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The image shows a close-up of a heavy, metallic vault door. The door is partially open, revealing a complex internal mechanism with multiple locking bolts and a central handle. A bright blue light emanates from the gap between the door and the frame, creating a strong glow and casting shadows on the surrounding metal. The overall aesthetic is industrial and mysterious.

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NATIONAL SECURITY AGENCY  
FORT GEORGE G. MEADE, MARYLAND 20755-6000

FOIA Case: 105679A  
12 December 2018

JOHN GREENEWALD  
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Dear Mr. Greenewald:

This responds to your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request of 11 November 2018, for Intellipedia pages on Operation Pocket Money. As stated in our initial response dated 26 November 2018, your request was assigned Case Number 105679. For purposes of this request and based on the information you provided, you are considered an "all other" requester. As such, you are allowed 2 hours of search and the duplication of 100 pages at no cost. There are no assessable fees for this request. Your request has been processed under the provisions of the FOIA.

For your information, NSA provides a service of common concern for the Intelligence Community (IC) by serving as the executive agent for Intelink. As such, NSA provides technical services that enable users to access and share information with peers and stakeholders across the IC and DoD. Intellipedia pages are living documents that may be originated by any user organization, and any user organization may contribute to or edit pages after their origination. Intellipedia pages should not be considered the final, coordinated position of the IC on any particular subject. The views and opinions of authors do not necessarily state or reflect those of the U.S. Government.

We conducted a search across all three levels of Intellipedia and located documents that are responsive to your request. The documents are enclosed. Certain information, however, has been deleted from the documents.

This Agency is authorized by statute to protect certain information concerning its activities, in this case internal URLs. Such information is exempt from disclosure pursuant to the third exemption of the FOIA, which provides for the withholding of information specifically protected from disclosure by statute. The specific statute applicable in this case is Section 6, Public Law 86-36 (50 U.S. Code 3605). We have determined that such information exists in these records, and we have excised it accordingly.

In addition, personal information regarding individuals has been deleted from the enclosures in accordance with 5 U.S.C. 552 (b)(6). This exemption protects from disclosure information that would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of

personal privacy. In balancing the public interest for the information you requested against the privacy interests involved, we have determined that the privacy interests sufficiently satisfy the requirements for the application of the (b)(6) exemption.

Since these deletions may be construed as a partial denial of your request, you are hereby advised of this Agency's appeal procedures. If you decide to appeal, you should do so in the manner outlined below.

- The appeal must be in sent via U.S. postal mail, fax, or electronic delivery (e-mail) and addressed to:

NSA FOIA/PA Appeal Authority (P132)  
National Security Agency  
9800 Savage Road STE 6932  
Fort George G. Meade, MD 20755-6932

The facsimile number is (443)479-3612.

The appropriate email address to submit an appeal is [FOIARSC@nsa.gov](mailto:FOIARSC@nsa.gov).

- It must be postmarked or delivered electronically no later than 90 calendar days from the date of this letter. Decisions appealed after 90 days will not be addressed.
- Please include the case number provided above.
- Please describe with sufficient detail why you believe the denial was unwarranted.
- NSA will endeavor to respond within 20 working days of receiving your appeal, absent any unusual circumstances.

For further assistance and to discuss any aspect of your request, you may contact our FOIA Public Liaison at [foialo@nsa.gov](mailto:foialo@nsa.gov). You may also contact the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) at the National Archives and Records Administration to inquire about the FOIA mediation services they offer. OGIS contact information is Office of Information Services, National Archives and Records Administration, 8601 Adelphi Road-OGIS, College Park, MD 20740-6001; e-mail: [ogis@nara.gov](mailto:ogis@nara.gov); main: 202-741-5770; toll free: 1-877-684-6448; or fax: 202-741-5769.

Sincerely,



JOHN R. CHAPMAN  
Chief, FOIA/PA Office  
NSA Initial Denial Authority

Encls:  
a/s

# (U) Operation Linebacker

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*For the December 1972 military operation, see Operation Linebacker II.*

**Operation Linebacker** was the title of a U.S. Seventh Air Force and U.S. Navy Task Force 77 aerial interdiction campaign conducted against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam) from 9 May to 23 October 1972, during the Vietnam War.

Its purpose was to halt or slow the transportation of supplies and materials for the *Nguyen Hue Offensive* (known in the West as the Easter Offensive), an invasion of the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam), by forces of the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN), that had been launched on 30 March. *Linebacker* was the first continuous bombing effort conducted against North Vietnam since the bombing halt instituted by President Lyndon B. Johnson in November 1968.

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- 1 Nguyen Hue Offensive
- 2 Build-up and air attacks


## Operation Linebacker

Part of Vietnam War

**Date** 9 May - 23 October 1972  
**Location** Democratic Republic of Vietnam  
**Result** Anti Communist Victory.

### Belligerents

 United States  
22px Republic of Vietnam

 Democratic Republic of Vietnam

### Commanders and leaders

John W. Vogt, Jr.      Nguyen Van Tien

### Casualties and losses

**PAVN claim:** 674 US aircraft shot down, 125 damaged,<sup>[1]</sup> 80 US warships sunk or damaged<sup>[2]</sup>      68 aircraft (54 in air combat), casualties unknown

**US claim:** 134 aircraft (104 in air combat), casualties unknown

**ARVN losses:** ten aircraft, casualties unknown



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## Nguyen Hue Offensive

At noon on 30 March 1972, 30,000 North Vietnamese troops, supported by regiments of tanks and artillery, rolled southward across the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) that separated the two Vietnams.<sup>[3]</sup> This three-division force caught the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) and their American allies unprepared.<sup>[4]</sup> The PAVN force struck the defensive positions of the Third ARVN Division and threw it into disarray. South Vietnamese forces then fell back, and a race began between both antagonists to the bridges at Dong Ha and Cam Low.

By 4 April, ARVN officers had patched together a defensive line that held the PAVN at bay, but it was only a temporary respite.<sup>[5]</sup> Although the conventional attack by the North Vietnamese, which included the extensive use of armor and heavy artillery, riveted the attention of the allies on the northern provinces, it was only the first of three such operations that were launched that spring. On 5 April, a PAVN force of 20,000 crossed the border from their sanctuaries in Cambodia in another three-division, combined arms force to attack Binh Long Province, north of Saigon.<sup>[6]</sup> They quickly seized the town of Loc Ninh and then surrounded the town of An Loc, cutting the road to the capital. On 12 April, PAVN struck again, this time moving in from eastern Laos and seizing a series of border outposts around Dak To in Kontum Province in the Central Highlands.<sup>[7]</sup> The North Vietnamese then proceeded east toward the provincial seat of Kontum. Hanoi had initiated the offensive to coincide with the winter monsoon, when continuous rain and low cloud cover made air support difficult.<sup>[8]</sup>

The initial U.S. response to the offensive was lackadaisical and confused.<sup>[9]</sup> The Pentagon was not unduly alarmed and the U.S. Ambassador and the commander of U.S. forces, General Creighton W. Abrams, were out of the country. President Richard M. Nixon's first response was to consider a three-day attack by B-52 Stratofortress bombers on Hanoi and the port city of Haiphong. His National Security Advisor, Dr. Henry Kissinger, convinced the president to reconsider, since he did not want to jeopardize the formalization of the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT I) with the Soviets, that was due to be formalized in May.<sup>[10]</sup> Another stumbling block to the plan was General Abrams' desire to utilize the available bombers (with their all-weather capability) to support the ARVN defense.<sup>[11]</sup>

Both Nixon and Kissinger considered a plan offered by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to be both unimaginative and lacking in aggressiveness.<sup>[12]</sup> On 4 April, he authorized the bombing of North Vietnam (which had been limited to reprisal raids just above the DMZ) up to the 18th parallel.<sup>[13]</sup> In order to prevent a total ARVN collapse and to protect American prestige during the upcoming summit meeting with Soviet Premier Leonid Brezhnev, Nixon decided to risk a massive escalation of force.<sup>[14]</sup>

Due to the continuous withdrawal of American forces and the ongoing policy of Vietnamization, at the time of the invasion fewer than 10,000 U.S. troops remained in South Vietnam, and most of them were scheduled to leave within the next six months.<sup>[15]</sup> The number of combat aircraft stationed in Southeast Asia was less than half that of its peak strength in 1968–1969. At the beginning of 1972, the U.S. Air Force had only three squadrons of F-4s and a single squadron of A-37s, a total of 76 aircraft, stationed in South Vietnam.<sup>[16]</sup> Another 114 fighter-bombers were located at bases in Thailand. 83 B-52 bombers were stationed at U-Tapao RTAFB, Thailand and at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam.<sup>[17]</sup> The U.S. Navy's Task Force 77 (stationed in the Gulf of Tonkin), had four aircraft carriers assigned to it, but only two were available at any one time to conduct operations. Their air wings totaled approximately 140 aircraft.<sup>[18]</sup>

## Build-up and air attacks

American and South Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) aircraft had been supporting the defense (weather permitting) since the inception of the offensive. These strikes were conducted in support of ARVN forces, and included those of the air wings of the carriers *Coral Sea* and *Hancock*. The continuing bad weather, however, limited the ability of the U.S. aircraft to assist in stemming the North Vietnamese onslaught. By 6 April, at naval and air bases around the globe, American forces were put on alert and ships and aircraft squadrons began moving toward Southeast Asia.

The U.S. immediately began a rapid build-up of airpower. The Air Force deployed 176 F-4 Phantoms and 12 F-105s from bases in the Republic of Korea and the U.S. to Thailand between 1 April and 11 May in Operation *Constant Guard*.<sup>[19]</sup> Between 4 April and 23 May, during Operation *Bullet Shot*, Strategic Air Command (SAC) dispatched 124 B-52s from the U.S. to Guam bringing the total B-52 strength available for operations to 209.<sup>[20]</sup> The Navy cut short its in-port period for the carriers *Kitty Hawk* and *Constellation* and ordered the *Midway* and *Saratoga* to augment the fleet so that four or more carrier air wings could conduct missions simultaneously. 7th Fleet assets in local waters was thereby increased from 84 to 138 ships.<sup>[12]</sup>

U.S. Air Force tactical strikes against North Vietnam north of the 20th parallel were authorized on 5 April under the nickname *Freedom Train*.<sup>[13]</sup> The first large-scale B-52 raid directed against the north was conducted on 10 April when 12 B-52s, supported by 53 attack aircraft struck petroleum storage facilities around Vinh.<sup>[21]</sup> By 12 April, President Nixon had informed Kissinger that he had decided on a more comprehensive bombing campaign which would include strikes against both Hanoi and Haiphong.<sup>[12]</sup>

The following day 18 B-52s struck Thanh Hoa's Bai Thuong Airfield. Three more days followed before another strike, this time by another 18 bombers in a pre-dawn attack against an oil tank farm outside Haiphong. They were followed by more than 100 tactical aircraft attacking targets around Hanoi and Haiphong during daylight.<sup>[13]</sup> Between the 6th and the 15th, U.S. aircraft also struck and destroyed the Paul Doumer and Thanh Hóa bridges and the Yen Vien railway marshalling yard. This marked the introduction of laser-guided bombs against strategic targets in North Vietnam. Both bridges had previously been attacked unsuccessfully with conventional bombs and even missiles. The B-52s were then withdrawn from operations in the north, and when they returned in June, their missions would be limited to the southern panhandle.<sup>[22]</sup>

By mid-month, nearly all of North Vietnam had been cleared for bombing raids for the first time in over three years. Air Force and Navy commanders and pilots were relieved that Nixon (unlike President Johnson) left the operational planning to local commanders and loosened the targeting restrictions that had hampered Operation Rolling Thunder.<sup>[23]</sup> Between 1 May and 30 June B-52s, fighter-bombers, and gunships had flown 18,000 sorties against formidable AAA defenses with the loss of 29 aircraft.<sup>[24]</sup>

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North Vietnamese  
anti-aircraft defense  
weapons

The U.S. also now began what North Vietnamese historians have described as "using devious political and diplomatic schemes...to cut back the amount of aid being supplied to us by socialist nations."<sup>[25]</sup> On 20 April Kissinger met secretly with Brezhnev in Moscow. Unwilling to jeopardize increasingly normalized relations with the West and wary of Washington's growing relationship with Beijing, Brezhnev agreed to apply pressure to Hanoi to end the offensive and negotiate seriously.<sup>[26]</sup>

Brezhnev then arranged for another secret meeting between Kissinger and Hanoi's lead negotiator Le Duc Tho, to be held on 2 May in Paris. On the assigned day, the two men met for a session that Kissinger later described as "brutal and insulting."<sup>[27]</sup> The North Vietnamese, sensing victory, were in no mood to make concessions. As a result of this meeting and the fall of Quang Tri City, Nixon was prepared to up the ante, stating that "the bastards have never been bombed like they're going to be bombed this time."<sup>[28]</sup>

## Operation *Pocket Money*

On 27 April, ARVN defenses in Quang Tri Province began to collapse. Due to conflicting orders from their high command, South Vietnamese units joined an exodus of refugees heading southward, abandoning Quang Tri City.<sup>[29]</sup> PAVN forces entered the city on the same day as the meeting between Kissinger and Le Duc Tho. The PAVN offensive had become a massive conventional military operation that was being conducted on three fronts simultaneously, involving the equivalent of 15 divisions and 600 tanks.<sup>[30]</sup> As the North Vietnamese continued to gain ground in three of South Vietnam's four military regions, the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff updated their contingency plans (drawn up before the bombing halt of 1968) for the resumption of bombing in the north and recommended it to the president, who approved it on 8 May.<sup>[31]</sup> Shortly after his inauguration, Nixon had ordered the preparation of a contingency plan, one that would hopefully bring the Vietnam War to an end.<sup>[32]</sup> Operation *Duck Hook* was to include an invasion of the north itself and included a proposal to mine its major harbors.<sup>[33]</sup> The plan had been shelved at the time as too extreme, but it was not forgotten. The U.S. Navy had also been updating its own contingency plans for just such a mining operation since 1965. On 5 May, the president ordered the Joint Chiefs to prepare to execute the aerial mining portion of the *Duck Hook* plan within three days under the operational title *Pocket Money*.<sup>[32]</sup>

At precisely 09:00 (local time) on 8 May six Navy A-7 Corsair IIs and three A-6 Intruders from *Coral Sea* entered Haiphong harbor and dropped 36 1,000-pound Mark-52 and Mark-55 mines into the water. They were protected from attack by North Vietnamese MiG fighters by the guided-missile cruisers *Chicago* and *Long Beach* and by flights of F-4 Phantoms. The reason for the precise timing of the strike became apparent when President Nixon simultaneously delivered a televised speech explaining the escalation to the American people: "the only way to stop the killing is to take the weapons of war out of the hands of the international outlaws of North Vietnam."<sup>[34]</sup> The mines were activated five days after their delivery in order to allow any vessels then in port to escape without damage.<sup>[31]</sup> Over the next three days other carrier aircraft laid 11,000 more mines into North Vietnamese secondary harbors, effectively blockading all maritime commerce.<sup>[35]</sup>

Both before and during *Pocket Money*, Nixon and Kissinger had worried about the Soviet and Chinese reaction to the escalation. Hours before the president's speech announcing the mining, Kissinger had delivered a letter to Soviet ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin which outlined the U.S. plan, but which also made clear Nixon's willingness to proceed with the summit.<sup>[36]</sup> The next day, Nixon shook the hand of Soviet Foreign Trade

Minister Nikolai Patolichev at the White House. Although both Moscow and Beijing publicly denounced the American operation, they were not willing to jeopardize their thawing relationship with the U.S. and Hanoi's requests for support and aid from its socialist allies met with only cool responses.<sup>[34]</sup> Nixon and Kissinger's diplomacy had triumphed and the U.S. was free to react as it pleased.

## Going North

Operation *Linebacker*, the designation for the new interdiction campaign, would have four objectives: to isolate North Vietnam from its outside sources of supply by destroying railroad bridges and rolling stock in and around Hanoi and northeastward toward the Chinese frontier; the targeting of primary storage areas and marshalling yards; to destroy storage and transshipment points; and finally, to eliminate (or at least damage) the north's air defense system.<sup>[37]</sup> With nearly 85 percent of North Vietnam's imports (which arrived by sea) blocked by *Pocket Money*, the administration and the Pentagon believed that cutting its final lines of communication with its socialist allies. The People's Republic of China alone shipped an average of 22,000 tons of supplies a month over two rail lines and eight major roads that linked it with North Vietnam.<sup>[32]</sup>

On 10 May Operation *Linebacker* and Operation Custom Tailor began with large-scale bombing operations against North Vietnam by tactical fighter aircraft of the Seventh Air Force and Task Force 77. Their targets included the railroad switching yards at Yen Vien and the Paul Doumer Bridge, on the northern outskirts of Hanoi.<sup>[38]</sup> A total of 414 sorties were flown on the first day of the operation, 120 by the Air Force and 294 by the Navy, and they encountered the heaviest single day of air-to-air combat during the Vietnam War, with 11 North Vietnamese MiGs (four MiG-21s and seven MiG-17s) and two U.S. Air Force F-4s shot down.<sup>[39]</sup> Anti-aircraft artillery and over 100 surface-to-air missile firings also brought down two U.S. Navy aircraft.<sup>[39]</sup>

By the end of the month, American aircraft had destroyed 13 bridges along the rail lines running from Hanoi to the Chinese border. Another four were destroyed between the capital and Haiphong, including the notorious "Dragon's Jaw" that spanned the Song Ma River near Thanh Hoa. Several more bridges were brought down along the rail line leading to the south toward the DMZ. Targets were then switched to petroleum and oil storage and transportation networks and North Vietnamese airfields.<sup>[40]</sup> There was an immediate impact on the battlefield in South Vietnam. Shelling by PAVN artillery dropped off by one-half between 9 May and 1 June. This slowdown was not due to an immediate shortage of artillery shells, but rather to a desire to conserve ammunition. U.S. intelligence analysts believed that PAVN had enough stockpiled supplies to sustain their campaigns throughout the autumn.<sup>[41]</sup>

The intensity of the bombing campaign was reflected by the sharp increase in the number of strike and support sorties flown in Southeast Asia as a whole: from 4,237 for all services, including the VNAF, during the month preceding the invasion, to 27,745 flown in support of ARVN forces from the beginning of April to the end of



VA-195 A-7E bombing the Hai Duong bridge, 10 May 1972.



June (20,506 of them flown by the Air Force).<sup>[42]</sup> B-52s provided an additional 1,000 sorties during the same period.<sup>[42]</sup> The north was feeling the pressure, admitting in the official PAVN history that "between May and June only 30 percent of supplies called for in our plan actually reached the front-line units."<sup>[43]</sup>

The *Linebacker* missions included the first widespread use of precision-guided munitions, including electro-optical and laser-guided bombs. In addition to interdicting the road and rail system of North Vietnam, *Linebacker* also systematically attacked its air defense system. The North Vietnamese Air Force, with approximately 200 interceptors, strongly contested these attacks throughout the campaign. Navy pilots, employing a mutually supporting "loose deuce" tactical formation and many with TOPGUN training, enjoyed a kill ratio of 6:1 in favor of USA in May and June, such that after that the North Vietnamese rarely engaged them thereafter.<sup>[44]</sup> The Air Force, opposed by MiG-21s, MiG-17s, and J-6s (the Chinese version of the MiG-19), experienced a virtual 1:1 shoot-down ratio through the first two months of the campaign, as seven of its eventual 24 *Linebacker* air-to-air losses occurred without any corresponding North Vietnamese loss in a twelve-day period between 24 June and 5 July.<sup>[45]</sup>



A 388th TFW SAM hunter-killer team refueling on its way to North Vietnam, October 1972.

Air Force pilots were hampered by use of the outdated "fluid four" tactical formations (a four-plane, two element formation in which only the leader did the shooting and in which the outside wingmen were vulnerable) dictated by service doctrine. Also contributing to the parity was a lack of air combat training against dissimilar aircraft, a deficient early warning system, and ECM pod formations that mandated strict adherence to formation flying.<sup>[46]</sup> During August, however, the introduction of real-time early warning systems, increased aircrew combat experience, and degraded North Vietnamese ground control interception capabilities reversed the trend to a more favorable 4:1 kill ratio.<sup>[47]</sup>

*Linebacker* saw several other "firsts". On the opening day of the operation, Navy Lieutenant Randall H. Cunningham and his radar intercept officer, Lieutenant (j.g.) William P. Driscoll became the first U.S. air aces of the Vietnam War when they shot down their fifth MiG.<sup>[48]</sup> On 28 August, the Air Force gained its first ace when Captain Richard S. Ritchie downed his fifth enemy aircraft. Twelve days later, Captain Charles B. DeBellevue (who had been Ritchie's backseater during four of his five victories) downed two more MiGs, bringing his total to six. On 13 October another weapons officer, Captain Jeffrey S. Feinstein, was credited with his fifth MiG, making him the final Air Force ace.<sup>[48]</sup>

## Paris Peace Talks and conclusion

The stalled offensive in the south and the devastation in North Vietnam had helped to convince Hanoi to return to the bargaining table by early August.<sup>[48]</sup> The meetings produced new concessions from Hanoi which promised to end the deadlock that had plagued negotiations since their inception in 1968. Gone were Hanoi's demands for the ouster of South Vietnamese President Nguyễn Văn Thiệu and his replacement by a coalition government in which the National Liberation Front would participate.<sup>[49]</sup> The diplomatic impasse was broken and Nixon ordered a halt to all bombing above the 20th parallel on 23 October. This once again placed Hanoi and Haiphong off-limits, and halted *Linebacker* operations.

Air Force historian Earl Tilford has written that *Linebacker* was "a watershed in aerial warfare...it was the first

modern aerial campaign in which precision guided munitions changed the way in which air power was used.<sup>[50]</sup> It succeeded, where *Rolling Thunder* had failed, he claimed, for three reasons: President Nixon was decisive in his actions and gave the military greater latitude in targeting; American airpower was forcefully and appropriately used; and the immense difference in the technology utilized made *Linebacker* the first bombing campaign in a "new era" of aerial warfare.<sup>[51]</sup>

During and immediately following the PAVN offensive, U.S. Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps aviators had flown 18,000 sorties in the four northern provinces of South Vietnam and dropped 40,000 tons of ordnance in the defense of An Loc. Between March and May, B-52 sortie rates had climbed from 700 to 2,200 per month and the big bombers had dropped 57,000 tons of bombs in Quang Tri Province alone.<sup>[52]</sup> During *Freedom Train* and *Linebacker* proper, B-52s had dropped 150,237 tons of bombs on the north while Air Force and Navy tactical aircraft had flown 1,216 sorties and dropped another 5,000 tons of ordnance.<sup>[53]</sup>

From the beginning of *Freedom Train* in April to the end of June 1972 the United States lost 52 aircraft over North Vietnam: 17 to missiles; 11 to anti-aircraft weapons; three to small arms fire; 14 to MiGs; and seven to unknown causes.<sup>[54]</sup> During the same time period, the Republic of Vietnam Air Force lost ten aircraft.<sup>[55]</sup> 63 North Vietnamese aircraft were destroyed during the same time period.<sup>[56]</sup> North Vietnam claimed that it had shot down 651 aircraft and sunk or set on fire 80 U.S. warships during the operation.<sup>[2]</sup>

*Linebacker* had played a crucial role in blunting the northern offensive by drying up its vital sources of supply. PAVN had evolved into a conventional military force, and such a force depended upon a complex logistical system, which made it vulnerable to aerial attack.<sup>[57]</sup> By September, imports into North Vietnam were estimated at 35 to 50 percent below what they had been in May, bolstering claims that the campaign had been successful in its interdiction effort.<sup>[58]</sup> Air Force General Robert N. Ginsburgh, of the Office of the Secretary of the Air Force, summed up the attitudes of U.S. commanders by remarking that *Linebacker* had "a greater impact in its first four months of operation than *Rolling Thunder* had in three and one-half years."<sup>[59]</sup> Although Henry Kissinger may have announced that peace was at hand, it was not going to come easily. American bombers would once again return to the skies of North Vietnam in 1972 during Operation Linebacker II before the American commitment to the Vietnam War came to an end.

North Vietnamese aircraft losses

(Air-to-air losses only)<sup>[60][61]</sup>

Dates	Service	MiG-21	MiG-19	MiG-17	Total
5 April-9 May	USAF	4	1		5
	USN	2		2	4
10 May-23 October	USAF	30	7		37
	USN	3	2	11	16
	USMC	1			1
VPAF Total		40	10	13	63

U.S. aircraft losses during Linebacker

Between 10 May and 23 October 1972, the United States lost a total of 134 aircraft either over the north or as a

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direct result of Linebacker missions. 104 were lost in combat and 30 were destroyed in operational accidents. Losses by service were:<sup>[62]</sup>

**USAF:** - 70 total

- **51 combat losses** (22 to MiGs, 5 induced losses,<sup>[63]</sup> 20 to AAA, 4 to SAMs)
  - 43 F-4D/E Phantom II (+17 non-combat losses)
  - 2 RF-4C Photo Recon (+1 non-combat loss)
  - 4 F-105G Wild Weasel (+1 non-combat loss)
  - 2 F-111A "Aardvark"

**USN:** - 54 total

- **43 combat losses** (1 MiG, 2 induced, 13 SAM, 27 AAA)
  - 8 F-4B/J Phantom II (+3 non-combat losses)
  - 22 A-7A/C/E Corsair II (+3 non-combat losses)
  - 3 A-6A Intruder
  - 2 F-8J Crusader (+3 non-combat losses)
  - 5 A-4F Skyhawk (+1 non-combat loss)
  - 1 RA-5C Vigilante
  - 2 RF-8G Photo Crusader (+1 non-combat loss)

**USMC:** - 10 total

- **10 combat losses** (1 MiG, 1 SAM, 8 AAA)
  - 4 F-4J Phantom II
  - 2 A-4E Skyhawk
  - 4 A-6A Intruder

## U.S. air order of battle

### ■ Task Force 77

USS *Constellation*, Carrier Air Wing 9 (F-4, A-6, A-7)

USS *Coral Sea*, Carrier Air Wing 15 (F-4, A-6, A-7)

USS *Hancock*, Carrier Air Wing 21 (F-8, A-4)

USS *Kitty Hawk*, Carrier Air Wing 11 (F-4, A-6, A-7)

USS *Midway*, Carrier Air Wing 5 (F-4, A-6, A-7)

USS *Saratoga*, Carrier Air Wing 3 (F-4, A-6, A-7)

USS *America*, Carrier Air Wing 8 (F-4, A-6, A-7)

### ■ Seventh Air Force

8th Tactical Fighter Wing, Ubon RTAFB, Thailand (F-4)

+ two Constant Guard squadrons from 4th TFW, Seymour-Johnson AFB, North Carolina

49th Tactical Fighter Wing, Takhli RTAFB, Thailand (F-4)

56th Special Operations Wing, Nakhon Phanom RTAFB, Thailand (A-1, HH-53)

366th Tactical Fighter Wing, Danang AB, RVN (F-4)

+ one Constant Guard squadron from 3rd TFW, Osan AB, Korea

*388th Tactical Fighter Wing*, Korat RTAFB, Thailand (F-4, F-105G)  
+ one Constant Guard squadron from 23d TFW, McConnell AFB, Kansas  
*432d Tactical Reconnaissance Wing*, Udon RTAFB, Thailand (F-4), RF-4)  
+three Constant Guard squadrons  
--one squadron from 405th TFW, Clark AB, Philippines  
--one squadron from 31st TFW, Homestead AFB, Florida  
--one squadron from 33d TFW, Eglin AFB, Florida  
*43d Strategic Wing*, Andersen AFB, Guam (B-52)  
*72d Strategic Wing (Provisional)*, Anderson AFB, Guam (B-52)  
*307th Strategic Wing*, U Tapao RTAFB, Thailand (B-52)

## (U) Operation Linebacker II, December 1972

- Harder, Robert O. **Flying From The Black Hole: The B-52 Navigator-Bombardiers of Vietnam** (Naval Institute Press: 2009) 299 pages ISBN 978-1-59114-359-8
  - (U) Robert Harder served as an active duty U.S. Air Force officer from 1966 to 1970 and having flown 145 combat missions during the Vietnam War as a B-52D navigator-bombardier. Harder opens his 2009 book with a discussion of the first day of Operation Linebacker II, the Christmas bombing campaign over North Vietnam in 1972. This campaign, conducted December 18–29, 1972, involved massive B-52 raids on Hanoi and Haiphong—the largest heavy bombing strikes launched by the U.S. Air Force since the end of World War II. He gives a detailed day-by-day account of the 1972 Christmas bombing. He relates how the deeply flawed attack plan that initially came from SAC headquarters in Offutt Air Base in Nebraska resulted in the downing of fifteen B-52s during the raids and almost turned the operation into a disaster.<sup>[64]</sup>
- Prados, John **Vietnam: The History of an Unwinnable War, 1945-1975** (University of Kansas Press: 2009) 665 pages ISBN 978-0-7006-1634-3
  - John Prados, a longtime student of the Southeast Asian conflict, attempts to provide a comprehensive account of the Vietnam War. Prados believes that the massive "Linebacker" bombing of 1972 achieved only cosmetic changes in the final ceasefire agreement. Although Richard Nixon had repeatedly demanded such attacks earlier in the war, the author asserts that their actual purpose in December 1972 was to convince South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu that Nixon had done everything possible to gain a fair peace: "The real audience sat in Saigon, not Hanoi" (page 510).<sup>[65]</sup>

## See also

- USS Kitty Hawk riot
- B-52 Stratofortress

## References



## Notes

1. Lịch sử kháng chiến chống Mỹ cứu nước. Tập VIII
2. *Victory in Vietnam*, p. 301.
3. Maj. A.J.C. Lavalley, ed. *Airpower and the 1972 Spring Offensive*. Maxwell AFB AL: Air University Press, 1976, p. 4.
4. David Fulghum & Terrance Maitland, et al., *South Vietnam on Trial*. Boston: Boston Publishing Company, 1984, p. 138.
5. Fulghum and Maitland, p. 141.
6. Lavalley, p. 6.
7. Fulghum and Maitland, pp. 154–158.
8. Earl H. Tilford, *Setup: What the Air Force Did in Vietnam and Why*. Maxwell AFB AL: Air University Press, 1991, p. 225.
9. Fulghum and Maitland, pp. 141–142.
10. Tilford, p. 234.
11. Fulghum and Maitland, p. 170.
12. Fulghum and Maitland, p. 142.
13. Tilford, p. 228.
14. Tilford, p. 232.
15. Michael Casey, Clark Dougan, Samuel Lipsman, Jack Sweetman, Stephen Weiss, et al., *Flags into Battle*. Boston: Boston Publishing Company, 1987, p. 182.
16. Lavalley, p. 12.
17. Tilford, pp. 223–224.
18. John Morocco, *Rain of Fire*. Boston: Boston Publishing Company, 1985, p. 170.
19. Lavalley, pp. 19, 23–25. Also see Morocco, pp. 108–109.
20. Tilford, p. 224.
21. Wayne To Hanoi and Back. Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000, p. 225.
22. Thompson, p. 229.
23. Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam*. New York: Viking, 1983, p. 643.
24. Casey, Dougan, Lipsman, p. 39.
25. Military Institute of Vietnam: *Victory in Vietnam*. Lawrence KS: University of Kansas Press, 1992, p. 299.
26. On 21 February 1972 Nixon had landed in Beijing for his dramatic diplomatic breakthrough with the People's Republic. The Chinese, who had previously hoped that a long war in Southeast Asia would bleed both the Americans and their Vietnamese neighbors, now feared that a decline in American power would deprive them of a counterweight to the Soviet Union. Karnow, p. 638.
27. Fulghum and Maitland, p. 179.
28. Fulghum and Maitland, p. 168.
29. Dale Andrade, *Trial by Fire*. New York: Hippocrene Books, 1995 p. 52.
30. Dave Richard Plamer, *Summons of the Trumpet*, New York: Ballentine, 1978, p. 317.
31. Tilford, p. 233.
32. Morocco, p. 130.
33. Fulghum and Maitland, p. 144.
34. Morocco, p. 131.
35. Andrade, p. 518.
36. Fulghum and Maitland, pp. 170–171.
37. William P. Head, *War Above the Clouds*, Maxwell AFB AL: Air University Press, 2002, p. 65.

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38. Casey, Dougan and Lipsman, p. 39.
39. Thompson, p. 236.
40. Tilford, p. 235.
41. Andrade, p. 519.
42. Head, p. 66.
43. *Victory in Vietnam*, p. 293.
44. Morocco, p. 144.
45. Marshall L. Michel, *Clashes: Air Combat Over North Vietnam 1965-1972*. Annapolis MD: Naval Institute Press, 1997, p. 244.
46. Michel, p. 288
47. Michel, p. 284
48. Morocco, p. 145.
49. Lipsman and Weiss, p. 9. See also Karnow, p. 647.
50. Tilford, p. 238.
51. Tilford, pp. 238-240.
52. Lavalley, p. 103.
53. Head, p. 71.
54. Head, p. 66. One of those aircraft was an EB-66 electronic jamming aircraft with the call sign "Bat-21". The Prowler was shot down over northern South Vietnam on 2 April with only one survivor, Lieutenant Colonel Iceal Hambleton. The successful rescue of Hambleton and Lieutenant Mark Clark were the subject of a best-selling book and a movie. See Lavalley, pp. 35-43.
55. Tilford, pp. 231, 251. *Linebacker*. See also Lavalley, p. 107.
56. Tilford, p. 245.
57. Palmer, p. 322.
58. Tilford, p. 237.
59. Morocco, p. 136.
60. United States Air Force in Southeast Asia: Aces and Aerial Victories - 1965-1973 (PDF). Air University. Retrieved on 15 February 2007., on-line book, pp. 95-102.
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62. Ed Rasimus (2006). "Appendix I - Linebacker Losses", *Palace Cobra: A Fighter Pilot in the Vietnam Air War*. St. Martin's Press., pp. 233-248. Losses are enumerated by date, aircraft type and serial number, and crew members.
63. Michel, p. 317 note 2. An "induced loss" occurred when a MiG was credited with indirectly causing a U.S. aircraft loss, including fuel exhaustion, fratricide, and loss of control while maneuvering.
64. (U) Review of Harder's **Flying From the Black Hole**, reviewed by James H. Willibanks (U.S. Army Command and General Staff College), for the journal *History: Reviews of New Books* (Vol. 38, issue 3; page 112) July 2010; accessed 7 NOV 2013 with [REDACTED]
65. (U) Review of Prados' **Vietnam**, reviewed by Jonathan M. House (U.S. Army Command and General Staff College), for the journal *History: Reviews of New Books* (Vol. 38, issue 3; pp. 105-106) July 2010; accessed 7 NOV 2013 with [REDACTED]
77. ^Hobson, Chris. "Vietnam Air Losses." 2001. ISBN 1-85780-1156

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## External links

- Bibliography: Operations Linebacker and Linebacker II (<http://www.clemson.edu/caah/history/facultypages/EdMoise/airwar.html#line>)

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# (U) USS Coral Sea (CV-43)

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From Intellipedia

**USS Coral Sea (CV-43)** (aka CVB/CVA-41) was the final *Midway* class aircraft carrier in the United States Navy. It was the second ship of the United States Navy to be named for the Battle of the Coral Sea. She earned the affectionate nickname "*Ageless Warrior*" through her long career. Initially classified as an aircraft carrier with hull classification symbol **CV-43**, the contract to build her was awarded to Newport News Shipbuilding of Newport News, Virginia on 14 June 1943. She was reclassified as a "Large Aircraft Carrier" with hull classification symbol **CVB-43** on 15 July 1943. Her keel was laid down on 10 July 1944. She was launched on 2 April 1946 sponsored by Mrs. Thomas C. Kinkaid, and commissioned on 1 October 1947 with Captain A.P. Storrs III in command.

Before 8 May 1945, the aircraft carrier CVB-42 had been known as *USS Coral Sea*; after that date, CVB-42 was renamed in honor of Franklin D. Roosevelt, the late President, and CVB-43 was named *Coral Sea*.

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## Early milestones

The ship promptly began a series of career milestones when, on 27 April 1948, two P2V-2 Neptunes, piloted by Commander Thomas D. Davies and Lieutenant Commander John P. Wheatley, made jet assisted take-offs

See the Wikipedia article  
*USS Coral Sea (CV-43)*



United States



Class: *Midway* class aircraft carrier  
Status: Decommissioned  
Commissioned: 1 October 1947  
Decommissioned: 26 April 1990  
Badge:



Motto: *Ageless Warrior*  
**Cryptologic Information**

- (JATO) from the carrier as it steamed off Naval Station *Norfolk*, Virginia. This was the first carrier launchings of planes of this size and weight. *Coral Sea* sailed from Naval Station *Norfolk*, Virginia on 7 June 1948 for a midshipmen cruise to the Mediterranean Sea and Caribbean Sea, and returned to Naval Station *Norfolk*, Virginia 11 August.

File:CVB-43 1947.jpg?  
The USS *Coral Sea* on her  
maiden cruise in 1948

After an overhaul period, *Coral Sea* was again operating off the Virginia Capes. On 7 March 1949, a P2V-3C Neptune, piloted by Captain John T. Hayward of VC-5, was launched from the carrier with a 10,000-load of dummy bombs. The aircraft flew across the continent, dropped its load on the West Coast, and returned nonstop to land at the Naval Air Station Patuxent

River, Maryland. Following training in the Caribbean Sea, *Coral Sea* sailed 3 May 1949 for her first tour of duty in the Mediterranean Sea with the Sixth Fleet, returning 28 September.

## Operations in the 1950s

On 21 April 1950, the first carrier takeoff of an AJ-1 Savage heavy attack bomber was made from *Coral Sea* by Captain John T. Hayward of VC-5. The remainder of the pilots of the squadron completed carrier qualifications on board *Coral Sea* in this aircraft on 31 August, marking the introduction of this long-range attack bomber to carrier operations. At this time, *Coral Sea* returned to the Mediterranean Sea for duty with the Sixth Fleet from 9 September 1950 to 1 February 1951.

An overhaul and local operations upon her return, as well as training with Air Group 17, prepared her for a return to the Mediterranean Sea once more on 20 March 1951. As flagship for Commander, Carrier Division 6, she took part in a North Atlantic Treaty Organization Exercise Beehive I. She returned to Naval Station *Norfolk*, Virginia 6 October for local and Caribbean Sea operations, next sailing for the Mediterranean Sea on 19 April 1952. While on service with the Sixth Fleet, she visited Yugoslavia, and carried Marshal Josip Broz Tito on a one-day cruise to observe carrier operations. The ship was reclassified as an "Attack Aircraft Carrier" with hull classification symbol **CVA-43** on 1 October 1952 while still at sea, and she returned to Naval Station *Norfolk*, Virginia for overhaul 12 October.

*Coral Sea* trained pilots in carrier operations off the Virginia Capes and Naval Station *Mayport*, Florida, and in April 1953 she embarked the Judiciary Committee of the United States House of Representatives for a three-day cruise. On 26 April, the carrier sailed for a tour of duty in the Mediterranean Sea. This cruise was highlighted by a visit to Spain, and participation in NATO Exercise Black Wave with Deputy Secretary of Defense R.M. Kyes on board as an observer. Returning to Naval Station *Norfolk*, Virginia on 21 October, she carried out tests for the Bureau of Aeronautics and trained members of the Naval Reserve at Naval Station *Mayport*, Florida, and Guantanamo Bay.

*Coral Sea* returned to the Mediterranean Sea from 7 July to 20 December 1954, and during this tour was visited by Generalissimo Francisco Franco as she lay off Valencia, Spain. On her next tour of duty in the Mediterranean Sea from 23 March to 29 September 1955, she called at Istanbul, and participated in NATO exercises.

File:CVA-43 1 1955.jpg  
Straight-deck *Coral Sea* in  
1955

Sailing from Naval Station *Norfolk*, Virginia 23 July 1956 for Naval Station *Mayport*, Florida, to embark Carrier Air Group 10, *Coral Sea* continued on to the Mediterranean Sea on her next tour. She participated in NATO exercises, and received Paul, King of the Hellenes, and his consort, Friederike Luise Thyra of Hannover on board as visitors in October. During the Suez Crisis, *Coral Sea* evacuated American citizens from the troubled area, and stood by off Egypt until November.



She returned to Naval Station *Norfolk*, Virginia 11 February 1957. She cleared that port on 26 February and visited Santos, Brazil; Valparaíso, Chile; and Balboa, Canal Zone, before arriving at Bremerton, Washington, on 15 April. *Coral Sea* was decommissioned at the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard on 24 May 1957 to receive a major conversion (SCB-110A), which included an angled deck, relocation of her elevators to the deck edge, new steam catapults, an enclosed hurricane bow, hull blisters, removal of the armor belt and several anti-aircraft guns, and other changes. Upon completion, she was recommissioned on 25 January 1960 and rejoined the Fleet. During September 1960, she conducted training with her new air group along the West Coast, then sailed in September for a tour of duty with the Seventh Fleet in the Far East.

## Vietnam and operations in the 1960s to early 1970s

Installation of the Pilot Landing Aid Television (PLAT) system was completed on *Coral Sea* on 14 December 1961. She was the first carrier to have this system installed for operations use. Designed to provide a videotape of every landing, the system proved useful for instructional purposes and in the analysis of landing accidents, thereby making it an invaluable tool in the promotion of safety. By 1963, all attack carriers had been equipped with PLAT and plans were underway for installation in the CVs and at shore stations.

Following the Gulf of Tonkin Incident in August, *Coral Sea* departed on 7 December 1964 for duty with the Seventh Fleet. On 7 February 1965, aircraft from *Coral Sea*, along with those from *Ranger* and *Hancock*, blasted the military barracks and staging areas near Dong Hoi in the southern sector of North Vietnam. The raids were in retaliation for a damaging Viet Cong attack on installations around Pleiku in South Vietnam. On 26 March, the Seventh Fleet units began their participation in Operation Rolling Thunder, a systematic bombing of military targets throughout North Vietnam. Pilots from *Coral Sea* struck island and coastal radar stations in the vicinity of Vinh Son. *Coral Sea* remained on deployment until returning home on 1 November 1965.

File: CVA-43 Pearl Harbor  
Apr1963.jpg

The *Coral Sea* leaving Pearl  
Harbor in 1963

*Coral Sea* continued WestPac/Vietnam deployments until 1975. She deployed from 29 July 1966 to 23 February 1967; 26 July 1967 to 6 April 1968; 7 September 1968 to 15 April 1969; 23 September 1969 to 1 July 1970; 12 November 1971 to 17 July 1972; 9 March 1973 to 8 November; and from 5 December 1974 to 2 July 1975. Operations by United States Navy and United States Marine Corps aircraft in Vietnam expanded significantly throughout April 1972 with a total of 4,833 Navy sorties in the south and 1,250 in the north. *Coral Sea*, along with *Hancock*, was on Yankee Station when the North Vietnamese spring offensive began. They were joined in early April by *Kitty Hawk* and *Constellation*. On 16 April 1972, aircraft from *Coral Sea*, along with those from *Kitty Hawk* and *Constellation*, flew 57 sorties in the Haiphong area in support of U.S. Air Force B-52 Stratofortress strikes on the Haiphong petroleum products storage area in an operation known as Freedom Porch.

After refitting, from 1970 through to 1971, and during Refra down to San Diego, the *Coral Sea* on its return trip to Alameda caught fire in the communications department. The fire spread so fast that Captain William H. Harris commanded that the carrier be put just off shore between San Mateo and Santa Barbara in order to abandon ship if the fire could not be put under control. Several communications personnel were trapped and Radiomen Bob Bilbo and Bill Larimore pulled many shipmates out of the burning and smoke filled compartments.

Operation Pocket Money, the mining campaign against principal North Vietnamese ports, was launched 9 May 1972. Early that morning, an EC-121 aircraft took off from Da Nang airfield to provide support for the mining operation. A short time later, *Kitty Hawk* launched 17 ordnance-delivering sorties against the Nam Dinh railroad siding as a diversionary air tactic. Poor weather, however, forced the planes to divert to secondary targets at Thanh and Phu Qui. *Coral Sea* launched three A-6A Intruders and six A-7E Corsair II aircraft loaded with naval

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mines and one EKA-3B Skywarrior in support of the mining operation directed against the outer approaches to Haiphong Harbor. The mining aircraft departed the vicinity of *Coral Sea* timed to execute the mining at precisely 09:00 local time to coincide with President Richard M. Nixon's public announcement in Washington that naval mines had been seeded. The Intruder flight led by the CAG, Commander Roger E. Sheets, was composed of United States Marine Corps aircraft from VMA-224 and headed for the inner channel.

The Corsairs, led by Commander Leonard E. Giuliani and made up of aircraft from VA-94 and VA-22, were designated to mine the outer segment of the channel. Each aircraft carried four MK52-2 mines. Captain William R. Carr, USMC, the bombardier/navigator in the lead plane, established the critical attack azimuth and timed the naval mine releases. The first mine was dropped at 08:59 and the last of the field of 36 mines at 09:01. Twelve mines were placed in the inner harbor and the remaining 24 in the outer. All mines were set with 72-hour arming delays, thus permitting merchant ships time for departure or a change in destination consistent with the President's public warning. It was the beginning of a mining campaign that planted over 11,000 MK36 type destructor and 108 special Mk 52-2 mines over the next eight months. It is considered to have played a significant role in bringing about an eventual peace arrangement, particularly since it so hampered the enemy's ability to continue receiving war supplies.

File:EA-1F VAW-13  
CVA-43.jpg  
Flight operations during the  
Vietnam war

## Paris Peace Accords, assorted events in the late 1970s and '80s

The Paris Peace Accords, ending hostilities in Vietnam, were signed on 27 January 1973, ending four years of talks. North Vietnam released nearly 600 American prisoners by 1 April, and the last U.S. combat troops departed Vietnam on 11 August. However, the war was not over for the Vietnamese. By spring 1975, the North was advancing on the South. *Coral Sea*, *Midway*, *Hancock*, *USS Enterprise* (CVN-652), and *Okinawa* responded on 19 April 1975 to the waters off South Vietnam when North Vietnam overran two-thirds of South Vietnam. Ten days later, Operation Frequent Wind was carried out by Seventh Fleet forces. Hundreds of U.S. personnel and Vietnamese were evacuated to waiting ships after the fall of Saigon to the North Vietnamese. South Vietnam officially surrendered to the North on 30 April.

On 12 May to 14 May 1975, *Coral Sea* participated with other United States Navy, United States Air Force, and United States Marine Corps forces in the Mayagüez incident, the recovery of the U.S. merchant ship SS *Mayaguez* and her 39 crew, illegally seized on 12 May in international waters by a Cambodian gunboat controlled by the Communist Khmer Rouge. Protective air strikes flown from the carrier against the Cambodian mainland naval and air installations as Air Force helicopters with 288 Marines from Battalion Landing Teams 2 and 9 were launched from U Tapao, Thailand, and landed at Koh Tang Island to rescue the *Mayaguez's* crew and secure the ship. Eighteen Marines, Airmen, and Navy corpsmen were lost in the action. For her action, *Coral Sea* was presented the Meritorious Unit Commendation on 6 July 1976. Meanwhile, she had been reclassified as a "Multi-Purpose Aircraft Carrier", returning to hull classification symbol 'CV-43, on 30 June 1975.

*Coral Sea* relieved *Midway* in the northern part of the Arabian Sea on 5 February 1980 in connection with the Iran Hostage Crisis. Militant followers of the Ayatollah Khomeini, who had come to power following the overthrow of the Shah of Iran, seized the US Embassy in Tehran on 4 November 1979 and held 63 Americans hostage. The crisis ended on 20 January 1981 when Ronald Reagan succeeded Jimmy Carter as President of the United States and Iran released the Americans.

File:CV-43 1981 DN-SC-  
93-00769.JPEG  
*Coral Sea* entering Pearl  
Harbor in 1981

In November 1981, her battle group under Rear Admiral Tom Brown, was involved in exercises with the Royal



Navy under Rear Admiral Sandy Woodward, operating with HMS Glamorgan as his flagship. During the subsequent exercise, Woodward was able to manoeuvre Glamorgan into a position where he could have "sunk" Coral Sea with Exocet missiles.<sup>[1]</sup> The result of this exercise played a part in the belief of Admiral Woodward that the British should sink ARA General Belgrano for the fear of a similar situation arising between that ship and British Aircraft Carriers HMS Hermes and HMS Invincible during the Falklands War.<sup>[2]</sup>

On 25 March 1983, the *Coral Sea* left its homeport of Alameda, Calif., for its new homeport of Norfolk, Va. The Navy sent the carrier on a six-month around-the-world cruise, with ports of call in a dozen countries. The USS *Carl Vinson* (CVN-70) replaced the *Coral Sea* at her homeport at what is now the former Alameda Naval Air Station. 1983 San Francisco Magazine Article (<http://www.everafterimages.com/editorial/skillet.htm>) photocredit EverafterImages.Com [1] (<http://www.everafterimages.com>)

On 11 April 1985, while on refresher training with its air wing in the Guantanamo Bay area, the *Coral Sea* collided with the Equadorian tanker ship *Napo* and subsequently underwent two months of repairs at Norfolk Naval Shipyard in Portsmouth, VA

File:CoralSea Small.jpg  
The Coral Sea passing under the Golden Gate Bridge March 83

On 13 October 1985, *Coral Sea* returned to the Mediterranean Sea for her first Sixth Fleet deployment since 1957. Commanded by Captain Robert H. Ferguson, with CVW-13 embarked, it was also the first deployment of the new F/A-18 Hornet to the Mediterranean Sea. The Hornets were assigned to VFA-131, VFA-132, VMFA-314 and VMFA-323 on *Coral Sea*.

On 24 March 1986, Libyan armed forces fired missiles at U.S. naval forces operating in the Gulf of Sidra after declaring international waters as their own. A missile (SA-5 site at Sert)attack on CV-43's aircraft (Tomcat/Hornet package)conducting a "Blue Darter" fell short and dropped into the Mediterranean. F/A-18's from *Coral Sea* and *America* flew combat air patrols, protecting the carrier groups from Libyan aircraft. The Hornets were frequently called upon to intercept and challenge numerous MiG-23s, MiG-25s, Su-22s, and Mirages sent out by Libya to harass the fleet. The Hornets often flew only a few feet from their adversaries, ready to shoot if need be. Coral Sea was the only carrier that could be counted on for DLI when needed, her deck was ready 24/7.

On 5 April 1986, in response to the US show of force, the La Belle Discotheque in the Federal Republic of Germany was bombed, resulting in the death of one U.S. serviceman and many injured

On 15 April 1986 aircraft from the *Coral Sea* and *America*, as well as USAF FB-111s from Lakenheath AFB in the U.K., struck targets in Libya as part of "Operation El Dorado Canyon." The Hornets went into action for the first time, flying several ship-to-shore air strikes against Libyan shore installations that were harassing the fleet. During this action, the Hornets from the *Coral Sea* attacked and destroyed the SA-5 missile site at Sirte which had been "painting" US aircraft on its radars. This was the combat debut for the Hornet, and incidentally marked the first combat use of the AGM-88A HARM anti-radiation missile. The Hornets attacked the SAM sites in bad weather and at wave top heights. All Hornets returned to the *Coral Sea* without mishap.

*Coral Sea* continued deployments to the Mediterranean Sea and Indian Ocean area throughout the remainder of the 1980s and into the 1990s. In 1987, she developed the "*Coral Sea* configuration" in which two attack squadrons on board used a shared maintenance program, helping to streamline aircraft maintenance. On 19 April 1989, while operating in the Caribbean Sea, *Coral Sea* responded to a call for assistance from *Iowa* due to an explosion in the battleship's number two gun turret in which 47 crew members were killed. The explosive ordnance disposal team from Coral Sea removed volatile

File:CV-43 March1989.jpg  
USS *Coral Sea* making a high speed run in 1989

- powder charges from the ship's 16 inch (407 mm) guns. Coral Sea also dispatched a surgical team and medical supplies. Medevac and logistical support to Iowa was provided by Coral Sea's deployed helicopter squadron HS-17 (Neptune's Raiders) flying the Sikorsky SH-3H, along with VC-8 flying the Sikorsky SH-3G aircraft.

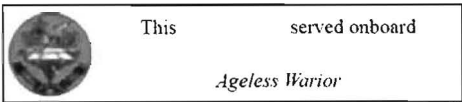
## Decommissioning and scrapping

*Coral Sea* was decommissioned 26 April 1990 and stricken from the Naval Vessel Register two days later. She was sold by the Defense Reutilization and Marketing Service (DRMS) for scrapping on 7 May 1993 to Seawitch Salvage of Baltimore, but scrapping was delayed by numerous financial, legal and environmental issues. Nearly 70,000 tons by the time she was struck, *Coral Sea* was the largest vessel ever scrapped up until that date and may be the last large American aircraft carrier ever to be scrapped (newer environmental laws make it unprofitable for companies to scrap carriers within the United States, and it is illegal to sell capital ships for scrapping abroad). The company attempted to sell the hulk to China for scrapping, but the Navy blocked the sale in court. The scrapping continued off and on for several years until finally completed on 8 September 2000.

## Renamed

Before 8 May 1945, the aircraft carrier CVB-42 had been known as USS *Coral Sea*; after that date, CVB-42 was renamed in honor of Franklin D. Roosevelt, the late President, and the name *Coral Sea* was changed to CVB-43. What is unknown to this day is, what *Coral Sea*'s name was prior to her renaming in 1945. After further investigation many believe the original name of CV-43 was USS *Leyte*, because the name *Leyte* was given the same day to USS *Leyte* (CV-32) (USS *Crown Point* (CV-32)).<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup> The following is a quote from the reply to in inquiry made to: (Public Affairs Officer Naval HHistorical Center Washington Navy Yard 805 Kidder Breese SE Washington, DC 20374-5060) on 18 June 2008 regarding the name of CVB-43 prior to being named USS *Coral Sea*. "When CVB-42 was renamed from USS *Coral Sea* to USS *Franklin D Roosevelt*, no name for CVB-43 had been determined. So there was no "original" name for the ship. From my study of the WWII Navy and it's ship naming policies, it's possible that it would have been named USS *Okinawa* when the CVE of that name was canceled on 11 August 1945."



## Merit badge



Please do not copy the raw badge code to paste into a page.

To insert this merit badge onto your page, insert the following code: {{User CV-43}}

You can customize your badge by changing the default text of `|status=served onboard` to any phrasing you prefer.

Desired badge	Required code
<div>This served onboard <i>Ageless Warrior</i></div>	{{User CV-43}}
<div>This is serving on the <i>Ageless Warrior</i></div>	{{User CV-43 status=is serving on the}}

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References

- 1. Admiral Sandy Woodward, One Hundred Days, pages 84 to 88. ISBN 9780007134670
- 2. Admiral Sandy Woodward, One Hundred Days, pages 206 and 207. ISBN 9780007134670

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