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[Main page](#)
[Contents](#)
[Featured content](#)
[Current events](#)
[Random article](#)
[Donate to Wikipedia](#)
[Wikipedia store](#)

[Interaction](#)

[Help](#)
[About Wikipedia](#)
[Community portal](#)
[Recent changes](#)
[Contact page](#)

[Tools](#)

[What links here](#)
[Related changes](#)
[Upload file](#)
[Special pages](#)
[Permanent link](#)
[Page information](#)
[Wikidata item](#)
[Cite this page](#)

[Print/export](#)

[Create a book](#)
[Download as PDF](#)
[Printable version](#)

[In other projects](#)

[Wikimedia Commons](#)

[Languages](#)

★ [Deutsch](#)
[Français](#)
[日本語](#)
[Русский](#)
[中文](#)

 [Edit links](#)

 Not logged in [Talk](#) [Contributions](#) [Create account](#) [Log in](#)

Article [Talk](#)

Read [Edit](#) [View history](#)

Search Wikipedia 

Operation Sea Orbit

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Operation Sea Orbit was the 1964 around-the-world cruise of the [United States Navy](#)'s Task Force One, consisting of [USS *Enterprise* \(CVAN-65\)](#), [USS *Long Beach* \(CGN-9\)](#), and [USS *Bainbridge* \(DLGN-25\)](#). This all-nuclear-powered unit steamed 30,565 miles unrefuelled around the world for sixty-five days.^{[1][2]}

Contents

[hide]

- [Concept](#)
- [Deployment](#)
 - [Command](#)
- [Anniversary](#)
- [See also](#)
- [Notes](#)
- [References](#)

Concept

[edit]

Operation Sea Orbit was the idea of Vice Admiral [John S. McCain, Jr.](#), who saw the exercise – which demonstrated how nuclear-powered ships could operate unfettered by shore logistical ties^[2] – as a statement of American technical achievement similar to that of the coal-burning [Great White Fleet](#) in 1907-1909.^[1]

Deployment

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Long Beach and *Bainbridge* departed [Norfolk](#) on 28 April 1964, in company with the aircraft carrier [Franklin D. Roosevelt](#) for the Atlantic crossing to the [Mediterranean](#), where the rendezvous with *Enterprise* was scheduled. Task Force 1 formed up at [Bahia de Pollença](#), [Mallorca](#) on 13 May, before undertaking a series of exercises to test the efficiency of the all-nuclear formation working together.^[3]

Having been relieved by other vessels, TF1 departed on its trans-global cruise on 31 July 1964, with all three ships having taken aboard maximum provisions the day before to ensure there was no need for further [underway replenishment](#) en route. The task force initially sailed down the west

Operation Sea Orbit

Part of [Cold War \(1962–1979\)](#)



Operation Sea Orbit route.

Type	Naval surface warfare and naval air operations
Location	World-wide
Planned by	United States Navy
Objective	First circumnavigation of the world by nuclear-powered surface warships
Date	31 July 1964 to 3 October 1964
Executed by	Rear Admiral Bernard M. Strean, USN
Task Force One:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">USS <i>Enterprise</i> (CVAN-65)USS <i>Long Beach</i> (CGN-9)USS <i>Bainbridge</i> (DLGN-25)Carrier Air Wing Six (CVW-6)
Outcome	Mission successfully accomplished.



Enterprise, *Long Beach*, and *Bainbridge*



coast of Africa, calling at [Rabat](#), [Dakar](#); [Freetown](#), [Monrovia](#) and [Abidjan](#), before [crossing the equator](#). By 10 August, TF1 had reached the [Cape of Good Hope](#), where it conducted exercises with a pair of [South African Navy](#) ships.^[3]

Following the South African visit, TF1 transited the [Mozambique Channel](#) into the [Indian Ocean](#) where the ships then called at [Mombasa](#), before transiting the Indian Ocean to [Pakistan](#), where they rendezvoused with three ships of the [Pakistan Navy](#), before the entire force called at [Karachi](#). However, due to the sea conditions it was determined to be too dangerous for either *Enterprise* or *Long Beach* to enter the port; instead, while *Bainbridge* came alongside, the two larger ships were forced to anchor several miles outside the harbour.^[3]

Upon departing from Karachi, TF1 transited along the west coast of India before turning towards [Australia](#). While en route, in the area south of [Indonesia](#), the force conducted an exercise with a [Royal Navy](#) carrier group led by *HMS Victorious*, before splitting to allow individual port calls at [Fremantle](#) (*Bainbridge*), [Melbourne](#) (*Long Beach*) and [Sydney](#) (*Enterprise*),^[3] before the three ships reformed for the transit to [New Zealand](#), where both *Bainbridge* and *Long Beach* additionally called at [Wellington](#).

TF1 crossed the [South Pacific Ocean](#) and rounded [Cape Horn](#) back into the Atlantic, with visits to [Buenos Aires](#) and [Montevideo](#) before the entire task force put in at [Rio de Janeiro](#). Having departed [Brazil](#), *Bainbridge* was detached on 30 September to return to [Charleston](#),^[4] while *Enterprise* and *Long Beach* put in at Norfolk, all three arriving back on 3 October 1964.

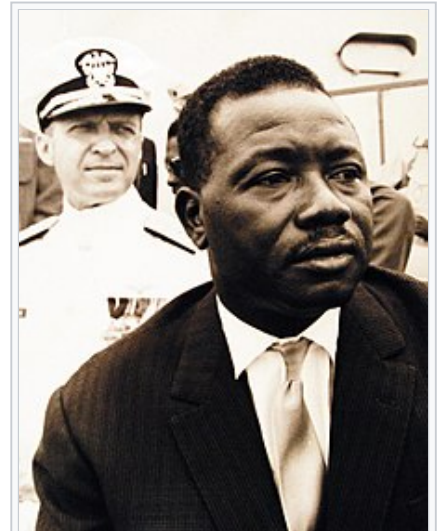
Task Force One had spent 65 days deployed, with 57 of them at sea, and steamed 30,216 miles in total without replenishment.^[5] Rear Admiral Strean noted that the flexibility of operating a force of nuclear powered vessels meant that TF1 "could have been diverted to any other maritime area of the world without logistical considerations and could have been ready for immediate operations upon arrival".^[3]

Command [[edit](#)]

- Commander, Task Force One: Rear Admiral Bernard M. Strean (Commander [Carrier Division 2](#))^[1]
 - *USS Enterprise*: Captain [Frederick H. Michaelis](#)^[6]
 - *Carrier Air Wing Six*: Commander T.L. Nielsen^[7]
 - *USS Long Beach*: Captain Frank H. Price, Jr.^[8]
 - *USS Bainbridge*: Captain Hal C. Castle^[9]

Anniversary [[edit](#)]

Veterans of Operation Sea Orbit gathered on July 30, 2004, for a 40th anniversary reunion.^[2] In 2011, Operation Sea Orbit was included in the Technology for the Nuclear Age: Nuclear Propulsion display for the Cold War exhibit at the [U.S. Navy Museum](#) in Washington, DC.^[10]



Mr. Emile Radiene, Cabinet member from Dakar, Senegal, and Rear Admiral Bernard M. Strean, Commander of the Task Force, watch flight operations off the coast of Africa during an underway visit aboard the nuclear carrier USS Enterprise

See also [edit]

- [Operation Sandblast](#)
- [Great White Fleet](#)
- [Nuclear powered cruisers of the United States Navy](#)
- [1966 Soviet submarine global circumnavigation](#)

Notes [edit]

- ↑ **^a** **^b** **^c** Baldwin, Hanson W. (1964-10-03). "Nuclear Task Force to End World Cruise Today" . *The New York Times*.
- ↑ **^a** **^b** **^c** Thompson, Jason (2004-08-04). "Operation Sea Orbit Veterans Celebrate 40th Anniversary Aboard Big E" . United States Navy. Archived from the original on 2005-11-30.
- ↑ **^a** **^b** **^c** **^d** **^e** "History 1961-1965" . USS Enterprise. DANFS. Retrieved 2 July 2014.
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