

# USS Delbert D. Black Returns To Homeport Following A Surge Deployment



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NAVAL STATION MAYPORT, Fla. – USS Delbert D. Black (DDG 119) returned to its homeport of Naval Station Mayport, February 18, 2024, following a near 3-month surge deployment.

The ship deployed Dec. 1 to the U.S. Naval Forces Europe area of operations as part of deterrence efforts in the region following the outbreak of conflict in Israel.

Deploying with Mayport sister ship USS The Sullivans (DDG 68), Delbert D. Black demonstrated the operational practicality of relieving carrier strike group warships while on station. Upon entering the Mediterranean Sea, Delbert D. Black and The Sullivans relieved USS McFaul (DDG 74) and USS Thomas Hudner (DDG 116) and joined the Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group. Drawing on crew proficiency and lessons from a Pre-Deployment Emergent Integrated Training event, Delbert D. Black was immediately capable of performing escort, screening, and warfare commander functions expected of Carrier Strike Group units.

“The seamless integration of Delbert D. Black into ongoing operations established proof of concept for sustained and continuous combat operations at sea, which enhancing the surface Navy’s ability to fight and win,” said Cmdr. Adam Stein, commanding officer of Delbert D. Black.

Following the departure of Gerald R. Ford, Delbert D. Black

continued presence operations in the Mediterranean Sea, enabling options and flexibility to operational commanders in theatre. Delbert D. Black went on to integrate operations with elements of Standing NATO Maritime Group Two, conduct joint training evolutions with the Italian Navy, and provide ballistic missile defense to the European continent.

“For many Delbert D. Black Trailblazers, departing for a surge deployment can be jarring, but I quickly learned how resilient the Sailors of this command were,” said Master Chief Keona Johnson, Command Master Chief (CMC) of Delbert D. Black. “We were ready for anything on this deployment, but still maintained high morale while answering our nations call. This crew was able to maximize qualifications and become stronger warfighters. I am a proud CMC because of this team and look forward to sailing safe again with all of my Sailors!”

During the 79 days underway, the ship’s crew conducted seven underway replenishments, logged more than 180 flight hours, sailed more than 21,000 nautical miles, and safely transferred 1.2 million gallons of fuel with zero mishaps. The crew operated at sea for a continuous period of 46 days through the holidays. Delbert D. Black’s Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) team hosted multiple events to help the crew keep their spirits up while away from their families.

“With the surge deployment, the crew spent the holidays at sea, but that did not stop the holiday spirit,” said Ens. Rachel Anthony, Delbert D. Black’s MWR Fun Boss. “While underway the crew enjoyed 20 MWR events, which included redecorating the main deck in holiday decorations, a lip sync battle and some delicious grilled cheese made by the command triad.”

USS Delbert D. Black commenced their trans-Atlantic voyage the beginning of February to return to Mayport, coming home to a warm reception by friends and family on the pier.

"I was fortunate to return home from deployment on my birthday this year and was greeted by my family," said Damage Controlman 1st Class Tyler Pascale. "Seeing the birthday signs and welcome home signs along with my nephews smiles makes it all worth it."

Delbert D. Black is an Arleigh Burke-Class destroyer named for the first Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy (MCPON), the Navy's most senior enlisted rank. MCPON Black is known as a trailblazer for his initiatives that improved quality of life for the Navy's junior ranks, and established the importance and value of having an empowered enlisted force in the Navy.