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# LOCAL NEWS

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## HISTORY COMING TO A CLOSE



There are few ships left at the Long Beach Naval Station. This view is from the control tower of the headquarters building.

Press-Telegram photos / o Hetzel

By Neil Strassman  
Staff writer

LONG BEACH — So long, sailor, the Navy's shipping out.

Following a brief ceremony Thursday at the Long Beach Naval Station headquarters, the Navy command in charge of the few warships remaining at this historic base will depart.

"On the 30th of June, it's turn off the lights, close the door, and we're all done," said Commodore Harry Selfridge, commander of the Navy's surface ships in Long Beach. The naval station itself will officially close Sept. 30.

Most of the ships will leave throughout the summer.

For 75 years, thousands of sailors on battleships and cruisers sailed from Long Beach in defense of the nation.

Just three years ago, there were 38 ships and 17,000 sailors here, including the great battleships Missouri and New Jersey.

The battleships were mothballed in the Pacific Northwest, and the naval hospital closed. Only 11 ships and 3,000 sailors remain, and by September there will only be three ships.

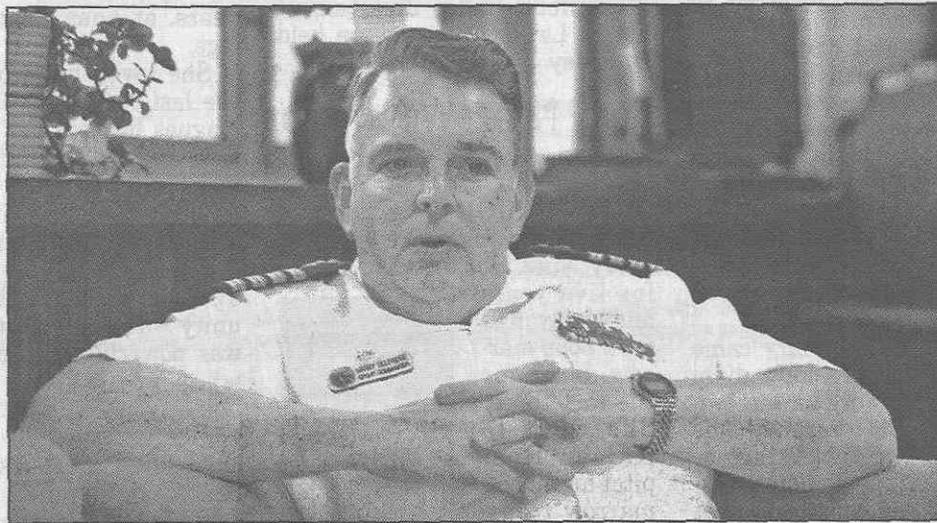
Two days after the command leaves, the USS Long Beach, the first nuclear-powered cruiser and the third ship to bear the city's name, will be decommissioned in Norfolk, Va.

In more ways than one, the Navy is severing its ties with Long Beach.

"There's a deep sense of loss at the closing of this base. I never intended to make Long Beach a personal home port, but it worked out that way," said Selfridge, who also retires Thursday.

He came to Long Beach in 1960 as a

seaman apprentice and made petty officer aboard a minesweeper a few years later. Thirty years later he was in charge of the ships here.



As the Navy goes, so goes Commodore Harry Selfridge. He retires Thursday, the same day the naval command disestablishes in Long Beach.

# Navy brass pulls up anchor

## Station closes in 3 months ending 75 years as U.S. port in L.B.

### The price of peace

The base was ordered to close by the federal base closure commission in 1991,

### Status of L.B. naval facilities

- Long Beach Naval Hospital: Closed March 24.
- Long Beach Navy Command: The command, which is in charge of the ships based here, will be disbanded Thursday.
- Long Beach Naval Station: Closes Sept. 30.

one of many defense cutbacks that year. The Navy is shrinking. By the end of the decade it will have 330 ships and 390,000 active-duty sailors, a number similar to pre-Korean War levels in 1950.

After the naval station closes, the Long Beach Naval Shipyard will oversee the base property, where initially, there won't be many changes. A few buildings have been declared surplus, and they will be knocked down.

The commissary — the base supermarket — will stay open through September 1995. The exchange, the large base department store where the naval hospital's pharmacy was relocated, is also expected to remain open.

Thousands of area military retirees and their dependents use these facilities, and if they stay profitable, they probably will remain open as long as the shipyard does, said Selfridge.

But the shipyard, which has a reduced workload and has laid off work-

## "NAVY PULLS UP ANCHOR"

# NAVY: Command sets sail Thursday

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ers this year, must survive the final round of base closures in 1995.

The Port of Long Beach has submitted a reuse proposal for the naval station property, a proposal already approved by the city. It includes bulldozing the base and making about 100 acres a container terminal.

The Navy is considering the Port's proposal, but wants the Port to rebuild barracks, a medical clinic, the exchange and commissary and other support facilities for the shipyard.

## Great white fleet

The Navy first came to Long Beach in 1843, when the sloop of war Cyane dropped anchor in San Pedro Harbor.

In 1897, a Navy flotilla visited, and in 1908 Teddy Roosevelt's great white fleet stopped here on its round-the-world cruise.

In 1919, when the Navy was split into an Atlantic and Pacific fleet, Long Beach became the West Coast home port for the battleship fleet and the great ships stayed here for 20 years.

In fact, many of the families of battleship sailors killed at Pearl Harbor still lived in Long Beach at the time of the attack.

The base was closed in 1950, but reopened a year later for the Korean War and stayed open during the Vietnam War. It closed again in 1974, but reopened in 1979.

In the past decade, Long Beach-based ships played a leading role in the Middle East, escorting oil tankers and participating in the Persian Gulf War.

The Navy spent \$130 million on the base, and it looked like it was here to stay. New facilities were built including a medical and dental clinic, fueling pier, barracks and off-base housing for Navy families.

But now, in the post-Cold War world, chances the base will reopen are slim, said Selfridge.

"This closure has a little bit different flavor to it," said Selfridge. Because it was ordered by Congress, he said, the disposal of excess property is mandated and the Navy is not permitted to keep anything in reserve.

"With the relinquishing of each piece of property, there is less opportunity for the base to rebound," he said, noting the 1,100 housing units that were closed. "This is further down the road than we've ever taken this installation."

## Anchors aweigh

Of the ships here, the helicopter carrier USS Tarawa, in a dry dock at the shipyard, will return to San Diego. The guided-missile destroyers USS David R. Ray and USS Paul F. Foster are scheduled to go into the shipyard.

The Aegis guided missile cruiser USS Princeton, which hit a mine in the Persian Gulf War, is off to San Diego, and its sister ship, the USS Antietam, the last ship that will return to Long Beach from deployment, is still sailing the western Pacific.

The frigates USS Ingraham and USS Ford are heading for the Navy's new base in Everett, Wash., and the USS Jarrett to San Diego. The salvage ship USS Bolster and the supply ship USS Wabash will be decommissioned. The USS Cayuga, a tank landing ship, has been leased to the Brazilian Navy.