



USS Mahan Returns Home

Story Number: NNS130914-04 Release Date: 9/14/2013 2:58:00 AM



By Ensign Alexander Washofsky, USS Mahan Public Affairs

NORFOLK, Va. (NNS) -- The guided-missile destroyer USS Mahan (DDG 72) returned to Naval Station Norfolk Sep. 13th after an eight-and a half-month deployment to the 6th Fleet area of responsibility.

Mahan traveled more than 42,391 nautical miles under the leadership of Cmdr. Adam Aycock, then Cmdr. Zoah Scheneman, who in May became the ship's commanding officer. The crew conducted 26 underway replenishments, 50 weapons exercises, 53 small boat operations, and 15 flight operations with 147 landings and recoveries of helicopters.

"I couldn't be more proud of the crew. They set the standard for excellence and established a great reputation for themselves out here," said Scheneman. "The successes we achieved are many, and the crew overcame every challenge they met with poise and precision."

Mahan deployed Dec. 28, 2012 in support of theater security cooperation efforts and maritime security operations in the Mediterranean Sea.

"The majority of the world's commerce moves by way of the sea," said Cmdr. Joe Matison, Mahan's executive officer. "We were out there ensuring safety and freedom of navigation, which is in the interest of all nations, by conducting theater security operations and working with our maritime partners."

While in 6th Fleet, the crew participated in a bilateral exercise with the Israeli Defense Forces. In addition to practicing core skills, the event also served as an opportunity to grow and foster partnership and cooperation between the two navies.

Mahan also participated in joint naval exercises and operations with France, Great Britain, Greece, Spain, and other NATO partners, highlighting the importance of working with coalitions to preserve the sea lines of communication.

After his first Mediterranean deployment, Chief Gas Turbine Systems Technician Daniel Hunt said he feels he has returned a better Sailor.

"I got to see so many interesting places and see so many cultures while serving our nation on the high seas," said Hunt. "It has been a fantastic and productive deployment."

Hunt was one of 10 first class petty officers selected for chief petty officer (CPO). The selectees were pinned in a ceremony on the pier soon after the ship moored. Chief Electrician's Mate Gregory Holcombe said that the ceremony felt different than all the other pinning ceremonies he has been to.

"Becoming a chief petty officer right after pulling in from such a successful deployment with the officers and chief petty officers wearing khakis was a great culmination of all the hard work and training we accomplished since being selected."

Command Master Chief Lewis Wilson added, "I would like to thank all the chief petty officers that provided all of the logistics support that allowed us to march down the pier into a ready stage to conduct our CPO Pinning Ceremony as part of the return to homeport events. Without the Chief's Mess, this would not have been possible."

While in theater, the ship made port visits to Augusta Bay and Naples, Italy; Israel; Cyprus; Rhodes and Souda Bay, Greece and Spain, where the crew enjoyed liberty, conducted maintenance on the ship, and participated in numerous community relations projects.

"The crew returns from deployment with their heads held high," said Wilson. "We accomplished our goal of a safe, sound and successful deployment."

Last month, the ship made headlines around the world when she headed east to be ready to conduct prompt and sustained combat operations after being directed by the Secretary of Defense in response to the alleged chemical weapons attack in Syria the day before.

Sailors anxiously endured the hours as homecoming drew near. The homecoming is especially exciting for Sonar Technician Surface 3rd Class Mark Brown, who is used to seeing ships returning due to growing up in the Norfolk area.

"I can't wait to see my family and to show them the great ship I've called home these last eight months," he said. Brown met the ship in Naples after completing boot camp and follow-on schools, and will return to his hometown a surface warfare-qualified Sailor.

Mahan is the 4th ship named after Rear Adm. Alfred Thayer Mahan, a naval theorist on seapower whose book 'The Influence of Sea Power Upon History 1660-1763' shaped naval strategy to this day.

The ship, whose motto is "Built to Fight" was commissioned in 1998 as the 21st Arleigh Burke-class destroyer, and the first Flight II variant of the class. She carries a complement of 236 Sailors and 29 Officers.

Reflecting on his 26 years of Naval service, Scheneman said that this deployment, his sixth, was by far his favorite. "It truly is an honor to lead these incredible men and women," he said.

For more information on USS Mahan please visit the ship's website <http://www.mahan.navy.mil/>
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130913-N-CT127-277 NORFOLK, VA. (Sept. 13, 2013) Chief Selectees from USS Mahan (DDG 72) sing Anchors Away as they march to their pinning ceremony held at the end of the pier. Mahan returned home after an eight-and-a-half month deployment to the 6th Fleet area of responsibility. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Josue L. Escobosa/Released)

September 15, 2013

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