

USS BELKNAP - A CAPSULE HISTORY

- 1962 - Keel laid on 3 February at Bath Iron Works Corp, Bath Maine
- 1963 - Christening by Mrs. L.B. Cresswell 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 Sept, visits to Spain, Italy, Turkey and Greece, SAR operations for Sunken Greek ship.
- 1967 - Sixth Fleet - Visited Italy & France, returned to Norfolk 1 Feb, March Operation Springboard/ASROC evaluations in Caribbean, 3 month yard period, 3 September departed for Western Pacific (WESTPAC) and Vietnam waters, 12 Oct 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 Nov and Dec.
- 1968 - Jan PIRAZ, Hong Kong, PIRAZ and late Feb to Australia and Tahiti arriving Norfolk 6 April. Hosted King Olaf V of Norway, local and Caribbean Operations. Sept commenced ROH at 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 predeployment workup. 23 October departed for WESTPAC, 1 Dec assumed PIRAZ duties, Visited Sasebo; 22 Dec proceeded to PARPRO Picket in Sea of Japan.
- 1970 - Continued Protection of Aerial Reconnaissance during Peacetime Operations (PARPRO) off North Korea, 14 Jan Yokosuka Japan, 28 Jan- 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 a no notice change deploying to the Mediterranean to support 6th Fleet during Jordanian crisis, (needed to get people and personal gear assembled and shipped to BELKNAP), 9 Nov 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 included Greece, Italy, and Spain. Departed for Norfolk 9 March for 7-month overhaul at NNSY, Post repair trials and ASW tests (SHAREM XIII) in Nov and Dec.
- 1973 - Refresher training at GTMO and the Puerto Rican area the Jan & Feb. After 2 months in the Norfolk area departed for 6th Fleet via LANTREDEX 3-73 in the Caribbean & SEACONEX-1 (evaluating the sea control ship concept in a high ASW threat) during the transit, June-Nov was a very busy time with missile tests 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 home 27 Nov.

- 1974 – In Jan the new SLQ-17 electronic warfare system was installed and testing was conducted thru May, Operation SPRINGBOARD was conducted in the Caribbean in Feb, departed on 25 July on South American UNITAS XV which involved working with many of the South American Navies including Columbia, Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina, Chile, Peru, and Venezuela (a truly memorable cruise). Returned to Norfolk 10 Dec.
- 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), On 1 July BELKNAP was redesignated as a Guided Missile Cruiser (CG), Departed for 6th Fleet on 21 August, 14 Oct commenced SILVER FOX operations involving a routine transit of the Black Sea (with Russian KASHIN (DLG). ASW operations were scheduled for mid Nov. However, BELKNAP's participation was abruptly ended when a tragedy occurred on the night of 22 Nov. 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 BORDELON towed BELKNAP to Augusta Bay, Sicily, then USS HOIST (ARS-40) towed the ship to Naples (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 Ship Construction, Navy (SCN) budget.
- 1978 – Modernization commences on 9 January. Modernization includes: 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 mods 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 – Jan, PNSY Machinery Trials, first underway since 1975. Feb PNSY Builders Trials. April, INSURV Acceptance Trials (7-11), crew move on (20), delivery (30). Commissioned 10 May. Underway for Norfolk. VA homeport. Conducted trials and tests, include Final Contract Trials. Selected REFTRA at GTMO Cuba. First carrier ops and plane guard 20-25 Nov.
- 1981 – Post-Shakedown Availability at Newport News 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. Sept/Oct, Comptuex 1-82, flagship for Radm Conrad CCDG 12, (former XO in 69). Nov, deployed for 6th Fleet as CCGG 12 flagship. Inport Palma, Mallorca for the holidays.
- 1982 – Major 6th Fleet exercise NATIONAL WEEK in Jan/Feb followed by amphibious exercise PHIBLEX 82 in Western Med. 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 8 April. Upkeep followed and then two months (Aug-Oct) UNITED EFFORT 82/NORTHERN WEDDING 82, NATO ops in the North Sea and Baltic op and home 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 during June. In July & Aug hostilities between Libya and Chad and the civil war in Lebanon resulted in 56 days at sea. Returned to Norfolk on 21 Nov.
- 1984 – From Jan –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 local 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. There were underway periods for carrier ops and SEABAT 2-85 (a USN/USAF exercise) in Jan & 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 qualifications 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). The major exercise was the 4-week DISPLAY DETERMINATION. Indicative of the future, protocol visits were made to 6 ports in 6 countries in six 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 – During 1988, BELKNAP participated in 3 fleet exercises and made protocol visits to 10 ports in 7 countries. They included 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 - This was 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 1 Dec. A deterioration of the weather led to a shift for the meeting to a Soviet cruise ship pier side. However, the barge was able to transport the President to and from the meeting. The winds increased to 55 knots late on 2 Dec, causing the kedge anchor to drag. To ease the strain on the anchor, the ship steamed to the anchor early on 3 Dec. The ship was awarded the Battle Efficiency E for 1989
- 1990 – During 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 – In 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 Med 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. The ship 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, 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 Oct.
- 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 and 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. There was a June visit to Istanbul, Turkey and then into the Black Sea to Varna, Bulgaria and Constanta, Romania. A successful OPPE was conducted in Oct.

- 1994 - Relieved as 6th Fleet Flagship Nov 8 and returned to Norfolk for decommissioning.
- 1995 – February 15 BELKNAP was decommissioned at Norfolk, VA and towed to Naval Inactive Ship Maintenance Facility, Philadelphia, PA for disposition.
- 1998 – On September 24, off the Coast of VA, 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.

compiled by Ross Hatch. 21 May 2005