



2013 Fact Sheet

Nimitz Class Aircraft Carriers (CVN-68 to CVN-77)

BACKGROUND

The *Nimitz* Class aircraft carriers, which currently make up the entirety of the U.S. Navy's aircraft carrier fleet, are the largest warships ever built. While the designs of the final 7 ships (beginning with USS *Theodore Roosevelt* CVN-71) are slightly different from those of the 3 earlier ships (beginning with the USS *Nimitz*, CVN-68), the Navy considers all 10 carriers as a single class. The class was developed in the early 1960s after the construction and sea trials of the first nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, the USS *Enterprise* (CVN-65), uncovered the fact that only 2 nuclear reactors (CVN-65 was built with 8) were needed to maintain constant and reliable combat operational speeds. All 10 nuclear-powered *Nimitz* Class carriers were built in Newport News, VA.

The first ship of the class, the USS *Nimitz* (CVN-68), was commissioned in 1975. The last ship of the class, USS *George H. W. Bush* (CVN-77), was commissioned in January 2009. Other hulls include: USS *Dwight D. Eisenhower* (CVN-69) in October 1977; USS *Carl Vinson* (CVN-70) in March 1982; USS *Theodore Roosevelt* (CVN-71) in October 1986; USS *Abraham Lincoln* (CVN-72) in November 1989; USS *George Washington* (CVN-73) in July 1992; USS *John C. Stennis* (CVN-74) in December 1995; USS *Harry S. Truman* (CVN-75) in July 1998; and USS *Ronald Reagan* (CVN-76) in July 2003. These ships have an average unit cost of \$4.5 billion dollars.

IMPORTANCE

The *Nimitz* Class carriers provide the U.S. Navy the ability to deploy 85 to 90 warplanes to almost any area in the world on very short notice. With over 6,000 personnel (ship's company and aircrew), these carriers have a displacement of 102,000t, a flight deck length of 1,092ft, and a beam of 252ft. All ships of the class are powered by 2 A4W nuclear reactors kept in separate compartments to allow more ordnance, fuel, and aircraft storage space in comparison to the previous class of nuclear-powered aircraft carriers (the *Enterprise* Class). The ship's propulsion comes from four propeller shafts which produce a maximum speed of over 30 knots (56 km/h). Since the *Nimitz* Class is nuclear-powered, the aircraft carrier can operate for 20 years without refueling and has a projected service life of 50 years.

These ships were initially classified as attack carriers since the introduction of the USS *Carl Vinson* (CVN-70). When older carriers come in for Refueling and Complex Overhaul (RCOH), for which Congress regularly procures funding, the ships' nuclear power plants are refueled, and they are upgraded to the standards of the latest carriers. These improvements include better radar systems and facilities, which enable the ships to operate aircraft in a more effective anti-submarine role. Fitted with Common Undersea Picture (CUP) technology, the *Nimitz* Class aircraft carrier uses sonar to allow for better assessment of the threat from submarines. Other RCOH changes include better support for SH-60 "Seahawk" helicopters with dipping sonar systems. The USS *Nimitz*, USS *Dwight D. Eisenhower*, and the USS *Carl Vinson* have all received their midlife RCOH, while the USS *Theodore Roosevelt* is currently in port to receive its overhaul.

The *Nimitz* Class aircraft carriers are assigned as follows: USS *Nimitz* (CVN-68) in Bremerton, WA; USS *Dwight D. Eisenhower* (CVN-69) in Norfolk, VA; USS *Carl Vinson* (CVN-70) in San Diego, CA; USS *Theodore Roosevelt* (CVN-71) in Norfolk, VA; USS *Abraham Lincoln* (CVN-72) in Everett, WA; USS *George Washington* (CVN-73) in Yokosuka, Japan; USS *John C. Stennis* (CVN-74) in Bremerton, WA; USS *Harry S. Truman* (CVN-75) in Norfolk, VA; USS *Ronald Reagan* (CVN-76) in San Diego, CA; and the USS *George H. W. Bush* (CVN-77) in Norfolk, VA.

RECOMMENDATION

The Association of the United States Navy (AUSN) recommends continued funding for RCOH to allow the *Nimitz* Class aircraft carriers to remain at maximum operational status until the next class of aircraft carriers, the *Ford* Class, is underway.