

Great Ships of The U. S. Navy

U.S.S. Canberra

USS Canberra (CA-70/CAG-2) was a Baltimore-class cruiser and later a Boston-class guided missile cruiser of the United States Navy. Originally to be named *USS Pittsburgh*, the ship was renamed before launch to honor the loss of Australia cruiser *HMAS Canberra* during the Battle of Savo Island. *USS Canberra* is the only USN warship named for a foreign warship or a foreign capital city.

The ship entered service in 1943, and served in the Pacific theater of World War II until she was torpedoed during the Aerial Battle of Taiwan-Okinawa and forced to return to the United States for repairs. Placed in reserve after the war, *Canberra* was selected for conversion into the second guided-missile carrying warship in the USN fleet. Following the conversion, she was host to the ceremony for selecting the Unknown Soldier representing World War II in 1958, undertook an eight-month round-the-world cruise in 1960, participated in the Cuban Missile Crisis naval blockade in 1962, and was deployed to the Vietnam War on five occasions between 1965 and 1969.

In 1962, she sailed south from Norfolk to participate in the naval blockade during the Cuban Missile Crisis. During the Vietnam War, *Canberra* was home ported at San Diego. She deployed to Vietnam five times from 1965 to 1969 where her 8-inch and 5-inch guns provided support for US troops. During the deployments in 1967 and 1968, *Canberra* operated north of the DMZ shelling bridges, transport routes and shore installations. On 2 March 1967, the cruiser was hit by two shells fired from ashore, which caused 5 injuries and minor structural damage. On 6 April 1967, a young seaman named Doug Hegdahl was accidentally blown overboard by one of the 5-inch guns; he was captured by a North Vietnamese gunboat and imprisoned in the infamous Hanoi Hilton. Hegdahl's recollections of his time there would later serve as proof of atrocities committed by the North Vietnamese at POW camps. At the conclusion of her second tour of duty in April 1967, the cruiser visited Melbourne, and was in Australian waters in May for commemorations of the Battle of the Coral Sea.

During the 1968 Tet Offensive, *Canberra* went south to support the troops at Hue and fired 35,000 rounds in 31 days. On 1 May 1968, *Canberra* returned to her original hull number of CA-70; following the obsolescence of her missile armament, her 8-inch guns were reclassified as the cruiser's main armament, although the Terrier launchers were retained until decommissioning. Her last Vietnam deployment ended in early January 1969.

Canberra was decommissioned in 1970, struck in 1978, and broken up in 1980. One of her propellers is preserved at the Los Angeles Maritime Museum, while the ship's bell was donated to the Australian National Maritime Museum in 2001. [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_Canberra_\(CA-70\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_Canberra_(CA-70))]

