

USS Gerald R. Ford Completes Post-Shakedown Availability



The aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford conducts high-speed turns in the Atlantic Ocean on Oct. 29 during sea trials. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Connor Loessin
WASHINGTON – The aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford is back in its homeport at Naval Station Norfolk, Virginia, after successful completion on Oct. 30 of its post-shakedown availability/selected restricted availability, Program Executive Office (PEO) Aircraft Carriers announced.

Completion of the availability marks a significant milestone for the Ford, the first ship in a next-generation class that will serve for 50 years as a centerpiece of U.S. national defense.

“This is a warship like none other, and the process of returning her to fleet service reflects the great technical skill, professionalism and tenacity of the government/industry team,” said Rear Adm. James Downey, program executive officer for aircraft carriers.

A PSA is a typical period of construction availability in the early life of a ship during which the Navy and shipbuilder resolve issues that arise in initial at-sea periods and make any needed changes and upgrades.

CVN 78’s PSA began on July 15, 2018, and included work on Advanced Weapons Elevators (AWEs), repairs to the ship’s main reduction gear, improvements to the throttle control system, upgrades to the advanced arresting gear and numerous other maintenance tasks.

During the PSA, most discrepancies – known as “trial cards” – that had been identified during previous workups

were addressed, with few remaining to address in future maintenance availabilities. As a first-of-class ship, such discrepancies are not unexpected, and the U.S. Navy is incorporating lessons learned from CVN 78 to inform design and actively improve oversight of future ships of the class.

The program manager for USS Gerald R. Ford, Capt. Ron Rutan, acknowledged that unique challenges accompany technological advances.

“The design and execution challenge in delivering a first-of-class warfighting platform is not only to make CVN 78 better, but also to enhance production on the next ships in the class – the future USS John F. Kennedy and future USS Enterprise,” Rutan said.

The Gerald R. Ford class incorporates 23 new technologies with advances in propulsion, power generation, ordnance handling and aircraft launch systems. These innovations will support a 30% higher sortie generation rate, executed with a 20% reduction in crew compared to Nimitz-class carriers. The Gerald R. Ford-class carrier offers a 17% reduction – about \$4 billion per ship – in life-cycle operations and support costs compared to the Nimitz class.