WASHINGTON – The Navy’s newest aircraft carrier USS George H. W. Bush (CVN 77) returned to Norfolk Naval Base Feb. 16 following the completion of builder’s sea trials that began Feb.13.

During builder’s trials the ship’s crew conducted high-speed maneuvers, systems checks and other tests that are key to the ship’s systems.

Following builder’s sea trials, the Navy will commence acceptance sea trials, conducted by representatives of the U.S. Navy Board of Inspection and Survey, to test and evaluate the ship’s systems and performance. Upon completion of acceptance sea trials, the ship will be formally delivered to the Navy. George H.W. Bush is scheduled to begin operational training later in 2009 with her first operational deployment in 2010.

George H.W. Bush is the 10th and final ship of the Nimitz class and incorporates major improvements from her predecessors, including a composite mast, new JP-5 fueling system, a bulbous bow, redesigned island, and three wire arresting gear configuration introduced on USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76). The ship’s keel was laid Sept. 6, 2003; and the vessel was christened Oct. 7, 2006 and commissioned Jan. 10, 2009. The carrier is powered by two nuclear reactors operable for more than 20 years before refueling, with an expected in-service life spanning about 50 years. USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77) is commanded by Capt. Kevin O’Flaherty.

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