

Families Welcome Nimitz Carrier Strike Group Sailors after 331 Days of Separation



Aircraft carrier USS Nimitz (CVN 68) arrives Naval Air Station North Island on Feb. 26. Nimitz Carrier Strike Group returned after a more than 10-month deployment to U.S. 5th Fleet and U.S. 7th Fleet, which included freedom of navigation operations and participation in operations Freedom's Sentinel, Inherent Resolve and Octave Quartz. U.S. Navy / Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Timothy Heaps

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Nimitz Carrier Strike Group (CSG) returned to San Diego Feb. 26 after nearly 11 months deployed in the U.S. 5th and 7th Fleet areas of operation (AOR), the Navy said. The strike group was the first to deploy after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

USS Nimitz departed its homeport, Naval Base Kitsap – Bremerton, on April 27, 2020, for integrated training and began its deployment heading west on June 8. The crew began sequestering April 7, resulting in a separation from families of 331 days by the time the strike group returned.

During the deployment, the strike group supported operations Inherent Resolve, Freedom's Sentinel and Octave Quartz in the U.S. Fifth Fleet area of operation, said Rear Adm. James Kirk, the strike group commander, in a Feb. 26 teleconference with reporters.

The strike group includes Carrier Strike Group (CSG) 11, aircraft carrier USS Nimitz (CVN 68), embarked Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 17, Destroyer Squadron 9, Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Princeton (CG 59) and Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Sterett (DDG 104). The USS Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS John Paul

Jones also operated with the group but remains in the 5th Fleet AOR.

The strike group made the lengthy deployment with no liberty port calls, a necessity in the COVID era. The Nimitz and Princeton pulled alongside a pier four times and the Sterett two times during the deployment, but only for pier-side logistics.

During the deployment, the Nimitz CSG conducted dual carrier operations twice with the USS Theodore Roosevelt CSG and thrice with the USS Ronald Reagan CSG. The Nimitz CSG also operated with ships of the Indian navy, Royal Australian Navy and Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force.

Nimitz disembarked CVW-17 and began its return to its homeport at Naval Base Kitsap – Bremerton. CVW-17 includes Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 137, VFA 94, VFA 22, Marine Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA) 323, Electronic Attack Squadron (VAQ) 139, Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron (VAW) 116, Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 6, Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron (HSM) 73 and Fleet Logistics Support Squadron (VRC) 30.