

USS Mobile Bay Decommissions, Honors 36 Years of Service



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SAN DIEGO – USS Mobile Bay (CG 53) honored more than three decades of naval service during a decommissioning ceremony at Naval Base San Diego, Aug. 10.

Vice Adm. Roy Kitchener, commander, Naval Surface Forces served as the ceremony's guest speaker and wished the current crew fair winds and following seas as they bid farewell to their ship.

"The Sailors of USS Mobile Bay demonstrated time and time again the resolve and readiness the Surface Force provides around the clock in support of our nation's interests," said Kitchener. "Everywhere this ship and crew deployed, Mobile Bay Sailors served their nation well, and lived up to the valor enshrined in the Battle of Mobile Bay."

Commanded by Capt. Brandon J. Burkett, Mobile Bay maintained a crew of 30 officers and 300 enlisted members.

"It's been an honor to be Mobile Bay's last commanding officer," said Burkett. "It has been a distinct privilege to work alongside some of the finest Sailors our Navy and our nation have to offer. Their persistence through adversity is commendable and truly represents the spirit of Mobile Bay's motto, 'Full speed ahead.' They truly embody what it means to be a 'MOBster.' It is now my solemn responsibility as the ship's final captain to order hauling down the colors and

disembarking the crew. Though to many of us 'MOBsters' past and present, the feeling is deeper than that. Those who've gone to sea know that a ship is more than a machine that floats. When you are away from home for months on end your ship becomes your home and your protection. We take care of her and she takes care of us. Simply put, she becomes family. It has been an honor to serve with my crew on this exemplary warship."

Mobile Bay was built by Ingalls Shipbuilding in Pascagoula, Mississippi and commissioned Feb. 21, 1987, Alabama State Docks in Mobile, Alabama.

The ship's operational history includes the 1989 evacuation of U.S. Embassy in Beirut, Lebanon; launching 22 Tomahawk Land Attack Missiles (TLAMs) in support of Operation Desert Storm and evacuation of thousands of people displaced by the volcanic eruption of Mt. Pinatubo in the vicinity of Subic Bay, Republic of the Philippines during Operation Fiery Vigil in 1991; U.S. Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachment (CGLED) seizure of 10.5 metric tons of cocaine approximately 800 miles southwest of Acapulco, Mexico, and launching Tomahawk Land Attack Missiles (TLAMs) in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003.

The ship's sponsor, Kathryn Jane Maury helped organize the National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia in the 1960s after her Navy pilot husband was shot down and captured in 1965. She was married to U.S. Sen. Jeremiah Denton, a Vietnam War veteran who was awarded the Navy Cross for his heroism while a prisoner of war. USS Jeremiah Denton (DDG 129), a Flight III Arleigh-Burke class destroyer is named for him. Mrs. Denton passed away on Nov. 22, 2007, at the age of 81.

The ship was the first named after and in honor of the Battle of Mobile Bay in August 1864. During the famous American Civil War naval battle between Union forces under the command of

Adm. David Farragut and Confederate forces under Adm. Franklin Buchanan.

The ship's motto, "Full speed ahead," is based on Adm. Farragut's famous command issued during the battle and typifies the Admiral's key to success in war, straight thinking and determined action. Mobile Bay proudly carried on the tradition of patriotism and courage displayed by the ships and Sailors in the historic battle which concluded when Farragut's Union ships converged upon the Confederate ironclad CSS Tennessee firing broadsides and ramming it at full speed with their prows. After two hours, Tennessee was dead in the water, it's steering gone and stack shot away, filling the gun deck with suffocating heat and flames. Only then did the wounded Buchanan give the order to surrender. Tennessee's colors came down, concluding one of the most important battles in the Civil War.

Mobile Bay will be inactivated and towed to the Navy's Inactive Ship's facility in Bremerton, Washington where they will be in a Logistic Support Asset (LSA) status.

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