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Aircraft Carriers: Expanding America's Reach

"The Harry S. Truman Carrier Strike Group works with coalition partners to deter criminal pirate activity, counter violent extremism, and provide close air support for our troops on the ground in Afghanistan. Naval aviation plays a key role in each of the Navy's core capabilities, thanks to the 100 years of effort and sacrifice by naval aviators, aircrew and aviation professionals who served before us."

- Rear Adm. Patrick Driscoll, Commander, Carrier Strike Group TEN

This month, the Navy commemorates the [first flight](#) from a Navy ship, the USS Birmingham (CL 2), Nov. 14, 1910, which launched the era of naval aviation. Today, while aircraft carriers remain the centerpiece of the nation's maritime ability to [deter](#), fight and win major wars, they are also a key element for building partnerships, preventing crises and confronting low-intensity, unconventional threats.

Presence and flexibility

- U.S. aircraft carriers conduct a myriad of missions vital to America's security, from combat operations, close-air support and maritime interdiction, to countering piracy and providing humanitarian assistance and disaster relief around the world and at home. The aircraft carrier team of some 5,000 Sailors and Marines enable these missions every day by conducting all the tasks – whether navigating the ship, maintaining and flying the aircraft, or preparing the 18,000 meals daily to feed the crew.
- Aircraft carriers significantly contribute to cooperative security operations through [forward presence](#) and sustained, routine engagement with foreign partners and allies, like the George Washington Carrier Strike Group (CSG), part of our forward deployed naval forces in Japan.

Credible combat power

- The Harry S. Truman CSG has been on station in the U.S. 5th Fleet area of responsibility (AOR) since June 2010 in support of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation New Dawn (OND). [Embarked](#) Carrier Air Wing 3 has flown nearly 2,500 combat sorties in direct support of coalition troops in Afghanistan.
- Throughout its deployment, USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75) conducted interoperability exercises with [French ships](#), rescued eight stranded [Iranian mariners](#), and completed the ship's [100,000th arrested recovery](#).
- In October 2010, the [Abraham Lincoln](#) CSG entered the U.S. 5th fleet AOR in support of OEF, flew 1,203 sorties, conducted 36 advanced multi-unit training exercises, enhanced relationships with Malaysian and Singaporean navies, and steamed 10,660 miles through two different oceans.

Naval aviation today and in the future

- The first of at least three Ford-class carriers, [USS Gerald H. Ford](#) (CVN 78) is scheduled to be commissioned in 2015. This new class of carrier will increase sortie generation rates and significantly improve the Navy's warfighting capability and flexibility.
- Over the next 20 years, nearly every platform in the carrier's air wing will transition to a newer, more capable model. Manned fighters and patrol aircraft will be complemented by unmanned tactical aircraft; rotary-wing aircraft will make up a majority of the Navy's future air force, performing critical anti-surface and anti-submarine warfare, mine countermeasures, and [humanitarian assistance](#) missions.

Key Messages	Facts & Figures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carrier aviation meets the needs of the Navy across all six core capabilities of the Maritime Strategy. • Carriers represent our nation's strength, capability and resolve to friends and potential adversaries • The versatility inherent to aircraft carriers and carrier air wings allows for flexible and mission-tailored forces, while representing our nation's strength, capability and resolve to friends and potential adversaries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whether to provide combat power or humanitarian assistance, America's aircraft carriers are capable of reaching 80 percent of the world's population. • There are 11 active nuclear aircraft carriers in America's Navy with two currently deployed in U.S. 5th fleet, one forward deployed to U.S. 7th Fleet, and one underway conducting training.