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For Immediate Release

Oct. 24, 2008

Expeditionary Strike Group Two, USS Nassau Commemorate Great White Fleet's 100th Anniversary

NORFOLK, Va. – Following months of extensive planning, Expeditionary Strike Group (ESG) Two along with the amphibious assault ship, USS Nassau (LHA 4), recently completed a three-day port visit to New York City during which the ship commemorated the 100th anniversary of Theodore Roosevelt's Great White Fleet and participated in New York City's annual Columbus Day events.

"The Great White Fleet showed the world that the United States was a power to be respected," said Rear Admiral Terence McKnight, commander, ESG Two. "Honoring its 100th anniversary underscores our commitment to sustaining a Navy and Marine Corps responsive to the challenges of the 21st century."

Having just returned from providing humanitarian relief to the Galveston, Texas area following Hurricane Ike, the Nassau and her crew sailed to New York City and participated in several annual Columbus Day events. Following the ship's arrival Oct. 11, three Sailors and two Marines attached to Nassau were honored by the Columbus Citizen's Foundation (CCF) during the Foundation's annual Columbus Day weekend gala dinner at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. The service members were recognized for their contributions during their recent deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan.

"I'm very proud and thankful to serve my country," said Religious Program Specialist 2nd Class (SW) Desire Nana, one of the Nassau Sailors honored. "I feel like I'm doing something good and it pushes me to do more for my Navy. Tonight made me really feel proud for serving in the Navy and really proud to serve my country."

In addition to the gala dinner, Sailors took part in the annual wreath laying at Columbus Circle and also in the annual Solemn Mass, held at St. Patrick's Cathedral.

The main event for ESG Two and the Nassau was a commemorative ceremony and reception held onboard Nassau Oct. 12. Service members from all branches of the military, New York City civic and business leaders as well as crewmembers from the visiting Italian submarine, ITS Todaro, gathered to listen to the Secretary of the Navy as he spoke of the Great White Fleet and how the U.S. Navy and her coalition partners still work today to keep the world's waterways free and safe for travel and commerce.

On the final day of the port visit, uniformed Nassau Sailors represented their ship and the Navy as they walked in the famous Columbus Day Parade along New York City's Fifth Avenue.

"These events may seem like small events to those outside the Navy," said McKnight. "It's very important that we show the citizens of not just New York, but the whole country, who we are and what we do. Keeping the global waterways safe for travel and commerce is paramount to the survival of our nation and our nation needs to see the young men and women who work tirelessly to keep them safe."

In December 1907, Theodore Roosevelt, 26th President of the United States, sent a portion of the Atlantic Fleet on a world tour to test naval readiness, establish global presence, generate international goodwill, and garner enthusiasm for the U.S. Navy. Sixteen battleships and 14,000 men embarked on an historic voyage that steamed 43,000 miles and made 20 port calls on six continents. Painted white with gilded scrollwork on their bows, the participating ships became known as the "Great White Fleet."

The historic deployment sent a clear message: America is a respected world power, with a strong Navy leading the way. Our Navy remains an essential element of U.S. power, deployed around the world 24/7, assuring friends, deterring potential adversaries, forging cooperative partnerships to maintain security at sea, and defending our country. As the U.S. Navy reflects on its past, we focus on the future...committed to a deployable forward presence that maintains capability for sustainment with minimal footprint ashore.

Today, informed by its diplomatic tradition, the U.S. Navy continues to work with partners to deter aggressors, protect the right to operate freely at sea, and provide humanitarian assistance and disaster relief

around the world. Our new Maritime Strategy – “A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower” – emphasizes the need for increased global cooperation to promote global peace and prosperity.

The Great White Fleet event in New York City was the last to be held in the U.S. The commemorative events kicked off in Dec. 2007 aboard the aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN 71) and have been held around the globe.