

= Japanese battleship Kawachi =

Kawachi ( 1907 ) was the lead ship of the two Kawachi class dreadnought battleships built for the Imperial Japanese Navy ( IJN ) in the first decade of the 20th century . Following the Japanese ship naming conventions , Kawachi was named after Kawachi Province , now a part of Osaka prefecture . During World War I she bombarded German fortifications at Tsingtao during the Battle of Tsingtao in 1914 , but saw no other combat . She sank in 1918 after an explosion in her ammunition magazine with the loss of over 600 officers and crewmen .

= = Background = =

The Kawachi class was ordered on 22 June 1907 under the 1907 Warship Supplement Program after the Russo Japanese War as Japan 's first dreadnoughts , although their construction was delayed by a severe depression . Their design was based on the Aki with a uniform 12 inch ( 305 mm ) main gun armament , although cost considerations prevented all the guns from having the same barrel length .

= = Design and description = =

The ship had an overall length of 526 feet ( 160 m ) , a beam of 84 feet 3 inches ( 25 m ) , and a normal draft of 27 feet ( 8 m ) . She displaced 20,823 long tons ( 21,157 t ) at normal load . Her crew ranged from 999 to 1100 officers and enlisted men . Kawachi was fitted with a pair of license built Curtis steam turbine sets , each set driving one propeller , using steam from 16 Miyabara water tube boilers . The turbines were rated at a total of 25,000 shaft horsepower ( 19,000 kW ) for a design speed of 21 knots ( 39 km / h ; 24 mph ) . She carried enough coal and fuel oil to give her a range of 2,700 nautical miles ( 5,000 km ; 3,100 mi ) at a speed of 18 knots ( 33 km / h ; 21 mph ) .

Kawachi 's main armament consisted of four 50 caliber 12 inch 41st Year Type guns in two twin gun turrets , one each fore and aft of the superstructure , and eight 45 caliber 12 inch 41st Year Type guns mounted in four twin gun turrets , two on each side of the superstructure . Kawachi 's secondary armament was ten 45 caliber 6 inch 41st Year Type guns , mounted in casemates in the sides of the hull , and eight 40 caliber quick firing ( QF ) 4 inch 41st Year Type guns . The ship was also equipped with a dozen 40 caliber 3 inch 4th Year Type guns and four others were used as saluting guns . In addition , the battleship was fitted with five submerged 18 inch ( 457 mm ) torpedo tubes , two on each broadside and one in the stern .

The waterline main belt of the ship had a maximum thickness of 12 inches amidships . It tapered to a thickness of 5 inches ( 127 mm ) at the ends of the ship . A 6 inch ( 152 mm ) strake of armor protected the casemates . The barbettes for the main guns were 9 to 11 inches ( 229 to 279 mm ) thick . The armor of Kawachi 's main gun turrets had a maximum thickness of 11 inches . The deck armor was 1 inch ( 25 mm ) thick and the conning tower was protected by 6 to 10 inches of armor .

= = Construction and career = =

Kawachi was laid down at Yokosuka Naval Arsenal on 1 April 1909 . She was launched on 15 October 1910 in a ceremony attended by Emperor Meiji and completed on 31 March 1912 at a cost of ¥ 11,130,000 . On 3 October 1912 , the ship was present when the battleship Mikasa had a fire that was started by a sailor in the forward magazine . It was flooded before the fire could get out of control and Kawachi sent over fire fighting teams to assist Mikasa 's crew in case they were needed . When World War I began in August 1914 , Kawachi was at Yokosuka .

Together with her sister ship , Settsu , she bombarded German fortifications in October to November 1914 during the final stage of the Battle of Tsingtao . The ship was present in Yokosuka on 8

January 1915 when the victorious Second Squadron returned to Japan after the Battle of Tsingtao . She was assigned to the First Squadron from 1915 ? 1917 and refitted that latter year .

Kawachi rejoined the First Squadron after her refit commanded by Captain Yoshimoto Masaki and entered Tokuyama Bay on the evening of 11 July 1918 . The following morning torpedo target practice was cancelled due to rough seas and the battleship remained at anchor for the rest of the day . That afternoon a loud explosion was heard at 15 : 51 in the vicinity of the starboard forward main @-@ gun turret and large quantities of smoke erupted from the turret and between the first and second funnels . Two minutes later , she began to list to starboard and capsized at 15 : 55 , only four minutes after the explosion . Over a thousand men were aboard Kawachi at the time of the explosion and over 600 were killed , with 433 survivors .

The Imperial Japanese Navy convened a commission to investigate the explosion the day after the incident with Vice Admiral Murakami Kakuichi as chairman . The commission first suspected arson , but no plausible suspect could be found and it reported that the cordite in her magazine might have spontaneously ignited due to decomposition . Kawachi 's magazines had been inspected in January ? February 1918 , however , and no problems were discovered , which made that possibility less likely . The commission made recommendations on tighter control of production and handling of cordite that were successfully adopted by the navy . The Japanese Navy considered salvaging Kawachi , but ultimately decided that it would be too expensive and would delay the construction of one battlecruiser by over a year . Stricken from the navy list on 21 September 1918 , the wreck was later partially dismantled although most of the hull was abandoned in place to serve as an artificial reef .