

history of uss hornet

History of USS Hornet

The USS Hornet (CV-8) and its successors, notably the USS Hornet (CV-12) and USS Hornet (LHD-8), have played significant roles in the United States Navy's storied history. Each vessel shares a legacy of valor, innovation, and resilience, serving in pivotal moments during World War II, the Cold War, and beyond. This article delves into the illustrious history of the USS Hornet, exploring its storied past, key missions, and contributions to naval aviation and military operations.

USS Hornet (CV-8)

Construction and Commissioning

The USS Hornet (CV-8) was laid down on July 3, 1940, at the Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company in Virginia. The ship was launched on August 14, 1943, and commissioned into service on October 20, 1941. With an overall length of 888 feet and a displacement of approximately 19,800 tons, the Hornet was one of the fastest aircraft carriers of its time, capable of reaching speeds in excess of 30 knots.

Key Contributions during World War II

The USS Hornet (CV-8) is perhaps best known for its pivotal role in World War II. Some of its key contributions include:

1. Doolittle Raid (1942):

- One of the most famous missions involving the Hornet was the Doolittle Raid on April 18, 1942. The Hornet launched 16 B-25 bombers, led by Lt. Colonel James Doolittle, on a daring raid against Tokyo, marking the first airstrike on the Japanese mainland.
- This mission served as a morale booster for the United States and demonstrated that Japan was vulnerable to American air attacks.

2. Battle of Midway (1942):

- The Hornet played a critical role in the Battle of Midway, which took place from June 4 to June 7, 1942. The carrier launched several successful air strikes against Japanese forces, contributing to a decisive American victory and turning the tide of the Pacific War.

3. Guadalcanal Campaign:

- The Hornet participated in the Solomon Islands campaign, providing air

support for U.S. Marines and ground forces during the critical battles of Guadalcanal.

4. Battle of the Santa Cruz Islands:

- In October 1942, the Hornet was involved in the Battle of the Santa Cruz Islands, where it was severely damaged by enemy air attacks. Despite this, the ship remained operational, continuing to serve in subsequent naval operations.

Final Voyage and Sinking

The USS Hornet's operational life came to a tragic end during the Battle of the Philippine Sea in June 1944. After surviving numerous engagements, the Hornet was heavily attacked by Japanese aircraft on October 26, 1944. The carrier sustained critical damage from multiple bomb hits and torpedoes, leading to devastating fires and loss of life. After being abandoned by her crew, the USS Hornet sank on October 27, 1944, in the Philippine Sea, marking the end of an era for this legendary ship.

USS Hornet (CV-12)

Construction and Commissioning

Following the loss of the CV-8, a new USS Hornet was built as CV-12, launched on August 30, 1943, and commissioned on November 8, 1943. This vessel was larger and more advanced than its predecessor, measuring 872 feet in length and featuring enhanced capabilities for launching and recovering aircraft.

Key Contributions during World War II

The USS Hornet (CV-12) continued the legacy of its namesake, participating in significant operations throughout the war:

1. Marianas and Palau Islands Campaign:

- The Hornet played a vital role in the extensive air operations over the Marianas Islands and the Palau Islands in 1944, providing air support for ground troops and engaging enemy forces.

2. Battle of Leyte Gulf (1944):

- As part of the largest naval battle in history, the Hornet's aircraft were instrumental in the defeat of Japanese naval forces during the liberation of the Philippines.

3. Strikes Against Japan:

- The Hornet conducted air strikes against Japanese cities and military installations, contributing to the weakening of Japanese defenses leading to the eventual victory in the Pacific.

Post-War Service and Decommissioning

After World War II, the USS Hornet (CV-12) was decommissioned on January 15, 1947. The ship underwent several modernization phases and served as an aircraft carrier in the early years of the Cold War. It was involved in various training exercises and humanitarian missions, showcasing its continued importance in naval operations.

The Hornet was finally decommissioned for the last time on May 26, 1970, after serving in the Navy for nearly three decades.

USS Hornet (LHD-8)

Introduction and Role

The current USS Hornet (LHD-8), commissioned on January 25, 1998, serves as an amphibious assault ship and is equipped to support Marine Corps operations. The vessel is capable of transporting and deploying a variety of aircraft, including helicopters and vertical takeoff and landing (VTOL) aircraft, making it a crucial asset for modern naval warfare.

Key Missions and Operations

The USS Hornet (LHD-8) has participated in numerous missions since its commissioning:

1. Humanitarian Assistance:

- The Hornet has been deployed to provide disaster relief and humanitarian assistance in response to natural disasters, including the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

2. Global Operations:

- The ship has also been involved in various military operations, including deployments in support of the Global War on Terrorism, showcasing its versatility and capability in modern naval warfare.

3. Training and Exercises:

- The Hornet regularly participates in joint training exercises with allied

nations, reinforcing international military partnerships and enhancing operational readiness.

Legacy and Preservation

The legacy of the USS Hornet lives on through its various incarnations. The original CV-8 and CV-12 are remembered for their bravery and contributions during World War II. The current LHD-8 continues to serve the U.S. Navy with distinction, embodying the spirit of innovation and adaptability that defines the Hornet name.

In addition to its active service, the USS Hornet (CV-12) has been preserved as a museum ship at Pier 3 in Alameda, California, allowing visitors to explore its rich history and learn about naval aviation's evolution.

Conclusion

The history of the USS Hornet is a testament to the resilience and strength of the United States Navy. From its early days as a pioneering aircraft carrier during World War II to its current role as an amphibious assault ship, the Hornet has consistently demonstrated the importance of naval power and air superiority in modern warfare. The legacy of the Hornet continues to inspire future generations of sailors, aviators, and historians, ensuring that its remarkable story remains a significant part of American naval history.

Frequently Asked Questions

What was the USS Hornet's original designation before becoming an aircraft carrier?

The USS Hornet was originally designated as a World War II aircraft carrier, known as CV-8.

What significant missions did the USS Hornet participate in during World War II?

The USS Hornet is known for its involvement in the Doolittle Raid on Tokyo and the Battle of Midway.

When was the USS Hornet commissioned, and how long

did it serve?

The USS Hornet was commissioned on October 20, 1941, and served until it was decommissioned on January 15, 1947.

How did the USS Hornet contribute to the Apollo space program?

The USS Hornet served as the recovery ship for Apollo 11, the mission that landed the first humans on the Moon, retrieving the astronauts after their return.

What is the current status of the USS Hornet?

The USS Hornet is now a museum ship located in Alameda, California, where it is open to the public for tours and educational programs.

What notable technology did the USS Hornet utilize during its service?

The USS Hornet was one of the first aircraft carriers to use the angled flight deck design, which allowed for simultaneous takeoffs and landings.

What was the fate of the USS Hornet after it was decommissioned?

After decommissioning, the USS Hornet was eventually turned into a museum and opened to the public in 1998.

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