Electromagnetic Aircraft Launch System and Advanced Arresting Gear System, were designed for use aboard Ford-class aircraft carriers, beginning with USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78). Land-based test sites, located at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J., enable test, troubleshooting and Sailor training. Developed by prime contractor General Atomics, EMALS and AAG provide significant advancements to the Navy's Ford-class aircraft carriers. EMALS and AAG require a smaller footprint in the ship, less maintenance, and less manpower than comparable steam catapults and arresting gear aboard Nimitz-class carriers.