

U.S. NAVY SHIPS --

USS *Coral Sea* (CVB-43, later CVA-43 and CV-43), 1947-1993

Other Resources

[Battle of the Coral Sea, 7-8 May 1942](#) - Battles of WWII information page

The first USS *Coral Sea*, a Casablanca-class escort carrier built at Kaiser Shipbuilding Co., Vancouver, Wash., under a Maritime Commission contract (MC hull 1094); was commissioned on 27 August 1943. She was renamed *Anzio* on 15 September 1944 to clear the name for assignment to a large aircraft carrier.

USS *Coral Sea*, a 45,000-ton *Midway* class large aircraft carrier built at Newport News, Virginia, was commissioned on 1 October 1947 to begin a career that lasted more than four decades. Following initial operations in the western Atlantic area, she made a midshipmen training cruise in mid-1948 that included visits to the Mediterranean and Caribbean Seas. In May 1949, *Coral Sea* began the first of many Sixth Fleet deployments. These took place nearly annually as the Cold War intensified in the 1950s and included regular "flag showing" and nuclear deterrent missions along the European southern flank. Amid this activity, the ship was reclassified as an attack aircraft carrier in October 1952, changing her hull number to CVA-43. Climaxing the first stage of her long service, *Coral Sea* transited to the west coast, by way of South America, in February-April 1957 to begin an extensive modernization.

The greatly-altered *Coral Sea* returned to active service in January 1960. Her flight deck had been greatly enlarged, with an angled landing area, three deck-edge aircraft elevators and three powerful steam catapults to facilitate operation of the latest aircraft types. The work also included fitting the ship with an enclosed "hurricane" bow, greater beam and many other improvements.

Later in 1960, *Coral Sea* crossed the Pacific for the first of more than a dozen Seventh Fleet cruises. These included vigorous participation in the Southeast Asian conflict between 1965 and 1972 and in evacuation and other activities as the Republic of Vietnam collapsed in the the Spring of 1975. At the end of June 1975, *Coral Sea* was reclassified CV-43 to reflect expansion of her air group to include anti-submarine warfare aircraft.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, *Coral Sea's* western Pacific deployments were extended to cover the vicinity of the increasingly tense Persian Gulf. In April 1980 she supported the abortive effort to rescue American hostages held in Iran. Beginning in March 1983 the ship redeployed westbound to the Atlantic, serving in the Far East for one last time and also operating in the Arabian Sea, Mediterranean and off South and Central America before the long cruise ended in September 1983.

Just over two years later, *Coral Sea* returned to the Mediterranean, where she launched air strikes against targets in terrorist Libya in April 1986. Two more Sixth Fleet deployments took place in 1987-88 and in 1989. USS *Coral Sea* decommissioned in April 1990 and was sold for scrapping in May 1993. She was slowly broken up at Baltimore, Maryland, over the next several years.

This page features selected views of USS *Coral Sea* (CVB/CVA/CV-43).

Click the photograph to prompt a larger view of image.

Photo #: NH 97648

USS *Coral Sea* (CVB-43)

Photographed in 1948.

Official U.S. Navy Photograph, Naval History & Heritage Command

Online Image: 138KB; 740 x 605 pixels



Photo #: 80-G-K-18394 (Color)

USS *Coral Sea* (CVA-43)

Maneuvers at high speed in the Mediterranean Sea, 28 July 1955.

Official U.S. Navy Photograph, National Archives collection

Online Image: 65KB; 740 x 500 pixels

Reproductions may be available through the [National Archives](#).



Photo #: NH 97649

USS *Coral Sea* (CVA-43)

Stears alongside USS *Bellatrix* (AF-62) during underway replenishment in Western Pacific waters. USS *Duncan* (DDR-874) is at left.

Photograph was released by USS *Coral Sea* under date of 16 April 1962.

Among the planes on the carrier's flight deck are seven A3D "Skywarrior" heavy attack aircraft.

Official U.S. Navy Photograph, Naval History & Heritage Command

Online Image: 140KB; 740 x 630 pixels



Photo #: 104027

USS *Aludra* (AF-55), center,

Is approached by USS *Cochrane* (DDG-21), at left, and USS *Coral Sea* (CVA-43) for underway replenishment, during operations in the South China Sea.

Photographed by USS *Coral Sea*, 15 May 1965.

Official U.S. Navy Photograph, from the collections of the Naval History & Heritage Command.

Online Image: 104KB; 740 x 615 pixels



Photo #: USN 1110187-C

USS Coral Sea (CVA-43)

Steams past USS *Ranger* (CVA-61) in the South China Sea, 24 March 1965, during the early days of the air campaign against North Vietnam.

Aircraft in the foreground is a North American RA-5C "Vigilante" reconnaissance plane (Bureau # 149313). Planes parked beyond it include McDonnell F-4B "Phantom II" fighters and Douglas A-1 "Skyraider" attack aircraft.

Photographed by JOC R.D. Moeser, USN.

Official U.S. Navy Photograph.

Online Image: 102KB; 740 x 605 pixels

Reproductions may be available through the [National Archives](#) as Photo # 428-N-1110187-C.



Photo #: NH 97650

USS Coral Sea (CV-43)

Underway during her 1977 Western Pacific cruise

Photograph is dated 10 September 1977. It was taken by PH1 Don Hanson.

Note UH-46 helicopter over the carrier's flight deck, amidships, with cargo suspended below. Two of the F-4 fighters visible (parked aft of the starboard after aircraft elevator) are wearing camouflage paint schemes.

Official U.S. Navy Photograph, Naval History & Heritage Command

Online Image: 98KB; 740 x 610 pixels



Photo #: NH 97652-KN (color)

USS Coral Sea (CV-43)

Underway at sea in 1986.

Photographed by PH2 Robert Chouinard.

Official U.S. Navy Photograph, Naval History & Heritage Command

Online Image: 177KB; 740 x 610 pixels



Photo #: NH 97651-KN (color)

USS Coral Sea (CV-43)

Makes over 30 knots, during a high speed run on 1 March 1989.

Photographed by PH2 Michael Skeens.

Official U.S. Navy Photograph, from the collections of the Naval Historical Center.

Online Image: 80KB; 740 x 605 pixels



Photo #: NH 97653-KN (color)

USS Coral Sea (CV-43)

Silhouetted against a low Sun, as she arrives at Palma, Spain, during her final Mediterranean deployment, June 1989.

Photographed by PH2 Michael Skeens.

Official U.S. Navy Photograph, Naval History & Heritage Command

Online Image: 68KB; 740 x 610 pixels



Photo #: 80-G-423543

Vought F4U-5 "Corsair" fighter

Takes off from from USS *Coral Sea* (CVB-43), while she was operating in the Mediterranean Sea, November 1950.

This is a U.S. Marine Corps aircraft.

Note radar antennas atop the island, and flag signal reading "085 turn".

Official U.S. Navy Photograph, Naval History & Heritage Command

Online Image: 91KB; 740 x 620 pixels

Reproductions may be available through the [National Archives](#).



Photo #: USN 1111691-A

USS Coral Sea (CVA-43)

The Catapult Officer signals "launch" and an A-4 "Skyhawk" starts down the flight deck, during operations in the South China Sea, 24 March 1965.

The plane is being launched from the carrier's starboard catapult.

Photographed by PH1 James F. Falk, USN.

Official U.S. Navy Photograph.

Online Image: 102KB; 740 x 600 pixels

Reproductions may be available through the [National Archives](#) as Photo # 428-N-1111691-A.



Photo #: NH 97654-KN (color)

USS Coral Sea (CV-43)

A F/A-18 "Hornet" of VFA-137 taxis forward through catapult steam, during flight operations on 18 January 1988.

Photographed by PH2(AW) Wayne Edwards.

Official U.S. Navy Photograph, Naval History & Heritage Command

Online Image: 63KB; 740 x 610 pixels



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