

DLG/CG 26 - From Destroyer Leader to Cruiser...

Compiled from Wikipedia sources by C.M. Reeves

(Originally published in the 2014 USS Belknap Reunion brochure. It has been slightly updated.)

The USS Belknap (DLG 26) was built as a Destroyer Leader. To understand that terminology, it is useful to consider some background on the destroyer navy, variously called “little boys,” “tin cans,” and “greyhounds.”

Evolution of the Destroyer

A Naval destroyer is a fast, maneuverable warship designed to escort larger vessels and defend them against attacks by submarines and smaller surface vessels such as torpedo boats.

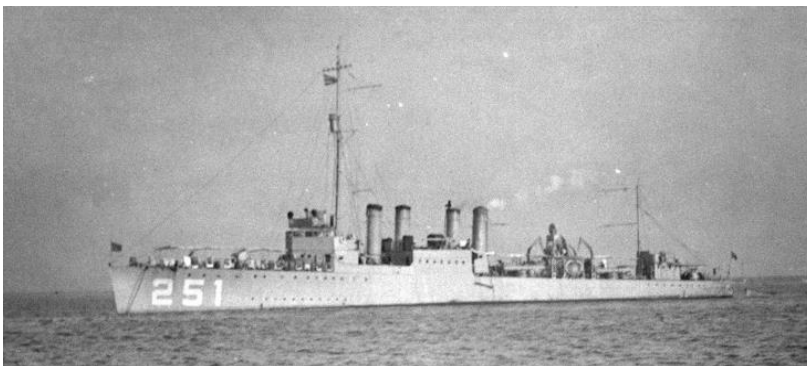
Development of the destroyer was related to emergence of the self-propelled torpedo in the 1860s. Initially launched from small surface vessels, the torpedo provided a means for a navy to destroy a superior enemy battle fleet. In response to this new threat, “torpedo boat destroyers” evolved to escort the battle fleet at sea. These escort vessels, soon to become known simply as destroyers, needed the same seaworthiness and endurance as the ships they protected. Destroyers gradually became more capable warships, including larger guns and torpedoes among their armaments.

The first ships designated as torpedo boat destroyers (TBD) were two Daring-class ships commissioned by the British Royal Navy 1895. The first US destroyer was the USS Bainbridge (DD1), commissioned in 1903 with a crew of three officers and 72 enlisted men. DD1 was one of nine ships comprising the original Bainbridge class that served the nation through World War I and emergence of a new threat: the submarine.

The need to attack submarines underwater led to rapid destroyer evolution during the war; they were quickly equipped with strengthened bows for ramming, listening devices for detecting, and depth charges for attacking the submerged targets. The submarine threat meant that many destroyers spent their time on anti-submarine patrol, and they were soon called upon to escort merchant convoys. When America entered the war in 1917, US Navy destroyers were among the first units to be dispatched.

The trend in WWI was toward larger destroyers with heavier armaments, because opportunities to fire at enemy capital ships were missed when destroyers had expended their munitions in an initial salvo. Many nations joined the trend to build larger destroyers, adding multiple gun mounts of larger caliber and increasing the number of torpedo tubes.

The first USS Belknap (DD-251), was commissioned in 1919 as part of the 156-ship Clemson Class, which was designed for extended range and improved antisubmarine warfare capability with increased fuel capacity and a larger load of depth charges than the predecessor Wickes Class. Because of their distinctive four stacks, Clemson Class ships were known as “four-pipers” to the men who sailed in them.



USS Belknap (DD 251), 1919-1945

By World War II, submarines were more effective and aircraft had become important weapons of naval warfare. This led to destroyers being equipped with sonar, new forward-thrown anti-submarine weapons, radar, and anti-aircraft guns in addition to their existing light guns, depth charges, and torpedoes.

By this time destroyers had become larger, multi-purpose vessels which made them valuable targets for the enemy. As a result, casualties on destroyers were high. This led to introduction of smaller specialized anti-submarine *corvettes* and *frigates* by the Royal Navy and *destroyer escorts* by the United States. The result was an agile mix of larger destroyers and smaller escort vessels that continues in today's Navy.

Destroyers designed after WWII built upon wartime experience. These vessels were significantly larger than wartime ships and had improved main propulsion, fully automatic main guns, and improved radar, sonar, and antisubmarine weapons. Some WWII vintage US ships were modernized to extend their service lives, such as those that underwent the Fleet Rehabilitation and Modernization (FRAM) upgrades.

The advent of surface-to-air missiles and surface-to-surface missiles in the 1950's and 60's changed naval warfare. Guided missile destroyers were developed to carry these weapons and more capably protect the fleet from air, submarine, and surface threats. In the US Navy, the letter G was added to the DD designation, so that DDG indicates a ship equipped with guided missiles.

Destroyer Leaders

At the end of WWII, smaller destroyers were stricken until only those over 2,000 tons remained in service. Even so, large inventories of destroyers and cruisers remained. Evaluation of captured ships and consideration of combat experience led the Navy to explore placing high-efficiency boilers in intermediate-sized hulls. This concept led to new ship designation, *Destroyer Leader* (DL), also called a frigate. The first destroyer leader was the USS Norfolk (DL-1). Authorized in 1948, the Norfolk was conceived as a submarine hunter-killer cruiser based on the Atlanta-class light cruiser. Norfolk was designated EDL-1 while engaged in experimental work with new sensors and weapons systems, including the SQS-23 Sonar, Weapon Alpha (forward thrown depth charges), the Antisubmarine Rocket (ASROC), and automatic 3" guns. One of a kind, DL-1 was commissioned in 1953 and served the fleet until 1970.

The next destroyer leaders were four experimental Mitscher-class ships, designated DL-2 through DL-5. Larger than WWII Destroyers but smaller than the USS Norfolk, the Mitscher-class was built to include anti-aircraft warfare (AAW) along with anti-submarine warfare (ASW) capabilities. Unlike the Norfolk, the Mitschers included 5" guns. Throughout their service life, Mitscher-class ships received numerous upgrades to evaluate new systems and sensors. DL 4 and DL 5 were retired in 1969, while Mitscher (DL-2) and John S. McCain (DL-3) were retrofitted with guided missiles in 1968-69 and re-designated DDG-35 and DDG-36 respectively. Both ships were decommissioned and stricken in 1978.

Building on observations of propulsion, weapon, and sensor systems with the Mitscher class, the Navy developed a third group of destroyer leaders, the Farragut Class (DLG-6 thru DLG-15). The first three ships of this class were ordered with three 5" guns, while the next three were ordered with two 5" guns forward and a Terrier missile system aft. (Because the USS Coontz (DLG-9) was the first to be designed as a guided-missile ship, the class is often called the Coontz Class.) However, all ten ships were completed with a single 5" 54 caliber gun forward, an ASROC launcher where the second gun would have been, and the missile system aft. All ten were reclassified (and renumbered) as guided missile destroyers (DDG) in 1975, and all were retired by 1992.

The fourth configuration of destroyer leaders was the Leahy Class (DLG-16 thru DLG-24), the immediate predecessor to the Belknap Class. Leahy Class ships were "double-enders," with Terrier missile launchers fore and aft. They were the only frigates without a main gun battery for shore bombardment or engaging other surface vessels. The 5" gun was omitted to allow the ships to carry a larger missile load, and an ASROC box launcher was mounted behind the forward missile launcher. Like the Farragut class, the Leahys were designed

to form part of the AAW and ASW screen for carrier task forces. Additionally, they were equipped to provide air control functions for carrier-based aircraft, directing them to assigned targets and helping assure their safety in hostile situations.

A major innovation in the Leahy Class was combining masts and stacks into structures called “Macks,” a feature that was continued in the Belknap Class. The Leahy Class ships were commissioned in the early 1960s and served into the 90’s. All were stricken by 1995.

Following the Leahy Class was the one-ship class USS Bainbridge (DLGN-25), which was equipped with essentially the same sensors and armament as the Leahy Class, but was nuclear powered to give it the range and endurance necessary to support nuclear-powered aircraft carriers.

Building on the Leahy Class was the Belknap Class (DLG-26 thru DLG-34). Similar in appearance to the Leahys, the Belknaps were slightly larger and more capable ships. Two noticeable outward differences were the absence of the ASROC box launcher forward and a Mk 42 5”/54 gun in place of the aft missile launcher (see photos below). With its successor Truxton, the Belknap Class had the distinction of being the only ships to fire the ASROC from the Terrier Launcher. The Belknaps were commissioned in the period 1964 – 1967 and decommissioned 1993 - 1995, with the USS Belknap being the first commissioned and the last to be retired.



Photos showing outward differences between the Leahy and Belknap class ships.

All destroyer leaders built after the Belknap Class were nuclear-powered. First was the one-ship Truxton Class (DLGN-35), which was a slightly-larger and significantly-modified version of the Belknap design. Although

the Truxton's armament was nearly identical to that of the Belknap, the positions of the 5" gun and missile launcher were switched fore and aft. The Truxton was commissioned in 1967 and decommissioned in 1995.

After the Truxton came the two-ship California Class (DLGN-36 thru DLGN-37). Larger than the Belknaps and Truxton, these ships included two single-rail missile launchers and two 5" guns, one each fore and aft. The ASROC box launcher reappeared on the California Class, mounted forward. Commissioned in 1974 and 1975, both ships were decommissioned in 1999.

The final order for destroyer leaders was the five-ship Virginia Class (CGN-38 thru CGN-42). Four of these ships were built (CGN-42 was cancelled), but they never carried the "DL" designation in the fleet (see 1975 Ship Reclassification below). Still larger than the California Class, these ships had a both a two-rail missile launcher and a 5" gun forward, and the same weaponry aft. Commissioned from 1976 to 1980, the Virginia Class was retired between 1994 and 1998.

1975 Ship Reclassification

From the 1950s to 1975, the Navy had three types of carrier task force escorts: cruisers, frigates (destroyer leaders), and destroyers; plus smaller destroyer escorts (DE) and patrol frigates for protecting convoys.

In 1975, active cruisers and frigates were reclassified as CG; destroyers remained DD/DDG, and the convoy escorts (DEs) became fast frigates (FF/FFG). The two remaining Mitscher Class and the entire Farragut Class DLs were redesignated DDGs, while the Leahy and subsequent classes of DLs became CGs. The USS Belknap was among the latter group, becoming CG-26.

New Threat Upgrade

An inherent limitation of DLG/CG ships was the inability to counter a massed, or saturation attack by multiple aircraft or missiles that could overwhelm the ship's sensors and weapon systems. To deal with this vulnerability, a New Threat Upgrade (NTU) was implemented. The upgrade improved interoperability of the ship's radar and computer systems, allowing time-sharing of illumination radars to support engagement of multiple targets with newer missiles. Many ships from CG-16 forward received the NTU in the 1980s, but even with this increased capability they proved inferior to the emerging Aegis ships. As a result, these proud ships that had served so well were deemed obsolete and all were retired before the end of the 20th century.

Aegis

Introduction of the Aegis Combat System revolutionized the design and role of US cruisers and destroyers. Aegis provides greatly increased multi-mission defensive and offensive capabilities in an integrated package of sensors, weapons, communication systems, and countermeasures. The first Aegis ship, the USS Ticonderoga, was originally designated DDG-47 but she was commissioned as a cruiser with the designation CG-47. (Retaining hull number 47 required skipping CG hull numbers 43 – 46, as well as CG-42 which was never built.) Twenty-seven Aegis Cruisers were built between 1980 and 1984, and all but the first five are still in service.

Lacking the Mark 41 Vertical Launch System (VLS), CG47 - 51 were retired early in deference to the more-capable VLS ships in the class.

In addition to the Aegis Cruisers, sixty-eight Arleigh Burke Class destroyers are in service, with hull numbers DDG-51 thru DDG-118, nine more are under construction or have contracts awarded, and an additional twelve are approved for construction, for a total of 89 in all. These ships have proven highly effective in numerous roles and continue to be upgraded with new technologies and added capabilities.

... to Sixth Fleet Flagship

To be sure, the USS Belknap was always configured as a Flagship, with quarters aboard for the commander of Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 18, at the time a senior Navy Captain known as “The Commodore.” Later, the ship served as flagship for Rear Admiral M. E. Chang, Commander of Cruiser-Destroyer Group Two (CRUDESGRU 2). But in 1986, the ship was modified significantly to become the flagship for a Vice Admiral, the Commander, US 6th Fleet (COMSIXTHFLT) based in Gaeta, Italy. Belknap relieved the USS Coronado (AGF 11) as the 6th Fleet Flagship on 7 July 1986. She served honorably in that assignment until scheduled for decommissioning. The USS Belknap (CG 26) was relieved on November 8, 1994 by the USS La Salle (AGF 3), and was decommissioned in Norfolk on February 15, 1995.



**USS Belknap (CG 26) after being reconfigured for Flagship Duty.
Notice the new “box” on the main deck below the pilot house.
Among other changes, the helicopter hanger was also removed.**

At the Forefront of Technology

As summarized in the Capsule History compiled by Ross Hatch on subsequent pages, the Belknap was modified and modernized repeatedly throughout her career. Some interesting facts:

The ship was originally equipped with the unmanned Drone Antisubmarine Helicopter (DASH) system, thus the small helicopter hanger and flight deck. The DASH system was removed by 1966. Later, Belknap was the first ship to deploy the Light Airborne Multipurpose System (LAMPS) helicopter system.

The ship was also equipped with large Mk 37 wire-guided torpedoes in addition to the Mk 32 torpedo tubes amidships. The Mk 37 torpedo room was under the flight deck. The Mk 37 system was removed by 1966.

The SQS-26 AX Sonar System was still considered experimental, and much of the ASW work done by the Belknap contributed to the science and refinement of sonar technology. In now-unclassified literature, the ship is cited repeatedly for its success in detecting and tracking submarines at unprecedented ranges.

The Belknap was among the first ships to deploy the Navy Tactical Data System, which allows ships to share and exploit radar information in a composite air picture. IFF aircraft identification readouts were added to the ship’s NTDS consoles during the first Vietnam deployment. NTDS was instrumental in Belknap’s forward air control role as PIRAZ in Vietnam.

A Capsule History of USS Belknap (DLG/CG-26)

Compiled by Ross Hatch, CO 1980-1982

- 1962 - Keel laid on 3 February at Bath Iron Works Corp, Bath Maine
- 1963 - Christening by Mrs. L.B. Cresswell on 20 July at Bath Iron Works
- 1964 - Commissioned 7 November at Boston Naval Shipyard, Boston, MA
- 1965 - System Trials for NTDS, TERRIER/ASROC Launcher, SQS-26 Sonar and other new equipment.
- 1966 – Norfolk Naval Shipyard (NNSY), Shakedown Training Guantanamo Bay (GTMO), Cuba, joined Second Fleet 2 May. NATO Operation STRAIGHT LACED above Arctic Circle (August), first major deployment to Sixth Fleet 27 September, visits to Spain, Italy, Turkey and Greece, SAR operations for Sunken Greek ferry Heraklion.
- 1967 - Sixth Fleet – Visited Italy & France, returned to Norfolk 1 February, March Operation Springboard /ASROC evaluations in Caribbean, 3 month yard period, 3 September departed for Western Pacific (WESTPAC) and Vietnam waters, 12 October assumed PIRAZ (Positive Identification Radar Advisory Zone) controlling all air traffic in the Tonkin Gulf, recovered downed pilot, visited Japan, returned to Tonkin Gulf and PIRAZ November and December.
- 1968 – January PIRAZ, Hong Kong, PIRAZ and late February to Australia and Tahiti, arriving Norfolk 6 April. Hosted King Olaf V of Norway, local and Caribbean Operations. September commenced ROH at Norfolk Naval Shipyard (NNSY).
- 1969 – Installed SPS-48 and Standard Missile (SM-1). Departed NNSY, 7 April for ASW trials, missile firings, and refresher training at GTMO, summer pre-deployment workup. 23 October departed for WESTPAC, 1 December assumed PIRAZ duties, visited Sasebo; 22 December proceeded to PARPRO Pickett in Sea of Japan.
- 1970 – Continued Protection of Aerial Reconnaissance during Peacetime Operations (PARPRO) off North Korea, 14 January Yokosuka Japan, 28 January- 20 March PIRAZ & South SAR with a brief call in Hong Kong, 30 March homeward bound via Sydney Australia, Midshipman Cruise in July, 14 Sept RIMEX 1-71 in Caribbean, and no-notice change to deploy to Mediterranean to support 6th Fleet during Jordanian crisis (had to get people and personal gear shipped to BELKNAP), 9 November returned to Norfolk, awarded Meritorious Unit Commendation and earned Battle Efficiency “E.”
- 1971 – January thru September East Coast ops include ASW Squeeze Play 7, 8, & 9, 2nd Fleet EXOTIC DANCER & NATO ROUGH RIDER Exercises, and preparation for deployment. Departed in September for Mediterranean and 6th Fleet Operations.
- 1972 – 6th Fleet ops continue including numerous ASW exercises and a missile firing and National Week XII, port visits in Greece, Italy, and Spain. Departed for Norfolk 9 March for 7-month overhaul at NNSY, Post repair trials and ASW tests (SHAREM XIII) in November and December.
- 1973 – Refresher training at GTMO and Puerto Rico in January and February. After two months in the Norfolk area, departed for 6th Fleet via LANTREADEX 3-73 in the Caribbean & SEACONEX-1 (evaluating the sea control ship concept in a high ASW threat) during the transit). June-November was very busy with missile exercises at the Italian and Crete missile ranges, international exercises, SHAREM ASW exercises, and ops with the NATO On Call Force. During the Oct Yom Kippur War, BELKNAP was involved in special operations. Port calls were made in Palma (with a dependents charter flight), Menorca, Cannes, Athens, Gardini, Sicily, & Turkey. Arrived Norfolk 27 November.
- 1974 – In January the new SLQ-17 electronic warfare system was installed and testing was conducted thru May. Operation SPRINGBOARD was conducted in the Caribbean in February. Departed 25 July on South American UNITAS XV which involved ops with many South American Navies including Columbia, Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina, Chile, Peru, and Venezuela (a truly memorable cruise). Returned to Norfolk 10 December.
- 1975 – A ten-week restricted availability at NNSY made major superstructure and berthing changes. Participated in Exercises AGATE PUNCH (April) and SOLID SHIELD 75 (May). Redesignated CG on 1 July. Departed for 6th Fleet on 21 August, commenced SILVER FOX operations 14 October involving a routine transit of the Black Sea (with Russian KASHIN (DLG)). ASW operations were scheduled for mid- November, but BELKNAP’s participation was abruptly ended on the night of 22 November; while escorting the carrier JOHN F. KENNEDY during flight

operations, BELKNAP and the carrier collided resulting in extensive damage to the BELKNAP, the loss of seven lives on BELKNAP and injuries to 50 crewmembers. The fact that BELKNAP remained afloat is a tribute to the courage, tenacity and professionalism of the crew, which fought raging fires for over two and one-half hours. The USS HOIST (ARS-40) towed the ship to Augusta Bay, Sicily to prepare for transatlantic crossing. BELKNAP was decommissioned and placed Out of Commission (Special) on 20 December and towed by USS HOIST to Philadelphia Naval Shipyard (PNSY) for a modernization/repair overhaul.

- 1976 - BELKNAP arrives in PNSY. Navy firms up plans to modernize BELKNAP to be the most capable ship in the surface Navy
- 1977 – Congress appropriates \$210 million in the Navy Ship Construction budget to rebuild the ship.
- 1978 – Modernization commences on 9 January. Modernization included first production of the long range Terrier SM-2 missile system w/MK 14 WDS, SPS-48C 3D and SPS-49 2D radars, NTDS Model IV, Phalanx CIWS, first all-digital MK 68 Mod 16 gun fire control system, Harpoon antiship missile, SQS 53A sonar, digital Mk 116 ASW fire control system, LAMPs III helo, Nixie countermeasures, SLQ-32 countermeasures and chaff system, upgraded communication, upgrades to the 1200 psi steam plant, a larger gas turbine emergency generator, a seventh fire pump, 2 18,000 gallons per day distilling systems (formerly 12,000/day), additional air conditioning, tripling original capability, improved bulkhead insulation for fire protection, Kevlar armor on critical areas, flagship modifications that provide additional berthing and a task force command center and improving the messing facilities. A small BELKNAP Industrial Team of future crew members was assigned.
- 1979 - BELKNAP Industrial Team expands slightly to about 20 officers and senior enlisted. The precommissioning unit was established in Norfolk, VA. It was there the name *Battlecruiser* was introduced for BELKNAP.
- 1980 – January, PNSY Machinery Trials, first underway since 1975. February PNSY Builders Trials. April, INSURV Acceptance Trials (7-11), crew move aboard and delivery to the Navy. Commissioned 10 May, and underway for Norfolk homeport. Conducted trials and tests, include Final Contract Trials. Selected REFTRA at GTMO Cuba. First carrier ops and plane guard 20-25 November.
- 1981 – Post-Shakedown Availability at Newport News, VA shipyard. April – June. Very successful refresher Training at GTMO, including Operational Propulsion Plant Examination (OPPE), gunfire qualifications, and missile firing in the Caribbean. As a first, BELKNAP completed Refresher training ahead of schedule. August 2nd Fleet Ocean Venture, including visit by sponsor and members of BELKNAP Family in Newport, RI. September/October, Comptuex 1-82, flagship for RADM Conrad (CCDG 12), (former XO in 69). November, deployed for 6th Fleet as CCGG 12 flagship. In port Palma, Mallorca for the holidays.
- 1982 – Major 6th Fleet exercise NATIONAL WEEK in January-February, followed by amphibious exercise PHIBLEX 82 in Western Mediterranean. A visit to Barcelona Spain then Operation Sardinia 82 and a visit to Split, Yugoslavia. After a SINKEX, a stop in Oran, Algeria and then home, arriving Norfolk 8 April. Upkeep followed and then two months (August-October) UNITED EFFORT 82/NORTHERN WEDDING 82, NATO ops in the North Sea and Baltic ops, and home to Norfolk in mid-October.
- 1983 – March, READEX 1-83. 29 April deployed to 6th Fleet as flagship for CCDG 2, RADM M. Chang. DISTANT DRUM exercise with NATO including observation of Russian carrier. CV support operations off Lebanon and demonstrations of right-to-navigate in international water off Albania and Libya in June. In July & August, hostilities between Libya and Chad and the civil war in Lebanon resulted in 56 days at sea. Returned to Norfolk on 21 November.
- 1984 – From January through May there was a very successful INSURV inspection and Selected Restricted Availability. In June the ship returned GTMO for Interim Refresher Training and the OPPE. The remainder of the year involved US East Coast carrier and ASW ops and work with the Standing Naval Force Atlantic.
- 1985 – On 14 January, notification was received that BELKNAP had been selected to become the permanent 6th Fleet Flagship. Underway periods for carrier ops and SEABAT 2-85 (a USN/USAF exercise) in January and Feb. BELKNAP entered NNSY in April for a nine-month flagship conversion overhaul. Modifications included increased berthing capacity and added working and command and control spaces and equipment.

- 1986 – Jan-May Preparation for move to 6th Fleet flagship Missile tests, gunfire training, ASW quals and refresher training at GTMO. May visit by CNO ADM Watkins stressed importance of BELKNAP's role in the Med as peacekeeper and ambassador of goodwill. 7 July, in her new homeport, Gaeta, Italy, the "Fighting Flagship" relieved the USS CORONADO as 6th Fleet flagship (the first time in several years that the flagship had been a combatant). 4-week DISPLAY DETERMINATION exercise. Indicative of the future, protocol visits were made to 6 ports in 6 countries in 6 months.
- 1987 –1987 saw 4 major exercises and protocol visits to 8 ports in 6 countries. Intense, but uneventful FIR ops were conducted off the coast of Libya. After an upkeep period in Toulon, France there was an amphibious exercise DRAGON HAMMER 1987 and ELDEST FROST with the French. In July, two weeks were spent in ports along the Cote d'Azur as part of Operation Friendship. During Operation DISPLAY DETERMINATION, BELKNAP steamed over 5,400 miles. A highlight was the join-up of three carrier battle groups in Augusta Bay.
- 1988 – BELKNAP participated in 3 fleet exercises and made protocol visits to 10 ports in 7 countries, including Tunis for discussions with the new Tunisian President, and Monaco where Prince Ranier talked with COMSIXTHFLT at a wardroom luncheon. ASW exercises with the Israeli Navy were held in July followed by a COMSIXTHFLT change of command. A successful OPPE was conducted in April.
- 1989 - A most significant year. BELKNAP participated in 3 fleet exercises and made 11 protocol visits to 7 countries. There was a \$14M two-month availability in the French shipyard in Toulon, which included drydocking. BELKNAP was designated as the host ship for President George Bush's historic meeting with Mikhail Gorbachev at Malta. Proceeding to anchor in Marsaxlokk Bay, BELKNAP was joined by the Soviet cruiser SLAVA. The President arrived on 1 December, but poor weather led to shifting the meeting to a Soviet cruise ship pierside. However, the Belknab barge transported the President to and from the meeting. 55-knot winds on 2 December, caused the kedge anchor to drag. To ease the strain on the anchor, the ship steamed to the anchor early on 3 December. The ship was awarded the Battle Efficiency E for 1989.
- 1990 – BELKNAP participated in 6 fleet exercises and made 18 protocol visits to 7 countries. The ship was awarded the Battle efficiency "E" and the Golden Anchor Award for retention. BELKNAP was part of contingency operations in the Eastern and Central Mediterranean in support of Desert Shield and Desert Storm. A successful OPPE was conducted in March.
- 1991 – BELKNAP participated in 2 major exercises and made 12 protocol visits to 7 countries. Early in the year, operated in support of Desert Storm. Throughout the war, BELKNAP patrolled the Central Mediterranean off the coast of Libya, working with ships of many nations to protect the war resupply effort and monitor Libyan activity to deter any expansion of the conflict. Also, steamed through the Dardanelle Strait and entered the Black Sea to conduct historic visits to Romania and Bulgaria.
- 1992 – BELKNAP participated in 2 fleet exercises and made 12 visits to 6 countries in 1992. She participated in 2 multi-national operations in the Adriatic Sea. The ship was awarded the Southeast Asia Service Medal and the Meritorious Service Medal. SECDEF Richard Cheney visited the ship in October.
- 1993 - In 1993 BELKNAP made 10 protocol visits to 9 countries and participated in Operation DENY FLIGHT in response to events in the former Yugoslavia. Later operations as the Adriatic CG and Red Crown or monitoring relief flights and surface traffic around the former Republic of Yugoslavia in support of Operations PROVIDE PROMISE and DENY FLIGHT. June visit to Istanbul, Turkey and then into the Black Sea to Varna, Bulgaria and Constanta, Romania. A successful OPPE was conducted in October.
- 1994 - Relieved as 6th Fleet Flagship November 8 and returned to Norfolk for decommissioning.
- 1995 –BELKNAP was decommissioned February 15 at Norfolk, VA and towed to Naval Inactive Ship Maintenance Facility in Philadelphia for disposition.
- 1998 – September 24, off the Coast of Virginia: BELKNAP, serving as a target ship, was attacked and sunk by F-14s from four fighter squadrons. A total of 29,000 lbs. of bombs were required.