



Great Ships of The U. S. Navy

U.S.S. Leyte

USS *Leyte* (CV/CVA/CVS-32, AVT-10) was one of 24 *Essex*-class aircraft carriers built during and shortly after World War II for the United States Navy. The ship was the third US Navy ship to bear the name. *Leyte* was commissioned in April 1946, too late to serve in World War II. She spent most of her career in the Atlantic, Caribbean, and Mediterranean, but also saw service in the Korean War, in which she earned two battle stars. She was reclassified in the early 1950's as an attack carrier (CVA), then as an Antisubmarine Aircraft Carrier (CVS), and finally (after inactivation) as an aircraft transport (AVT).

Unlike most of her sister ships, *Leyte* received no major modernizations, and thus throughout her career retained the classic appearance of a World War II *Essex*-class ship. She was decommissioned in 1959 and sold for scrap in 1970.

Leyte joined battleship *Wisconsin* on a good will cruise down the western seaboard of South America in the fall of 1946 before returning to the Caribbean on 18 November to resume shakedown operations. In 1948, the carrier was equipped with its first helicopter detachment of HO3S-1 utility helicopters, and participated in a fleet exercise, Operation Frigid, in the North Atlantic. In the years preceding the Korean War, the *Leyte* participated in numerous other fleet exercises in the Atlantic and Caribbean, trained naval reservists, and deployed three times to the Mediterranean: April-June 1947, July-November 1947, September 1949-January 1950, and May-August 1950. The latter included a demonstration of airpower over Beirut, Lebanon on 13 August, supporting the Middle East against Communist pressure.

Leyte arrived at the Sasebo base Sasebo, Japan on 8 October 1950 and made final preparations for combat operations. From 9 October-19 January 1951, the ship and her aircraft spent 92 days at sea and flew 3,933 sorties against the North Korean aggressors. Her pilots accumulated 11,000 hours in the air while inflicting massive damage upon enemy positions, supplies, transportation, and communications. Among the squadrons based on *Leyte* were the VF-32 *Swordsmen*, flying the F4U Corsair. This squadron included the first African-American Naval Aviator, Ensign Jesse LeRoy Brown who was killed in action on 4 December 1950. *Leyte* returned to Norfolk for overhaul 25 February 1951.

Reclassified CVA-32 on 1 October, she returned to Boston on 16 February 1953 for deactivation. On 8 August, however, she was ordered to be retained in the active fleet, and, redesignated CVS-32 on the same day, work was begun converting her to an ASW support carrier. At 15:15 on 16 October 1953, while still under conversion to an antisubmarine carrier, *Leyte* suffered an explosion in her port catapult machinery room. Within minutes, naval base and city fire trucks were on the scene. After a hard and gallant fight, the fire was extinguished at 1957. As a result of the fire, 37 men died and 28 were injured.

Leyte was redesignated AVT-10 and decommissioned both on 15 May 1959, and was assigned to the Philadelphia group of the Atlantic Reserve Fleet, where she remained until sold for scrap in September 1970. [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_Leyte_\(CV-32\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_Leyte_(CV-32))]

