

USS John C. Stennis Leaves Dry Dock, Begins Second Phase of Refueling and Complex Overhaul



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WASHINGTON NAVY YARD – USS John C. Stennis (CVN 74) undocked from drydock April 8, completing a significant milestone during its multi-year Refueling and Complex Overhaul (RCOH) at HII-Newport News Shipbuilding (NNS) in Newport News, Virginia.

Commissioned in December 1995, the nation's seventh Nimitz-class nuclear-powered aircraft carrier entered RCOH in May 2021, under a \$3 billion contract with NNS. The overhaul is now more than 65 percent complete and tracking for redelivery in October 2026.

Aircraft carriers enter refueling complex overhauls at the mid-point of their 50-plus-year lifespan, incorporating upgrades to propulsion equipment, infrastructure and electronic systems. After NNS flooded the dry dock with more than 100 million gallons of water, the ship moved to the shipyard's outfitting berth, where shipyard workers and crew will complete the installation and testing of major components and combat support systems.

Rear Adm. Casey J. Moton, Commander, Program Executive Office Aircraft Carriers, recognized the important milestone, adding that the next phase of the ship's overhaul will deliver impressive new technologies to support the Navy's warfighters,

enabling John C. Stennis to meet operational taskings during another 25-plus years of service.

“When John C. Stennis redelivers, she’ll be the most technologically advanced Nimitz-class aircraft carrier in the Navy,” Moton said. “She’ll bring to the fleet the highest level of capability across all mission sets.”

Moton also acknowledged that the shipyard and Navy team have been navigating several challenges and working under an extended redelivery schedule due both to mandatory growth work following ship condition assessments, as well as industrial base challenges.

“The Navy-Industry team is dealing with the lingering effects of a post-COVID industrial base—one that includes a reduced or unstable capability and capacity along with challenges in workforce recruitment, retention and proficiency. However, the bottom line is that fleet operators need us to deliver these capital assets to our warfighters ready for tasking, so we are working on a daily basis with our industry partners and within the Navy to accelerate problem solving and to speed production on the deck plates—all focused on delivering readiness. I am proud of our entire team for achieving this important production milestone towards redelivering USS John C. Stennis to the fleet.”

Capt. Mark Johnson, manager of the PEO Aircraft Carriers In-Service Aircraft Carrier Program Office, said that the Navy-Industry team is leveraging lessons learned from the Navy’s previous RCOHs, especially on USS George Washington (CVN 73), which was redelivered in May 2023.

“Recognizing the changing workforce demographics coming out of the COVID pandemic, the combined Navy/Shipbuilder team has taken measurable steps to improve the level of support to the mechanic or sailor actually performing work on the ship by

leveraging new digital management tools and processes,” said Johnson.

More than 25 million total man-hours of work will go into John C. Stennis’ RCOH, with crews refitting and installing a new square and tapered mast, accommodating state-of-the-art defense and communications systems, updates to the ship’s shafts, refurbished propellers, and modernized aircraft launch and recovery equipment.

“RCOH construction enhances nearly every space and system on the carrier, beyond the most critical requirement to defuel and refuel the ship’s two nuclear reactors and to repair and upgrade the propulsion plant,” Johnson said. “We work on every part of the ship, from the hull, screws and rudders to more than 600 tanks; thousands of valves, pumps and piping components; electrical cables and ventilation; as well as combat and aviation support systems. It’s demanding, complex work that challenges every member of the planning team, shipyard crews and ship’s force.”

During the upcoming outfitting and testing phase, shipbuilders will complete the overhaul and installation of the ship’s major components and test its electronics, combat and propulsion systems. This period will also focus on improving the ship’s living areas and the general quality of life for the sailors, including crew living spaces, galleys and mess decks.