

Gulf of the Farallones and Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuaries



Photo: National Archives

USS *Independence* (CVL 22) was the first dedicated U.S. carrier to conduct night fight operations during WWII.



Photo: National Archives



Photo: National Archives

USS *Independence* (CVL 22) received eight battle stars due to the heroic actions of the Sailors and Officers, Pilots and Marines that served aboard the carrier in WWII.

USS *Independence* (CVL 22)

History

The keel was laid down for the USS *Amsterdam* (CL 59) on May 1, 1941 at the New York Shipbuilding Corporation in Camden, New Jersey. During construction of the Cleveland class light cruiser, the United States entered into war with Japan following the attack at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. *Amsterdam* was converted to a light aircraft carrier and renamed *Independence* (CV 22), later (CVL 22). *Independence* was the fourth military ship to carry this name, being launched August 22, 1942 and commissioned at the Philadelphia Navy Yard on January 14, 1943.

Being the first of the Independence class carriers converted from cruiser hulls, *Independence* (CV 22) conducted shakedown training in the Caribbean, and then steamed through the Panama Canal to join the Pacific Fleet, arriving in San Francisco, California on July 3, 1943. Relocating to Pearl Harbor, *Independence* (CVL 22) completed training exercises then joined up with the aircraft carriers USS *Essex* and USS *Yorktown*. The carriers' aircraft conducted a successful raid on Japanese installations at Marcus Islands in September, and a similar raid at Wake Island in October.

Independence headed for the Gilbert Islands in the South Pacific for pre-invasion strikes at the Battle of Tarawa, "*Operation Galvanic*." During a Japanese counterattack on November 20, 1943; low flying planes launched at least five torpedoes, one striking the aircraft carrier. Although seriously damaged, *Independence* steamed to Funafuti Atoll for temporary repairs before arriving back at Hunters Point in San Francisco Bay on January 2, 1944 to complete permanent repairs. While in San Francisco, an additional catapult was installed on the forward flight deck.

Independence returned to Pearl Harbor in July 1944 and began training for night carrier operations. In September, the warship joined a large task group participating in the "*Palau Operation*," which aimed to secure bases for the final assault upon Japanese forces on the Philippine Islands, by providing night combat air patrols and reconnaissance flights. Soon after, *Independence* returned to daytime operations and attacked Japanese installations off Okinawa, Formosa and the Philippines. While involved in daytime operations, *Independence's* aircraft were responsible for locating Japanese battleships, cruisers and destroyers in the Sibuyan Sea. On October 24, 1944, the U.S. Navy launched a massive air attack sinking the Japanese super-battleship *Musashi* and critically

Adm. Ernest ("Ernie") King's examination USS *Independence* conversion plans, January 1942

"This ship will be a most useful unit, and [her plans] are sufficiently promising to warrant immediate steps towards the conversion of two additional ships of this class. Examination of the prospective dates of completion of the 10,000-ton cruisers...indicates that it would be practicable to select two for conversion now which could be completed at approximately the same time as the *Amsterdam*. It is further considered that there are sufficient cruisers of this type under construction to warrant conversion of two more ships to aircraft carriers. If the decision is made now the very desirable result will be the completion of three small aircraft carriers at about the end of the year 1942, instead of one as now planned." Friedman, N., *U.S. Aircraft Carriers: An Illustrated Design History*

damaging a cruiser in the "Battle of the Sibuyan Sea." Returning to night operations, search planes located and shadowed Japanese carriers until U.S. Navy planes attacked, sinking all four Japanese carriers in the "Battle of Cape Engano."

Through December 1944, *Independence* returned to operating off the Philippine Islands on night attacks and defensive operations. In January 1945, the carrier supported landings on the Philippine island of Luzon, after which, Admiral Halsey took his fleet, including the *Independence*, into the South China Sea striking bases on Formosa, China and coast of Indochina, Southeast Asia. *Independence* remained off Okinawa until June 1945. In August, the carrier took part in the final strikes against Japan. *Independence's* aircraft patrolled Japan during U.S. occupation after the war came to end, returning to San Francisco on October 31, 1945.

In November 1945, *Independence* joined operation "Magic Carpet" transporting American troops from the Pacific and Asian theaters to the United States, returning to California on January 28, 1946.

Following the war, *Independence* was assigned to "Operations Crossroads," the secret atomic bomb tests at Bikini Atoll. As a target vessel, the carrier was placed within 560 yards of the ground zero blast. *Independence* was severely damaged but survived the first test, code name "Able."

The second test, code name "Baker," was an underwater detonation 1390 yards from the carrier. *Independence* was towed to Kwajalein Atoll for examination, and decommissioned on August 28, 1946. Eventually the carrier was towed to Pearl Harbor, then onto San Francisco for decontamination at Hunter's Point.

On January 26, 1951, the decommissioned ex-USS *Independence* was towed off the coast of California near the Farallon Islands. During weapons testing, the aircraft carrier was intentionally sunk in 3000 feet of water. USS *Independence* (CVL 22) received eight battle stars for World War II service.

Specifications

Nationality: United States
Type: Light Aircraft Carrier
Class: Independence
Owner: United States Government
Builder: New York Shipbuilding Corp.
Where Built: Camden, New Jersey
Sponsor: Mrs. Rawleigh Warner
Launched: August 22, 1942
Hull Material: Steel
Machinery: 4 Steam Turbines
Propellers: 4 Four-bladed, 12.0' diameter
Horsepower: 100,000 (shaft)
Displacement: 11,000 (standard)
Length (feet): 622.5 (overall)
Beam (feet): 71.5 (waterline), 109.16 ext.
Draft (feet): 20.0 (standard), 26.0 (loaded)

Rediscovery of *Independence*

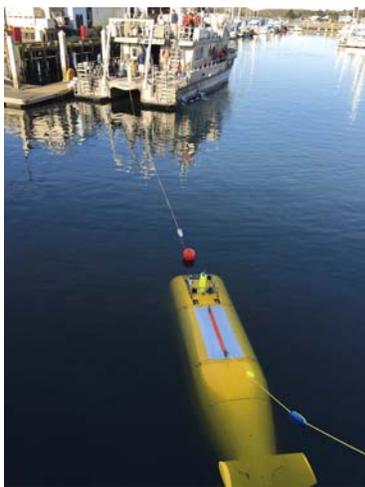
The remains of the aircraft carrier ex-USS

Independence now rest in the northern region of Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. Although the wreck site location was known, the NOAA Ship *Okeanos Explorer* conducted the first multibeam sonar survey of the *Independence* site on July 22, 2009.

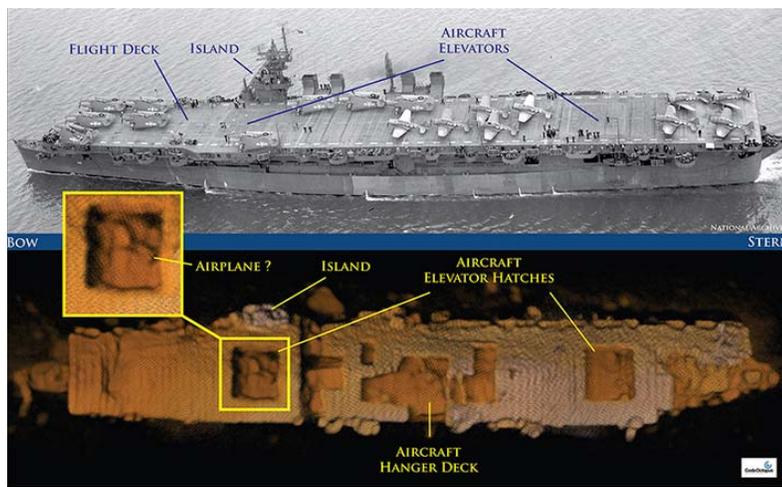
First Maritime Archaeological Survey 2015

NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries' Maritime Heritage Program and West Coast Region, NOAA's Office of Ocean Exploration and Research, The Boeing Company and Coda Octopus conducted the first maritime archaeological assessment of the ex-USS *Independence* site to help guide future NOAA resource management decisions. Boeing's Autonomous Underwater Vehicle (AUV) *Echo Ranger*, integrated with Coda Octopus Echoscope three-dimensional sonar, imaged the *Independence* in March 2015. The systematic AUV survey revealed that the former aircraft carrier is sitting upright on its keel, with a slight list to starboard. Comparing the Coda Octopus acoustic images to photographs prior to being scuttled shows that *Independence* is remarkably intact. All major features of the ship are recognizable along with damage caused by Operation Crossroads.

Echo Ranger was deployed from Half Moon Bay, California and traveled autonomously to the site located 30 miles offshore with the NOAA research vessel *Fulmar* serving as an escort boat.



Photos: Robert V. Schwemmer NOAA



Boeing's AUV *Echo Ranger* being deployed out of Half Moon Bay, California. NOAA's research vessel *Fulmar* was the escort vessel for the 3-D sonar survey.

Features on an historic photo of the USS *Independence* CVL 22 are captured in a 3-D sonar image of the shipwreck in nearly 3000 feet of water with the flight deck still visible.

Maritime Heritage: <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/maritime/welcome.html>