



NAVY HISTORY MATTERS

June 11, 2019



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Welcome to *Navy History Matters*—our weekly compilation of articles, commentaries, and blogs related to history and heritage. Every week we'll gather the top-interest items from a variety of media and social media sources and then link you to related content at NHHC's website (history.navy.mil), your authoritative source for Navy history.

★ H-Gram 031

In his latest H-Gram, NHHC Director [Sam Cox](#) provides his thoughts on Operation Neptune in commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the [invasion of Normandy](#). By H-hour on Omaha Beach (6:30 a.m., June 6, 1944), not a lot was going right. Heavy seas forced many of the amphibious tanks, which were supposed to land on the beach, to the bottom of the ocean. The shore bombardment was only 30 minutes long, which was inadequate to take out the heavily fortified German division. In addition, many of the bombs missed their intended targets due to overcast conditions. Although Allied forces faced tremendous adversity and a ferocious German fighting force, the landings went relatively well due to extraordinary acts of mass courage and bravery by the ground forces. The U.S. Navy played a critical role in the [mighty endeavor](#) by providing key gunfire on enemy forces throughout the battle. Also covered in this H-Gram is the June 1969 collision between [USS Frank E. Evans](#) and HMAS *Melbourne* during the [Vietnam War](#). To learn more, read [H-Gram 031](#) at NHHC's [Director's Corner](#). For more on the D-Day landings, read [Operation Neptune: Innovating on the Spot Made D-Day a Success](#) by NHHC historian Greg Bereiter, Ph.D., at [The Sextant](#). It is the latest installment of CNO Adm. [John Richardson](#)'s initiative "Why We Do What We Do."



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/our-collections/art/exhibits/conflicts-and-operations/wwii/the-invasion-of-normandy/d-day-6-june-1944/target-of-opportunity.html>

★ NDW Commemorates 77th Anniversary of the Battle of Midway

On June 4, Naval District Washington commemorated the 77th anniversary of the [Battle of Midway](#) with a wreath laying ceremony at the [U.S. Navy Memorial](#) in Washington, DC. Sailors, Marines, and veterans of the battle gathered to remember events that took place during [World War II](#). CNO Adm. [John Richardson](#) served as the keynote speaker for the event. "Rather than go through the intricacies of the battle, I'd like to really focus on the true power that won that great contest 77 years ago, which was of course, the people," said Richardson. The Battle of Midway took place June 3–7, 1942, and is considered the turning point of the war in the Pacific. The U.S. Navy inflicted devastating damage on the Japanese fleet, which was considered a superior naval force at the time. To learn more, [read the U.S. Navy release](#).



Photo Link: <https://www.navy.mil/management/photodb/photos/190604-N-JT705-0070.JPG>

★ NHHC Special—Ready and Resilient: The Fight to Save USS *Samuel B. Roberts*

Join NHHC's Communication and Outreach team as Captain Paul Rinn (USN, Retired) discusses his experiences in command of the guided missile frigate [USS Samuel B. Roberts \(FFG-58\)](#) when Iranian forces mined the ship in the Arabian Gulf. Rinn's gripping account highlights the people from this important moment in naval history and is a remarkable tale of toughness, accountability, initiative, integrity, and redemption. Watch the event, moderated by MCPON Russell Smith, June 19, 2019, at 1 p.m. EST via the [NHHC Facebook page](#). The American Forces Network will televise the event live and, in the following week, video will be available for download from the [Defense Visual Information Distribution Service](#). For more information about the event, see NHHC's [notable ships](#) page. Also see "[When Heritage Meets Initiative—The Story of Samuel B. Roberts FFG-58](#)" and "[No Higher Honor—The Road to Operation Praying Mantis, 18 April 1988](#)."



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/browse-by-topic/ships/modern-ships/uss-samuel-b--roberts--ffg-58-.html>

★ WWII@75: Saipan Invasion

On June 15, 1944, 75 years ago, following intensive naval gunfire and carrier-based aircraft bombing, Task Force 52 landed Marines on [Saipan](#), which was the first relatively large and heavily defended land mass in the central Pacific assaulted by U.S. amphibious forces during [World War II](#). The island of Saipan, only 1,200 nautical miles south of Tokyo, would give American forces a prime location in the strategic Marshall Islands chain from which to conduct air strikes. The plan was to destroy Japanese forces on Saipan, take the island, and then allow [B-29 bombers](#) to attack Japan relentlessly. By July 9—due in part to the U.S. Navy’s tremendous victory in the [Battle of the Philippine Sea](#)—Saipan would fall.



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhhc-series/nh-series/USMC-81000/USMC-81840.html>

★ WWII@75: USS Missouri Commissioned

On June 11, 1944, 75 years ago, [USS Missouri](#), the last battleship to enter active service in the U.S. Navy, was commissioned. Born in battle, *Missouri* steamed to [Iwo Jima](#) to support invasion landings, participated in the bombardment of [Okinawa](#), and struck hard blows against the Japanese mainland. On Aug. 15, 1945, President Harry S. Truman announced Japan’s acceptance of [unconditional surrender](#). On Sept. 2, 1945, high-ranking military officials of the Allied powers, including Fleet Admiral [Chester Nimitz](#) and General of the Army [Douglas MacArthur](#), came aboard *Missouri* to meet Japanese representatives for a 23-minute surrender ceremony that was broadcasted around the world. Although most remember *Missouri* as the symbolic end of [World War II](#), she was a highly decorated battleship that earned eight battle stars during her service to the nation—three during WWII and five during the [Korean War](#). To learn more, check out [USS Missouri: Mighty Mo](#) content on NHHC’s [notable ships](#) pages.



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/us-navy-ships/battleships/missouri-bb-63/80-G-421049.html>

★ The Naval History of Alaska

Although many view Alaska as being far removed from the rest of the United States, “The Last Frontier” state was important during [World War II](#). Alaska’s Aleutian Islands were considered vital transportation routes. In June 1942, the Japanese bombed American bases and took occupation of two of the [Aleutian Islands](#). A year later, U.S. and Canadian forces regained control of the islands in the only battle that took place on North American soil during the war. Notable natives from the state include Medal of Honor recipient Archie Van Winkle and the Tlingit code talker brothers from WWII—Harvey and Mark Jacobs. At least 33 ships have been named after the state of Alaska, its cities, and people. To learn more about the [naval history of Alaska](#), go to [The Sextant](#). NHHC has now completed naval history infographics for all 50 states and the territory of Puerto Rico. To view your state, go to [state infographics](#) at [NHHC’s website](#).



Photo Link: https://usnhistory.navylive.dodlive.mil/files/2019/06/FINAL_NavyWeekAlaska_highres_JPEG.jpg

★ Nautical Terms and Naval Expressions: Seamanship Edition Part 1

Seamanship is the foundation of a Sailor’s life at sea. Whether it is basic navigation, line handling, or just knowing your way around a ship, basic seamanship plays a role in keeping Sailors safe, oriented, and organized. In this edition of basic seamanship, terms that are common when on a ship are explored. One of the first lessons Sailors learn is how to get around on a ship, and it is important to know the terms associated with the front, rear, left, and right sides of the vessel. The term fore refers to the front of the ship, or forward. It is the area where the bow is and usually the most forward when underway. The aft is the rear of the ship and where the stern is located. When someone says “fore and aft,” (s)he usually is referring to the entire length of the ship from bow to stern. To learn more, [read the blog](#) at [The Sextant](#).



Photo Link: https://usnhistory.navylive.dodlive.mil/files/2019/06/FINAL_NauticalTerms_Seamanship_Part1_small.jpg

★ **USS Sirocco Commissioned at WNY 25 Years Ago**

On June 11, 1994, 25 years ago, [USS Sirocco](#) was commissioned at the [Washington Navy Yard, District of Columbia](#). It was the first commissioning of a Navy ship at the WNY in 120 years. *Sirocco* is the sixth of the Cyclone-class patrol coastal boats, and she is homeported in Bahrain. On Sept. 1, 2010, the ship [responded to a medical emergency](#) aboard Maltese-flagged merchant vessel *Lucky Trader* where a crewmember had suffered deep lacerations and a severed finger from a line-handling accident. Corpsmen from *Sirocco* treated the injured crewmen for four hours until they were able to get him to a Kuwaiti hospital. On March 28, 2016, a boarding team from *Sirocco* [seized a ship laden with illegal weapons](#) in the Persian Gulf that was bound for Houthi fighters in Yemen. The team discovered 1,500 AK-47s automatic rifles, 200 RPG launchers, and 21 .50-caliber machine guns.



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nara-series/dn-series/dn-sc-94-02206-uss-sirocco--pc-6-.html>

★ **USS Constitution Underway to Commemorate 75th Anniversary of D-Day**

[USS Constitution](#) was underway from the Charlestown Navy Yard to commemorate the 75th anniversary of [Operation Overlord: Invasion of Normandy](#), June 7. It was the first-ever Army/Navy cruise, conducted to highlight the partnership between the Army and Navy during [World War II](#) and today. “Old Ironsides” traveled to Fort Independence on Castle Island, where it fired a 21-gun salute. The 101st Field Artillery Regiment Massachusetts National Guard then returned a 21-gun salute to *Constitution*. In addition, *Constitution* fired a 17-gun salute as it passed the U.S. Coast Guard Sector Boston, the former site where *Constitution* was built and launched more than 220 years ago. To learn more, [watch the story](#) at WCVB5 news channel.



Photo Link: <https://www.wcvb.com/article/uss-constitution-to-set-sail-to-commemorate-75th-anniversary-of-d-day/27771595>

★ **Lone Sailor Will Stand Watch at Historic D-Day Beach**

Adm. [James G. Foggo](#), commander of Allied Joint Force Command Naples and U.S. Naval Forces Europe and Africa, the [U.S. Navy Memorial](#), and the Frogmen Association of Utah Beach joined forces to announce that a Lone Sailor statue is scheduled to be placed on Utah Beach in Normandy, France, later this year. It will be the first one located outside the United States or its territories. “The newest location was chosen to honor the frogmen of the Naval Combat Demolition Units and all of the men and women of the Navy who heroically served at [Normandy](#) to defend freedom for the United States and our Allies,” said retired Rear Adm. Frank Thorp IV, president and CEO of the U.S. Navy Memorial. [The Lone Sailor](#) is an iconic symbol that signifies the men and women who have served, are serving, or will serve in the U.S. Navy. The Lone Sailor statue in Normandy will be the seventeenth, including the original on the Navy Memorial Plaza in Washington, DC. To learn more, [read the U.S. Navy release](#).



Photo Link: <https://www.navy.mil/management/photodb/photos/190606-N-WO404-061.JPG>

★ **U.S. Army Birthday, Flag Day—June 14**

More than a year before the Declaration of Independence, the Continental Congress passed two resolutions—the birth of the American Continental Army and adoption of the flag of the United States. Founded on June 14, 1775, with Gen. George Washington as the first commander-in-chief, the [U.S. Army](#) became [America’s first national institution](#) and has played a vital role in the growth and development of the United States. Over the course of the [U.S. Army’s storied history](#), major battles in defense of our country have been decisive, including the Battle of Yorktown, Battle of Vicksburg, Meuse-Argonne Offensive, [Operation Overlord](#), and the Battle of the Bulge. Happy birthday to our brothers and sisters in arms, and let the Stars and Stripes be forever a symbol of liberty and freedom.



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhhc-series/nh-series/NH-115000/NH-115310.html>

★ NHHC Webpage of the Week

On June 4, 2019, U.S. Navy ships and craft [returned to flying the Union Jack](#). It had been replaced by the First Navy Jack in response to the 9/11 attacks. The date for reintroduction of the Union Jack commemorated the greatest naval battle in history: the [Battle of Midway](#), which began on June 3, 1942. In celebration of the return, this week's Webpage of the Week is the [U.S. Navy's Jack](#) on NHHC's [heritage](#) page. The Union Jack is a flag consisting of 50 white stars, representing each of the 50 states, on a blue background. A version of this jack first flew in 1777 and was updated as new states joined the union.



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/news-and-events/multimedia-gallery/infographics/heritage/colors-of-the-nation--flag.html>

★ Today in Naval History

On June 11, 1927, [USS Memphis](#) arrived at the [Washington Navy Yard, District of Columbia](#), with Charles Lindbergh and his plane, [Spirit of St. Louis](#), following his nonstop flight from New York to Paris. Later that day, Lindbergh became the first person to receive the [Distinguished Flying Cross](#) when President Calvin Coolidge presented the award to him on the Washington Monument grounds.



For more dates in naval history, including your selected span of dates, see [Year at a Glance](#) at [NHHC's website](#). Be sure to check this page regularly, as content is updated frequently.

Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhhc-series/nh-series/NH-00001/NH-787.html>