

= USS New Mexico (BB @-@ 40) =

USS New Mexico (BB @-@ 40) was a battleship in service with the United States Navy from 1918 to 1946 . She was the lead ship of a class of three battleships , and the first ship to be named for the state of New Mexico . Her keel was laid down on 14 October 1915 at the New York Navy Yard , she was launched on 23 April 1917 , and was commissioned on 20 May 1918 . She was the first ship with a turbo @-@ electric transmission , which helped her reach a cruising speed of 10 knots (19 km / h ; 12 mph) . Shortly after completing initial training , New Mexico escorted the ship that carried President Woodrow Wilson to Brest , France to sign the Treaty of Versailles . The interwar period was marked with repeated exercises with the Pacific and Atlantic Fleets , use as a trial ship for PID controllers , and a major modernization between March 1931 and January 1933 .

The ship 's first actions during World War II were neutrality patrols in the Atlantic Ocean . She returned to the Pacific after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor , and participated in shore bombardments during operations at Attu and Kiska , Tarawa , the Marshall Islands , the Mariana and Palau islands , Leyte , Luzon , and Okinawa . These were interspersed with escort duties , patrols , and refits . The ship was attacked by kamikazes on several occasions . New Mexico was present in Tokyo Bay for the signing of the Japanese Instrument of Surrender on 2 September 1945 . Four days later , she sailed for the United States , and arrived in Boston on 17 October .

New Mexico was decommissioned in Boston on 19 July 1946 , and struck from the Naval Vessel Register on 25 February 1947 . The ship was sold for scrapping to the Lipsett Division of Luria Bros in November 1947 , but attempts to bring the ship to Newark , New Jersey for breaking up were met by resistance from city officials . City fireboats were sent to block the passage of the battleship and the Lipsett tugboats , while the United States Coast Guard declared intentions to guarantee safe passage . The Under Secretary of the Navy Department was sent to defuse what the media began to call the " Battle of Newark Bay " , with the city agreeing to the breaking up of New Mexico and two other battleships before scrapping operations in Newark Bay ceased , and Lipsett under instructions to dismantle the ships in a set timeframe or suffer financial penalties . Scrapping commenced in November and was completed by July 1948 .

= = Description = =

New Mexico was 624 feet (190 m) long overall and had a beam of 97 ft 5 in (29 @.@ 69 m) and a draft of 30 ft (9 @.@ 1 m) . She displaced 31 @,@ 000 long tons (32 @,@ 000 t) as designed and up to 32 @,@ 000 long tons (33 @,@ 000 t) at full load . She had a crew of 1 @,@ 084 officers and enlisted men . The ship 's main armament comprised twelve 14 @-@ inch (356 mm) / 50 caliber guns mounted three guns in each of four turrets , with each turret weighing 980 tonnes (1 @,@ 080 short tons) . The secondary battery consisted of fourteen 5 @-@ inch (127 mm) / 51 caliber guns , with all of them being removed in May 1942 . The anti @-@ aircraft defense consisted of four 3 @-@ inch (76 mm) / 50 caliber guns , which were soon replaced by a battery of eight 5 @-@ inch (127 mm) / 25 caliber guns . As was standard for capital ships of the period , she carried two 21 @-@ inch (533 mm) torpedo tubes in deck mounted torpedo launchers .

New Mexico 's main armored belt was 13 @.@ 5 in (343 mm) thick over the magazines and the machinery spaces and 8 in (203 mm) elsewhere . The main battery gun turrets had 18 @-@ inch (460 mm) thick faces , and the supporting barbettes had 13 in (330 mm) of armor plating on their exposed sides . Armor that was 3 @.@ 5 in (89 mm) thick protected the decks . The conning tower had 11 @.@ 5 in (290 mm) thick sides .

= = Propulsion system = =

Unlike the other two battleships of this class which used geared turbines , New Mexico had turbo @-@ electric transmission , in which the high @-@ speed steam turbine drove a set of generators providing electricity to electric motors turning the propeller shafts . The engines were rated at 27 @,@ 500 shaft horsepower (20 @,@ 500 kW) and had nine Babcock & Wilcox boilers , generating

a top speed of 21 knots (39 km / h ; 24 mph) . She had a range of 8 @, @ 000 nautical miles (9 @, @ 200 mi) at a cruising speed of 10 knots (19 km / h ; 12 mph) .

General Electric ran an advertisement titled " The " Constitution " of To @-@ day ? Electronically Propelled " with a drawing of New Mexico next to USS Constitution . The ad touted the battleship as " the first of any nation to be electrically propelled " . The electrical generating plant was said to put out 27 @, @ 500 shaft horsepower (20 @, @ 500 kW) for a cruising speed of 10 knots (19 km / h ; 12 mph) . GE called it one of the most important achievements of the scientific age and related it to consumer products noting that " so general are the applications of electricity to the needs of mankind that scarcely a home or individual today need be without the benefits of General Electric products and service . " An illustrated booklet titled " The Electric Ship " was offered free of charge upon request .

A comparison of the turbo @-@ electric propulsion with the more conventional direct @-@ drive turbine design used on her sister ships showed that the conventional design generated 2 @. @ 5 times the power per ton of machinery and required 1 / 3 the floor area although at the cost of 20 % greater fuel consumption , always a concern for the U.S. Navy given Pacific distances . The turbo @-@ electric design allowed for the equipment to be split between smaller watertight compartments , which was a potential benefit should parts of the engine space be attacked and flooded . There was a design weakness in that all electrical connections went through a single switch room , which could entirely disable the ship were that room to be hit . Saratoga , which used a similar propulsion design , lost power for five minutes when it was hit by a torpedo in 1942 . The scheme of watertight subdivisions was further weakened by large ventilation trunks passing through bulkheads and glass windows in the generator room bulkhead .

= = Service history = =

New Mexico 's keel was laid down on 14 October 1915 by the New York Navy Yard . She was launched on 23 April 1917 . The ship was sponsored by Miss Margaret Cabeza De Baca , the daughter of the recently deceased Governor of New Mexico , Ezequiel Cabeza De Baca (died on 28 February 1917) . She was commissioned on 20 May 1918 , with Captain Ashley Herman Robertson in charge .

After New Mexico passed her initial trials , she left New York Harbor on 15 January 1919 for Brest , to escort the ship George Washington . The George Washington was carrying President Woodrow Wilson on his return from the Versailles Peace Conference to the U.S. She returned to the Hampton Roads area on 27 February . New Mexico became the flagship of the newly created United States Pacific Fleet on 16 July and three days later she left Hampton for San Pedro , California . She passed through the Panama Canal and arrived at San Pedro on 9 August . Two of her 5 @-@ inch (130 mm) / 51 caliber guns were removed in a later overhaul , in 1922 .

The next twelve years consisted of training exercises and maneuvers in the Pacific and the Caribbean , with the Pacific and the Atlantic Fleets . She also took several cruises to South American ports and was used for the early development of PID controllers . Invented by the Russian @-@ American engineer Nicolas Minorsky for the automated steering of ships , the devices have since become widespread in control engineering . After that , in 1925 , she took a cruise to Australia and New Zealand .

After her training exercises in the Atlantic and the Pacific were finished , New Mexico was overhauled and modernized at the Philadelphia Harbor by the Navy from March 1931 to January 1933 . The overhaul included the replacement of her turbo @-@ electric drive with more conventional geared turbines , which were made by Curtis . In addition , New Mexico received eight 5 @-@ inch (127 mm) / 25 caliber anti @-@ aircraft guns , replacing the four 3 @-@ inch (76 mm) guns that had been previously installed . After the overhaul , she returned the Pacific to continue training exercises and the development of tactical operations .

Even in 1936 during Fleet Problem XVII , she was one of the fastest battleships in the Navy , having a maximum speed of 21 knots (39 km / h ; 24 mph) , higher than most U.S. battleships , but only 1 @. @ 5 knots (2 @. @ 8 km / h ; 1 @. @ 7 mph) faster than Japan 's slowest battleships .

This led to the development of the North Carolina @-@ class battleship and South Dakota @-@ class battleship . In 1937 , she arrived in Hawaii to sail to Dutch Harbor , Alaska , where she and several other ships were sent to help the Navy evaluate fighting in sub @-@ arctic conditions .

= = = World War II = = =

= = = 1940 ? 43 = = =

As the prospect of war grew , New Mexico 's was based at Pearl Harbor , Hawaii , from 6 December 1940 to 20 May 1941 . She then left Pearl Harbor to join the Atlantic fleet at Norfolk on 16 June for neutrality patrol duty along the Atlantic coast . In the Atlantic , she served on three 7 ? 14 day " shifts " following destroyers to escort convoys across the Atlantic . On 10 December , while headed to Hampton Roads (en route to the west coast after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor) , she accidentally rammed and sank the U.S. freighter Oregon south of the Nantucket Lightship off Boston Harbor . She managed to reach the Panama Canal by 17 January 1942 .

During an overhaul in May 1942 , at the Puget Sound Navy Yard , she had her secondary battery of twelve 5 in / 51 guns removed to make space for more anti @-@ aircraft guns . After the overhaul , which was completed on 1 August , she departed San Francisco to Hawaii to prepare for action . From 6 December to 22 March 1943 , she escorted convoys and transports to the Fiji Islands . After that , she patrolled the southwestern Pacific , before returning to Pearl Harbor to get ready for the Aleutian Islands Campaign . After her training , on 17 May , she steamed to Adak , which would be her base for the attack on Attu . She later participated in the shelling of Kiska on 21 July , which led to the Japanese evacuation of the island a week later .

After the Aleutian Islands Campaign , a refit was undertaken at the Puget Sound Navy Yard . On 25 October , New Mexico returned to Pearl Harbor to practice for the invasion of the Gilbert Islands . On 20 November , while the invasion was underway , she shelled Makin Atoll . During the fighting on the islands the ship was tasked with guarding transports at night when they retreated from the islands , providing anti @-@ aircraft fire for the unloading of supplies and troops , and providing screening fire for the aircraft carriers . After U.S. troops captured the Gilbert Islands on 5 December , New Mexico returned to Pearl Harbor .

= = = 1944 = = =

New Mexico was part of the Marshall Islands invasion force on 12 January 1944 . She shelled Kwajalein and Ebeye from 31 January to 1 February . Replenishing at Majuro , on 20 February the ship shelled Wotje , and then the following month also shelled New Ireland and Kavieng . After that , she sailed to the Solomon Islands to practice the attack on the Mariana Islands , stopping at Sydney , in Australia , on the way .

In mid @-@ June , New Mexico joined the shelling of Tinian , and also bombarded Saipan and Guam . On 18 June , she helped drive away two air attacks . Later , on 20 June , she escorted transports off the Mariana Islands . Meanwhile , the carrier task force destroyed the Japanese carrier force at the Battle of the Philippine Sea . Later , she escorted troop transports to the naval base of Eniwetok . On 9 July , she sailed to guard escort carriers until 12 July . Her guns later hit Guam on 21 July and kept on shelling the island until 30 July .

After the invasion of the Mariana Islands , she received an overhaul at Bremerton , Washington , from October to November . After the overhaul , she arrived in Leyte Gulf to escort reinforcement and supply transports and convoys . She dealt with daily air attacks , as the Japanese put up heavy resistance to the liberation of the Philippines . She departed Leyte Gulf on 2 December to the Palaus , where she later joined a Mindoro @-@ bound convoy . She provided anti @-@ aircraft fire for the convoy and provided cover fire for invading forces . She provided cover for two more days before retiring to the Palaus .

===== 1945 =====

New Mexico 's next task in the Philippines was the liberation of Luzon . She took part in the pre-@-@ invasion shelling of Lingayen Gulf on 6 January . During the bombardment she came under heavy kamikaze attack , one of which hit her bridge , killing her commanding officer , Captain Robert Walton Fleming , and 29 others . The dead included Lieutenant General Herbert Lumsden , the British representative to General of the Army Douglas MacArthur . A further 87 of her crew were wounded . Bruce Fraser , the commander of the British Pacific Fleet , narrowly escaped death while on her bridge , although his secretary was killed . The guns remained in action as the ship 's crew repaired the damage while the invasion troops were landing on the beaches .

More extensive repairs were completed at Pearl Harbor , after which New Mexico sailed to the island of Ulithi to rehearse the invasion of Okinawa as part of a large fire @-@ support group . Her heavy guns opened up on Okinawa on 26 March , and for the next month she continued to support the US troops ashore . On 11 May , she destroyed eight Shinyo suicide boats .

While she was approaching her berth in the Hagushi anchorage , just after sunset on 12 May , she was attacked by two kamikazes . One of them plunged into her , the other managed to hit her with its bomb . She was set on fire and 54 members of New Mexico 's crew were killed , while a further 119 were wounded . Swift action led to the fires being extinguished within 30 minutes . On 28 May , she departed for repairs at Leyte , followed by rehearsals for the planned invasion of the Japan . Word of the war 's end reached her when she was at Saipan on 15 August . The next day she sailed for Okinawa to join the occupation force . She entered Sagami Wan on 27 August to support the airborne occupation of Atsugi Airfield . The next day New Mexico passed into Tokyo Bay to witness the Japanese surrender , which took place on 2 September . She departed Tokyo Bay on 6 September , passing Okinawa , Hawaii , and the Panama Canal , before arriving at Boston on 17 October .

=== Postwar ===

New Mexico was decommissioned in Boston on 19 July 1946 , and was struck from the Naval Vessel Register on 25 February 1947 . On 9 November 1947 , she was sold for scrapping to the Lipsett Division of Luria Bros , for \$ 381 @, @ 600 .

Lipsett decided to tow New Mexico for scrapping at Newark , New Jersey . The proximity of Newark to rail lines made it an ideal location for dismantling the ship and hauling away the steel . In early November 1947 New Mexico departed Boston , towed by two tugs . On 12 November , while off the coast of New York , the tugs pulling the battleship encountered heavy weather and were forced to cut the tow lines . Running lights were kept on aboard New Mexico along with three crewmembers , but the tugs eventually lost sight of the battleship . New Mexico then drifted as a derelict until spotted by a Coast Guard plane the next day , 35 miles off the coast . The two tugs then secured tow lines and continued the journey to the scrapyard .

Newark city officials decided they did not want any more ships scrapped along the city 's waterfront . Newark was implementing a beautification plan for the waterfront , and had allocated \$ 70 million for improvements . As such , the city declared that any attempt to bring New Mexico to Newark would be blocked . Two city fireboats , Michael P. Duffy and William T. Brennan , were dispatched and were prepared to use their fire hoses and chemical sprayers to halt Lipsett and New Mexico . In response , Lipsett organized its own force of four tugs , and the United States Coast Guard declared it would guarantee safe passage of New Mexico , provided legal entry was permitted . This showdown was dubbed by the press as the " Battle of Newark Bay " , while the Santa Fe Chamber of Commerce announced it would protest Newark 's " slur " of New Mexico 's namesake , through its refusal to admit the battleship .

As New Mexico awaited suitable tidal conditions to make the final tow into Newark , the Navy Department sent Under Secretary W. John Kenney to negotiate . After several sessions , he arranged a tenuous agreement between the City of Newark and Lipsett . Newark would allow New Mexico and two other battleships , Idaho and Wyoming , to be scrapped at Newark , but there would

be no permanent ship dismantling facility . Lipsett had nine months to dispose of the three ships , or would be subjected to a fine of \$ 1 @, @ 000 per day after the deadline .

New Mexico finally entered Newark Channel on 19 November , and was greeted by the same Newark fireboats that had earlier been sent to oppose the ship . Newark also arranged to have school children honor the old battleship dockside , with a marching band . New Mexico was subsequently joined by Idaho and Wyoming , where all three were finally dismantled . Scrapping of New Mexico began on 24 November and was completed by July 1948 .

= = Awards = =

The following awards were presented to the ship for its service during World War II :

American Defense Service Medal with " Fleet " clasp

American Campaign Medal

Asiatic @-@ Pacific Campaign Medal with six battle stars

World War II Victory Medal

Navy Occupation Medal with " Asia " clasp

Philippine Liberation Medal with two stars