

VADM D.H. MILLER III

AIR BOSS Remarks to UK Air Power Convention: July 2019

When you close your eyes and think of the words Aircraft Carrier – what do you see?

What do you think of?

Maybe you picture HMS Queen Elizabeth or USS Nimitz, or even scenes from movies of World War II as brave men flew off to battle against the Japanese Fleet.

In the United States – our Navy gathers each summer around June 4th to celebrate and commemorate the heroic actions and honor the memories of those we lost in the Battle of Midway, not only because it was the turning point in the war in the Pacific and not just because it was

the most important battle in the history of the United States Navy.

We celebrate the Battle of Midway because it was a test of our national character and the fate of our nation was in the balance. In the face of a superior force and overwhelming odds, a group of dedicated service men was called upon to risk it all for their country, for their families, and for the future. They were called upon to risk everything for us. They did, and they prevailed. Midway was the first “over the horizon” battle and the battle that solidified the Aircraft Carrier as the cornerstone of U.S naval power.

Today, in a time where other nations are challenging international norms and threatening the free and open international order, we must be ready to defeat a peer adversary. The United States and the United Kingdom

are brothers in arms and our collective dominance on the high seas is not a birthright, and our collective victory in a high-end fight is not preordained.

Aircraft carriers and Aircraft Carrier Strike groups comprised of potent air wings and associated escort ships are the centerpiece of America's security strategy; they complement the nuclear deterrence capability provided by undersea forces; they continuously...and visibly...support and protect national interests around the world. And we therefore, share your excitement as HMS Queen Elizabeth enters the fleet and prepares for her first deployment.

The aircraft carrier is the most survivable airfield in the world, travelling great distances in a day and capable of concentrating fires from the sea. They need no permissions from other host nations to operate, they operate where no land-based airfields exist, they are

sustainable, and, as history has shown us – they provide valuable options to National Decision makers. They are so, however, only if they are resourced to be available and to be lethal. Accordingly, the might of a carrier strike group is widely recognized; in fact, the mere presence of an aircraft carrier and its embarked air wing in an area of potential conflict often shapes the behavior of regional actors.

This was displayed on the worldwide stage in 2014, when USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH Strike Group transitioned from conducting flight operations over the skies in Afghanistan to address growing concerns about a terrorist group called ISIS that was moving into Iraq. 30 hours after flying over Afghanistan, aircraft from BUSH were launching overwatch missions into Iraq from the Arabian Sea. During these missions GEORGE H.W. BUSH was expertly protected by her escort, HMS Defender. For 54

days, the only manned offensive strike capability came from the sea, as Gulf Coalition Countries had not yet provided permission for land-based aircraft to launch offensive missions from their soil. 54 very crucial days.

Carrier Strike Groups matter: An aircraft carrier with an embarked air wing is one of the most powerful military forces in the world.

An aircraft carrier is Lethal. It is Agile. It is Multi-Dimensional. It is Resilient. It is Survivable. And without a doubt, it is a symbol of military strength that immediately reassures allies and deters adversaries.

Take, for example, the message sent to our allies and partners... as well as the DPRK...when USS NIMITZ, USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT, and USS RONALD

REAGAN – along with their embarked air wings – operated off the Korean peninsula in 2017.

That clear show of force and demonstration of lethality showed the U.S. Pacific Fleet's ironclad commitment to the continued security and stability of the region, and ultimately helped pave the way for bi-lateral discussions between the United States and North Korea six months later.

In the Pacific, the ability of a warfighting platform to rapidly respond to any mission set within our AOR – more than 100 million square miles – is critical to me as the Commander of U.S. Naval Air Forces in the Pacific Fleet.

One of the hallmarks of aircraft carriers is their agility – specifically their ability to quickly and effectively respond to the entire spectrum of military operations. From Combat missions to Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief...Carriers can do it all – irrespective of land-basing rights, fly-over agreements or diplomatic arrangements.

Good examples that showcase the agility I reference occurred in 2005, when USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN responded to a devastating TSUNAMI in Indonesia or USS CARL VINSON's 2010 response to render aid to earthquake victims in Haiti and again in 2011 when RONALD REAGAN provided much needed assistance to those affected by a devastating tsunami in Japan – during Operation Tomodachi.

Carriers are multi-dimensional in that they possess the flexibility to simultaneously conduct power projection, battlespace dominance and surveillance missions.

Further, they adapt to support an evolving air wing and expanding game-changing technologies to remain on the cutting edge of warfighting across a very long service life.

The U.S. Navy's first nuclear-power aircraft carrier, USS ENTERPRISE characterized the agility of a CVN during her 51-year service life, beginning with participation in the Cuban Missile Crisis and ending with Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. A true testament to her evolving capability, ENTERPRISE hosted 20 different aircraft during 25 overseas deployments, ultimately supporting the same air wing composition on her final deployment in 2012 as USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH, then the Nation's newest aircraft carrier, hosted during her maiden deployment the year prior.

Carriers are **resilient**. By resilience, I mean the measure of a unit's toughness or ability to operate in adverse conditions, and an aircraft carrier is arguably the most resilient, survivable platform in a Nation's military inventory:

Given the ability to conduct full-scale military operations over nearly 70% of the earth's surface in nearly any environmental condition, and the capacity to store vast amounts of aviation fuel, ordnance and supplies that enable weeks of intense combat operations without the need for resupply. The ability to replenish all of that while underway and quickly return to the fight, and the ability to transfer fuel, ordnance and supplies to other strike group assets when operating in austere logistical conditions or remote geographic locations.

Consider, for example, the recent deployment to the Northern Atlantic last fall by Carrier Strike Group EIGHT led by USS HARRY S. TRUMAN (CVN 75). For the first time in nearly 3 decades, an American aircraft carrier returned to the Arctic Circle to participate in high-end air, surface, and subsurface operations with NATO allies, often serving as a logistics multiplier for partner units given a supply line stretched thin by the harsh conditions of the Norwegian and Baltic Seas. Then consider that only four months prior, TRUMAN was conducting precision strikes on ISIS targets in support of Operation Inherent Resolve in the summer heat of the Eastern Mediterranean. And as I speak today, she is participating in workups yet again to deploy later this year – the perfect example of the resilience, lethality and agility of an aircraft carrier.

In an age of Great Power Competition – **numbers matter and interoperability is a must for those numbers to matter.** Therefore, the timing of HMS Queen Elizabeth, USS GERALD R. FORD and HMS Prince of WALES entering service is fortuitous and the efforts we make to ensure operations can occur seamlessly between our platforms is critical.

Before I leave the stage, I must address one aspect of Carriers that shouldn't be avoided. I am perplexed at why some in the media continue to proclaim the demise of the carrier. Critics would have us believe that anti-ship ballistic missiles would render aircraft carriers obsolete.

I believe these critics and skeptics are flat out wrong. The carrier strike group is **more** relevant today than ever before.

In this age of contested borders, disputed seas, and uncertain access, moving acres of sovereign territory at will across the global landscape is a force to be reckoned with ... and an enduring symbol of power for which there is no substitute.

There is nothing on God's blue earth than can match it. They are *where you need them, when you need them and bring what you need*. They say imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. Look no further than China...if the carrier was so irrelevant, why are they working so hard to build a fleet of them?

So when I close my eyes and think of the words “Aircraft Carrier.” I see modern day Carrier Strike Groups with HMS Queen Elizabeth and USS GERALD R. FORD,

interchangeably escorted by British Type 45 Daring Class Destroyers and US Arleigh Burke Class Destroyers. I see flight decks filled with the most capable aircraft in the world: including 5th generation F-35 Fighters and finally I see amazing Sailors and Airman – from both of our countries – patrolling the high seas, ensuring access across the maritime domain and making the world a safer place.

Thank you.