

READY SEAPOWER

A HISTORY OF THE U.S. SEVENTH FLEET

Edward J. Marolda



*“The Navy is more than
the ‘first line of defense.’
It frequently is and must be
the spearhead of our military
actions overseas. It is a ‘first line
of impact’ on many occasions.”*

—ADMIRAL ARLEIGH BURKE,
CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS,
1955–1961

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FRONT COVER: *George Washington* (CVN 73), the Navy's only permanently forward-deployed aircraft carrier, underway off Japan in November 2009, ensures security and stability in the western Pacific Ocean. *MCSN Adam K. Thomas*

BACK COVER: The U.S. Seventh Fleet command ship *Blue Ridge* (LCC 19) steams off Shimizu, Japan, ending a six-week tour of Pacific Rim ports in May 2008. *MC3 Heidi McCormick*



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7th Flt PA

Commander Seventh Fleet Vice Admiral John M. Bird discusses operations with Vice Admiral Tohru Izumi, Commander in Chief, Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force, aboard the command ship Blue Ridge (LCC 19) in February 2009.

FOREWORD

THE NAVAL HISTORY AND HERITAGE COMMAND published this history to enhance our understanding of the pivotal role played by the U.S. Seventh Fleet in the Western Pacific from World War II through 2010. This project is in keeping with the Command's ongoing efforts to provide naval personnel with historical information and analysis that directly support their global mission. No naval command has done more than the Seventh Fleet to defend and promote American interests in Asia. This "fighting fleet" was in the forefront of U.S. forces involved in the Pacific campaigns of World War II and the conflicts in Korea, Vietnam, and the Arabian Gulf. In the last half of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st century, the Seventh Fleet has stood as a bulwark against aggression and partnered with America's Asian allies to maintain peace and stability in this vital region. Whether combating conventional forces, guerrillas, insurgents, pirates, or terrorists, Seventh Fleet Sailors have routinely displayed exceptional courage and dedication, serving also as ambassadors for America's core values of freedom, democracy, free market enterprise, and respect for human rights.

The author of this illustrated history, Dr. Edward J. Marolda, former Senior Historian of the Navy, brings to the topic forty-plus years of relevant scholarship and experience. He has authored, coauthored, or edited 12 highly regarded works on the Navy's history, with a special focus on its involvement in modern Asian conflicts and developments.

Rear Admiral Jay DeLoach, U.S. Navy (Ret.)
Director of Naval History



USN 47602

Vice Admiral Thomas C. Kinkaid and his commanders off the Philippines. Left to right, Rear Admiral Jesse B. Oldendorf, Kinkaid, Rear Admiral Theodore E. Chandler (later killed in a kamikaze attack), and Rear Admiral Russell S. Berkey (future Commander Seventh Fleet).



USN 1116891-A

A flight deck officer signals the pilot of an A-4 Skyhawk to launch from carrier Coral Sea (CVA 43) in March 1965.



NHHCL File

Changing of the guard. Midway (CV 41), top, en route in August 1991 to San Diego and decommissioning, shares a pier at the Pearl Harbor naval base with Independence (CV 62), preparing to begin her forward deployment to Japan.

SEVENTH FLEET CHRONOLOGY

- 1941, 7 December Imperial Japanese Navy attacks U.S. Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, igniting World War II in the Pacific.
- 1942, 4-6 June U.S. naval forces defeat Japanese fleet in Battle of Midway.
- 1943, 19 February U.S. Navy establishes U.S. Seventh Fleet.
- 1943, 26 November Vice Admiral Thomas C. Kinkaid takes the helm as Commander U.S. Seventh Fleet.
- 1944, 29 February Seventh Fleet forces land troops in the Admiralty Islands.
- 1944, 22 April Seventh Fleet deploys ground forces ashore at Hollandia, New Guinea.
- 1944, 20 October Allied forces land at Leyte in the Philippines.
- 1944, 25 October Seventh Fleet and Third Fleet forces defeat the Imperial Japanese Navy in the Battle of Leyte Gulf.
- 1944, 25 October First major kamikaze attack on U.S. naval forces results in the sinking of escort carrier *St. Lo* (CVE 63).
- 1944, 15 December Seventh Fleet lands troops on Mindoro Island, Philippines.
- 1945, 9 January Seventh Fleet amphibious forces deploy Army divisions ashore at Lingayen on the main Philippine island of Luzon.
- 1945, 15 August General Douglas MacArthur issues General Order No. 1 directing the disarmament of Japanese forces in China and Korea.
- 1945, 2 September World War II ends as Japanese officials sign surrender documents on board battleship *Missouri* (BB 63).
- 1945, 9 September Admiral Thomas C. Kinkaid and Army General John R. Hodge accept the surrender of Japanese forces in southern Korea at a ceremony in Seoul.
- 1946, 4 July Seventh Fleet forces are on hand off Manila for Philippine Independence Day.
- 1947, 1 January Seventh Fleet renamed U.S. Naval Forces Western Pacific.
- 1948, 17 January Attack transport *Renville* (APA 227) serves as the venue for a cease-fire agreement between the Netherlands and Indonesian independence groups.
- 1949, 25 May Seventh Fleet departs Qingdao, China, its homeport from 1946 to 1949, for the last time.

1949, 19 August	U.S. Naval Forces Western Pacific designated U.S. Seventh Task Fleet.
1949, 1 October	Communist leader Mao Zedong (Mao Tse-tung) establishes the People's Republic of China.
1950, 12 January	Secretary of State Dean Acheson announces a U.S. defensive perimeter in the Western Pacific that excludes South Korea and Taiwan from American protection.
1950, 11 February	U.S. Seventh Task Fleet redesignated U.S. Seventh Fleet.
1950, 14 February	People's Republic of China and Soviet Union sign a 30-year Treaty of Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Assistance.
1950, 25 June	Communist North Korea, with the support of the People's Republic of China and the USSR, invades South Korea.
1950, 27 June	At the direction of President Harry S. Truman, Seventh Fleet steams near Taiwan to discourage a Chinese Communist invasion of the Chinese Nationalist-held island.
1950, 3 July	Seventh Fleet carrier <i>Valley Force</i> (CV 45) and Royal Navy carrier <i>Triumph</i> carry out the first naval attacks on North Korea with strikes against targets near Pyongyang.
1950, 4 August	Commander Seventh Fleet establishes the Formosa Patrol Force (Task Force 72), which operates for almost three decades as the Taiwan Patrol Force.
1950, 15 September	Seventh Fleet and UN warships and ground troops execute an amphibious assault at Incheon (Inchon), South Korea, that routs the invading North Korean army and liberates the country.
1950, 25 November	Chinese People's Liberation Army launches a major offensive that forces the withdrawal of U.S. and UN forces from North Korea.
1950, 24 December	Seventh Fleet and other UN naval forces evacuate close to 200,000 troops and refugees from Hungnam, North Korea.
1951, 30 August	United States and Republic of the Philippines sign a Mutual Defense Treaty.
1951, 1 September	Australia, New Zealand, and the United States sign the ANZUS Security Treaty.
1953, 5 March	Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin dies.
1953, 27 July	Belligerents sign a cease-fire agreement that ends the fighting in Korea.
1953, 1 October	United States and Republic of Korea sign a Mutual Defense Treaty.
1954, 7 May	Ho Chi Minh's Viet Minh forces overwhelm the last French defenders of the combat base at Dien Bien Phu in Indochina.

- 1954, 21 July At a conference in Geneva, Switzerland, representatives of the belligerents in the First Indochina War agree to cease-fire terms ending the conflict.
- 1954, 16 August Seventh Fleet begins loading the first of 293,000 refugees from northern Vietnam who are transported to southern Vietnam in Operation Passage to Freedom.
- 1954, 3 September Mao Zedong's army begins shelling Jinmen and Mazu, islands held by the forces of Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist government on Taiwan.
- 1954, 8 September At a meeting in Manila, the United States, Australia, Great Britain, France, Pakistan, the Philippines, New Zealand, and Thailand agree to establish the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) to counter Communist inroads.
- 1954, 2 December United States and Republic of China sign a Mutual Defense Treaty.
- 1955, 20 January Chinese Communist forces seize Yijiangshan Island in the Dachens chain.
- 1955, 28 January Congress passes the Formosa Resolution to support the Republic of China in its confrontation with the People's Republic of China.
- 1955, 6 February Seventh Fleet ships begin the evacuation of Chinese Nationalist troops and civilians from the Dachen Islands.
- 1958, 23 August Chinese Communist forces begin shelling Chinese Nationalist positions on Jinmen Island in the Taiwan Strait, sparking a confrontation with the United States.
- 1958, 6 October Mao Zedong ends the Taiwan Strait crisis with the announcement that his forces will shell Jinmen only on odd days.
- 1960, 19 January United States and Japan sign a Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security.
- 1962, 17 May At the direction of President John F. Kennedy, Seventh Fleet deploys Marine and other U.S. forces to Thailand as a deterrent to Communist advances in neighboring Laos.
- 1962, 23 July At a conference in Geneva, Switzerland, the United States and other nations agree to the neutralization of Laos in the ongoing conflict in Southeast Asia.
- 1963, 1 November Military coup in South Vietnam results in the assassination of President Ngo Dinh Diem.
- 1963, 22 November President John F. Kennedy is assassinated in Dallas, Texas.
- 1964, 2 August North Vietnamese torpedo boats attack Seventh Fleet destroyer *Maddox* (DD 731) in the Gulf of Tonkin.
- 1964, 7 August Congress passes the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, enabling President Lyndon B. Johnson to employ military means against Communist forces in Southeast Asia.

- 1965, 8 March Seventh Fleet amphibious units land the 9th Marine Expeditionary Brigade at Danang, South Vietnam.
- 1965, 11 March The Market Time anti-infiltration operation that will involve Seventh Fleet, U.S. Coast Guard, and Vietnam Navy forces, gets underway off the coast of South Vietnam.
- 1965, 15 March Task Force 77 carriers launch the Navy's first strikes of the Air Force–Navy Rolling Thunder bombing campaign against North Vietnam.
- 1966, 26 October Fire on board carrier *Oriskany* (CVA 34) in the Gulf of Tonkin kills 44 naval aviators and crewmen.
- 1967, 29 July Catastrophic fire on the flight deck of carrier *Forrestal* (CVA 59) leads to the death of 134 Sailors.
- 1968, 23 January North Korean naval forces seize intelligence ship *Pueblo* (AGER 2) in international waters.
- 1968, 31 January Communist forces launch the Tet Offensive in South Vietnam.
- 1968, 31 March President Lyndon B. Johnson announces the end of bombing in North Vietnam above of the 19th parallel.
- 1969, 15 April North Korean MiGs shoot down a Navy EC-121 reconnaissance plane, killing the entire crew of 31.
- 1971, 9 December Washington orders the *Enterprise* (CVAN 165) battle group to deploy to the Indian Ocean in connection with the Indo-Pakistan War.
- 1972, 21 February President Richard M. Nixon meets with Chinese Communist leader Mao Zedong in China.
- 1972, 30 March North Vietnam launches the multipronged Easter Offensive into South Vietnam.
- 1972, 9 May Navy and Marine aircraft flying from carrier *Coral Sea* (CVA 43) mine the approaches to North Vietnam's Haiphong harbor.
- 1972, 10 May Seventh Fleet and U.S. Air Force aircraft launch the Linebacker I bombing campaign against North Vietnam.
- 1972, 18 December As directed by President Richard M. Nixon, Task Force 77 and Air Force planes inaugurate the Linebacker II strikes on Hanoi and Haiphong.
- 1973, 27 January Vietnam War is over for the United States with the signing of the Paris Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam.

- 1973, 6 February Seventh Fleet's Mine Countermeasures Force (Task Force 78) begins operations to ensure the waters of North Vietnam are free of U.S.-laid mines, a requirement of the Paris peace agreement.
- 1975, 12 April Seventh Fleet and Marine forces evacuate Americans, Cambodians, and others from Phnom Penh, Cambodia, in Operation Eagle Pull.
- 1975, 30 April Seventh Fleet directs the Operation Frequent Wind evacuation that ends the U.S. presence in South Vietnam.
- 1975, 15 May Navy and Marine units recover merchant ship *SS Mayaguez*, seized two days before by Cambodia's Khmer Rouge.
- 1976, 21 August In response to the brutal axe murder of two U.S. Army officers by North Korean soldiers, Seventh Fleet and other U.S. and South Korean units mount a massive show of force in and around the peninsula's Demilitarized Zone.
- 1979, 1 January United States and People's Republic of China establish diplomatic relations.
- 1979, 17 February People's Republic of China attacks Socialist Republic of Vietnam to "teach the Vietnamese a lesson."
- 1979, 27 December Soviet army invades Afghanistan.
- 1983, 1 September Soviet MiG shoots down a KAL airliner off Sakhalin Island, killing all on board.
- 1986, 5 November For the first time since 1949, warships of the Seventh Fleet visit the Chinese port of Qingdao.
- 1989, 4 June China's People's Liberation Army crushes a pro-democracy movement in Beijing's Tiananmen Square.
- 1989, 1 December Seventh Fleet units support the government of the Philippines when military elements stage a coup in Manila.
- 1990, 2 August Saddam Hussein's Iraqi forces invade Kuwait.
- 1990, 7 August As directed by President George H.W. Bush, Seventh Fleet and other U.S. forces launch Operation Desert Shield.
- 1991, 17 January Seventh Fleet and other UN coalition forces initiate Desert Storm air and naval operations against Iraqi armed forces.
- 1991, 24 February Coalition ground forces begin the ground assault into Kuwait.
- 1991, 28 February UN coalition concludes combat operations against Iraq.

1991, 9 May	In Operation Sea Angel, Seventh Fleet and other forces begin humanitarian assistance to the victims of typhoon-devastated Bangladesh.
1991, 16 June	Seventh Fleet forces begin transporting evacuees to Cebu Island in the Philippines from U.S. Naval Base Subic Bay, hit hard by the eruption of volcanic Mount Pinatubo.
1992, 24 November	Seventh Fleet ends the almost 100-year U.S. military presence at U.S. Naval Base Subic Bay.
1993, 12 March	North Korea declares “state of readiness for war” and announces intention to withdraw from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.
1996, 11 March	Washington directs the <i>Nimitz</i> (CVN 68) and <i>Independence</i> (CV 62) carrier battle groups to concentrate near Taiwan as a deterrent to aggressive behavior by the People’s Republic of China.
1994, 21 October	United States and North Korea concur on an agreed framework to limit the latter’s development of nuclear weapons.
1997, 1 July	United Kingdom transfers sovereignty of its Hong Kong crown colony to the People’s Republic of China.
1998, 19 January	United States and People’s Republic of China sign a Military Maritime Consultative Agreement for military-to-military contacts.
1998, 31 August	North Korea fires a Taepo Dong I missile over Japan.
1999, 7 May	U.S. aircraft mistakenly bomb the embassy of the People’s Republic of China in Belgrade, Serbia.
1999, 15 Jun	Republic of Korea Navy combatants sink a North Korean patrol boat in the Battle of Yeonpyeong.
1999, 1 October	Seventh Fleet forces arrive off Dilli, East Timor, in support of UN Operation Stabilize.
2000, 12 October	Al-Qaeda terrorists in Aden, Yemen, detonate an explosive next to the hull of guided missile destroyer <i>Cole</i> (DDG 67), killing 17 American Sailors.
2001, 1 April	PRC fighter crashes into a U.S. EP-3E patrol plane, forcing the latter to make an emergency landing on China’s Hainan Island.
2001, 11 September	Al-Qaeda terrorists crash civilian airliners into the Twin Towers of New York’s World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and a field in central Pennsylvania, killing close to 3,000 people.
2001, 7 October	U.S. forces begin the fight against al-Qaeda and Taliban terrorists in Afghanistan in Operation Enduring Freedom.

2003, 19 March	Coalition forces begin combat actions against Iraq in Operation Iraqi Freedom.
2003, 31 May	President George W. Bush announces the Proliferation Security Initiative to counter proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.
2004, 28 December	In Operation Unified Assistance, Seventh Fleet units deploy to waters off Indonesia in connection with the Indian Ocean tsunami humanitarian relief.
2005, 28 June	Washington and New Delhi sign the New Framework for the U.S.-India Defense Relationship, a ten-year agreement for joint protection of sea lanes.
2005, Fall	Chief of Naval Operations calls for an international “thousand-ship navy” to defend the maritime commons.
2006, 5 July	North Korea fires Scud, No Dong, and Taepo Dong II missiles into the Sea of Japan/East Sea.
2007, 21 November	Uniformed heads of the U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine Corps, and U.S. Coast Guard sign the “Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower.”
2008, 26 November	Islamist terrorists attack targets in Mumbai, India, killing 165 people.
2009, 20 March	Seventh Fleet and Republic of Korea Navy leaders sign an agreement regarding eventual ROKN assumption of operational control over contingency operations in Korea.
2009, 9 March	Ships of the People’s Republic of China harass U.S. Navy research vessel <i>Impeccable</i> (T-AGOS 23) in the South China Sea.
2010, 26 March	A North Korean submarine sinks the ROKN corvette <i>Cheonan</i> , killing 46 South Korean sailors.
2010, 23 November	North Korean artillery shells South Korea’s Yeonpyeong Island, killing two Republic of Korea marines and two civilians.



INTRODUCTION

U.S. INTEREST IN THE FAR EAST dates from the earliest years of the republic, when American merchant ships sailed across the vast Pacific to ply their trade in the ports of China, the Philippines, Indochina, and the East Indies. Warships of the U.S. Navy followed soon afterward to protect those commercial carriers and to promote American diplomatic interests in Asia.

The U.S. Seventh Fleet, successor to the Asiatic Squadron and Asiatic Fleet of the 19th and early 20th centuries, began making its own naval history in the early days of World War II. Unique among the nation's naval forces, the fleet has taken part in all the major conflicts and most of the crises and confrontations of the last six decades. It has defended U.S. interests and worked with America's Asian alliances to deter aggressors and maintain peace and stability in the region. The fleet's Sailors have provided humanitarian assistance and disaster relief to numerous countries devastated by natural and manmade disasters.

The fleet's area of responsibility in the 21st century encompasses 48 million square miles of the Pacific and Indian oceans, an area holding half of the world's population, 35 nations, and many of its most prosperous economies. Much of the world's energy resources and oceangoing trade passes through waters guarded by the warships, aircraft, and men and women of the U.S. Seventh Fleet, whose motto is appropriately—Ready Power for Peace.

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