

= Spanish battleship Alfonso XIII =

Alfonso XIII was a Spanish dreadnought battleship , the second member of the España class . She had two sister ships , España and Jaime I. Alfonso XIII was built by the SECN shipyard ; she was laid down in February 1910 , launched in May 1913 , and completed in August 1915 . Named after King Alfonso XIII of Spain , she was renamed España in 1931 after the king was exiled following the proclamation of the Second Spanish Republic . The new name was the namesake of her earlier sister ship , the España that served in the Spanish fleet from 1913 to 1923 .

Alfonso XIII served in the Spanish fleet from 1915 to 1937 . Spain remained neutral during World War I , and so Alfonso XIII and her sisters were the only European dreadnoughts to avoid the war . She and her sisters participated in the Rif War , where they provided gunfire support to Spanish Army forces . The ship was seized by General Francisco Franco at the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War . While steaming off Santander on 30 April 1937 , she struck a mine and sank ; most of her crew was taken off by the destroyer Velasco .

= = Technical characteristics = =

Alfonso XIII was 132 @. @ 6 m (435 ft) long at the waterline and 140 m (460 ft) long overall . She had a beam of 24 m (79 ft) and a draft of 7 @. @ 8 m (26 ft) ; her freeboard was 15 ft (4 @. @ 6 m) amidships . Her propulsion system consisted of four @- @ shaft Parsons steam turbines and twelve Yarrow boilers . The engines were rated at 15 @, @ 500 shaft horsepower (11 @, @ 600 kW) and produced a top speed of 19 @. @ 5 knots (36 @. @ 1 km / h ; 22 @. @ 4 mph) . Alfonso XIII had a cruising radius of 5 @, @ 000 nautical miles (9 @, @ 300 km ; 5 @, @ 800 mi) at a speed of 10 knots (19 km / h ; 12 mph) . Her crew consisted of 854 officers and enlisted men .

Alfonso XIII was armed with a main battery of eight 305 mm (12 @. @ 0 in) / 50 guns , mounted in four twin gun turrets . One turret was placed forward , two were positioned en echelon amidships , and the fourth was aft of the superstructure . This mounting scheme was chosen in preference to superimposed turrets , as was done in the South Carolinas , to save weight and cost . Her secondary battery consisted of twenty 102 mm (4 @. @ 0 in) guns mounted in casemates along the length of the hull . They were too close to the waterline , however , which made them unusable in heavy seas . She was also armed with four 3 @- @ pounder guns and two machine guns . Her armored belt was 203 mm (8 @. @ 0 in) thick amidships ; the main battery turrets were protected with the same amount of armor plate . The conning tower had 254 mm (10 @. @ 0 in) thick sides . Her armored deck was 38 mm (1 @. @ 5 in) thick .

= = Operational history = =

Alfonso XIII was laid down at the Sociedad Española de Construcción Naval shipyard in Ferrol on 23 February 1910 . She was launched on 7 May 1913 , and completed on 16 August 1915 . After their completion , Alfonso XIII and her sisters , España and Jaime I , the three battleships formed the 1st Squadron of the Spanish fleet . Spain remained neutral after the outbreak of World War I in August 1914 , so Alfonso XIII and her sisters were the only European dreadnoughts to avoid the war . In August 1917 , Alfonso XIII assisted in the suppression of general strikes in Vizcaya and Bilbao . After the end of the war , Alfonso XIII conducted cruises to show the flag , including a visit to Annapolis , Maryland , in 1920 , during which USS Reina Mercedes , a former Spanish Navy cruiser captured by the United States during the Spanish ? American War in 1898 , flew the Spanish flag to honor her visit .

Throughout the early 1920s , she provided fire support to the Spanish Army in its campaigns in Morocco during the Rif War . On 17 September 1921 , she and España bombarded Rif positions south of Melilla while Spanish Foreign Legion troops assaulted the positions . In August 1923 , she participated in the first aerial , naval , and land combined arms operation in Spanish military history . In September 1925 , she provided fire support for the Al Hoceima landings , a decisive Franco @- @ Spanish operation ; there , she served as the flagship of the Spanish naval contingent .

In April 1931 , after the advent of the Second Spanish Republic , Alfonso XIII became part of the Spanish Republican Navy and was renamed España , the name previously held by her sister ship España , which had been wrecked in 1923 while engaged in combat operations at Cape Tres Forcas . By 1934 , the renamed España was laid up at Ferrol awaiting disposal . That year , the Spanish Navy considered rebuilding the ship and Jaime I into analogues to the German Deutschland @-@ class cruisers , with new oil @-@ fired boilers . The ships ' hulls would have been lengthened , and the main battery turrets rearranged so they would all be on the centerline . The ships ' secondary batteries would have been replaced with dual @-@ purpose 120 mm (4 @. @ 7 in) guns . The plan was nevertheless abandoned . In 1936 , the Navy again proposed a modernization for the two ships . It was a less radical plan , and called for additional anti @-@ aircraft guns , modern fire control equipment , oil @-@ fired boilers , and an increase to the elevation of the main guns .

At the time of General Francisco Franco 's coup in July 1936 the battleship was still laid up in Ferrol . As detachments of the army , including some coastal artillery units around the harbor , sided with Franco 's Nationalists , sailors who supported the Republican government took control of the ship with the intent of resisting the coup . Along with the crew of the cruiser Almirante Cervera , España engaged in an artillery duel with the shore batteries and the Nationalist @-@ controlled destroyer Velasco . The engagement lasted several days and resulted in considerable destruction in the harbor , while Velasco was also heavily damaged before the crews of España and Almirante Cervera were convinced to surrender . España was then refitted and fought on the Nationalist side in the Spanish Civil War , operating as part of a naval task force along with Almirante Cervera and Velasco , which captured or drove back a number of Republican and foreign merchant ships . España seized the Republican freighter Mar Báltico with a cargo of iron ore on 13 February 1937 , and on 30 April she prevented the entry of the British steamer Consett to Santander by firing her main guns across the freighter 's bows . According to Nationalist sources the Consett and other blockade @-@ runners were escorted at the time by the destroyer HMS Forester . Later that day the España accidentally struck a mine laid by her own side and sank three hours later off the coast near Santander , while assisting the destroyer Velasco in turning away the British merchantman Knistley . While the ship was sinking , Republican aircraft attacked her . All her crew , with the exception of five seamen , were rescued by the Velasco .