

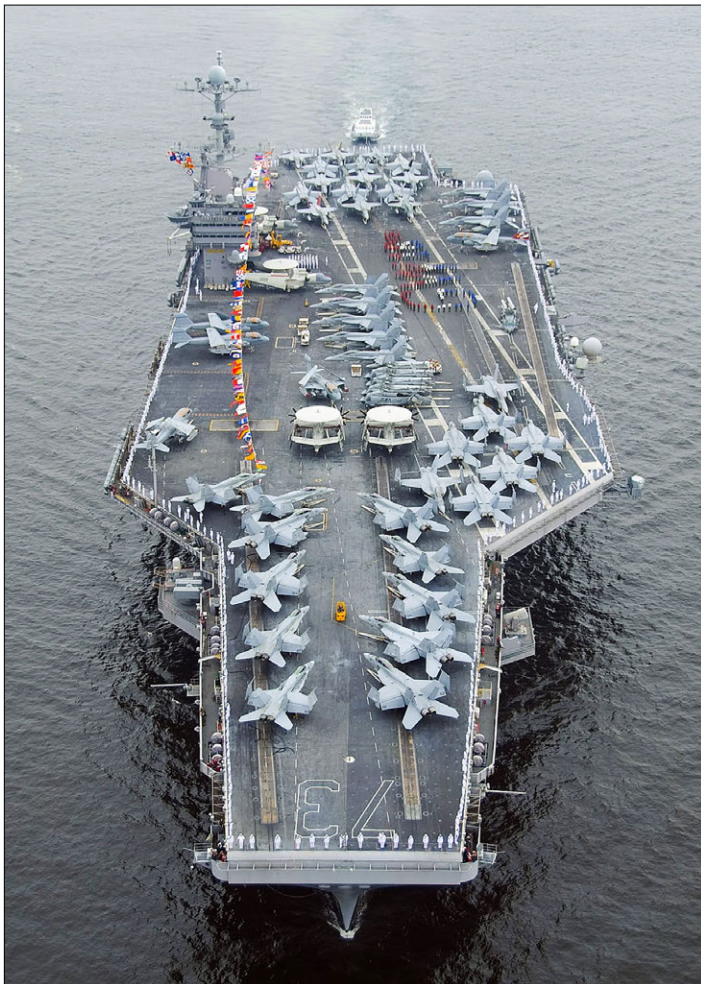
AROUND CFAY



CFAY to Welcome Aboard the USS George Washington

Story by **Garrett Nicolas Cole, CFAY Public Affairs**

As 2024 unfolds, Commander, Fleet Activities Yokosuka braces for a year of significant change and growth. The centerpiece of this transformation is the anticipated hull swap between the USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76) and USS George Washington (CVN 73). After eight years of service, the community will bid farewell to Reagan while welcoming back the GW that was previously forward deployed to Yokosuka from 2008 to 2015.



USS George Washington (CVN 73). (U.S. Navy photo)

Capt. Les Sobol, Commander, Fleet Activities Yokosuka, gave insight into the upcoming transitions in a recent podcast called “The Giant Voice,” which is the only official CFAY podcast. “This isn’t just a change of ships; it represents a significant transition for our entire community. Even if this is the second time she has been forward-deployed here, we’ll welcome aboard a primarily new crew and their families while others are transitioning out with the Ronald Reagan.”

It’s currently an all-hands-on-deck effort at CFAY to ensure a smooth transition. Sobol said, “The hull swap is a logistical feat, but beyond that, it’s all about the people.” Sobol also added that his team’s focus at CFAY “is primarily on the human aspect by ensuring smooth transitions for our service members and their families, helping them settle, and making them feel part of the CFAY family on Day One.”

CFAY is accustomed to adapting to change, with an ever-evolving dynamic mission. Sobol said, “Effective two-way communication will be the cornerstone for this process. Success in our environment hinges on our ability to communicate effectively.” He continued, “Our goal is to maintain consistent and clear communication channels within our community and with tenant commands. This podcast is just one of the tools we use to keep the community informed and connected.”

Along with listening to “The Giant Voice” podcast, community members can stay informed by subscribing to the weekly CFAY newsletter titled “My CFAY Weekly,” following the official CFAY social media profiles, and visiting the official CFAY website.

To aid newcomers in their transition to CFAY, Master Chief Master-at-Arms Anwar Blakely, the installation

Command Master Chief, highlighted the CFAY welcome aboard webpage as a vital resource.

"This webpage consolidates essential information, from initial relocation steps to contact details for crucial services, all consolidated in one convenient location," he said

Sponsors serve as the vital bridge for both Sailors and families during their transition to a new command. Their role in smoothing the path of transition cannot be overstressed. Blakely underscored the importance of sponsors, stating, "Your first point of contact after receiving your orders should be your sponsor." The sponsorship team at FFSC [Fleet and Family Service Center] connects newcomers with sponsors and current members of their gaining command who offer invaluable support throughout the relocation process. Information on locating and contacting your sponsor is on the CFAY welcome aboard webpage.

CFAY has recently pioneered a "Sponsorship-on-Demand" initiative to supplement the sponsorship program at CFAY. Sponsorship-on-Demand provides interactive, real-time assistance with PCS experts. On the first and third Thursday of each month, newcomers and those leaving can join an online call and chat to have their questions answered by professionals in real time. Blakely said, "We understand the challenges of moving and settling into a new place, and this additional resource is designed to help make that process as smooth as possible," while introducing the initiative on the podcast.

Justin M. Keller, Lead Public Affairs Specialist at Commander, Fleet Activities Yokosuka, stressed the significance of accurate information. Sharing his personal experience, Keller noted the importance of verifying information with official sources, highlighting the Public Affairs Office's commitment to providing accurate, reliable information.

Keller announced the CFAY "Welcome Aboard" campaign, which will cover essential topics for newcomers through a podcast mini-series on "The Giant Voice" and a series of informative articles in the "My CFAY Weekly" newsletter. "Our goal is to ensure that everyone has access to the most current and

helpful information for their journey here," Keller stated. The series will offer insights into various aspects of life at CFAY, both on and off base.

The "Welcome Aboard" episodes will be released on the first and third Tuesday of the month, which will proceed the FFSC Sponsorship-on-Demand sessions occurring on the first and third Thursday of the month. Sobol emphasized, "Information is empowerment; you will have the convenience of both the podcast mini-series along with the ability to speak directly with professionals," underlining the importance of these resources for newcomers.

Keller also announced a "Chief's Corner" mini-series focusing on mentorship and career development will air later in the year. Keller revealed that this series would cover enlisted advancement, educational opportunities, and career pathways for different ranks, involving experts from CFAY community leaders. "Our goal this year is to not only empower our sailors, civilians, and families with all the necessary information for a smooth transition to Yokosuka but also to help find success in their careers while they are here at CFAY," stated Keller.

Blakely, encouraged participation in this series, stating, "I would encourage everyone to get involved and utilize this series as a key communication tool. It's an excellent opportunity to connect and share valuable information."

Sobol concluded, "Communication is a collaborative effort," and encouraged everyone to contribute to the dissemination of information, emphasizing the importance of a collective "Giant Voice" within the community.

