



# NAVY HISTORY MATTERS

December 10, 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](http://history.navy.mil)), your authoritative source for Navy history.

## ★ Navy Christens *John F. Kennedy*, *Mobile*

The Navy christened its newest aircraft carrier, USS *John F. Kennedy*, at Newport News, VA, and its newest Independence-variant littoral combat ship, USS *Mobile*, at Mobile, AL, during ceremonies held on Dec. 7. Caroline Kennedy, [President John F. Kennedy's](#) daughter, serves as the ship's sponsor for her father's namesake ship, and Rebecca Byrne, wife of U.S. Rep. Bradley Byrne and CEO of the [Community Foundation of South Alabama](#), serves as *Mobile's* sponsor. An NHHC outreach team was present at the *John F. Kennedy* christening, spreading the word about NHHC's resources. "I'm so proud to be the sponsor of this ship and bring her to life," said Kennedy. "The CVN-79 crew is fortunate to have such distinguished leaders, this is your day, and our chance to say thank you. Having a chance to get to know the people who served on USS *John F. Kennedy* really gave me insight into who he was, and what kind of leader he was in a way that I wouldn't have had any other way. And I know that's going to be just as true now with a whole new generation." For more, read the articles on [John F. Kennedy](#) and [Mobile](#).



**Photo Link:** [https://www.navy.mil/view\\_image.asp?id=303345&t=1](https://www.navy.mil/view_image.asp?id=303345&t=1)

## ★ History is Calling: Submit Your COR

It's that time of year again, and history is calling. The annual submission of the command operations report (COR) is quickly approaching. The deadline to summarize annual operations, activities, and exercises of your command is March 1 per Chief of Naval Operations (OPNAV) Instruction 5750.12K CH-1. Commands with more than 25 people are required to submit a COR, and commands with less than 25 can have their higher headquarters submit a COR on their behalf. The reports are submitted to NHHC where they are archived as public record of naval history. They are used as a resource for inquiries from veterans, Congress, media, and researchers. Need help submitting a COR? [Read the article](#) by MC1 Chris Henry. Also, check out the [How to Write and Submit a Command Operations Report](#) page at [NHHC's website](#).



**Photo Link:** <https://www.history.navy.mil/news-and-events/news/2019/history-is-calling--submit-your-command-operations-report.html>

## ★ Annual Classic Set for Saturday

Are you ready for the big game? The annual [Army Black Knights](#) vs. the [Navy Midshipmen](#) football game is set for Saturday, Dec. 14 at 3 p.m. at Lincoln Financial Field in Philadelphia, PA. This will be the 120th meeting between the two teams, with Navy leading the series all-time, 60–52–7. The first game against the cadets was played back in 1890, and Navy won 24–0. Last year, Army edged out Navy 17–10 in a close game. This year, the 9–2 Navy squad, which is ranked 23rd nationally, will wear uniforms that pay homage to the Academy's two Heisman Trophy winners—Joe Bellino and Roger Staubach. The 5–7 Army team honors the [1st Cavalry Division](#) and pays tribute to the birth of air mobility during the [Vietnam War](#). To view the scores of all the games played, go to NHHC's [Army-Navy game scores](#) page. Go Navy!



**Photo Link:** <https://www.capitalgazette.com/sports/navy/ac-cs-army-navy-uniforms-1206-20191205-ewpgemog55cvbc4ykk2m2hirdm-story.html>

### ★ WWII@75: “Hell Ships”

On Dec. 14, 1944, 75 years ago, Task Force 38 aircraft began to attack Japanese transport *Oryoku Maru*, which was carrying approximately 1,600 Allied [prisoners of war](#) and about 2,000 Japanese civilians. The following day, [naval aviation](#) from [USS Hornet](#) dropped 500-pound bombs and multiple rockets on the “hell ship.” Hell ship was the name POWs gave the Japanese transport ships because of their deplorable conditions. In most cases, extreme overcrowding, stifling heat, and lack of food and water were the conditions endured on these ships. When *Oryoku Maru* was sunk on Dec. 15, more than 1,000 POWs were in the water and swam toward land. The Japanese captured the survivors in the water and on shore. Then the guards herded the survivors together for their next hellish trip at sea. For more, read [The Japanese “Hell Ships” of World War II](#), an essay by COD’s Adam Bisno.



**Photo Link:** <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhhc-series/nh-series/NH-95000/NH-95603.html>

### ★ WWII@75: Invasion of Mindoro Island

Following a short naval bombardment, the [invasion of Mindoro Island](#) in the Philippines began on Dec. 15, 1944, when troops of the 19th Regimental Combat Team and 503rd Parachute Regiment landed without opposition and pushed rapidly inland. During the invasion, [LST-738](#) was hit by a Japanese kamikaze plane and set ablaze. After attempts to control the fires were unsuccessful, the guns of other ships of the invasion fleet sank LST-738. [LST-472](#) was also hit by a kamikaze attack and sank six days later. By noon, the town of San Jose was occupied, and Australian construction troops assisted in the conditioning of the airfields, two of which were ready by Dec. 23. The invasion of Mindoro was successful in that it met its objectives: establish airfields from which land-based aircraft could bomb targets on Luzon and at the same time protect shipping enroute to [Lingayen Gulf](#).



**Photo Link:** <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhhc-series/nh-series/NH-97000/NH-97259.html>

### ★ WWII@75: Five-Star Rank Established

On Dec. 14, 1944, 75 years ago, an act of Congress established the rank of Fleet Admiral, U.S. Navy, (five stars), precipitated by the rapid buildup of U.S. military forces during [World War II](#). The first five-star admirals were Adm. [William D. Leahy](#), Adm. [Ernest J. King](#), and Adm. [Chester W. Nimitz](#). Adm. [William F. Halsey](#) joined the select group on Dec. 11, 1945. The legislation included a “sunset clause” that terminated six months after the formal cessation of hostilities the presidential authority to appoint officers to the five-star rank. For more, read the [Navy’s WWII-era Fleet Admirals](#) at [NHHC’s website](#).



**Photo Link:** <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhhc-series/nh-series/NH-62000/nh-62645-adm-ernest-j--king.html>

### ★ German WWI Wreck *Scharnhorst* Discovered off Falklands

The wreck of German SMS *Scharnhorst* has been found at a depth of 5,282 feet off the remote Falkland Islands in the South Atlantic. The search for the sunken ship began five years ago. Search teams resumed their search this year using a subsea vessel and four autonomous underwater vehicles. “Suddenly she just came out of the gloom with great guns poking in every direction,” said Mensun Bound about the discovery. “As a Falkland Islander and a marine archaeologist, a discovery of this significance is unforgettable, poignant moment in my life.” *Scharnhorst* was sunk on Dec. 8, 1914, by British navy ships HMS *Invincible* and HMS *Inflexible* during [World War I](#). More than 800 men, including Vice Adm. Maximilian Graf von Spee, went down with the ship. For more, [read the article](#) at BBC News.



**Photo Link:** <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhhc-series/nh-series/NH-46000/NH-46837.html>

## ★ Happy Birthday, National Guard

Friday marks the 383rd birthday of the [U.S. National Guard](#). An order of the Massachusetts Bay Colony's General Court in Salem established the first militia regiments in North America on Dec. 13, 1636. All able-bodied men between the ages of 16 and 60 were required to join the militia. The National Guard still consists of citizen-Soldiers and Airmen who provide states with additional help during natural disasters and civil uprisings, in addition to the ability to deploy during a conflict. Happy birthday, National Guard!



### Photo Link:

<https://www.nationalguard.mil/Portals/31/Images/Image%20Gallery/Graphics/Vehicle%20Logo/National%20Guard%20Vehicle%20Logo.png>

## ★ Alex Vraciu: The Navy's Most Indestructible Ace

On June 19, 1944, famed [naval aviator](#) Lt. j.g. Alexander Vraciu was frustrated. His Grumman F6F-3 Hellcat was having problems keeping up with the rest of Fighter Squadron 16. His Pratt & Whitney engine was stuck in low blower, unable to reach maximum speed and climb. He watched in frustration as his squadron pulled away to intercept a sky full of enemy targets. He was already a double ace with 12 victories, but he desperately wanted more. The [attacks on Pearl Harbor](#) had left lifelong scars on Vraciu that nurtured a fierce desire for revenge. Unable to keep up with the squadron, Vraciu led Ensign Homer Brockmeyer and another pilot back toward the task force, establishing a "shortstop" orbit between the incoming enemy and the U.S. carriers. He radioed [USS Lexington's](#) fighter director requesting a vector in case the enemy got through the Hellcat picket line up ahead. His efforts were rewarded when Task Group 58.3's fighters gave Vraciu's formation a westerly heading. Minutes later, Vraciu saw multiple targets through his oil-speckled windscreen. He double-checked his weapon and ammunition and then dived to attack. For more, [read the article](#) in the *Navy Times*. For more on the [Great Marianas Turkey Shoot](#), go to [NHHC's website](#).



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhnc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhnc-series/nh-series/80-G-236000/80-G-236841.html>

## ★ Family, Friends, Shipmates Honor Life of Retired SEAL, "Survivor" Star Rudy Boesch

On Dec. 3, family, friends, and [frogmen](#) gathered to honor the life and service of retired Master Chief Boatswain's Mate (SEAL) Rudolph "Rudy" Boesch on Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek Fort-Story. "Rudy was not just our senior enlisted leader for 26 years, he was SEAL Team Two," said retired Vice Adm. Joseph Maguire, former commander of SEAL Team Two. "Rudy set the standard of conduct for military bearing, for physical excellence and for dedication to mission, to team, to family and to the country he loved. Rudy didn't just set the standard for all of us. Rudy was the standard." Boesch joined the Merchant Marine in 1944 at 17, and one year later he enlisted in the Navy where he spent the next 45 years on active duty. He retired in 1990. During his career, Boesch served two tours in [Vietnam](#) and was the senior enlisted leader at the [U.S. Special Operations Command](#). Boesch became famous when he finished third on the first season of the reality show "Survivor." For more, [read the U.S. Navy release](#).



Photo Link: [https://www.navy.mil/view\\_image.asp?id=12694&t=4](https://www.navy.mil/view_image.asp?id=12694&t=4)

## ★ NHHC Webpage of the Week

This week's webpage of the week is a new entry on NHHC's [DANFS](#) index. Former First Lady Nancy Reagan christened the fifth [USS Ticonderoga](#) on May 16, 1981, at Pascagoula, MS. During the ship's first year of operation after commissioning on Jan. 22, 1983, the crew spent 48 days off Beirut after [terrorists bombed the U.S. Marine barracks](#). From 1985–1991, *Ticonderoga* participated in multiple exercises, including Seabat, Ocean Safari, Fleetex, Attain Document, and Baltops. After a regular overhaul period in 1991, *Ticonderoga* set sail for [Operation Desert Storm](#). NHHC historian Guy Nasuti wrote the ship's history for this new DANFS entry. Check it out today.



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhnc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhnc-series/nh-series/NH-106000/NH-106516-KN.html>

## ★ Today in Naval History

On Dec. 10, 1994, 25 years ago, USS *Mitscher* was commissioned at Naval Air Station Pensacola, FL, with Elizabeth Ferguson, niece of the ship's namesake, as the sponsor. It is the second ship named in honor of famed [naval aviator](#) Adm. [Marc Andrew Mitscher](#), who received the [Navy Cross](#) for his distinguished service during [World War I](#) and two more for his leadership during [World War II](#). In 2007, *Mitscher* took part in Partnership of Americas, a multinational exercise designed to enhance interoperability between participating countries. In 2011, *Mitscher* conducted maritime security operations and cooperation efforts in support of Operations [Enduring Freedom](#) and New Dawn to [combat piracy](#) and terrorism. In 2015, *Mitscher* had the honor of steaming alongside the replica Concorde-class frigate *L 'Hermione* of the French navy near the Battle of the Virginia Capes off the U.S. east coast to represent and reaffirm the historic relationship between the United States and France.



*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.navy.mil/view\\_image.asp?id=197077&t=1](https://www.navy.mil/view_image.asp?id=197077&t=1)