

Greetings from USS Abraham Lincoln,

Thank you for your kind gifts to the Sailors of USS Abraham Lincoln and Carrier Air Wing Seven. Our deployment has been full of ups and downs, and one thing that made it more bearable is the outpouring of care packages, letters and cards from back home.

This being my sixth deployment, you could say that I'm used to it by now; however, this deployment has been anything but ordinary. Due to world events, we were operating just outside of our normal "Area of Operations" for this part of the world, which presented numerous logistical challenges. It also limited our ports of call to just one (Duqm, Oman) which will one day be a major port city. It is currently a large port in the beginning stages of construction with a small town as the only reprieve for the 5,500 Sailors onboard Abe. This resulted in all onboard being confined to the pier with very limited resources (and two hotels!) ...still nice to get off the ship and get some decent food and drink, but not really any place to stock up on much needed supplies as we would in any other port. This is why I sent out the call for help to the Navy Chiefs Mess on Facebook. I have to admit; I was not ready for the amount of support that was received. Within DAYS, care packages started arriving from Chiefs stationed in the area who had access to some of the much needed supplies. That was just the beginning as word travelled fast that we were in need.

Another discouraging aspect of this deployment was the seemingly never-ending changes in our homecoming date. Our original homecoming was scheduled for October 31. With news that USS Harry S Truman was suffering electrical issues, that quickly changed to November 22. As that date approached and it was nearly time to start heading home, we were informed that we would be delayed further and would be home by December 21. This was not meant to be, and within two weeks of hearing this news, we were informed we would be staying "on station" until relieved by another aircraft carrier, which could mean indefinitely. I can't begin to describe to you the effect this had on morale onboard. This is when I decided to reach out to the Chief's Mess for help.

I never could have imagined the end result in my wildest dreams. It was at times overwhelming (with joy!) how many very caring people sent their love and support. I received approximately one thousand care packages personally, which I distributed throughout the ship with the help my Sailors and the Chaplain's office. Many others received packages as well. I would estimate the total reached several thousand! One package had a letter in it informing us that a US Senator had even sent out a call for our support!

Even as I write this, I'm overwhelmed with joy knowing that so many Americans care so deeply about our wellbeing. My words cannot express how intensely grateful everyone here is for all the love and support.

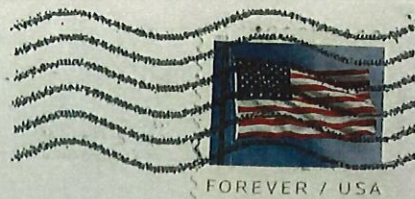
As we (hopefully) wind down to the end of our seemingly never-ending deployment, it has become increasingly difficult to find people in need of the supplies which are still arriving. In an effort to ensure that nothing goes to waste, we have begun sorting out all the non-perishables and will be donating them to the homeless upon our arrival to homeport. (The perishable items are being eaten as quickly as they arrive!)

At the end of the day, we all "signed up for this", and we're all hanging in here knowing that we have so much support from Great Americans like you back home.

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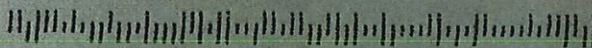
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May your days be merry and bright!

THANK YOU FOR THE SUPPORT

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Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group Arrives in San Diego after Around-the-World Deployment

Story Number: NNS200120-11 Release Date: 1/20/2020 6:26:00 PM

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By Ensign Molly Fresher, USS Abraham Lincoln Public Affairs

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200120-N-HD110-0245 SAN DIEGO (Jan. 20, 2020) The Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) transits San Diego Bay. Lincoln arrives at Naval Air Station North Island after a 10-month deployment in support of maritime security operations and theater security cooperation efforts in the U.S. 6th, 5th, and 7th Fleet areas of operations. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Danielle A. Baker/Released)

January 20, 2020

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SAN DIEGO (NNS) -- The Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group arrived at Naval Air Station North Island Jan. 20, marking the end of a 10-month deployment to the U.S. 6th, 5th, and 7th Fleet areas of operation.

The strike group deployed April 1 from Norfolk, Virginia, in support of maritime stability and security. With flagship USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72), embarked airwing Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 7, and the staffs of Carrier Strike Group (CSG) 12 and Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 2, the strike group steamed east all the way around the world.

"I couldn't be more proud of the work that our team accomplished during this deployment," said Rear Adm. Michael Boyle, commander, CSG 12. "Over the course of 10 months the Sailors of the Abraham Lincoln Strike Group made a difference in some of the world's most critical waterways, ensuring the free flow of commerce and deterring aggression through strength and readiness. They can return home knowing that their service to our Navy and our Nation made a positive difference."

The 295-day deployment is the longest carrier deployment in the post-Cold War era.

The strike group was expedited to the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations in early May, in response to credible threats to maritime security. Over the course of its seven months in theater, the strike group sustained critical presence operations to deter aggression. It also conducted combat missions in support of Operations Freedom's Sentinel and Inherent Resolve, ultimately flying 392 combat sorties and over 28,000 flight hours.

"An aircraft carrier, with its embarked airwing, is one of the most powerful assets our Navy has at its disposal," said Capt. William Reed, commander, CVW 7. "The airwing can project power from the carrier, offering both offensive and defensive capabilities to a combatant commander. I think our deployment shows just how impactful a carrier can be in theater."

While operating in the U.S. 6th Fleet area of operations, ABESCG supported coalition theater security operation efforts, conducting multiple partnership-building and interoperability evolutions in the region. The strike group participated in various multilateral maritime warfare exercises with militaries from Great Britain, Italy, Romania, Lithuania, and Spain that promoted proficiency across platforms and services. Building on key leader engagement efforts, Abraham Lincoln hosted international leaders including numerous ambassadors, heads of state, chiefs of defense, and NATO representatives from regional allies.

Demonstrating the U.S. Navy's ability to operate alongside sister services and to aggregate credible combat forces anywhere in the world, the strike group also conducted combined operations with the John C. Stennis Strike Group and Kearsarge Amphibious Ready Group, as well as joint exercises with a U.S. Air Force B-52H Stratofortress.

In the U.S. 7th Fleet, the strike group conducted flight operations inside the South China Sea in support of a free and open Indo-Pacific. Hosting a Thai military delegation, the strike group also worked toward strengthening key partnerships in the region.

Over the 10-month deployment, ABESCG travelled over 64,000 nautical miles and completed multiple strait and choke point transits, including the Strait of Gibraltar, the Suez Canal, the Bab-el Mandeb, the Strait of Hormuz, the Strait of Malacca, and the Surigao Strait.

The conclusion of deployment also marks an important milestone for Abraham Lincoln, completing a homeport shift from Naval Station Norfolk to Naval Air Station North Island. This deployment is the ship's first since completing its Refueling Complex Overhaul, a standard period of a carrier's lifecycle designed to prepare it for the second half of its lifespan.

"On Abe, we strive for excellence every day," said Capt. Walt Slaughter, commanding officer of Abraham Lincoln. "This deployment was our chance to show the world that we are ready, we are professional, and we will be absolutely relentless in our execution of any mission we are called to complete."

Now at home in San Diego, Abraham Lincoln and its crew will undergo the next stage of the ship's operational and maintenance lifecycle, but not before Sailors have a chance to take some time to learn about their new homeport.

"San Diego is an incredible place to live and work, and the crew is looking forward to reconnecting with families and then getting out to explore," Slaughter said. "While leaving Norfolk was bittersweet, ABE was originally a West Coast ship, so this is really a homecoming in more ways than one."

The embarked airwing and staffs of CSG 12 and DESRON 2 will return to their respective home bases throughout the East and West Coasts.

The Arleigh-Burke class guided-missile destroyers USS Bainbridge (DDG 96), USS Mason (DDG 87), and USS Nitze (DDG 94), and the Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Leyte Gulf (CG 55), which deployed as part of ABESCG in April, completed their deployment and returned to their homeport of Naval Station Norfolk in late 2019 and early 2020.

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For more news from USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72), visit www.navy.mil/local/cvn72/.