

USS Fitzgerald Arrives in Northern Japan

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AOMORI, Japan (NNS) -- USS Fitzgerald (DDG 62) moored in Aomori, Japan, Aug. 5, for a port visit to the northern Japan city that is in the midst of hosting its annual Nebuta Festival.

While in port, the guided-missile destroyer's crew members will have an opportunity to experience the local culture by taking part in several of the festival's renowned parades and events.

However, the ship also plans to spend time participating in community engagement events.

"Visiting Aomori provides our Sailors with an opportunity to experience a part of Japan that not many Sailors get to experience," said Cmdr. Jonathan Schmitz, Fitzgerald commanding officer, and a native of Huntsville, Ala. "The crew is especially looking forward to experiencing the Nebuta Festival, which should be a lot of fun for them."

While the visit will be a nice break for the ship's crew, it also serves as an outward demonstration of U.S. commitment to the defense of Japan, and to maintain peace and stability throughout the entire East Asia region.

"The significance of this visit and our participation in the Nebuta Festival is not lost upon us," said Schmitz. "We are very proud to be here in this beautiful city, and grateful for the opportunity to experience such an incredible opportunity."

Fitzgerald Command Master Chief Josh Davis said the festival, which attracts millions of tourists each year, is an opportunity that his Sailors should not take for granted.

"I enjoy seeing our Sailors participate in different cultural activities, and this parade is another great opportunity for them to experience," said Davis, who originally hails from Columbus, Ohio. This is an opportunity for these young Sailors to come out here and experience a culture unique to not only Japan, but to this region as well. It's truly a once-in-a-lifetime experience that I hope they'll all take part in."

Fitzgerald crew members will have the opportunity to participate in both the Tachi Nebuta in Goshogawara, as well as the Aomori Nebuta in downtown Aomori-shi. But in keeping with the ship's namesake selflessness, Fitzgerald Sailors will also be assisting at a local orphanage during their stay in northern Japan.

Fitzpatrick is Arleigh Burke-class, guided-missile destroyer forward deployed out of Fleet Activities Yokosuka, and has a complement of more than 300 Sailors. It was commissioned Oct. 14, 1995 and was named in honor of Lt. William C. Fitzgerald

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130805-N-Z1955-061 AOMORI, Japan (Aug. 5, 2013) Dancers from the Japan Self-Defense Force Parental Association of Aomori perform a traditional Nebuta dance in honor of the guided-missile destroyer USS Fitzgerald (DDG 62) arriving in Aomori, Japan, for a port visit. Fitzgerald Sailors will take part in Nebuta Festival parades, experience the local culture, and offer assistance at a nearby orphanage while in port. (U.S. Navy photo by Senior Chief Mass Communication Specialist Daniel Sanford/Released)

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