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CFAY

Weekly
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CFAY Starts 2024 with a Bang

横須賀市合同新年賀詞交歓会



Photos by Taylor Ardito, CFAY Public Affairs



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Barracks Craft Nueces (APL 40) Departs Yokosuka

Story by Garrett Cole, photos by Ryo Isobe and Taylor Ardito, CFAY Public Affairs

The Benewah-class barracks craft Nueces (APL 40) departed Commander, Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY) on Dec. 13, 2023 for a new deployment at Commander, Fleet Activities Sasebo (CFAS) following 22 years of service in the Miura Peninsula. Her departure echoes with the time-honored maritime blessing, “fair winds and following seas.” She has been a staple, a guiding force seen through decades of service and surpassing nautical traditions. The USS Nueces has been a steadfast presence – a berthing and messing barge like no other.

In the annals of naval history, few vessels have borne witness to the changing tides of time quite like the USS Nueces. Laid down on Jan. 2, 1945 at the Boston Navy Yard and launched on May 6, 1945, with Miss Dorthy E. Dunnell as its proud sponsor, this storied ship has seen it all. Commissioned on 19 March 1946, it embarked on a journey that would span decades, continents, and conflicts.



The Benewah-class barracks craft Nueces (APL 40) departed Commander, Fleet Activities Yokosuka Wednesday, December 13 for a new deployment following 22 years of service in the Miura Peninsula.

The USS Nueces’ maiden voyage marked the beginning of a remarkable journey. Commissioned during the post-war era, it soon found itself in the Atlantic Reserve Fleet, 6th Naval District, where it stood as a sentinel during a time of transition. Its stoic presence was a testament to the Navy’s commitment to maintaining peace and readiness.

Fast forward to a tumultuous chapter in history – the Vietnam War. The USS Nueces underwent a transformation to become a mobile base for river patrol squadrons of the Mobile Riverine Force Task Force 117. More than a ship, it became the nerve center for U.S. Army infantry battalions of the 9th Infantry Division. Commissioned once more on May 3, 1968, it braved the turbulent waters of Vietnam, providing crucial support until August 1969. Anchored near Saigon in late 1968, it bore witness to the intensity of the era.

Like a phoenix, the USS Nueces saw rebirth through decommissioning. On March 13, 1970, it bade farewell to active service at Naval Station Long Beach, marking the end of an era. However, its story continued. Rechristened as IX-503, it found a new home in Sasebo, Japan, in the company of USS Mercer.

The USS Nueces’ story took another turn on July 3, 2001, when it was redesigned as APL 40. Yokosuka became its new home, as it took part in the Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet (CINCPACFLT) Berthing and Messing Program. In 2005, it underwent a meticulous dry docking for repairs, transforming it into more than just a ship. Today, it serves as a berthing and messing barge, and its boiler and evaporator room are now a fitness gym – a symbol of resilience and adaptability.

Most Decorated in the Pacific:
What sets the USS Nueces apart is not just its longevity



getting repaired by the Ship Repair Facility. The Nueces has been here for 22 years, and she was quite the most used vessel here. She was our main birthing barge and, for a while, the biggest one.”

As the USS Nueces stood tall in Yokosuka, Japan, its journey through history is a testament to the unwavering dedication of those who served aboard it. This ship’s legacy endures from the post-World War II era to the turbulent times of Vietnam and into the modern day. It serves as a reminder of the Navy’s commitment to duty and readiness in the face of change.

but its storied history of service. It proudly holds the title of being the most decorated ship in the Pacific, with a distinguished list of accolades, including 4 battle stars earned during the Vietnam War, the Combat Action Ribbon, Presidential Unit Citation, Navy Unit Commendation (2 awards), American Campaign Medal, World War II Victory Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, and the Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross Unit Citation (2 awards), among others. Its walls echo with tales of valor, sacrifice, and unwavering dedication.

One such tale comes from Chief Warrant Officer Donald Freel, who served aboard APL 40 during a pivotal moment in history. He recalls, “When I was on APL 40, I was in my rack when 9-11 happened. I was woken up and still didn’t believe it until I went up, and they confirmed it. Then in the evening, our fellow ships started lighting off their sonars.”

Chief Warrant Officer Freel goes on to highlight the USS Nueces’ essential role, stating, “The USS Nueces was used here for ships needing repairs. After we shut down everything, they were able to just shift their operation over to the barge while their ships were



In the ever-evolving tapestry of naval history, the USS Nueces has returned to Commander, Fleet Activities Sasebo where it will stand as a beacon of continuity. Its transformation from a wartime vessel to a modern amenity is a reflection of the adaptability and resilience that define the United States Navy.

For more than 75 years, CFAY has provided, maintained, and operated base facilities and services in support of the U.S. 7th Fleet’s forward-deployed naval forces, tenant commands, and thousands of military and civilian personnel and their families.





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31 JAN 2024 | 0800-0900
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Rescheduled