

missiles or high speed aircraft on a massed basis.

DES MOINES AND ITS ROLE IN THE POST-WAR NAVY

The *Des Moines* did not just simply sit in reserve and be ignored. In 1962, it was proposed that the *Des Moines* be converted to enable the use of the Typhon System and accompanying missile batteries. This system was designed to shoot down incoming swarm attacks of missiles and high-speed aircraft. The system consumed a tremendous amount of space and electrical power; thus a large ship with a powerful engineering plant was a basic requirement.

The *Des Moines* fit the bill. In addition, the ship would be modernized to defend it against enemy submarines, yet primarily its function would be somewhat like the Aegis system that would follow on

the *Ticonderoga*-class cruisers. For over a year, the issue was studied and nearly came to fruition, however, advances in technology rendered the entire program obsolete before a prototype was built. It was however, a major stepping stone in the journey toward Aegis.

Typhon and the conversion of the *Des Moines* were formally cancelled on 25 January 1963. Aegis would supplant this concept, and this system would give the US Navy a quantum leap in Naval warfighting, as it enabled multiple targets to be prioritized and destroyed based system requirements. Had this been available on at least one ship protecting the carriers off Okinawa in 1945, the *kamikaze* would have been a minor threat. The *Des Moines* and the studies

utilizing this cruiser helped lead the way to a massive improvement in fleet defense.

EPILOGUE

The *Des Moines* may have sat in Philadelphia for over four decades, but this cruiser served a vital need to Naval combat. It is not necessary for a ship to fight to the death to gain recognition. There are other ways, and the *Des Moines* deserves its place in the sun for its valued contribution.

Thanks to the following for the images: ESCO Marine; US Navy; Author's Collection; Ed Zajkowski; Ray Miller; and Larry Rock. **SC**

A group of former crewmen salute one of the world's last all-gun cruisers. A century has passed since the all-gun, steam-driven, steel cruiser was introduced, and its combat heyday was during the bloody months off the Solomon Islands (1942-1943). On the other side of the world, British and Commonwealth cruisers fought Italian forces in a series of no-holds-barred battles similar to those in the Southwest Pacific.



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