

# Cruiser USS Antietam is Decommissioned



The crew departs the ship for the last time during the decommissioning ceremony of Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Antietam (CG 54).

Story By LaDonna Singleton, Commander, Naval Surface Forces Public Affairs, Sept. 27, 2024

HONOLULU (September 27, 2024) – Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Antietam (CG 54) was recognized for its more than 37 years of naval service during a decommissioning ceremony at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, on September 27.

During the ceremony guest speaker Rear Adm. Christopher Moe (USN, Ret.) spoke about Antietam's history and accomplishments, wishing this final crew fair winds and following seas as they bid farewell to their ship.

Moe served as Antietam's commanding officer from 1997 to 1999. "I was there June 6, 1987, when USS Antietam was commissioned in Baltimore, Maryland. The ceremony was a magnificent start to 37 years of service that will end today after thousands of young men and women crossed her quarterdeck, anxious to serve this great nation," he stated. "This is a remarkable ship and of equal importance is a crew who can only do what they do because they have the love and support of the families at home."

CG 54's last Commanding Officer, Cmdr. Victor J. Garza reflected on the service of his crew and those who came before him. "The soul of Antietam is in her Sailors. We bring the heartless steel and iron to life. Today, we lay her to rest. We keep the soul, and until the Navy commissions a fourth USS Antietam, I will be the captain of her soul. We will always be Antietam."

During his speech, Garza recognized the 23 former Antietam commanding officers who attended the ceremony. He also congratulated the two newly pinned chief petty officers, Chief Fire Controlman Daniel Delgado and Chief Fire Controlman Robin Phillips. Delgado and Phillips were promoted in the ship's final Chiefs pinning ceremony earlier the same day. Garza also conducted the final ship's promotion earlier in the day for now Lt. Cmdr. Steve Millet, a former crew member, on the bow. Antietam maintained a crew of 40 officers and 300 enlisted Sailors throughout its service.

CG 54 was named for the site of the 1862 Battle of Antietam, Maryland, between Confederate forces under Gen. Robert E. Lee and Union forces under Maj. Gen. George McClellan, during the American Civil War.

Taking place on September 17, 1862, the Battle of Antietam remains the bloodiest day in American history, with a tally of

22,727 dead, wounded, or missing on both sides. Although the Union Army suffered heavier casualties than the Confederates, the battle was a major turning point in the Union's favor.

The first USS Antietam was a screw sloop of war and construction began in 1864 at the Philadelphia Navy Yard. Due to the end of the Civil War, the ship was not completed as initially planned. Instead, it remained partially built until 1869, when it was decided to finish it as an equipment storeship. This Antietam served as a storeship and marine barracks at League Island, Pennsylvania, from 1876 to 1888.

The second USS Antietam was an Essex-class aircraft carrier commissioned towards the end of World War II. Launched on August 20, 1944, and commissioned on January 28, 1945, this vessel missed the war but played significant roles in the Korean War, and in Cold War operations. Notably, it was the first aircraft carrier to be fitted with an angled flight deck, enhancing its operational capabilities.

The decommissioning of Antietam supports department-wide business process reform initiatives to free up time, resources, and manpower in support of increased lethality.

The mission of CNSP is to man, train, and equip the Surface Force to provide fleet commanders with credible naval power to control the sea and project power ashore.