

# THE AVENGER

Volume 2, Issue 38 December 9, 2011



**THIS WEEK:** Coming home | Best photos of deployment

# table of [CONTENTS]

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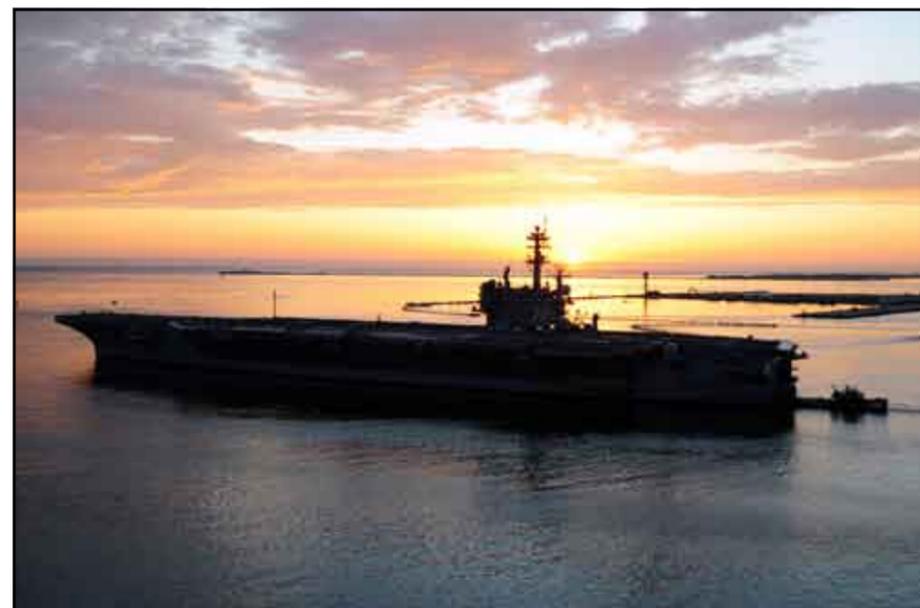
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# Coming Home

USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77) will return to its homeport of Norfolk, Va., Dec. 10, after completing its historic first combat deployment. The ship's transition from rookie to seasoned veteran is a story all its own.



## On the cover:

A montage of Avenger covers from deployment. Photo illustration by MC3(SW/AW) Greg Wilhelmi.



The ship's seven-month journey began May 11, with the call "Underway - shift colors." The Navy's newest aircraft carrier and its crew sailed across the Atlantic Ocean to the U.S. 6th Fleet Area of Responsibility (AOR). While there, the crew enjoyed three European port visits to England, Spain, and Italy – in only four weeks.

The crew arrived in Portsmouth, England, on May 28 and spent four days enjoying many of the country's famous cities and sights through Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) program-sponsored tours, to include trips to London.

"The only complaint I had was that we didn't have enough time because there is just so much to see," said Legalman 1st Class Jonathan High. "It's impossible to see it all in a four-day period."

Also, 48 Sailors took part in a memorial service held in honor of America's fallen World War I veterans. Brookwood American Cemetery and Memorial – one of eight overseas American cemeteries—contains the graves of 468 Americans, including 41 who have never been identified. For those Sailors



who attended, the event represented something beyond the average community relations (COMREL) project, said George H.W. Bush Chaplain Lt. Sunny Mitchell.

"This was unlike most COMRELs," Mitchell said. "People are used to building something or cleaning up a place, but this was just as much a community relations project as any other. We were invited to join this event in an effort to make a truly joint celebration for Memorial Day which knows no geographical boundaries."

On June 6, while the ship was anchored off the coast of Cartagena, Spain, the crew hosted a reception and welcomed Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus. After spending the day meeting Spanish defense officials and military leaders, Mabus joined U.S. Ambassador to Spain Alan Solomont for the sunset social aboard George H.W. Bush. He mingled with more than 100 Spanish dignitaries, as well as many George H.W. Bush Carrier Strike Group Sailors.

"These strike groups are symbols of freedom, and they project freedom's power, never more so than when we are



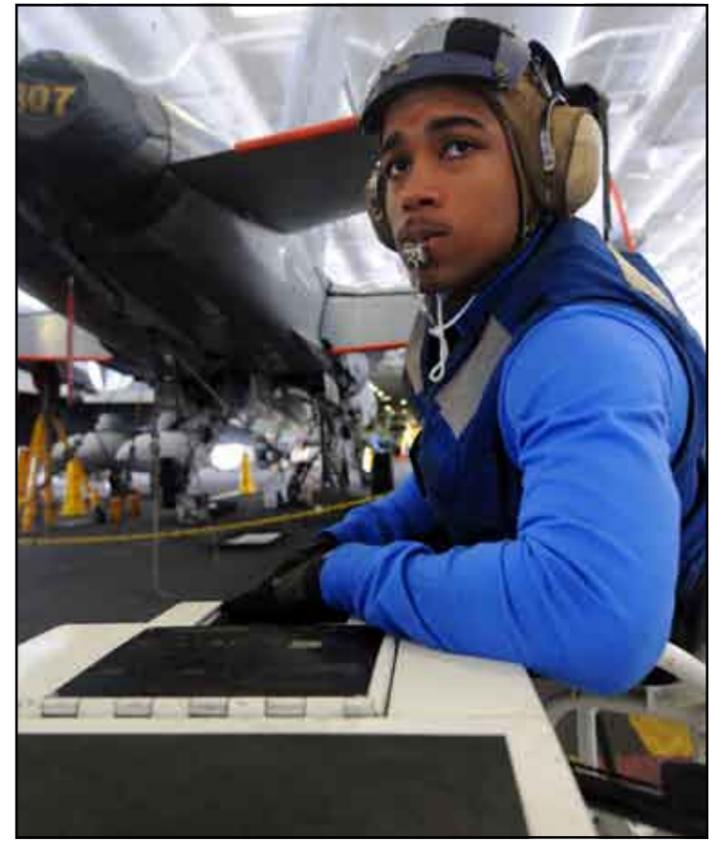
joined by a country that we have had such a long and deep history with," Mabus said.

During the ship's visit to Spain, the crew participated in two COMRELs and a variety of MWR-sponsored events, including a day at Terra Mitica Amusement Park and trips to botanical gardens, wineries and castles.

A few days later, George H.W. Bush made a port call in Naples, Italy. The crew enjoyed the local culture and also participated in several MWR tours including overnight trips to Rome.

"I'll always remember the amazing pizza [in Naples]," said Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handling) 1st Class (SW/AW) Edwin Perez. "The people were nice and the food was great."

While in Naples, several Sailors volunteered at the Missionary Sisters of Charity, a local men's shelter and soup kitchen that provides free meals and housing to homeless men. Approximately 20 volunteers prepared food in the morning, while 20 more served food and helped clean up in the evening. In addition, nearly 50 Sailors spent five hours clearing an



"These strike groups are symbols of freedom."  
— Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus



# “By any metric, we blew 5th Fleet’s door off.”

— Cmdr. Scott Troyer, Commanding Officer, Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 87

overgrown soccer field at Centro Laila which provides shelter for refugees and their children.

“Everyone worked hard,” said Yeoman 1st Class (AW) Ivy Cyphers. “We helped clean, washed dishes, and put together beds to prepare the Missionary Sisters of Charity for the afternoon.”

The crew then steamed toward the U.S. 5th Fleet AOR to begin the combat phase of the deployment, passing through the Suez Canal on June 18.

After a long line of days at sea, the crew ported in Khalifa Bin Salman, Bahrain, for a four-day visit, July 10.

More than 750 Sailors purchased tickets for discounted tours offered by MWR. Sailors experienced both the cultural side of Bahrain with food tastings and a tour of the Grand Mosque, as well as the recreational side by swimming with dolphins, fishing, golfing and going to a local water park.

“The water park was a great way to stay cool in the heat,” said Damage Controlman 3rd Class (SW) Laron Cooke. “Everyone got together after riding the slides to play water volleyball. It was a blast.”

While in Bahrain, George H.W. Bush’s soccer team competed in a friendly soccer match with a local Bahraini soccer team. Sailors tutored children in math, English and Arts at the Regional Institute for Active Learning. The Embassy of the Philippines in Manama, Bahrain, also offered George H.W. Bush Sailors the chance to socialize with residents of a local women’s shelter.

“It’s important to give back to the community, no matter what community you’re in,” said Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class (SW/AW) Kendrah Agostini, who participated in a COMREL at the women’s shelter. “It’s rewarding to take some of our limited liberty time and give to a good cause.”

On Aug. 30, George H.W. Bush ported

in Jebel Ali, United Arab Emirates, for the fifth port call of deployment. Nearly 2,000 Sailors purchased more than 2,400 sponsored tour tickets from MWR. Sailors spent time sandboarding, riding four-wheelers in the desert, visiting the famous sports-car museum Ferrari World, and touring the city of Dubai.

“Everything here has unique architecture that you just don’t see in other places,” said Aviation Structural Mechanic 3rd Class Derek C. London during his tour of Dubai. London and other Sailors visited the Spice Souk and Gold Souk, enjoyed an Arabian Dhow cruise on the Dubai Creek, and toured the Dubai Historical Museum.

After Jebel Ali, George H.W. Bush successfully passed its first Maintenance and Material Management (3M) Inspection Sept. 24. The inspection is conducted every 24 months aboard aircraft carriers to examine each ship’s ability to effectively record and administer required maintenance throughout the ship via the Navy’s 3M system.

“The ship did really well for being such a new ship with a green crew,” said Chief Aviation Boatswain’s Mate (Fuel) (AW/SW) Bryan D. Hay, one of the 3M inspectors.

During the five-day event, 16 inspectors from Commander, Naval Air Forces (COMNAVAIRFOR) conducted 248 supervised checks on the ship’s 18 departments to ensure the crew properly follows written procedures for required maintenance.

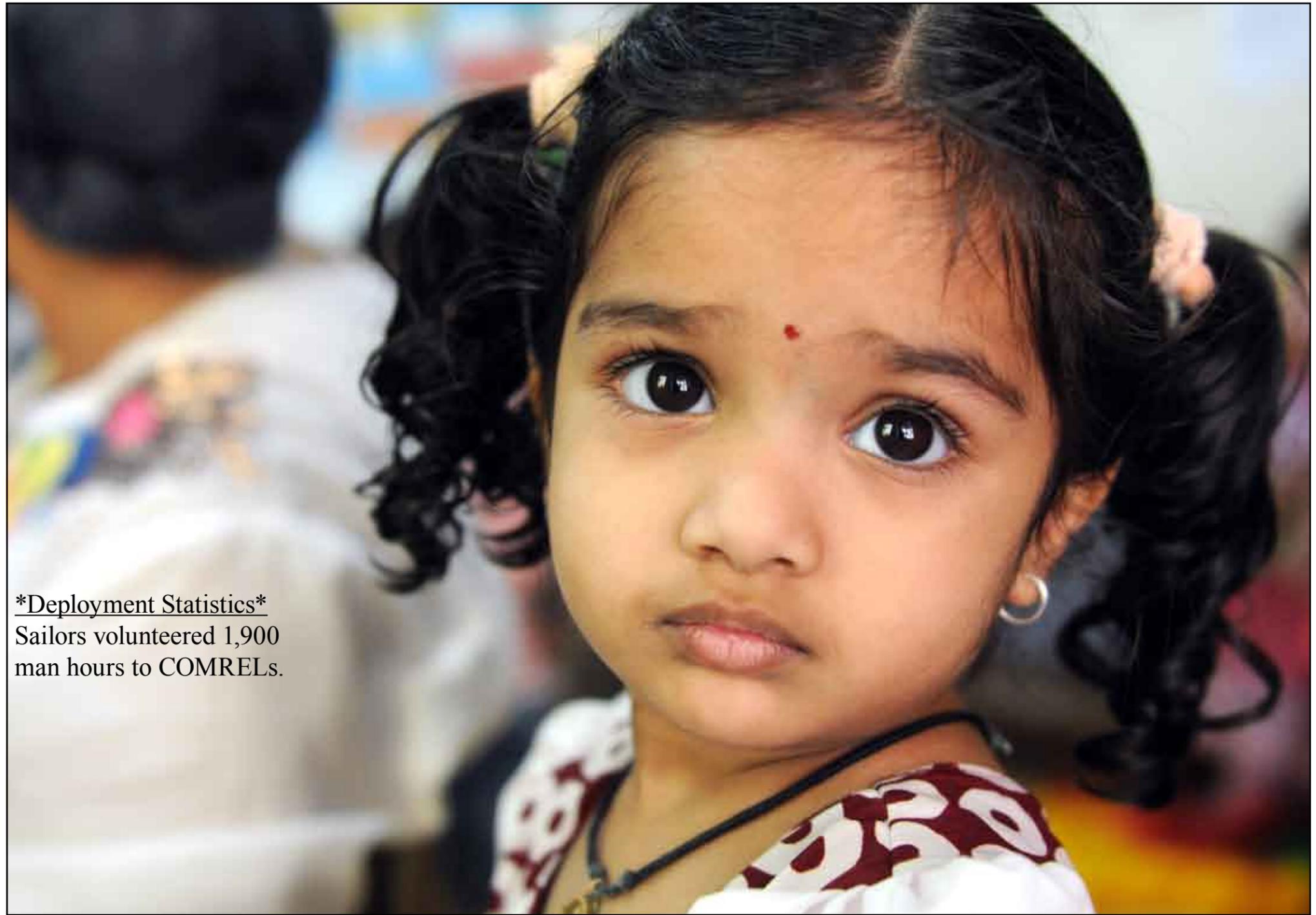
“I saw a lot of confidence in the crew, especially in the maintenance workers,” added Hay. “There was a lot of pride and professionalism in their work.”

After a second visit to Jebel Ali, George H.W. Bush Sailors enjoyed a visit from country music supergroup The Frontmen on Oct. 19. The Frontmen include Richie McDonald, former lead singer of the country band Lonestar; Tim Rushlow,



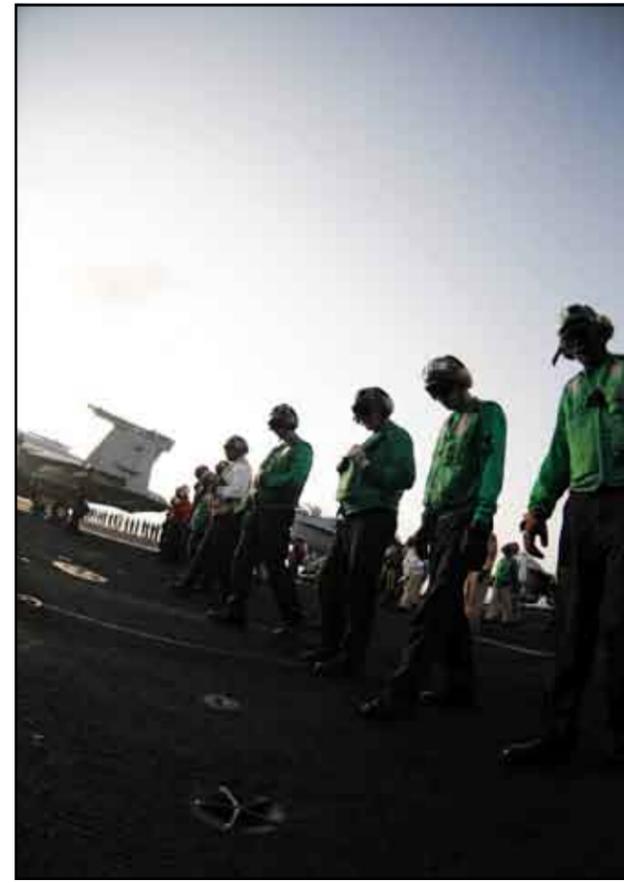
## \*Deployment Statistics\*

240,000 pounds of mail was processed and over 63 million gallons of water was made.



\*Deployment Statistics\*  
Sailors volunteered 1,900 man hours to COMRELS.





formerly of the band Little Texas; and Larry Stewart of the band Restless Heart. The trio was touring for the first time as a group and decided to play a show for deployed Sailors.

“We’re here to lift spirits,” said McDonald. “Our job is to come out, let everybody here have a good time and hopefully put a smile on [the Sailors’] faces.”

After the sound was checked and the lights were cued, Sailors gathered in the hangar bay to witness the first live musical performance of the deployment.

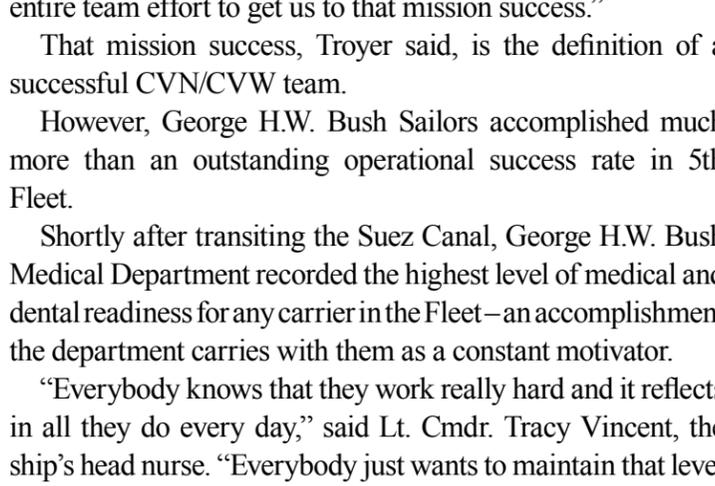
“I can’t think of a cooler place to have a concert than on an aircraft carrier in the middle of the ocean,” said Aviation Structural Mechanic 3rd Class Chelsea R. Taufasau.

Sailors sang along to some of their favorite songs, including “Amazed,” “The Bluest Eyes in Texas,” and “God Blessed Texas,” and enjoyed the break from the daily routine of ship life.

“It’s great that they came out here for us,” said Aviation Boatswain’s Mate (Handling) 3rd Class Katie L. Heilmann. “It’s a great morale booster that will keep the ship going through the rest of this deployment.”

On Nov. 11, USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77) and Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 8 completed flight operations in support of Operation New Dawn, marking the end of the combat phase of the aircraft carrier’s first operational deployment.





**\*Deployment Statistics\***

Over 100,000 pounds of chicken was cooked and 53,000 gallons of milk was used to feed the crew.

Over the course of nearly five months, the flight deck of George H.W. Bush launched more than 2,210 combat sorties totaling nearly 12,300 combat flight hours in support of Operations Enduring Freedom and New Dawn.

While in 5th Fleet, the crew of USS George H.W. Bush conducted 30,668 aircraft moves, 1,591 elevator operations, and 9,140 flight deck launches and recoveries, all the while distributing more than 31 million gallons of fuel to support flight operations, in addition to logging more total flight hours than any of the last five CVN/CVW teams deployed to the region.

“By any metric, we blew 5th Fleet’s doors off,” said Cmdr. Scott Troyer, Commanding Officer, Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 87. “We flew more operational missions than any other carrier in recent memory. We supported more [troops in contact]. Our success rate was higher than any other. It’s an entire team effort to get us to that mission success.”

That mission success, Troyer said, is the definition of a successful CVN/CVW team.

However, George H.W. Bush Sailors accomplished much more than an outstanding operational success rate in 5th Fleet.

Shortly after transiting the Suez Canal, George H.W. Bush Medical Department recorded the highest level of medical and dental readiness for any carrier in the Fleet—an accomplishment the department carries with them as a constant motivator.

“Everybody knows that they work really hard and it reflects in all they do every day,” said Lt. Cmdr. Tracy Vincent, the ship’s head nurse. “Everybody just wants to maintain that level of excellence where it is.”

Medical personnel conducted 68 medical evacuations and 278 surgeries during deployment, making them the most proficient medical team in the Fleet.

As the ship was conducting operations in 5th Fleet, the crew studied for the upcoming E4-E6 advancement exams. On the previous cycle, George H.W. Bush advanced more than 240 Sailors and during an all hands call, Capt. Brian “Lex” Luther, the ship’s Commanding Officer, offered a 96-hour special liberty if at least 275 Sailors advanced during the next cycle.

To meet that goal the ship offered many opportunities to study. One command program, “Professional Pursuit,” focused on Professional Military Knowledge (PMK) topics, to include Enlisted Surface and Aviation Warfare Specialist material, as well as damage control, 3M, and Navy history. Initiated by the ship’s Training department and run by the First Class Petty Officers’ Association, the program was a combination board game and television game show in which Sailors competed in teams of five on the ship’s mess decks in elimination-style rounds. Competitors won prizes ranging from head-of-the-line passes to free drinks at the ship’s coffee bar, Lonestar Café. Each week’s winning team carried the Professional Pursuit trophy to their departmental spaces.

“I knew most of the PMK questions on the test because of Professional Pursuit,” said Aviation Boatswain’s Mate (Handling) 3rd Class (AW) Vanessa Pierson. “It was fun and rewarding, not only because of how it helped me on the advancement exam, but because my team won the overall competition, we’ll be some of the first Sailors to get off the ship when we return from deployment.”

Not only did the crew pass Luther’s advancement goal – they blew it out of the water. The Navy’s newest aircraft carrier advanced 432 Sailors to First, Second and Third Class Petty Officer. In addition to breaking the ship’s own advancement record, George H.W. Bush also experienced the highest promotion of all carriers in the past seven years with not only its total number but also its 30.3% advancement rate.

“Our Sailors truly connected the importance of studying to the results of Perform-to-Serve and the Enlisted Retention Boards,” said Command Master Chief David Colton. “We provided the avenue through some creative training and incentive programs, but our Sailors were the ones who really put forth the time and effort to set themselves up for success.”

On Nov. 20, George H.W. Bush reentered the 6th Fleet AOR and after a few days in the Mediterranean Sea, made its final port call to Marseille, France.

During the visit, Sailors enjoyed historic French sites through MWR, which sold 1,136 total tours to numerous museums, art galleries and historic monuments, as well as an overnight tour

**\*Deployment Statistics\***

Medical Department examined at least 25,000 Sailors during sick call and Dental conducted 1,700 dental exams.

\*Deployment Statistics\*

Over 10,000 Avengers were printed for 31 different magazines.



to Paris that sold out six hours after the tickets went on sale.

“Paris was amazing,” said Logistics Specialist 2nd Class Adam Ardire. “There wasn’t enough time to see it all. In the end, waiting in the line for the tour was worth every penny.”

Several Sailors volunteered for the nine different COMREL programs offered during the port visit ranging from participating in a volleyball game to speaking with high school students about American culture and the U.S. Navy.

“The French people seemed very pleased to have us around,” said Ship’s Serviceman 1st Class (SW/AW) Laura Clarke, who participated in two COMRELS. “I take great pleasure in knowing that I’m making a difference in their lives and mine, as well as strengthening the ties between the U.S. and France, which in the end, is one of the Navy’s missions.”

As the ship makes its way back home after seven months at sea, the crew has begun reflecting on what they enjoyed most about deployment.

“Paris, by far, was my favorite part of deployment,” said reactor guy “It was magical, for lack of a better word. I don’t know how else to describe it.”

In the end, 706 Sailors advanced to the ranks of E4, E5 and E6, approximately 1,200 Sailors earned Enlisted Surface and Enlisted Aviation Warfare Specialist qualifications, and with more than 61,000 miles traveled, the maiden voyage of George H.W. Bush was a successful one.

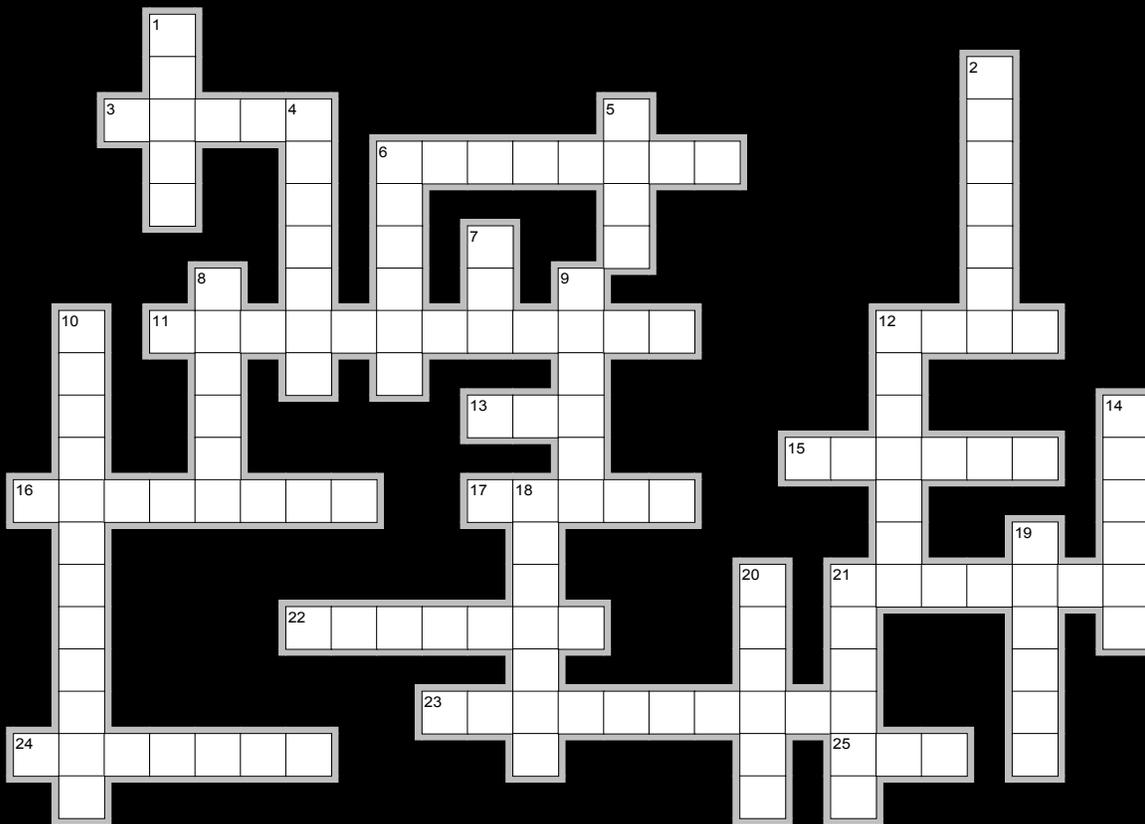
The Sailors aboard George H.W. Bush look forward to time with family and loved ones and some much needed time to relax before their country calls on them again. †

“Paris was, by far, my favorite part of deployment.”

— Electronics Technician 2nd Class Matthew Spire



# Navy Knowledge Crossword



## ACROSS

3. The ship's newspaper, TV studio and photo lab are run by \_\_\_\_ Department.
6. George H.W. Bush is the only aircraft carrier with a living \_\_\_\_.
11. You can get a cup of Starbucks coffee at \_\_\_\_ (two words).
12. \_\_\_\_ is responsible for intermediate-level repairs and maintenance on aircraft parts, systems and components (acronym).
13. Weapons Department personnel wear \_\_\_\_ jerseys.
15. George H.W. Bush's final port visit of deployment was in Marseille, \_\_\_\_.
16. The ship's store is known as \_\_\_\_ (two words).
17. George H.W. Bush is the \_\_\_\_ and final carrier of its class.
21. The ship's museum is known as the \_\_\_\_ Room.
22. George H.W. Bush's homeport is \_\_\_\_, Va.
23. George H.W. Bush Executive Officer Capt. William \_\_\_\_.
24. The ship's nuclear-trained Sailors are assigned to \_\_\_\_ Department.
25. George H.W. Bush has \_\_\_\_ nuclear reactors.

## DOWN

1. Sailors who work on the aircraft catapults and arresting gear wear \_\_\_\_ jerseys.
2. "\_\_\_\_ at Work" is the motto of CVN 77.
4. Type of aircraft George H.W. Bush flew during World War II.
5. On board a U.S. Navy ship, a bed is known as a \_\_\_\_.
6. George H.W. Bush is a \_\_\_\_-class aircraft carrier.
7. \_\_\_\_ Department is responsible for all activity in the hangar bay and on the flight deck, to include providing fuel for flight operations.
8. The \_\_\_\_, Welfare and Recreation program offers discounted tours, and operates the ship's gyms.

9. On May 11, 2011, George H.W. Bush left on its \_\_\_\_ deployment.
10. USS George H.W. Bush was \_\_\_\_ on Jan. 10, 2009.
12. Former President George H.W. Bush was a naval \_\_\_\_ during World War II.
14. What is George H.W. Bush's Commanding Officer's last name?
18. The ship's first port visit of deployment was Portsmouth, \_\_\_\_.
19. \_\_\_\_ Department is in charge of all galleys, laundry and ship's stores.
20. George H.W. Bush Command Master Chief David \_\_\_\_.
21. George H.W. Bush can operate \_\_\_\_ years without refueling.

## Last Week's Answers

