NAVAIR developmental program participants stand on the flight deck of USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72). The group was part of the Civilians to Sea program, and lived aboard the carrier March 16-19.

Ever wonder what it might be like conducting your everyday Navy civilian work life onboard a floating city that never sleeps? For 15 participants in the Naval Air Systems Command (NAVAIR) Civilians to Sea Program, this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity came to fruition as they lived and dined aboard USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) during a four-day excursion March 16-19.

The participants came from different Naval Air Warfare Center (NAWCAD) and Fleet Readiness Center (FRC) sites, competencies, developmental programs and career fields supporting both coasts and represented six developmental programs – Engineer and Scientist Development Program, Joint Engineering Training Team, Naval Acquisition Development Program, Journey Leadership Development Program, NAVAIR Leadership Development Program and the Rising Journey Program.

They met with enlisted personnel and officers who were eager to share their work on the ship and provide input on how NAVAIR can continue to support the fleet.

“Not having any prior military experience, this was an invaluable encounter to see firsthand
USS Abraham Lincoln welcomes NAVAIR Civilians to Sea participants

how we support national defense and learn how to better serve the needs of the fleet as a logistician,” said Kimberly Westerlund, NAWCAD training systems facilities engineer.

The group toured the maintenance, supply and engineering departments of the aircraft carrier, as well as other parts of the vessel, and in a typical day, visited two or three departments, ate with the crew and attended roundtable discussions. In addition, they observed night flight operations and even participated in physical training with the Navy Morale, Welfare and Recreation fitness consultant, commonly referred as the “Fit Boss.”

“In such a short amount of time, we were able to see more corners of the Abraham Lincoln than many Sailors might see in their entire deployment,” said Christine Zernickow, NAWCAD engineering psychologist. “The Civilians to Sea program is the single most valuable and meaningful developmental opportunity I've ever had the privilege of participating in.”

Commissioned Nov. 11, 1989, USS Abraham Lincoln is America’s fifth Nimitz-class aircraft carrier and supports a crew of 5,500 sailors.