

Herald Sun

Japan earthquake: USS Reagan 'went through radioactive cloud'

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This satellite image shows the extent of the damage caused by the tsunami in Fukushima prefecture. Picture: AFP/DigitalGlobe

Source: AFP

THE crew of the US aircraft carrier, on a humanitarian mission to Japan, received a month's worth of radiation in about an hour, a US newspaper reports.

The fleet said that the radiation was from a plume of smoke and steam released from the crippled Fukushima nuclear power plant.

The US Seventh Fleet has now moved its ships and aircraft away from the nuclear power plant after discovering low-level radioactive contamination.

The aircraft carrier USS *Ronald Reagan* was about 160 kilometres offshore when its instruments detected the radiation.

But the fleet says the dose of radiation was about the same as one month's normal exposure to natural background radiation in the environment.

There was no indication that any of the military personnel had experienced ill effects from the exposure, the *New York Times* reported.

But the episodes showed that the prevailing winds were picking up radioactive material from crippled reactors in northeastern Japan, *The NY Times* noted.

Japan has been battling to control the overheating No. 1 and No. 3 reactors at the ageing Fukushima plant after the cooling systems were knocked out by Friday's 9-magnitude quake and the resulting tsunami that swallowed towns.

A new explosion at the plant today had experts racing to avert a catastrophic meltdown in the wake of the quake and tsunami.

They are now dealing with the a failed cooling system at the plant's No.2 reactor.

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