

SENATOR J. JAMES EXON  
U.S.S. PLATTE COMMISSIONING  
NORFOLK, VIRGINIA  
APRIL 16, 1983

ADMIRAL McDONALD, ADMIRALS IN SERVICE AND RETIRED,  
DISTINGUISHED GUESTS, CAPTAIN NORTON AND THE OFFICERS AND MEN  
OF THE PLATTE, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, FRIENDS OF THE NAVY ALL.

IT GIVES ME A GREAT DEAL OF PLEASURE TO BE TODAY'S SPEAKER  
AT THIS, ONE OF AMERICA'S OLDEST AND FINEST TRADITIONS--THE  
COMMISSIONING OF A NEW NAVAL SHIP. FOR A NATION AS RELATIVELY  
YOUNG AS OURS--ONLY 207 YEARS OLD--OUR TRADITIONS ARE AS RICH  
AND COLORFUL AS THOSE OF ANY NATION ON EARTH. I KNOW THAT  
TODAY'S CEREMONY WILL BE LONG REMEMBERED BY THOSE OF US WHO  
ARE PRIVILEGED TO PARTICIPATE IN IT AND I APPRECIATE THE  
INVITATION FROM THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY TO BE YOUR SPEAKER.

THE PREDECESSOR OF TODAY'S PLATTE SERVED IN THREE WARS  
DURING HER ILLUSTRIOUS HISTORY SPANNING THE YEARS 1939 TO 1970  
AND EARNED 17 BATTLE STARS FOR SERVICE DURING THAT TIME. OUR  
COUNTRY COMMISSIONS THIS LATEST U.S.S. PLATTE, AND ALL OF HER  
SISTER NAVY SHIPS, IN THE FERVENT HOPE THAT BATTLE STARS WILL  
NEVER AGAIN HAVE TO BE EARNED. YET DESPITE OUR BEST HOPES AND  
PRAYERS, HISTORY TELLS US THAT WE MUST BE PREPARED FOR  
CONTINGENCIES AND THE ACTIONS OF THOSE WHO WOULD THREATEN OUR  
NATION AND OUR INTERESTS. WE SPEAK A GREAT DEAL ABOUT DETERRENCE

THESE DAYS--THE DETERRENCE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND THE DETERRENCE OF OUR CONVENTIONAL LAND, SEA AND AIR FORCES. YET MOST OF OUR DETERRENT FORCES ARE LARGELY NOT VISIBLE IN PERSON TO THOSE WE ARE HOPING TO DETER.

THE SOVIETS CANNOT GET CLOSE TO A MINUTEMAN MISSILE OR A FIGHTER AIRCRAFT OR AN M-1 BATTLE TANK VERY OFTEN. NORMALLY, THEY PHOTOGRAPH THEM, READ ABOUT THEM AND THEN ATTEMPT TO JUDGE THEIR PERFORMANCE. HOWEVER, OUR NAVAL FORCES ARE THERE FOR ALL TO SEE, AROUND THE WORLD, AND DOING IN PEACETIME ALMOST ALL OF THE TASKS THEY WOULD BE REQUIRED TO PERFORM IN WARTIME. THE SOVIET NAVY LITERALLY OPERATES WITH OUR BATTLE GROUPS AND TASK FORCES. ON A DAILY BASIS, THE SOVIET NAVY CAN OBSERVE UNDERWAY REPLENISHMENT OPERATIONS, 24-HOUR-A-DAY AIRCRAFT CARRIER FLIGHT OPERATIONS AND ANTI-SUBMARINE WARFARE EXERCISES. THEY KNOW MOST OF OUR CAPABILITIES AND MOST OF OUR TACTICS--AND THEY KNOW WE'RE BETTER!

THE PLATTE MOTTO, "EXCELLENCE THROUGH QUALITY", SAYS IT ALL. OUR SHIPS ARE BETTER, OUR WEAPONS ARE BETTER AND, MOST IMPORTANTLY, OUR PEOPLE ARE BETTER. OUR NAVY MEN AND WOMEN AND THEIR FAMILIES REPRESENT THE CUTTING EDGE OF U.S. NAVAL POWER. WHILE SOVIET NAVAL POWER IS EXPANDING AND, INDEED, THE SOVIETS HAVE BECOME A GLOBAL NAVAL POWER DURING THE LAST FEW YEARS, OUR NAVY HAS BEEN OPERATING AT A HIGH TEMPO ON A WORLDWIDE BASIS FOR DECADES. WHILE SOVIET SHIP CAPTAINS ADHERE TO THEIR RIGID SYSTEM OF CENTRAL COMMAND AND CONTROL, OUR SHIP CAPTAINS EXERCISE INITIATIVE

ON-THE-SPOT AND CAN TAKE ADVANTAGE OF UNFOLDING SITUATIONS. OUR SHIP CREWS ARE HERE BECAUSE THEY WANT TO SERVE AND TAKE PRIDE IN THEIR WORK. THEIR SOVIET COUNTERPARTS ARE DRAFTEES WHO ARE PAID A LITTLE OVER \$7 PER MONTH DURING THEIR FIRST TOUR OF DUTY AND WHO REQUIRE CLOSE SUPERVISION AND POLITICAL INDOCTRINATION ONBOARD SHIP. DESPITE THIS SPARTAN EXISTENCE, HOWEVER, SOVIET SAILORS MAY NOT BE AS UNHAPPY AS YOU MIGHT THINK. AFTER ALL, THE DOMESTIC EXISTENCE OF A SOVIET CIVILIAN IS ALSO A BLEAK PICTURE AS A RESULT OF THE BANKRUPTCY OF THEIR ENTIRE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL SYSTEM.

OUR NAVY IS ON THE MOVE AND GETTING STRONGER MONTH BY MONTH. AS A MEMBER OF THE SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE SINCE 1979, AND RANKING MINORITY MEMBER OF THE MANPOWER SUBCOMMITTEE, I HAVE SHARED WITH YOU THE UNHAPPY EXPERIENCES OF THE WORST OF THE PERSONNEL SHORTAGES AND THE RECORD-SETTING, LENGTHY DEPLOYMENTS TO THE INDIAN OCEAN. FORTUNATELY, ALTHOUGH LATER THAN MANY OF US WOULD HAVE LIKED, OUR GOVERNMENT REACTED TO THESE CRISES IN OUR NAVY WITH BETTER PAY, IMPROVED WORKING CONDITIONS AND AN ENHANCED SHIPBUILDING PROGRAM. I VIEW AN IMPORTANT PART OF MY JOB AS A SENATOR WITH RESPONSIBILITY IN THIS AREA AS HELPING TO ENSURE THAT WE NEVER GO THROUGH SUCH A TENUOUS PERIOD AGAIN. WE'RE MAKING GREAT STRIDES IN PROVIDING OUR NAVY MEN AND WOMEN WITH ADEQUATE COMPENSATION AND THE TOOLS WHICH THEY NEED TO DO THEIR JOBS, AND I PLEDGE MY CONTINUED EFFORTS IN THE PURSUIT OF THIS GOAL.

THE OFFICERS AND MEN WHO MAKE UP THE CREW OF THIS FINE SHIP WE ARE COMMISSIONING TODAY CAN TRULY BE PROUD OF THEIR ACCOMPLISHMENT IN MAKING THE U.S.S. PLATTE READY FOR SERVICE. I KNOW YOU'LL ALL BE RELIEVED TO FINALLY BE AT THE POINT WHERE YOU CAN TAKE HER TO SEA AND DO YOUR JOBS. THE FLEET NEEDS YOU. OUR LOGISTICS FORCE SHIPS MAINTAIN AS RIGOROUS AN AT-SEA OPERATING TEMPO AS ANY SHIPS IN THE NAVY. THE FLEET GOES NOWHERE WITHOUT YOU. THE PLATTE, AND HER SISTER REPLENISHMENT SHIPS, WILL GIVE OUR NAVY THE FLEXIBILITY AND ENDURANCE TO CARRY OUT ITS MANY AND VARIED MISSIONS ANYWHERE AND AT ANYTIME.

I WANT TO TAKE A MOMENT AND SPEAK TO THE NAVY FAMILY MEMBERS WHO ARE PRESENT. YOU CAN BE VERY PROUD OF THE MEN WHO SERVE IN THIS SHIP. YOU CAN ALSO BE VERY PROUD OF THE INDISPENSABLE ROLE YOU PLAY IN OUR NATION'S DEFENSE. THE AMERICAN PEOPLE DEMAND A GREAT DEAL FROM THEIR MILITARY PERSONNEL AND THEIR FAMILIES. LONG DEPLOYMENTS HALFWAY ACROSS THE GLOBE, RAISING CHILDREN AND CARING FOR HOMES ALONE, ONE PERSON TACKLING LIFE'S PROBLEMS WHICH ARE NORMALLY HANDLED BY TWO--ALL OF THESE ARE PART OF NAVY LIFE. YOU ARE SHOULDERING THESE BURDENS UNSELFISHLY AND OUR COUNTRY THANKS YOU. SIMPLY PUT, WITHOUT YOUR SUPPORT, WE WOULD NOT HAVE THE FIRST-CLASS NAVY WE HAVE TODAY.

AND SO, AS WE LOOK BACK TO THE MARVELOUS ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF OUR GREAT COUNTRY AND LOOK FORWARD TO MEETING NEW CHALLENGES IN THE QUEST FOR PEACE, LET US ALSO REMEMBER THAT FUTURE

ACCOMPLISHMENTS CAN ONLY BE REALIZED IF ATTEMPTED FROM A BACKDROP OF SECURITY FOR OUR PEOPLE. STRONG NAVAL FORCES ARE ESSENTIAL TO OUR NATIONAL SECURITY. AND STRONG NAVAL FORCES REQUIRE THE KIND OF DEDICATED AND COMPETENT SAILORS AND FAMILIES I HAVE THE PLEASURE OF BEING WITH HERE TODAY.

TO YOU, THE OFFICERS AND MEN OF THE NEW PLATTE, I BRING GREETINGS AND BEST WISHES FROM THE PROUD AND DEDICATED PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF NEBRASKA. GODSPEED TO YOU IN YOUR IMPORTANT ENDEAVORS. AS THE PLATTE RIVER CONNECTS THE GREAT STATE OF NEBRASKA FROM WEST TO EAST, SO WILL THE U.S.S. PLATTE LINK OUR FORWARD-DEPLOYED NAVAL FORCES WITH THE RESOURCES THEY NEED TO KEEP THE PEACE AND DEFEND OUR FREEDOM. CAPTAIN NORTON, AS YOU AND YOUR MEN TAKE THIS FINE SHIP TO SEA AND CONTINUE OUR GREAT NAVY TRADITION, I WISH YOU GODSPEED, "FAIR WINDS AND FOLLOWING SEAS" AND THE BEST OF EVERYTHING.

**Welcome Aboard**



**UNITED STATES SHIP**

**P L A T T E**

**AO-186**

## Coat of Arms USS PLATTE (AO-186)

### Blazon

- SHIELD:** Azure within an orle wavy argent a saltire treble — parted and quarter — pierced of the field or charged with a fireball gold flamant of seven proper.
- CREST:** On a wreath or and azure a lymphad, oars in action, proper, on the sail set vert, a chevron wavy reversed argent charged with two chevrons wavy reversed of the second; on a pennant flotant to dexter azure two mullets gold.
- MOTTO:** On a scroll azure reversed argent, the motto EXCELLENCE THROUGH QUALITY in silver letters.

### Symbolism

- SHIELD:** Blue and gold are the traditional colors of the Navy. The white wavy border on the blue field represents the U.S. fleet. The fireball suggests energy and is centered on the divided saltire that radiates to the border symbolizing the Platte's mission of distribution of various fuels to the fleet and its aircraft.
- CREST:** The lymphad suggests the long term of service of the first USS Platte, (first member of the Navy's 30 year club). The two blue wavy reversed chevrons on the green sail symbolize the second ship to bear the name of the river which winds through the rich farmland of America's plains states. The two stars on the pennant allude to the two wars and seventeen battle stars awarded the first Platte.

### Seal

The coat of arms emblazoned upon a white oval enclosed within a blue oval — shaped collar edged inside an outside with gold rope and inscribed USS PLATTE at the top and AO-186 at the base all in gold letters.



### **Platte characteristics**

Keel laid: 2 February 1981

Christened: 30 January 1982

Commissioned: 29 January 1983

Length overall: 591 feet, 6 inches

Beam (Max.): 88 feet

Draft (Full Load): 31 feet, 4 inches

Displacement (Full Load): 26,110 Tons

Fuel Capacity: 5,040,000 Gallons  
60% Diesel Fuel Marine  
40% JP-5

Sustained Speed: 20 Knots

Built by: Avondale Shipyards, Incorporated  
New Orleans, Louisiana



## **COMMANDING OFFICER**

**JAMES L. NORTON**

**COMMANDER**

**UNITED STATES NAVY**

Commander Norton was born in Thomasville, North Carolina on 7 August 1942, the son of James G. and Dorothy (Steed) Norton. He was graduated from Thomasville Senior High School in 1960, and Duke University in 1964. He was commissioned an Ensign from the Duke Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps on 27 July 1964.

Following commissioning, he served in USS CHARLES F. ADAMS (DDG-2) as Main Propulsion Assistant. This tour was followed by service in USS FRONTIER (AD-42) as Main Propulsion and Damage Control Assistant from May 1966 until June 1967. Subsequent to this assignment he served in USS LAWRENCE (DDG-4) as Navigator and Damage Control Assistant prior to attending the Naval Destroyer School Department Head course in May 1968. He served as Weapons Department Head in USS DAVIDSON (DE-1045) from December 1968 until January 1971, and as Surface ASW Officer on the Staff of Commander Carrier Group THREE from September 1973 until October 1975. Commander Norton's most recent tour at sea was Executive Officer of USS SANTA BARBARA (AE-28).

He is a graduate of the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey (Master of Science, Operation Research). His shore assignments have been as Mobile Logistics Support Force New Construction Programs Coordinator in the office of the Chief of Naval Operations and as a strategic analyst for the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Commander Norton's personal awards include the Meritorious Service Medal, Joint Services Commendation Medal, Navy Commendation Medal (two awards), and numerous service and campaign ribbons.

Commander Norton is married to the former Elizabeth Williams of Alcoa, Tennessee. They have three children: Elizabeth, James and Venessa.



## **EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

**LAWRENCE F. DIDDLEMEYER**

**LIEUTENANT COMMANDER**

**U.S. NAVY**

LCDR Diddlemeyer enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps after graduating from high school in 1964. Eighteen months later, he was selected to attend the U.S. Naval Academy. LCDR Diddlemeyer graduated and was commissioned an Ensign in June 1969. His first duty assignment was as DASH Officer and 3M Coordinator aboard the Yokosuka homeported destroyer USS LEONARD F. MASON (DD-852). He later assumed duties as the USS MASON's First Lieutenant and Gunnery Officer. In June 1971, LCDR Diddlemeyer received orders to Naval Advisory Group Vietnam. In June 1971, LCDR Diddlemeyer received orders to Naval Advisory Group Vietnam. After a year of Vietnamese language training, he reported to the West Delta Advisory Element at Chou Doc, Vietnam as the Maintenance Advisor. In November 1972, LCDR Diddlemeyer was evacuated to the Naval Hospital in Boston, Massachusetts. After recovering from a leg injury, he served as the Boston Navy Shipyard Athletic Director until he attended the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California in June 1973. He graduated with a Master's Degree in Oceanography in June 1975, and then reported to the Surface Warfare Officer School in Newport, Rhode Island to attend Department Head School.

In June 1976, LCDR Diddlemeyer reported as the Weapons Officer of the Philadelphia homeported destroyer USS HAROLD J. ELLISON (DD-864). The following year, he completed his qualifications for command aboard USS ELLISON. LCDR Diddlemeyer then reported to the fleet oiler USS CANISTEO (AO-99) in February 1978 as the Operations Officer. He subsequently assumed the duties of First Lieutenant on board USS CANISTEO during a deployment to the Mediterranean Sea in 1979. After departing USS CANISTEO, LCDR Diddlemeyer reported to the Commander Operational Test and Evaluation Force in March 1980, assuming duties as the Operational Testing Director for towed-array sonar systems. In March 1982, LCDR Diddlemeyer was assigned as PXO of the new construction fleet oiler PLATJE (AO-186).

LCDR Diddlemeyer is married to the former Joanne Marie Marengi of Boston, Massachusetts. Mrs. Diddlemeyer is a teacher with a Master's Degree in Reading. The Diddlemeyer's have one daughter, Lisa Marie, born in 1978.

## **History of Ship's Name**

PLATTE derives her name from the Platte River. The river has its origins in two branches which form in the Rocky Mountains. The North Platte flows out of the mountains in Wyoming while the South Platte starts in the Colorado section of the Rockies. These two branches join in Western Nebraska to form the Platte River. The river transverses Nebraska to empty into the Missouri at the Nebraska-Iowa border. While not a large river, the Platte played a key position in our country's development.

Beaver trappers for years worked the river to bring to the entire world the beaver top hat. The Oregon Trail followed the banks of the river for hundreds of miles. Water from the Platte provided the irrigation necessary for the sugar industry from which sugar was extracted with the pulp being used to feed the infant cattle feed not industry.

Today, the river still provides water for irrigation in Nebraska and Colorado.

A previous fleet oiler, christened USS PLATTE (AO-24), was built by the Bethlehem Steel Company of Baltimore, Maryland and launched 8 July 1939. She had a very distinguished record of service during World War II, serving in campaigns which included Midway, Guadalcanal, Okinawa, the Marianas and the Philippine Islands. After the surrender of Japan, USS PLATTE remained in Tokyo Bay as the Station Tanker for the Occupation Forces.

During the peace following World War II, PLATTE continued to serve units of the Pacific Fleet until 1951 when she was again called into wartime service with the United Nations Forces in Korea.

PLATTE made almost yearly deployments to the western Pacific from 1954 to 1968, including extensive operations in Vietnamese waters and the refueling of the Enterprise Task Group off Korea during the USS PUEBLO crisis.

PLATTE received 11 battle stars for service in World War II and 6 battle stars for Korean War service.

USS PLATTE continued to render distinguished service until 25 September 1970 when she was stricken from the Naval Register. When decommissioned, USS PLATTE (AO-24) was the oldest active duty vessel in the U.S. Navy.

### **Ship's Mission**

The mission of the PLATTE is to transport bulk petroleum products from the shore depots to AOE's, AOR's and AO's, effecting delivery underway, including consolidation; to deliver bulk petroleum products to combatants and support forces underway; and to deliver limited fleet freight, mail and personnel.

**Excellence**

**Through**

**Quality**

COMMISSIONING  
CEREMONY

**United States Ship**  
**PLATTE**  
**(AO-186)**



16 APRIL 1983



## Coat of Arms USS PLATTE (AO-186)

### Blazon

- SHIELD:** Azure within an orle wavy argent a saltire treble-parted and quarter-pierced of the field or charged with a fireball gold flammant of seven proper.
- CREST:** On a wreath or and azure a lymphad, oars in action, proper, on the sail set vert, a chevron wavy reversed argent charged with two chevronels wavy reversed of the second; on a pennant flotant to dexter azure two mullets gold.
- MOTTO:** On a scroll azure reversed argent, the motto EXCELLENCE THROUGH QUALITY in silver letters.

### Symbolism

- SHIELD:** Blue and gold are the traditional colors of the Navy. The white wavy border on the blue field represents the U.S. fleet. The fireball suggests energy and is centered on the divided saltire that radiates to the border symbolizing the Platte's mission of distribution of various fuels to the fleet and its aircraft.
- CREST:** The lymphad suggests the long term of service of the first USS Platte, (first member of the Navy's 30 year club). The two blue wavy reversed chevrons on the green sail symbolize the second ship to bear the name of the river which winds through the rich farmland of America's plains states. The two stars on the pennant allude to the two wars and seventeen battle stars awarded the first Platte.

### Seal

The coat of arms emblazoned upon a white oval enclosed within a blue oval-shaped collar edged inside and outside with gold rope and inscribed USS PLATTE at the top and AO-186 at the base all in gold letters.

**UNITED STATES SHIP  
PLATTE  
(AO-186)**



**BUILT BY  
AVONDALE SHIPYARDS INCORPORATED  
AVONDALE, LOUISIANA**



## Commissioning of a Navy Ship

The commissioning ceremony marks the acceptance of a ship as a unit of the operating forces of the United States Navy. At the moment of breaking the commissioning pennant, USS PLATTE (AO-186) becomes the responsibility of the Commanding Officer, who together with the ship's officers and men, has the duty of making and keeping her ready for any service required by our nation in peace or in war.

The commissioning pennant is believed to date from the 17th century, when the Dutch were at war with the English. The Dutch Admiral Maarten Harpertszoon Tromp hoisted a broom at his masthead to indicate his intention to sweep the English from the sea. This gesture was answered by the English admiral who hoisted a horsewhip, indicating his intention to subdue the Dutch. The English were victorious and ever since the narrow "coachwhip" pennant has been adopted by all nations as the distinctive mark of a war ship.

The modern U.S. Navy commissioning pennant is blue at the hoist with a union of seven white stars and a horizontal red and white stripe at the fly. In lieu of a commissioning pennant, flagships fly commodores' or admirals' personal flags, hence the term flagship.

## United States Ship PLATTE (AO-186)

**U.S. Navy Auxiliary Oiler      Cimarron Class**



KEEL LAID: 2 February 1981

CHRISTENED: 30 January 1982

BUILT BY  
AVONDALE SHIPYARDS, INC.  
Avondale, Louisiana

### Statistics

LENGTH: 591'6"  
BEAM: 88'  
DISPLACEMENT: 26,110 tons  
COMPLEMENT: 200 Men  
Officers and Enlisted  
PROPULSION: Fully Automated  
Single Shaft Steam  
Turbine (Total—  
24,000 Shaft  
Horsepower) Two  
Boiler, Steam

**MISSION:** This fleet oiler will be required to transport bulk petroleum products (POL) from shore depots to AOE's, AOR's, and AO's, effecting delivery underway, including consolidation; to deliver bulk POL to combatants and support forces underway; and to deliver limited fleet freight, mail and personnel.

## History of Ship's Name



PLATTE derives her name from the Platte River. The river has its origins in two branches which form in the Rocky Mountains. The North Platte flows out of the mountains in Wyoming while the South Platte starts in the Colorado section of the Rockies. These two branches join in Western Nebraska to form the Platte River. The river transverses Nebraska to empty into the Missouri at the Nebraska-Iowa border. While not a large river, the Platte played a key position in our country's development.

Beaver trappers for years worked the river to bring to the entire world the beaver top hat. The Oregon Trail followed the banks of the river for hundreds of miles. Water from the Platte provided the irrigation necessary for the sugar industry from which sugar was extracted with the pulp being used to feed the infant cattle feed lot industry.

Today, the river still provides water for irrigation in Nebraska and Colorado.

## The First Platte



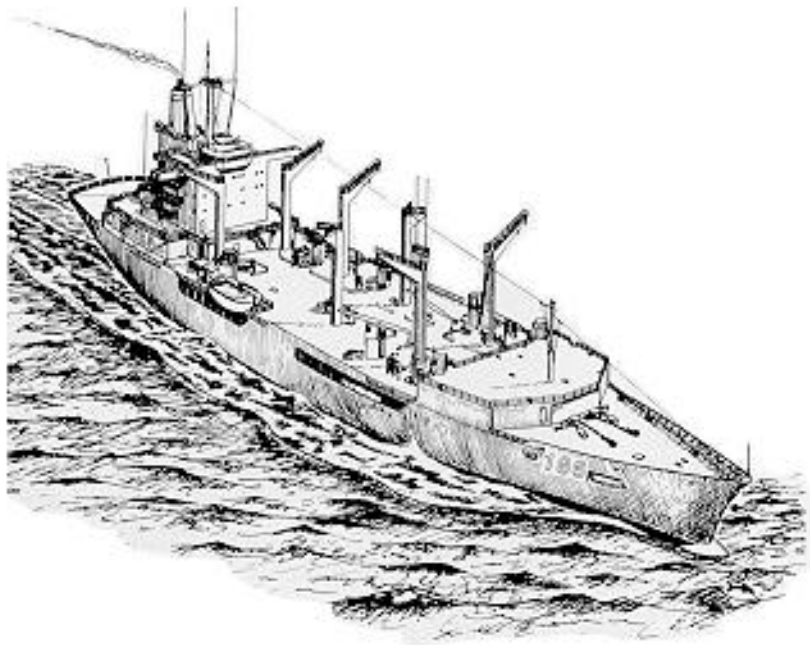
A previous fleet oiler, christened USS PLATTE (AO-24), was built by the Bethlehem Steel Company of Baltimore, Maryland and launched 8 July 1939. She had a very distinguished record of service during World War II, serving in campaigns which included Midway, Guadalcanal, Okinawa, the Marianas and the Philippine Islands. After the surrender of Japan, USS PLATTE remained in Tokyo Bay as the Station Tanker for the Occupation Forces.

During the peace following World War II, PLATTE continued to serve units of the Pacific Fleet until 1951 when she was again called into wartime service with the United Nations Forces in Korea.

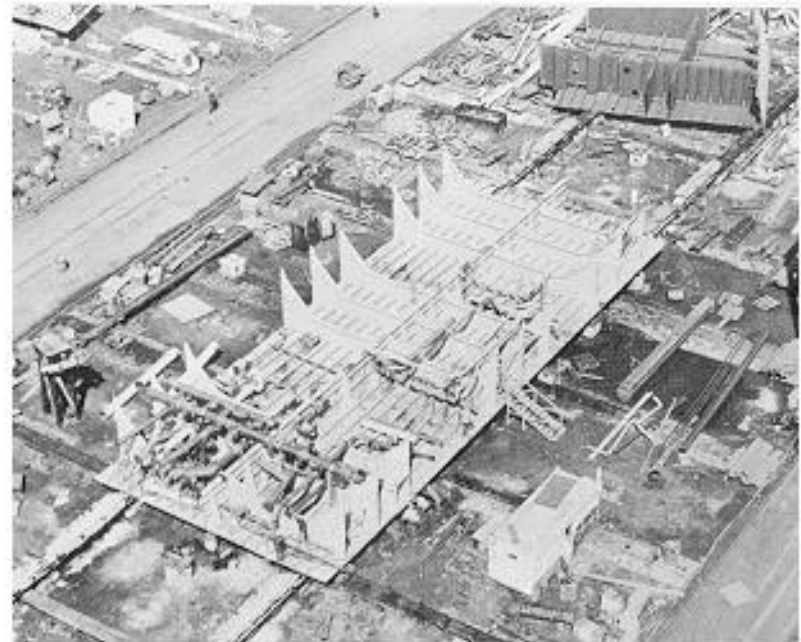
PLATTE made almost yearly deployments to the western Pacific from 1954 to 1968, including extensive operations in Vietnamese waters and the refueling of the Enterprise Task Group off Korea during the USS PUEBLO crisis.

PLATTE received 11 battle stars for service in World War II and 6 battle stars for Korean War service.

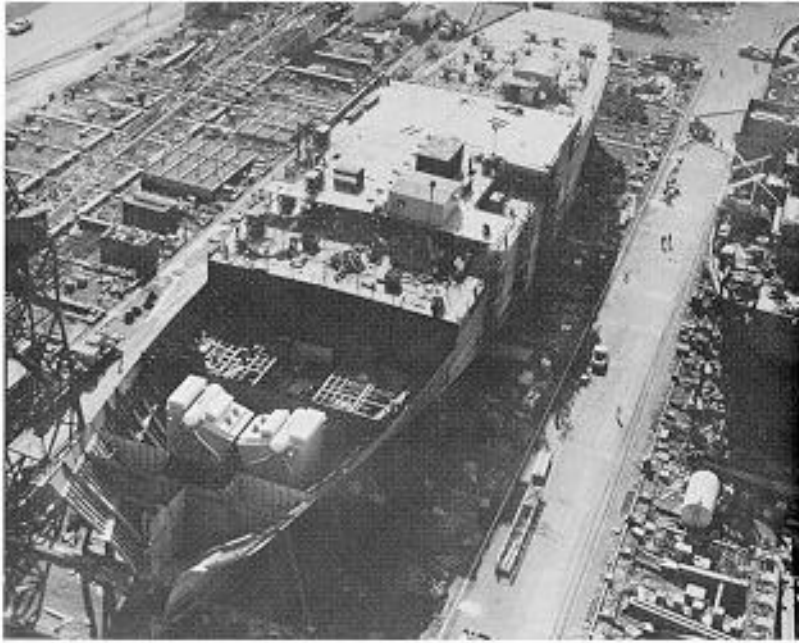
USS PLATTE continued to render distinguished service until 25 September 1970 when she was stricken from the Naval Register. When decommissioned, USS PLATTE (AO-24) was the oldest active duty vessel in the U.S. Navy.



**Artist's Conception.**



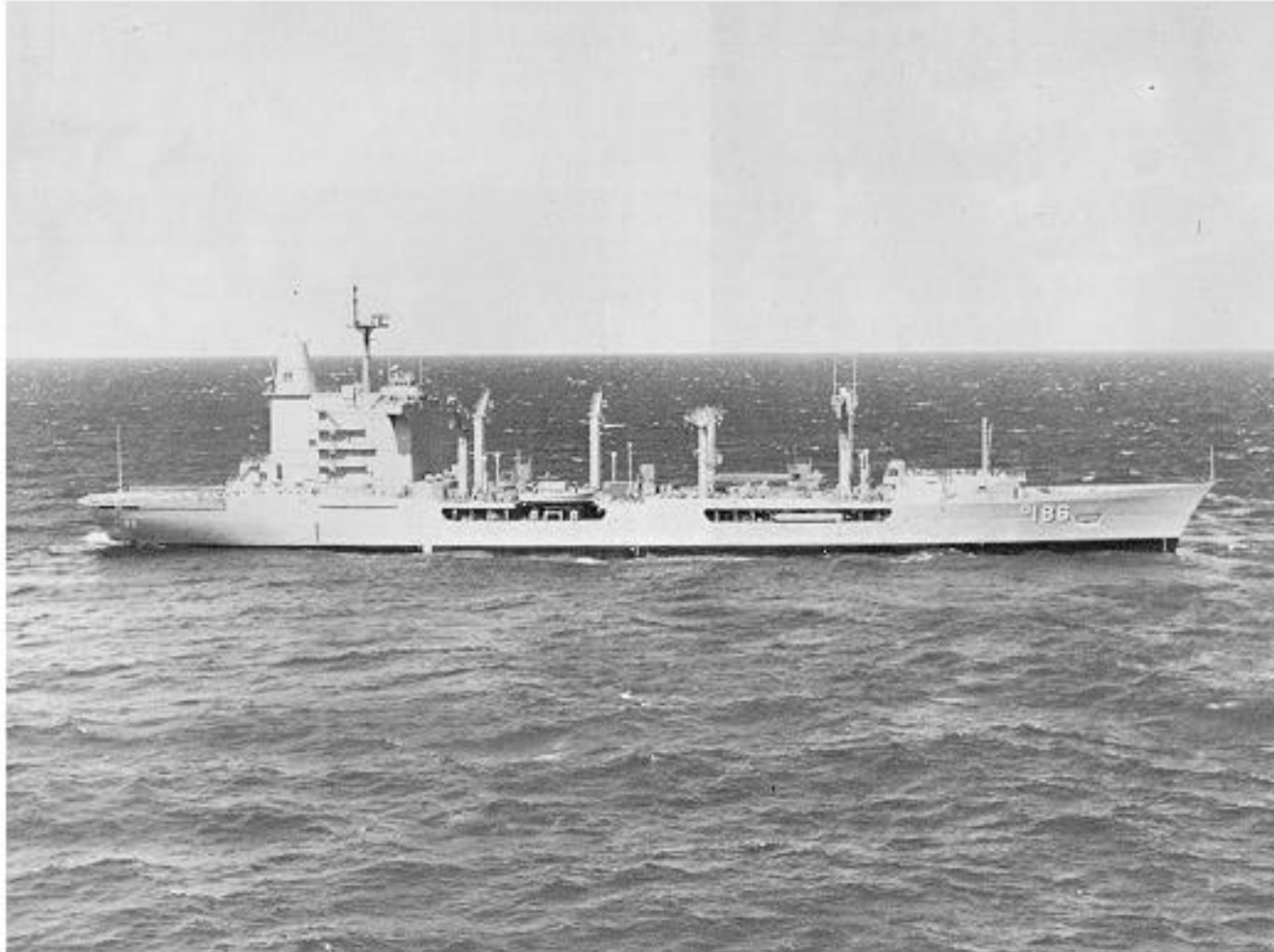
**Assembly On The Building Ways Begins.**



**Boilers Are Installed During Hull Assembly.**



**Ship Is Side Launched.**



*And see! She stirs!  
She starts—she moves—she seems to feel  
The thrill of life along her keel,  
And, spuming with her foot the ground,  
With one exulting, joyous bound,  
She leaps into the ocean's arms.*

—Longfellow, *The Building of the Ship*

