

***The US Navy's newest super-carrier is underway with all its available air-power for the first time***

***Jake Epstein (jepstein@insider.com) - Business Insider***



*The USS Gerald R. Ford set sail on October 4, 2022, from Norfolk, Virginia.  
Navy© Navy*

*A Navy official confirmed to Insider [reporting](#) from Navy Times that this is the first time the entire carrier air wing has been embarked on the Ford for an underway period. The ship is underway for a composite training unit exercise known as COMPTUEX.*

*This exercise "assesses a carrier strike group's abilities to conduct military operations at sea and project power ashore through joint planning and execution of challenging and realistic training scenarios," 2nd Fleet spokesperson Lt. Cmdr. Kristi Johnson told Insider. "This evaluation is planned and executed by the Carrier Strike Group 4 staff, and it tests the mission-readiness of deplorable assets to perform as an integrated unit."*

*Johnson said the Ford's carrier strike group includes staff from Carrier Strike Group 12, Carrier Air Wing 8, and Destroyer Squadron 2. The participating vessels include the Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Normandy and Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers USS Ramage, USS McFaul, and USS Thomas Hudner.*

*The first-in-class Ford is the Navy's most [advanced](#) aircraft carrier and has a price tag of around \$13 billion. The ship, which was launched in 2013, commissioned in 2017 and [first deployed in 2022](#), has suffered [delays](#) and setbacks, and other issues like cost overruns.*

*It has a litany of new [technologies](#), including advanced elevators that can move missiles and bombs to the flight deck and electromagnetic catapults that are supposed to be capable of launching planes more effectively than the steam catapults on the Nimitz-class carriers.*



*Photos in Gallery©US Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Jackson Adkins*

*The US Navy's most advanced aircraft carrier – which was commissioned and later critiqued by President Donald Trump, according to a book – [deployed Tuesday from Norfolk, Virginia, to head to the Atlantic.](#)*

*After years of delay and costly setbacks that amounted to a \$13 billion price tag, the USS Gerald R. Ford set off on its first deployment, entering the competitive arena of naval ships from countries like Russia and China.*

*The ship comes with a slew of new technologies, including electromagnetic catapults that can launch planes and advanced weapons elevators that will move bombs and missiles up to the flight deck.*

*This is not only one of the most advanced aircraft carriers to enter the waters, surpassing the Navy's Nimitz-class carriers, but also [the world's largest.](#) Its sheer size hasn't won over everyone, however. Trump was among the critics of the ship.*

*"Peril," a book by the Washington Post reporters Bob Woodward and Robert Costa, says Trump was often preoccupied by the carrier, with rants about the ship's high cost, as well as the placement of the flight command center on the flight deck.*

*"It just doesn't look right," Trump said, according to the book.*

*Congress members have also taken issue with the ship. Rep. Elaine Luria of Virginia called the ship a "[\\$13 billion nuclear-powered floating berthing barge.](#)"*

*Ford's deployment in the Atlantic Ocean will consist of military exercises involving about 9,000 personnel from nine countries, 20 ships, and 60 aircraft, according to the Navy.*

***Take a peek at the Navy's latest aircraft carrier:***



*Photos in Gallery©MC2 Jackson Adkins/Navy*

*An MH-60S Knight hawk helicopter lands on the flight deck of the USS Gerald R. Ford. Behind it is the flight command center, or the ship's "island," that Trump is said to have ranted about.*



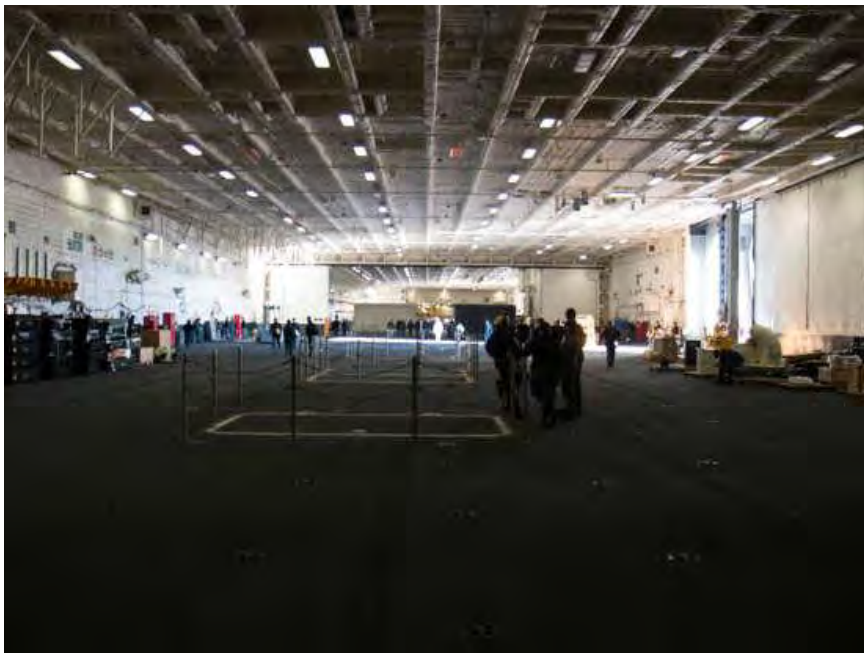
*Photos in Gallery©US Navy/Mass Comm Specialist Seaman Cory J. Daut*

*A tugboat directs the USS Gerald R. Ford as it leaves the pier in Newport News, Virginia, on October 25, 2019.*



*Photos in Gallery©US Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Ridge Leoni*

*Here's the empty flight deck of the USS Gerald R. Ford. The ship can hold about 75 aircraft, according to the Navy.*



*Photos in Gallery©Daniel Brown/Business Insider*

*The Ford has a massive hangar bay.*



*Photos in Gallery©Daniel Brown/Business Insider*

*The advanced weapons elevators move ordnance, such as bombs and missiles, up to the flight deck.*



*Photos in Gallery©Daniel Brown/Business Insider*

*Here's a view from the flight deck.*



*Photos in Gallery©Daniel Brown/Business Insider*

*The ship is also equipped with multiple short-range antiaircraft and missile systems called Sea Sparrows.*



*Photos in Gallery©Daniel Brown/Business Insider*

*Personnel navigate the ship from the bridge.*



*Photos in Gallery©Daniel Brown/Business Insider*

*The lead helm digitally controls the speed and steering of the aircraft carrier.*



*Photos in Gallery©Navy*

*Here's how the Ford looks when it's loaded with aircraft on its flight deck.*

*Navy Times [reported](#) on Thursday that during the Ford's [short 2022 deployment](#) around 80 percent of the air wing had embarked on the ship.*

*The Ford began the COMPTUEX exercise on March 2 with all its available air-power, including fixed-wing fighter jets, airborne early warning aircraft, and rotary aircraft.*

*The Ford Carrier Strike Group "demonstrated to the world what high-end naval warfare and integrated NATO interoperability looks like when it sailed on its*

*inaugural deployment in 2022," said Rear Adm. Greg Huffman, commander of Carrier Strike Group 12, in a [March 3 statement](#).*

*"Now, the strike group is initiating its final step in fully certifying as a combat-deplorable warship. COMPTUEX will further demonstrate that our carrier strike group is a combat-ready naval force capable of conducting a full spectrum of integrated maritime, joint, and combined operations," he added.*

*The Ford Carrier Strike Group is expected to deploy on its first full-length deployment sometime later this year.*