



Fist of the Fleet Association

a non profit 501 (c) (19) military organization

NEWSLETTER

October 2017

Preserving the Past Providing for Today
Promoting the Future

AUTUMN EDITION

By: Jerry "Ricochet" Fritze

I want to share part of this sentence from *Air War over Korea*, R. Jackson, 1973, Scribners, page 140: "...it had already been decided that Allied *politics and persuasion*, and not Allied offensives, would be the principle factors in the bid to decide the outcome of the war." (Italics mine). And so a failed strategy was born. Occasionally there can be a learning opportunity by revisiting events and playing "What if?". What if Admiral Nagumo had authorized additional strikes at Pearl Harbor, or they had stumbled on to the American carriers. What if the Kriegsmarine had concentrated all of it's surface ships in the Battle of the North Atlantic to act in concert with the U-Boats? What if we would have had our asses kicked at Midway? In these scenarios the end result is a longer war, but an unchanged outcome as the Axis did not possess the means to attack the American mainland. The Korean War presents entirely different outcomes. If we would have exerted maximum effort by air by sending hundreds of B-29s at a time instead of dozens, if we would have staged a 2nd invasion, if we would have attacked the Antung air base just across the Yalu then the war would have dragged on with Red China fully engaged and committed to defeat the West, and they could have relied on the Soviet Union to deliver limited nuclear strikes if, *if*, the United States deployed them first. Towards the end of the summer of 1953 the Soviet air force pilots had largely been removed from combat operations having learned what they could about modern jet combat. Chinese pilots would remain engaged as the pilots of the North Korean forces were just dead meat up there. Once the Chinese had engaged United Nations forces in the north they became the *de facto* aggressors in the conflict. As tired as they were of the casualty lists and material losses they could not convince the North Korean negotiators to agree to terms of a truce until 1953 primarily because the North wanted all POWs repatriated, even those that did not want to come back.

Historically repressive or tyrannical regimes do not fail when pressured economically from outside. You have to take them down if it is in the best interests of the "global" community. Witness the end of the Third Reich versus the end of Saddam's Iraq. The Soviet Union failed only because their economy could no longer support their vast military presence in Eastern Europe as they struggled to understand and counter Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI, or *Star Wars*), and their forces have suffered to this day although Putin has done much to restore their pride and prestige. In Africa and South America corrupt governments are still the norm while in the Middle East, for all of their facades, they are still engaged in their internecine tribal conflicts. But these are not countries or areas of the world that represent a clear and present danger, or in many cases even an existential threat to the United States. And while North Korea is perceived as a global problem it is not. It is a regional one, a country led by a fat man-child with a bad haircut and a cheap suit who wants to bully everybody. But that's not the real problem. North Korea does not have the capability to launch a devastating nuclear strike on the U.S. mainland, however China and Russia do. They understand the implications for the country who will be the first to use those weapons in this theater. The question is: do we?

In this year's edition of "Man that's gotta suck" I had surgery on my left hand last August, and will have the same procedure on my right hand on Friday Oct 27th so, no reunion for me. Charles Town was founded in 1670, is one of the oldest cities in America and has a rich and varied history. So get out and get some she-crab soup and grits and have a wonderful time. Catch you at Fist '19. ~Ricochet~



www.fistofthefleet.org

Mission Statement

Perpetuate the history of Naval Aviation Squadrons VT-17, VA-6B, VA-65, VA-25 and VFA-25,
Remember deceased veterans and comfort their survivors,
Conduct charitable and educational programs,
Foster and participate in activities of patriotic nature,
Assist current active squadron members, and
Provide assistance to family members in times of emergency.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

On Thursday, August 24th I had the pleasure of attending the "Fist" Change of Command ceremony at NAS Lemoore. Commander Winston Scott II was relieved by Commander Christopher Dentzer during an "in flight change of command" as their aircraft flew over the Fist hangar and attendees listened as the radio transmissions were broadcast over the speakers in the hangar. Upon taxiing to the hangar, Cdr. Scott received a traditional wetting down by the base fire engines. Among the attendees were Cdr. Scott's father who was a Naval Aviator and NASA astronaut. It was a real treat to meet and speak with the squadron's pilots and support personnel, all of whom appeared very professional and squared away.

NAS Lemoore and the neighboring towns have changed quite a bit since my tour in the 1970s. Lemoore had 7,000 residents then versus over 30,000 today. The town has changed so much that I had trouble finding my old bachelor pad in the Country Club Apartments. But the sweet smell of alfalfa and sorghum in the air, along with the dust from agricultural operations, still remain. I heard that most officers choose to live in Hanford despite the longer commute. The base itself hasn't changed much except for much improved security facilities and rebuilt housing, no more swamp coolers. One thing that was very noticeable was the low tempo of operations due to the lack of funding brought about by the budget sequester deal and its negative impact on aircraft readiness that has been well documented in the press.

Now on to more current events. Our Charleston reunion is scheduled for Thursday, November 9th through Sunday the 12th. Gary "Dome" Kerans has worked hard to produce a great event for us, including some interesting tours. Unfortunately, due to illness and other conflicts, just 23 squadron mates have signed up to attend with 20 spouses accompanying them. The good news is that this will give attendees a more personal experience and I look forward to seeing everyone.

That's all for now, I'm packing my bags for to attend my 45th reunion at the Naval Academy to be closely followed by our trip to Charleston; truly an "anchors away" travel month.

John Chalker

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Blue Angels Tour Dates

- Oct 7/8 San Francisco Fleet Week San Francisco CA
- Oct 14-/5 Kane'ohe Bay Air Show Kane'ohe Bay HI
- Oct 21/22 Bell Fort Worth Alliance Air Show Fort Worth TX
- Oct 28/29 Wings Over North Georgia Rome Georgia
- Nov 4/5 NAS JAX Birthplace of the Blue Angels Air Show NAS Jacksonville FL
- Nov 11/12 Blue Angels Homecoming Air Show NAS Pensacola FL

SKIPPER'S CORNER

Greetings FOFA.

It is an honor to write a message on behalf of the finest squadron in the Navy as the Fist of the Fleet 70th Commanding Officer. A little bit about myself. I earned my wings of gold in June of 2002 and have served in VFA-86, when they were stationed in MCAS Beaufort, VFA-37 as the training officer, and VFA-25 as a department head. My wife Beth, daughter Alexandra (3), and I returned to the Fists in May 2016 and caught the tail end of our latest deployment. Joining the squadron on month six of a recently extended eight month combat deployment, I honestly didn't know what I would find. Would I find a squadron just going through the motions or maybe a squadron that had turned on one another? What I found could not have been further from either of those. Instead I found a highly professional organization; a family committed to one another and dedicated to the mission. It was in that moment that I realized I could not have asked for a better situation for my command tour. Unfortunately, I will not be able to take the Fists back on deployment as we do not go overseas again until spring of 2019. But there is still a ton of work to be done to ensure this combat-proven squadron is ready to send our nation's enemies to meet their maker. Since the last newsletter, besides the change of command where I got the chance to meet Chalks, the Fist of the Fleet detached to Anchorage, Alaska to work with the 90th and 525th Fighter Squadrons based at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson. We were able to show the F-22 Raptor bubbas how the Navy rolls both on the ground and in the air. Executing fighter integration and dissimilar air combat training, we held our own and proved how capable our Super Hornet can be in the hands of a highly skilled pilot.

Our maintenance department absolutely crushed the detachment as they produced six fully mission capable aircraft. Considering we are undermanned, under-resourced, and under-funded, that feat in itself is awe inspiring. Seeing how the Fist of the Fleet were killing it, the wing asked for our help to fulfill requirements for VFA-122, the west coast fleet replacement squadron, and TOPGUN so we were only able to bring four of these awesome aircraft with us. That just go to show how dedicated our Sailors are as we truly believe in the one team, one fight mantra.

Next up, we have a major maintenance inspection at the end of October and another fighter integration detachment this time to Hickam AFB on the island of Oahu. I am confident that in true Fist fashion, our Sailors are going to crush it as we enter the holiday season. We will then have a couple of months to get ready for workups that are scheduled to begin in April of next year.

On January 19th, the squadron is hosting a 75th anniversary celebration. The details are still being worked out, but as soon as we nail them down, I will make sure to pass that info to Chalks. All are invited as the celebration will most likely include a tour of our spaces, a chance to get into a simulator, and some food, drinks, and a chance to reminisce at the club. On a personal note, I want to thank each and every one of you that make the FOFA such a great organization. I have been reading a lot about our squadron's history recently and I cannot help but walk away impressed with what our predecessors accomplished. Since January 1st, 1943, from the Second World War, Korea, and Vietnam to Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria, Fist of the Fleet has been making a difference and affecting the course of history. So whether you are a former Fist or a family member, thank you for your service. I am proud to be a part of the FOFA, proud to be a part of the greatest Navy the world has ever known, and as I tell our Sailors every chance I get, I am damn proud to be a Fist!



Picture courtesy of Toni LaSalle Images, Hanford, CA.



FIST ONE: CDR Scott, Departing.

FROM THE COCKPIT By: LT Gerald "Soul Patch" Anderson

Strike Fighter Squadron TWO FIVE continues to operate at the tip of the spear conducting multi-faceted operations and major squadron movements. Over the past few months VFA-25 conducted cross-country flights, fighter integration flights, and gained a few new pilots. Since the spring newsletter, VFA-25 went on detachments to Virginia, Oregon, Washington, and Alaska. Throughout these multiple detachments the squadron focused on air to air tactics and fighter integration.

Qualifications

In September LT Stephen "Scooby" Yoo received his Strike Fighter Weapons and Tactics (SFWT) Level IV "combat division lead" qualification. As a division combat lead, the pilot is responsible for being in charge of up to four aircraft administratively and tactically. This is no small feat, and takes a lot of preparation and training to achieve. The rest of the junior pilots in VFA-25 are either working on completing SFWT Level II or Level III, with the goal of eventually leading a division of F/A-18 Super Hornets into combat should our nation call upon us.

Detachments

During the month of September, VFA-25 sent four jets to Alaska in order to fly with the 525th and 90th Fighter Squadrons. VFA-25 pilots gained valuable experience training with USAF F-22s. The unique mission set of pairing next-generation platforms with F/A-18 Super Hornets was the focus of our training during the two week detachment. In November, VFA-25 will be going to Hawaii once again to train with the Hawaii Air National Guard (HIANG) unit stationed at Hickam Air Force Base. Training with the HIANG will continue to strengthen our tactics with next generation platforms.

Hail and Farewell

As the year comes to an end, there have been new people that have joined the squadron, and a few who have left. Every pilot joining the squadron brings a unique set of skills and knowledge making VFA-25 more lethal and capable. In August, LCDR Steve "JoJo" Helmer joined VFA-25 from VX-31. During his time at VX-31, LCDR Helmer was responsible for developing and testing many advanced components of the F/A-18 Super Hornet, ranging from precision landing modes to combat systems and software. VFA-25 also welcomes LT Dave "SADE" Eshelman, who comes from Strike Fighter Weapons School Pacific. During his time at the weapons school, LT Eshelman was responsible for training Air Wings to prepare them for deployment as well as conducting SFWT evaluation flights, and passing along vast knowledge and tactics to aircrew.

Every pilot is crucial to the command and thus it's never easy when they must leave. In August of this year, CDR Winston "Stoner" Scott conducted a change of command with CDR Chris "Meat" Dentzer. CDR Scott played a vital role in the success of the squadron and will continue to be an exemplary officer in the Navy as he starts his new journey in Washington D.C. He was the Executive Officer in VFA-25 through demanding workups and 6 months of an 8-month combat deployment. CDR Scott became the Commanding Officer on that combat deployment where he safely returned the squadron home, and led the squadron through the challenging months of post deployment maintenance phase. In August, LT Matthew "Chattermatt" Matlock left to train at TOPGUN in Fallon, Nevada to become an instructor at Strike Fighter Weapons School Atlantic. In the month of September, LCDR John "Johnny Kittens" Hiltz and LCDR Zacharay "hAMPster" Griswold both left the squadron to start their new journeys. "Johnny Kittens" proceeded to Pacific Command for a Joint Staff billet. "hAMPster" plans on joining the Air Force reserve and pursuing a commercial airline position. All three pilots were instrumental in the shaping of the squadron and will be greatly missed.



Have you paid your 2017 Dues?

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Life Time Dues \$200

Mail dues to Financial Officer:

Chuck Webster 2441 Lock B Road North Clarksville TN 37043

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FROM THE HANGAR DECK

Hello again from the deckplates,

It's been a while since I've had the privilege of talking to you about this amazing squadron and all the awesome Sailors we have. Depending on who you ask, some would say there hasn't been much going on around these parts lately, but others would tell you a different story. I guess it all depends on how you look at the last couple of months. Regardless of whom you ask though, one word is sure to come out of everyone's mouth, Detachments! From my perspective, I would have to agree with both sides, there isn't much happening because lately we've done a lot of detachments, but I also agree that going on these detachments keeps us busy and helps to break the monotony of the everyday grind here at NAS Lemoore. Detachments allow us to visit other places and show other commands and branches of service why VFA-25 is "The Best Damn Squadrons in the World!" When we go, not only do our pilots get vital training, but it gives the maintainers an opportunity to cross train with other branches of service, improve their skill set, and increases the pride and professionalism they have in the Navy and the command. Our first stop was a familiar one, back to Norfolk and Oceana to support carrier qualifications and flight deck certification onboard the mighty USS Abraham Lincoln. She was fresh out of the shipyard after almost five years of being down for a maintenance overhaul, but she looked beautiful and ready to go. It was a challenging detachment as we were tri-sited during this time operating out of Lemoore, Oceana and on the ship all at the same time. For many of our newest Sailors, it was their very first time seeing this monstrosity of a ship called an aircraft carrier in person. Do you remember your first time seeing an aircraft carrier? Remember those feelings you had? The nervousness of not knowing what to expect because of all the stories you heard about the flight deck being the most dangerous place in the world to work. The excitement of getting to board one of the world's most technologically advanced ships that can launch and recover aircraft anywhere in the world. The overwhelming desire to get underway so you could experience everything you've been hearing about and more. Well, I saw all of these emotions on the faces of our newly acquired Sailors, the excitement, the fear and the overwhelming desire to explore all parts of the ship. Through it all, even while having one third of the squadron working in three different locations, we completed the detachment with the same dedication and commitment that has defined the Fist of the Fleet team since its inception. After leaving Virginia we took a short break and then it was off to Portland, Oregon to operate with the Air National Guard. Compared with being in Virginia, this detachment was a lot more fun and allowed for more off time to explore and enjoy the beautiful scenery and activities of Northern Oregon. Of course, we kept our jets flying as we always do, but this detachment was more about the hikes to the beautiful waterfalls, the whitewater rafting, the delicious food, and of course, a daily supply of Voodoo Donuts. To top it off, we hit Portland at the end of June when the weather was a fresh and lovely 78 degrees; leaving behind the Lemoore heat, which was starting to exceed 100 degrees on a daily basis. Good flying, good food, good weather, good gracious, I never knew I was such a fan of Portland, but it quickly moved to the top of my list behind only Hawaii. After 10 days of perfect weather and absolutely fabulous food, we had to say good bye to Portland and head on back home. It wouldn't be long though before we would be heading back to a different part of Oregon, Klamath Falls. Just over the border of California, Klamath Falls didn't quite have the same fantastic weather as Portland, but it was still better than the triple digit temperatures we endure in Lemoore. Klamath Falls was a short detachment, only 5 days long, but probably the most satisfying as we got to work with several different commands, encompassing F-15's, F-16's, and F-35's. The det was capped off on Saturday with a big air show and festival on base that drew thousands of spectators to watch the various professional maintainers care for and launch their respective aircraft. I don't think there is anything more satisfying than being able to perform your job in front of the very people who we have sworn to protect in this great country. Hearing the applause and having them thank us for our service makes us feel proud and I know for many of the Sailors on the deckplates it renews the sense of pride they have in knowing what they do matters. Next up, team TWO FIVE headed to the northern frontier, Alaska! What a beautiful state to visit, with its diverse terrain and abundant wildlife, there was so much to see and do over the 14 day period. Where else can you see a bear or moose walking down the street on base? We had a phenomenal time exploring, eating, and oh yes, completing excellent training with the Air Force. How do we top views of the Northern Lights, hikes on glaciers and visits to waterfalls? We go from Alaska to Hawaii, which is our next detachment destination. Like the Sailors tell me all the time, CMC let the good times roll and they have been rolling this year in the best of ways.

This will be my last article as the CMC of VFA-25, as my time has come to transfer. It's a bittersweet moment for me because I have to leave the family I've had for the last two and a half years. I am truly grateful for the opportunity I had to be the Command Master Chief of this awesome squadron with such a great legacy. I have so much respect and admiration for everything the Sailors and pilots of VFA-25 do. I couldn't have asked for a better experience in my first aviation command; the commitment, the pride, and the high standards have made me a Fisty for Life. Thank you to all the FOFA members for leading the way and laying the foundation for VFA-25, because of you, every Fisty, past and present exudes the dedication and professionalism that have made this squadron a world class organization. I am honored and proud to now forever be a part of the Fist of the Fleet heritage and I am damn proud to be a Fisty!



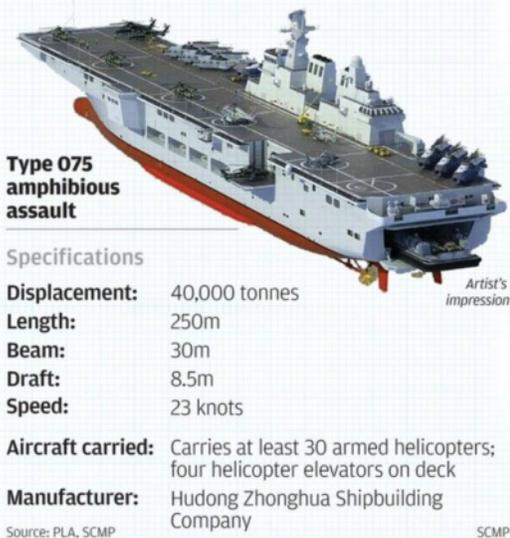
DID YOU KNOW: NAVY, MILITARY AND OTHER INFORMATION

China building 40,000 ton helicopter aircraft carrier and increasing number of marines

By: Brian Wang Next Big Future April 2017

China has started building a new generation of large 40,000 ton amphibious assault vessels. They are helicopter aircraft carriers. The amphibious vessel is far larger than similar ships formerly constructed for the PLA Navy. Construction of the Type 075 ships will take two more years. The first will be launched as early as 2019 and put into full service in 2020. China is also increasing the size of its marine corps from about 20,000 to 100,000 personnel. The size of the Chinese navy would also grow 15 per cent. This would be from 235,000 now to 260,000. China's army staffing will be reduced by 300,000.

China's first helicopter ship



The South China Morning Post reports that China will not adopt highly advanced electromagnetic take-off technology on its second domestically built aircraft carrier but instead rely on a conventional steam system, naval experts say. The next carrier (Type 002) after the Liaoning and the Type 001A carrier under construction in Dalian – would be equipped with at least three natural steam launch catapults, a source close to the navy told the South China Morning Post.

But it would be the first Chinese aircraft carrier to use this type of launch system. “There are still some technical problems with China’s magnetic launcher, so the Type 002 will still use steam catapults,” the source said. In 2013 the deputy chief-of-staff of the People’s Liberation Army confirmed China was developing new aircraft carriers that would be much larger and more capable than the old Soviet design.

Little is known about ‘Project 002’. The South China Morning Post says work began on the ship in 2015, in the Shanghai Jiangnan Changxingdao shipyard. It will be much larger. It may even be nuclear powered.

Beijing may have gained access to steam catapult technology when it took possession of Australia’s last aircraft carrier HMAS Melbourne. It was sold to be scrapped in 1985, but its World War II era technology would have still been of great interest to the PLA. Only the currently-under-construction USS Ford carries shipboard electromagnetic catapults at this stage. And they’re demonstrating an unwelcome tendency to toss aircraft into the sea. The next Chinese carrier (001a) will likely look very similar to the current Liaoning. The carrier group will have updated destroyers and frigates that provide a more advanced layered defense and missile strike system. It will likely be accompanied by an arsenal of drones.

Certain weapons were excluded from the Type 001A platform to allow more carrier-based J-15 parking. The hanger was also expanded to allow the new carrier to carry between six and eight more J-15 fighter jets than the Liaoning. “The control tower island on the deck was shrunk 10 per cent, which allow the deck to dock more helicopters and fixed-wing early-warning aircraft,” he said, adding that four weapons sponsons, or projections, on the aft deck had been dismantled. S-band radars with four large antennae would be installed on the top of control tower, he said. The system is China’s most advanced and is capable of covering a 360-degree search field to scout dozens of targets in the air and at sea. Four HQ-10 short-range air defence missiles systems with 24 tubes would also deployed on the new ship.

The Type 003 carrier will likely look a lot like the Nimitz or Ford class US aircraft carriers. It will have nuclear powered propulsion. The Type 003 itself would likely have a displacement of around 90,000-100,000 tons and carry anywhere from between 70-100 helicopters and fixed wing aircraft, and have multiple aircraft elevators and a single island superstructure. With a nuclear-powered reactor, the Type 003 could reach speeds in excess of 30 knots. The reactors could also provide the power for electromagnetically assisted launch system (EMALS) catapults (the preceding conventional Type 002 carrier may use steam catapults). EMALS catapults have improved efficiency and are less maintenance intensive than steam catapults. The EMALS catapult could allow the Type 003 to launch aircraft with a takeoff weight of up to 50 tons, including aerial tankers, airborne early warning aircraft (especially useful to guiding long range missiles against distant aircraft), anti-submarine warfare (ASW) planes, smaller cargo planes and strike aircraft. Given Chinese interest in unmanned vehicles, the Type 003 could come with a UAV for surveillance and reconnaissance. The Type 003’s air group will also have helicopters for ASW and search and rescue missions.

The CVBG’s escort elements will likely consist of Type 055 destroyers and a future Chinese frigate (Type 057?) with an integrated mast. The improved Type 055, upgraded from the current hulls under construction, would have integrated electric propulsion system to increase onboard power generation for sensors and direct energy weapons. It will likely also be armed with over a hundred long-range anti-air and surface attack missiles, in addition to carrying helicopters. Given Chinese interest in unmanned naval vehicles, those surface combatants would likely carry UAVs, UUVs, and USVs for mine countermeasure. For underwater escort, the accompanying submarine would likely be a Type 095 nuclear attack submarine, stealthier and more heavily armed than current Chinese attack boats.

SOURCES- South China Morning Post, News Corp Australia. Popular Science

FISTORY-KOREA: A WINTER AIR CAMPAIGN

Reeling from the November Chinese Communist offensive Allied ground forces were forced to retreat or face annihilation. In many cases the Republic of Korea (ROK) units simply disintegrated in panic and while other ground forces maintained better unit cohesion there was no mistake: the rout was on. As military units and civilians were streaming south the decision was made to use the port of Hungnam to evacuate as many people and as much material as possible in what was termed a "landing in reverse". Task Force 77, with VA-65 embarked on *Valley Forge* provided close air support along the perimeter.

By December 28th the evacuation was complete and CAG 2 could return to striking the enemy in earnest.



The port of Hungnam, North Korea

Communist troops had pushed well south to about the 37th parallel, again occupying Seoul, Inchon, and Osan; but here the advance stalled and began to fall back towards defensive positions along the 38th parallel. But now the weather turned and the Task force faced an implacable enemy for which the only defense is endurance. On those stretches of days were the seas were calmer and the skies cleaner *Happy Valley* could launch up to 90 sorties. But in the grips of the ocean at her worst all you could do was hang on. There were too many days when air operations were curtailed or canceled due to low ceiling, poor visibility, and inclement weather. These days less than 30 aircraft could be launched, or a dozen or none. The weather played in the hands of the ChiComs who could keep the pressure on the allied ground forces. The one thing they feared above all others was "the blue airplanes" that would come roaring or screaming out of the skies to lay waste to anything out in the open.



By mid-January the Skyraiders of Valley Forge had flown 273 offensive combat missions in Northeast Korea with warehouses, villages and highway bridges comprising the majority of the targets attacked. By January 19th *Valley Forge* was on her way back to Sasebo, Japan for a complete replenishment of stores, returning on the 31st and launching new strikes on February 1st.



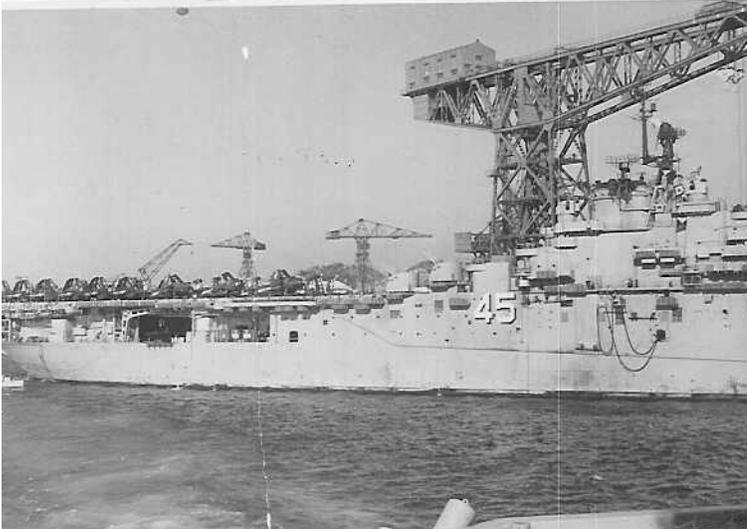
Valley Forge and *Leyte* at Sasebo, Japan in 1950



The interdiction campaign had shifted its focus and bridges of all types were hit repeatedly throughout February in the belief that North Korean supply lines could be completely severed. However, allied strategists and mission planners underestimated the resolve and capabilities of the Koreans and Chinese to make good on repairs overnight, or erect new pontoon bridge structures where feasible. Both the Chinese and the Soviets continued to funnel material across the border, moving mostly at night; and while at times this flow was impeded it was never successfully halted. In 15 years time a similar scenario would be played out in another little Asian county called Vietnam with similar results. However, the Ho Chi Minh Trail lives on in history while the Korean War continues to fade away.



By February 26th *Valley Forge* was back in Yokosuka, Japan for much needed maintenance.



By March 14th CAG 2 was back in action keeping up the pressure on the Communists until March 25th, when they again returned to Yokosuka and transferred to *Philippine Sea* (CV-47). During operations on *Valley Forge* Skyraiders flew a total of 471 offensive missions expending ordnance for the most part on storage facilities and bridge structures. It would be the task of the *Phil Sea* to continue these missions until the coming of the Communist Chinese Spring Offensive on April 22nd, 1951.



NEXT TIME IN FISTORY: GREEN TAILS OVER 'NAM

VT-17

VA-6B

VA-65

VA-25

VFA-25

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