

# USN Ship Designations

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## Nomenclature History

Warships in the United States Navy were first designated and numbered in system originating in 1895. Under this system, ships were designated as "Battleship X", "Cruiser X", "Destroyer X", "Torpedo Boat X" and so forth where X was the series hull number as authorized by the US Congress. These designations were usually abbreviated as "B-1", "C-1", "D-1", "TB-1," etc. This system became cumbersome by 1920, as many new ship types had been developed during World War I that needed new categories assigned, especially in the Auxiliary ship area. On 17 July 1920, Acting Secretary of the Navy Robert E. Coontz approved a standardized system of alpha-numeric symbols to identify ship types such that all ships were now designated with a two letter code and a hull number, with the first letter being the ship type and the second letter being the sub-type. For example, the destroyer tender USS Melville, first commissioned as "Destroyer Tender No. 2" in 1915, was now re-designated as "AD-2" with the "A" standing for Auxiliary, the "D" for Destroyer (Tender) and the "2" meaning the second ship in that series. Ship types that did not have a subclassification simply repeated the first letter. So, Battleships became "BB-X" and Destroyers became "DD-X" with X being the same number as previously assigned. Ships that changed classifications were given new hull numbers within their new designation series.

The designation "USS" standing for "United States Ship" was adopted in 1907. Prior to that time, no designation was used in official documents. New-construction ships not yet in commission are currently prefixed with "PCU" which stands for "Pre-Commissioning Unit."

It should be noted that in the United States Navy, unlike European Navies, the first ship in a class to be authorized by the US Congress is the designated class leader (class name ship), regardless of the order in which the ships of that class are laid down, launched or commissioned. For example, contrary to many European texts, for the last class of "Standard" battleships, the battleship USS Colorado BB-45 (commissioned 30 August 1923) is the class leader under USN designation standards, not USS Maryland BB-46 (commissioned 21 July 1921). These battleships are thus properly designated as being "USS Colorado BB-45 Class" and not as "USS Maryland BB-46 Class."

Please note that the listings below include many designations that are no longer in use by the current-day US Navy and that others were proposed designations not actually used or were intended for ships that were never built. Designations highlighted in **Blue Font** are for those ships actually in commission or currently under construction as of the present time (2009).

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## Aircraft Carriers

<b>ACV</b>	Aircraft Carrier, Auxiliary
<b>AVG</b>	Escort Carrier, Auxiliary
<b>AVT</b>	Aircraft Carrier, Training Ship
<b>CV</b>	Aircraft Carrier
<b>CVA</b>	Aircraft Carrier, Attack
<b>CVAN</b>	Aircraft Carrier, Attack, Nuclear Powered
<b>CVB</b>	Aircraft Carrier, Large
<b>CVE</b>	Aircraft Carrier, Escort
<b>CVGH</b>	Aircraft Carrier, Guided Missile Helicopter
<b>CVH</b>	Aircraft Carrier, Helicopter
<b>CVHE</b>	Aircraft Carrier, Escort, Helicopter
<b>CVL</b>	Aircraft Carrier, Light
<b>CVN</b>	Aircraft Carrier, Nuclear Powered
<b>CVS</b>	Prior to 1957: Seaplane Carrier
<b>CVS</b>	After 1957: Anti-Submarine/Support Carrier
<b>CVV</b>	Aircraft Carrier, Vertical Take Off And Landing

### Notes:

The ex-collier USS Langley AC-3 was rebuilt and recommissioned as the first US aircraft carrier CV-1 on 20 March 1922. The CVB designation was approved by the Secretary of the Navy on 10 June 1943 and the CVL designation was approved on 15 July 1943. The CVS designation was established in 1953 with USS Bunker Hill (CVS-17) being the first so designated on 8 August 1953, although she was in reserve at the time and never did recommission. The designation CVA replaced both CV and CVB on 1 October 1952. CVL went out of use on 15 May 1959 when the last light carrier was decommissioned. With the decommissioning of the last CVS in 1974, CV and CVN replaced CVA and CVAN on 30 June 1975 as carriers are now considered to be multi-mission capable rather than specialized.

Escort Aircraft Carriers were originally designated AVG (Escort Carrier, Auxiliary) on 31 March 1941, with the USS Long Beach AVG-1 being the first ship so commissioned on 2 June 1941. This designation was changed on 20 August 1942 to ACV (Aircraft Carrier, Auxiliary), and then changed again on 15 July 1943 to CVE. Escort Carriers built for the British Royal Navy were designated BAVG until they were transferred. The CVE designation went out of use when the remaining escort carriers were reclassified AKV (Auxiliary, Aircraft Ferry) on 7 May 1959.

A common question is "what does the 'V' stand for in CV or CVA or CVS or CVE?"

[Thanks to C. Bossie who provided much of the following answer.]

The following is taken from "*United States Naval Aviation 1910-1995, Appendix 16: US Navy and Marine Corps Squadron Designations and Abbreviations*":

On 17 July 1920, the Secretary of the Navy prescribed a standard nomenclature for types and classes of NAVAL VESSELS, including aircraft, in which lighter-than air craft were identified by the type "Z" and heavier-than air craft by the letter "V". The reference also speculates that: "The use of the "V" designation has been a question since the 1920s. However, no conclusive evidence has been found to identify why the letter "V" was chosen. It is generally believed the "V" was in reference to the French word *volplane*. As a verb, the word means to glide or soar. As a noun, it described an aeronautical device sustained in the air by lifting devices (wings), as opposed to the bag of gas that the airships (denoted by "Z") used. The same case may be regarding the use of "Z". It is generally believed the "Z" was used in deference to Count Ferdinand von Zeppelin. However, documentation has not been located to verify this assumption."

In European NATO Countries, "R" is used to designate an aircraft carrier.

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## Battleships

<b>B</b>	Battleship (prior to 1920)
<b>BB</b>	Battleship (after 1920)
<b>BBC</b>	Battleship, Command Ship
<b>BBG</b>	Battleship, Missile
<b>BBH</b>	Battleship, Helicopter
<b>M</b>	Monitor (prior to 1920)
<b>BM</b>	Monitor (after 1920)

## Notes:

The early pre-dreadnoughts Maine and Texas were commissioned as "Second Class Battleships" but apparently did not receive hull series numbers. Maine was originally designated as Armored Cruiser #1 (ACR-1) but was reclassified during construction.

Many pre-dreadnoughts were colloquially known as "Coastal Defense Ships" as they were not designed nor intended to fight far from home. Some of these were officially renamed as "Coast Battleship #X" (with "X" being their hull number) in March - April 1919 in order to free up their names for new construction. Surviving pre-dreadnoughts were reclassified as "Battleships" and given the BB designation in the 17 July 1920 assignment, although many of these were then rapidly scrapped under the terms of the Washington Naval Limitation Treaty.

The "BBC" "BBG" and "BBH" designations were all for proposed conversions of Iowa class (BB-61) battleships. The first two were developed during the 1950s while the last one was planned during the 1980s commissions. None of these conversions ever took place.

Monitors were coastal defense ships of the 1890s, obsolete even when commissioned.

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## Cruisers

<b>ACR</b>	Armored Cruiser (prior to 1921)
<b>C</b>	Cruiser (prior to 1920)
<b>CA</b>	Cruiser, First Line (1920 to 1921)
<b>CA</b>	Armored Cruiser (1921 to 1931)
<b>CA</b>	Heavy Cruiser - Cruiser armed with guns 8" (20.3 cm) or larger (after 1931)
<b>CAG</b>	Guided Missile Heavy Cruiser - Heavy cruiser converted to carry missiles
<b>CB</b>	Large Cruiser
<b>CBC</b>	Large Command Ship
<b>CC</b>	Battlecruiser (prior to 1961)
<b>CC</b>	Command Cruiser or Command Ship (after 1961)
<b>CF</b>	Flight-deck Cruiser

<b>CG</b>	Guided Missile Cruiser
<b>CGH</b>	Guided Missile Cruiser with an assigned Helicopter
<b>CGN</b>	Guided Missile Cruiser, Nuclear Powered
<b>CH</b>	Cruiser with an assigned Helicopter
<b>CL</b>	Light Cruiser
<b>CLAA</b>	Anti-Aircraft Light Cruiser
<b>CLC</b>	Command Light Cruiser
<b>CLD</b>	Light Cruiser, Dual-Purpose (AA and ASu)
<b>CLG</b>	Guided Missile Light Cruiser - Light cruiser converted to carry missiles
<b>CLGN</b>	Guided Missile Light Cruiser, Nuclear Powered
<b>CLH</b>	Helicopter Light Cruiser - Cruiser with an assigned Helicopter
<b>CLK</b>	Light Cruiser, ASW (submarine Killer)
<b>CLV</b>	Aviation Cruiser
<b>CS</b>	Scout Cruiser
<b>CSG</b>	Strike Missile Cruiser
<b>CSGN</b>	Strike Missile Cruiser, Nuclear Powered

**Notes:**

The history of cruiser classification is somewhat complicated. Initially, there were three major classifications: Protected Cruisers, Peace Cruisers, Third Class Cruisers and Unprotected Cruisers were all designated "C-X", Armored Cruisers were designated "ACR-X" and Scout Cruisers were designated "CS-X" where "X" was the hull series number. There were also older and non-classified cruisers which had not been assigned hull numbers. As part of the 20 July 1920 redesignation mentioned above, there were the following four major changes:

- The Scout cruisers of the Salem and Omaha classes were merged into a single new category, Light Cruisers, and were given the hull series numbers CL-1 to CL-13.
- Armored Cruisers formerly designated as "ACR-X" were redesignated as "CA-X" and used the same hull number as previously assigned.
- All un-numbered cruisers were now classified into one of the above categories and received hull series numbers accordingly.

- The newer Peace Cruisers were removed from the cruiser category entirely and were now reclassified as gunboats PG-27 through PG-34 and PG-36.

Many cruisers changed categories and hull series numbers as a result of this reorganization. For example, USS Minneapolis was previously designated as C-13 but was now designated as CA-17.

However, the Navy was not satisfied with this reclassification, and so there was a second reclassification on 8 August 1921. On this date, Gunboats PG-28 to PG-34 and PG-36 were again classified as cruisers, this time as light cruisers CL-16 to CL-23, which left only USS Marblehead (PG-27, formerly C-11), still classified as a Gunboat. Also on this date, USS Olympia (CA-15) was reclassified as a light cruiser (CL-15) and it was intended for the old cruiser USS Chicago (CA-14) to be reclassified as a light cruiser (CL-14). Thus, these ships changed classification, but retained their previous hull numbers. Chicago was not actually redesignated and instead she was decommissioned in 1923 and became the uncommissioned barracks ship IX-5 at Pearl Harbor.

This classification system was used throughout the 1920s with the new 10,000 ton "Treaty" cruisers built during that time being commissioned into the CL hull number series, starting with USS Pensacola (CL-24). Then, as a result of the provisions of the London Conference of 1930, cruisers were split into two categories, heavy and light. The main differentiator was the size of the guns carried, with those cruisers having guns of 8" (20.3 cm) now being designated as "Heavy Cruisers" and those cruisers with smaller gun calibers being designated as "Light Cruisers." On 1 July 1931, this new classification was officially adopted by the USN and the meaning of the "CA" designation was changed from "Armored Cruiser" to "Heavy Cruiser." As a result of this reclassification, the "Treaty" cruisers USS Pensacola CL-24 through USS Portland CL-33 were redesignated as CA-24 through CA-33. Thus, these ships retained their previous Light Cruiser hull series numbers, even though the last Armored Cruiser, USS Charleston, was CA-19. From this time forward, all heavy and light cruisers built or planned between 1931 and 1949 used a single series of hull numbers, with the hull numbers interleaved between classes. This interleaving created somewhat of a jumble in the sequence of hull numbers in the latter part of World War II, when the light cruisers of the Juneau (ii), Cleveland, Fargo and Worcester classes and the heavy cruisers of the Baltimore, Oregon City and Des Moines classes were all being built simultaneously. The nuclear powered missile cruiser USS Long Beach, originally designated as CLGN-160, was the last ship to be numbered under this system, although she did not commission with this hull number, as noted below.

The Lexington class were the only battlecruisers ever laid down by the USN and were assigned hull series numbers CC-1 to CC-6. When construction was suspended following the Washington Naval Limitation Treaty of 1922, the first two of these ships, USS Lexington CV-2 and USS Saratoga CV-3, were completed as Aircraft Carriers. The Alaska class of the 1940s were designated as Large Cruisers and assigned hull series numbers CB-1 to CB-6. The USN did not consider these ships to be battlecruisers.

In the late 1940s and 1950s, four new cruiser classification groups were created:

- Anti-aircraft Cruisers - On 18 March 1948 anti-aircraft cruisers of the USS Atlanta CL-51 class were redesignated as CLAA, but retained their previous cruiser series hull numbers. An improved anti-aircraft cruiser class was cancelled in the 1940s and no other ships were ever given the CLAA classification.
- ASW Cruisers - A planned class of Submarine Hunter-Killer Cruisers were designated CLK and numbered in a separate series, but only one ship of this type, USS Norfolk CLK-1, was actually

laid down and she was redesignated as destroyer leader DL-1 on 2 February 1951 prior to her commissioning on 4 March 1953.

- Missile Cruisers - Two Baltimore class (CA-68) Heavy Cruisers and six Cleveland class (CL-55) Light Cruisers were converted into Guided Missile Cruisers in the late 1950s and early 1960s. These missile ships kept some of their large-caliber guns and started a new numeric series, but they retained their previous sub-type designations as either CAG-X (Heavy Missile Cruiser) or CLG-X (Light Missile Cruiser). The first of these conversions was USS Boston (CA-69) which was redesignated as CAG-1 on 4 January 1952, but she was not actually in commission as a missile cruiser until 1 November 1955. Three other Baltimore and Oregon City class heavy cruisers had all of their former gun armament and superstructures removed and were more heavily modified into all-missile cruisers. These three cruisers formed a single class (Albany) and were designated as CG-10 to CG-12. Two other planned conversions were cancelled and their hull numbers (13 and 14) were not reassigned. The nuclear powered missile cruiser USS Long Beach, originally designated as CLGN-160 and later as CGN-160, finally commissioned as CGN-9 on 9 September 1961.
- Command Cruisers - Command Cruisers (later, Command Ships) had little armament but were equipped as fleet flagships with a great deal of command, control and communications facilities. USS Northampton (ex-CA-125) was launched as CLC-1 on 27 January 1951 and later redesignated as CC-1 on 15 April 1961. As noted above, prior to this time CC had been the designation for Battlecruiser. The light carrier USS Wright (CVL-47) was designated as CC-2 on 15 March 1962 and then converted into a Command Ship, recommissioning on 11 May 1963. It was planned to convert the Large Cruiser USS Hawaii (CB-3) into a large command cruiser and she was so redesignated as CBC-1 on 26 February 1952, but this conversion was later cancelled and she reverted back to her original designation on 9 October 1954.

Reflecting the obsolescence of their missile systems, on 1 May 1968 the Guided Missile Heavy Cruisers USS Boston (CAG-1) and USS Canberra (CAG-2) reverted back to their original Heavy Cruiser classifications CA-69 and CA-70, respectively, although they retained their Terrier missile launchers.

The designations "Cruiser," "Destroyer" and "Frigate" were a source of some confusion in the USN during the 1970s. Existing US carrier escorts were designated as Frigates (DLG and DLGN), but foreign warships of the size of US Frigates were generally classified as destroyers or cruisers. The USN was also applying the term "Patrol Frigate" or "PF" to the much smaller USS Oliver Hazard Perry class of convoy escorts then being designed. This usage was more in line with the "Frigate" designation as used in foreign navies, where it was usually given only to smaller warships of about the same size as the Perrys. On 30 June 1975, this issue was partially resolved when the following reclassifications were made:

- Most DLG and DLGN Frigates were redesignated as Guided Missile Cruisers CG and CGN, with these warships retaining their original hull numbers (CG/CGN-16 through 40). This reclassification resulted in hull number CG-15 not being assigned. In addition, USS Arkansas, originally planned as DLGN-41, was commissioned on 18 October 1980 as CGN-41. An unnamed Virginia class warship, CGN-42, was cancelled in 1976, then redesigned and but again cancelled in 1978, 1979 and finally in 1983.
- Due to their smaller size, the Farragut class missile frigates (DLG-6 through DLG-15) were reclassified as Guided Missile Destroyers and given new hull numbers in that series (DDG-37 through DDG-46).
- The remaining CLG cruisers that were still active or in reserve were redesignated as CG and retained their existing hull numbers.
- Existing Guided Missile Escorts (DEG-1 to DEG-6) were redesignated as Guided Missile Frigates (FFG-1 to FFG-6) and those Escorts (DE) still in commission were redesignated as Frigates (FF) and retained their existing hull numbers. USS Oliver Hazard Perry herself was commissioned on 17 December 1977 as FFG-7.

This reclassification was incomplete, as the new Ticonderoga class Aegis missile ships were still planned to be designated as Guided Missile Destroyers (DDG-47 class), even though they were much larger vessels than the redesignated conventionally-powered cruisers (ex-DLG, now CG). Finally, on 1 January 1980, the Ticonderoga class DDGs were redesignated as CGs and Ticonderoga herself was commissioned on 22 January 1983 as CG-47. As the Ticonderoga class retained their originally planned hull numbers, this left a gap in the missile cruiser hull series sequence and hull numbers CG-43 to CG-46 were never assigned to any ship. There was some thought that these unused numbers could be assigned to the new generations of nuclear-powered missile cruisers then being discussed (the revamped CGN-42 and CSGN classes), but none of these ships were ever built. This redesignation of the early members of the Ticonderoga class also left a gap in the missile destroyer hull series sequence and hull numbers DDG-47 to DDG-50 were not reassigned to any ship. USS Arleigh Burke, the first of a new class of missile destroyers, was commissioned on 4 July 1991 as DDG-51.

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## Destroyers, Escorts and Frigates

<b>BDE</b>	Destroyer Escorts to be transferred to Britain during World War II
<b>D</b>	Destroyer (prior to 1921)
<b>DD</b>	Destroyer (after 1921)
<b>DE</b>	Destroyer Escort, Escort or "Ocean Escort"
<b>DEG</b>	Destroyer Escort, Guided Missile
<b>DER</b>	Destroyer Escort, Radar Picket
<b>DDE</b>	Destroyer converted to Fleet Escort
<b>DDG</b>	Guided Missile Destroyer
<b>DDH</b>	Destroyer with an assigned Helicopter
<b>DDK</b>	Destroyer, ASW (Submarine Killer)
<b>DDR</b>	Destroyer, Radar Picket
<b>DL</b>	Destroyer Leader (1920 to 1955)
<b>DL</b>	Frigate (after 1955)
<b>DLG</b>	Frigate, Guided Missile



<b>DLGN</b>	Frigate, Guided Missile, Nuclear Powered
<b>EDD</b>	Destroyer, Experimental Test Ship (before 2005)
<b>EDD</b>	Destroyer, Self-Defense Test Ship (after 2005)
<b>EDDE</b>	Experimental Escort Destroyer
<b>FF</b>	Frigate
<b>FFG</b>	Guided Missile Frigate
<b>FFH</b>	Frigate with an assigned Helicopter
<b>FFT</b>	Reserve/Training Frigate
<b>PE</b>	Patrol Escort
<b>PF</b>	Frigate or Patrol Frigate
<b>PFG</b>	Patrol Frigate, Guided Missile
<b>PFR</b>	Radar Picket Frigate
<b>TB</b>	Torpedo Boat

**Notes:**

Following World War II, many Fletcher (DD-445), Allen M. Sumner (DD-692) and Gearing (DD-710) class destroyers were modified and given new, specialized missions as Fleet Escorts (DDE), radar pickets (DDR) and ASW submarine killers (DDK). The ASW destroyers (DDK) were redesignated as Fleet Escort destroyers (DDE) on 4 March 1950. All Fleet Escort destroyers (DDE) were reclassified as destroyers (DD) on 30 June 1962. Most radar picket destroyers (DDR) were reclassified as destroyers (DD) during the 1960s. One Fleet Escort destroyer USS Saufley (DDE-465) was reclassified as an Experimental Escort Destroyer (EDDE) on 1 January 1951 and then used as a test bed during the 1950s for sonar and ASW experiments. She was reclassified as a general purpose destroyer (DD-465) on 1 July 1962.

USS Gyatt (DD-712) was modified to carry a twin Terrier launcher and she was designated as DDG-712 on 1 December 1956. She was redesignated as DDG-1 on 23 May 1957. Her missile emplacement was later removed and her designation reverted back to DD-712 on 1 October 1962.

The "DL" designation meaning "Destroyer Leader" was originally created as part of the 17 July 1920 designation system revision. This designation was not assigned to any ship prior to 2 February 1951 when the ASW cruiser USS Norfolk CLK-1 was redesignated as DL-1 as described above. In addition, the new fleet destroyers of the Mitscher class, which were originally designated in the DD series as DD-927 to DD-930, were redesignated as DL-2 to DL-5. This designation change was meant to indicate that

these warships were significantly larger than those destroyers built during World War II yet still smaller than cruisers. The DL designation was changed to mean "Frigate" on 1 January 1955.

The follow-on Farragut class frigates were originally to be an all-gun design and the first three ships of this class were designated as DL-6 to DL-8. The next three ships starting with USS Coontz were to a similar design but were given a Terrier missile launcher and were designated accordingly as DLG-1 to DLG-3. However, the Navy subsequently decided to equip the Farragut class with Terrier missile launchers and their designation was then changed to become DLG-6 to DLG-8 on 14 November 1956. USS Coontz and her sisters were renumbered in sequence starting with DLG-9 on that same date. As a result of these changes, all DL and DLG warships are in the same hull number series.

The Mitscher class frigates Mitscher DL-2 and John McCain DL-3 were converted to carry a Tartar missile launcher during the 1960s and they were then redesignated as missile destroyers DDG-35 and DDG-36, respectively. As noted above in the cruiser section, on 30 June 1975 most Frigates were redesignated as CG and CGN with the same hull number as previously, the exception being the Farragut DLG class which were redesignated as missile destroyers DDG-37 through DDG-46.

The designation "DE" was originally assigned to Destroyer Escorts of World War II. It is sometimes stated that "DE" meant "Ocean Escorts" for those convoy escorts of the 1950s-1970s starting with the USS Dealey (DE-1006) class and ending with the USS Knox (DE-1052) class, but this does not appear to have ever been made a formal designation. The DANFS entry for USS Knox herself describes her as "the prototype in a new class of destroyer escorts" while the Naval Vessel Register (NVR) currently lists all DE-designated ships as simply "Escort" including those built during World War II. As stated above, on 30 June 1975 existing Guided Missile Escorts (DEG) were redesignated as Guided Missile Frigates (FFG) and those Escorts (DE) still in commission were redesignated as Frigates (FF).

A number of Edsall (DE-129) class destroyer escorts were converted to Radar Pickets (DER) during the 1950s. They carried that designation during the rest of their careers, although none of them appear to have been used in that role after about 1960.

The "PF" designation was originally used for World War II frigates of the Asheville (PF-1) and Tacoma (PF-3) classes. In the 1970s, it was proposed to designate what became the Oliver Hazard Perry (FFG-7) class as PF which would have then meant "Patrol Frigates."

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, a series of design studies were made for the "next generation" of ASW and guided missile carrier escorts. These warship designs were given various interim designations, such as "DX" for the conventionally powered ASW destroyers, "DXG" for conventionally powered guided missile destroyers, "DXGN" for nuclear powered guided missile destroyers and "DG/Aegis" for an "austere" Aegis missile destroyer. These proposals coalesced around what eventually became the conventionally powered Spruance (DD-963) ASW destroyers and Ticonderoga (CG-47) Aegis missile cruisers. The nuclear powered version, which had grown considerably in size and was now known as a "Strike Cruiser" or CSGN and then later as the "CGN-42" class, was cancelled in the fall of 1978 although it was resurrected a few times until being cancelled once and for all in 1983.

A similar series of interim designations is currently in progress for new destroyer and cruiser designs, with the "DD-21" and "CG-21" designations having been replaced with the "DD(X)" and "CG(X)" designations. The first destroyer in the DD(X) series will be christened as USS Zumwalt DDG-1000. This means that

the DDG hull series will now be in the DD series, rather than the DDG series, and it appears likely that the unused hull numbers DD-998 and DD-999 will not be assigned to any ship.

As expected, the delay and ballooning costs of the Zumwalt class destroyers has resulted in additional orders for Arleigh Burke DDGs and now it is expected that advanced versions of this class will continue in production for at least the next decade.

The DD designation went out of service when USS Cushing DD-995 was decommissioned on 21 September 2005.

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## Submarines

<b>AGSS</b>	Auxiliary/Experimental Submarine
<b>APS</b>	Auxiliary Cargo Submarine
<b>NSSN</b>	New Nuclear Powered Attack Submarine (temporary designation)
<b>S</b>	Submarine (Attack/Fleet) - prior to 1920
<b>SS</b>	Submarine (Attack/Fleet) - after 1920
<b>SC</b>	Cruiser Submarine
<b>SF</b>	Fleet Submarine
<b>SM</b>	Submarine, Minelayer
<b>SSA</b>	Auxiliary/Experimental Submarine
<b>SSAG</b>	Auxiliary/Experimental Submarine
<b>SSB</b>	Submarine, Ballistic Missile
<b>SSBN</b>	Submarine, Ballistic Missile, Nuclear Powered
<b>SSG</b>	Attack Submarine, Guided Missile
<b>SSGN</b>	Attack Submarine, Guided Missile, Nuclear Powered
<b>SSK</b>	Hunter-Killer Submarine
<b>SSM</b>	Midget Submarine

<b>SSN</b>	Attack Submarine, Nuclear Powered
<b>SSP</b>	Transport Submarine
<b>SSR</b>	Radar Picket Submarine
<b>SSRN</b>	Radar Picket Submarine, Nuclear Powered
<b>SST</b>	Submarine, Target/Training

**Notes:**

Early submarines were given the designation "Submarine Torpedo Boats" (later shortened to just "Submarine") and most were given fish names. On 17 November 1911 these names were discontinued and in their place was substituted an alphanumeric designation system representing their class and sequence. For example, USS Bonita (S-15) was renamed as USS C-4 (S-15), with C-4 meaning that she was the fourth submarine of the third class of USN submarines. Newer classes of submarines generally followed the letters of the alphabet, with "S" being the last letter used during the building spree generated by World War I. Following the reclassification of 1920, all of the older submarines changed their hull series number designation from S to SS, but new submarines built during the mid-1920s to 1931 period were separated into different hull number series, depending upon their assigned role. Fleet Submarines (SF) were intended to scout ahead of the battle fleet, Cruiser Submarines (SC) were larger boats with heavy gun armament while the single Minelayer Submarine (SM) had special tubes for launching mines. All of these newer submarines were given "V" alphanumeric names, although most of them were to differing designs.

This rather confusing practice of giving submarines both an alphanumeric name and an alphanumeric designation was continued until 1931. In that and the following year, all of the submarines built since the mid-1920s were given fish names and redesignated into the SS hull number series. The older submarines built during and immediately after World War I continued with their alphanumeric names (mainly the O, R and S classes). New submarines built since 1931 have continued to be designated into the SS numeric series, with a few exceptions, as detailed below.

In a reprise of the alphanumeric naming of the 1911 to 1931 period, Training and Hunter-Killer submarines of the 1950s originally had only an alpha-numeric designation instead of a hull number. Training submarine SST-1 was commissioned as "T-1" and SST-2 was "T-2." On 15 May 1956 these training submarines were given fish names but they retained their SST designations and hull numbers throughout their service lives. In a similar fashion, the "Hunter-Killer" ASW submarines SSK-1, SSK-2 and SSK-3 of that period were also given only alphanumeric names, "K-X" with the X being the same number as in their hull designations. On 15 December 1955, these three boats were given standard fish names and on 15 August 1959 they were renumbered into the SS series.

The modern Seawolf class submarines were designated as SSN-21 to SSN-23, with this apparently meaning "21st century" submarine. This designation seems to have been an aberration, as the follow-on Virginia class submarines continue the previous series, starting at SSN-774.

Some former Ohio (SSBN-726) class ballistic missile submarines were converted during the early 2000s into Tomahawk-carrying guided missile submarines (SSGN).

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## Amphibious Forces

<b>AGC</b>	Amphibious Fleet Flagship
<b>LC(FF)</b>	Landing Craft, Flotilla Flagship
<b>LCAC</b>	Air Cushion Landing Craft
<b>LCC</b>	Amphibious Command Ship
<b>LCI</b>	Infantry Landing Craft
<b>LCI(G)</b>	Infantry Landing Craft, Gun
<b>LCI(L)</b>	Infantry Landing Craft, Large
<b>LCI(R)</b>	Infantry Landing Craft, Rocket
<b>LCM</b>	Mechanized Landing Craft
<b>LCM/ML</b>	Minelaying Mechanized Landing Craft
<b>LCP</b>	Personnel Landing Craft
<b>LCP(L)</b>	Personnel Landing Craft, Large
<b>LCP(N)</b>	Personnel Landing Craft, Nested
<b>LCP(R)</b>	Personnel Landing Craft, Ramp
<b>LCR</b>	Landing Craft, Rubber or Riverine
<b>LCS</b>	Support Landing Craft (prior to 2004)
<b>LCS(L)</b>	Support Landing Craft, Large (Rocket)
<b>LCT</b>	Tank Landing Craft
<b>LCU</b>	Utility Landing Craft

<b>LCV</b>	Vehicle Landing Craft
<b>LCVP</b>	Vehicle and Personnel Landing Craft
<b>LCW</b>	Wing-in-Ground-Effect Landing Craft
<b>LFR</b>	Inshore Fire Support Ship
<b>LHA</b>	Amphibious Assault Ship, General Purpose
<b>LHD</b>	Amphibious Assault Ship, Multi-purpose
<b>LKA</b>	Amphibious Cargo Ship
<b>LPD</b>	Amphibious Transport Dock Ship
<b>LPH</b>	Amphibious Assault Helicopter Carrier
<b>LPR</b>	Amphibious Transport, Small
<b>LSD</b>	Dock Landing Ship
<b>LSM</b>	Medium Landing Ship
<b>LSM(R)</b>	Medium Landing Ship, Rocket
<b>LSS</b>	Landing Support Ship
<b>LSSL</b>	Small Landing Support Ship
<b>LST</b>	Tank Landing Ship
<b>LST(H)</b>	Tank Landing Ship, Evacuation (Hospital)
<b>LST/ML</b>	Minelaying Tank Landing Ship
<b>LSU</b>	Utility Landing Ship
<b>LSV</b>	Vehicle Landing Ship

**Notes:**

Most of the larger "Landing Craft" of World War II were later reclassified as "Landing Ships."

## Littoral Warfare Ships

<b>FSF</b>	Fast Sea Frame
<b>LCS</b>	Littoral Combat Ship (after 2004)
<b>PAC</b>	Air Cushion Patrol Craft
<b>PB</b>	Patrol Boat
<b>PBL</b>	Amphibious Assault Patrol Boat
<b>PBM</b>	Riverine Monitor
<b>PC</b>	Coastal Patrol Craft/Submarine Chaser (173 ft)
<b>PCC</b>	Submarine Chaser (Control)
<b>PCE</b>	Submarine Chaser (Escort)
<b>PCEC</b>	Escort (Control)
<b>PCE(R)</b>	Escort (Rescue)
<b>PCI</b>	Fast Coastal Interceptor
<b>PCS</b>	Submarine Chaser (136 ft)
<b>PCSC</b>	Submarine Chaser (Control)
<b>PG</b>	Patrol Gunboat or Corvette
<b>PGM</b>	Missile Gunboat
<b>PGH</b>	Helicopter Gunboat
<b>PH</b>	Hydrofoil Gunboat
<b>PHM</b>	Missile Hydrofoil
<b>PHT</b>	Hydrofoil Torpedo Boat
<b>PL</b>	High Endurance Cutters
<b>PM</b>	Medium Endurance Cutters

<b>PR</b>	Radar Picket Conversion
<b>PSOC</b>	Special Operations Patrol Craft
<b>PT</b>	Patrol Torpedo Boat
<b>PTC</b>	Patrol Motor Boat Submarine Chaser
<b>PW</b>	Wing-in-Ground-Effect Patrol Craft
<b>PY</b>	Patrol, former Yacht
<b>PYe</b>	Coastal Patrol, former Yacht
<b>SC</b>	Submarine Chaser (110 ft)
<b>SCC</b>	Submarine Chaser (Control)

**Notes:**

The "PG" designation was given both to patrol gunboats built in the US during the first half of the twentieth century and to corvettes transferred from the Royal Navy under reverse lend-lease in 1942.

The "LCS" designation was originally assigned during World War II to "Landing Craft, Support." In 2004, the USN reassigned this designation to the "Littoral Combat Ship."

## Mine Warfare Ships

<b>ACM</b>	Auxiliary Minelayer
<b>AM</b>	Minesweeper
<b>AMc</b>	Coastal Minesweeper
<b>AMc(U)</b>	Coastal Minesweeper (underwater locator)
<b>CM</b>	Minelayer
<b>CMc</b>	Coastal Minelayer



<b>DM</b>	Prior to 1955 - Light Minelayer (converted destroyer)
<b>DM</b>	After 1955 - Destroyer Minelayer (converted destroyer)
<b>DMS</b>	High Speed Minesweeper (converted destroyer)
<b>MCAC</b>	Air Cushion Mine Countermeasures Craft
<b>MCD</b>	Mine Countermeasures Drone
<b>MCM</b>	Mine Countermeasures Ship
<b>MCS</b>	Mine Countermeasures Support Ship
<b>MCT</b>	Mine Countermeasures Conversion Trainer
<b>MHC</b>	Coastal Minehunter
<b>MHI</b>	Inshore Minehunter
<b>ML</b>	Minelayer
<b>MMD</b>	Fast Minelayer (ex-DM destroyers)
<b>MSA</b>	Auxiliary Minesweeper
<b>MSAC</b>	Air Cushion Minesweeper
<b>MSC</b>	Coastal Minesweeper
<b>MSCO</b>	Coastal Minesweeper, Old
<b>MSD</b>	Drone Minesweeper
<b>MSF</b>	Steel Hull Fleet Minesweeper
<b>MSH</b>	Harbor Minesweeper
<b>MSI</b>	Inshore Minesweeper
<b>MSO</b>	Ocean Minesweeper
<b>MSR</b>	River Minesweeper
<b>MSS</b>	Special Device Minesweeper
<b>YMS</b>	Motor Minesweepers

**Notes:**

Those Benson and Gleaves class destroyers converted to minesweepers (DMS) during World War II were reclassified as destroyers (DD) during 1954/1955 and quickly thereafter decommissioned.

Converted Allen M. Sumner Light Minelayers (DM) were redesignated as Destroyer Minelayers (DM) on 7 February 1955 and redesignated as Fast Minelayers (MMD) on 1 January 1969.

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## Auxiliary Ships

<b>AB</b>	Crane Ship (later changed to ACS)
<b>AC</b>	Collier (coaling ship)
<b>ACS</b>	Crane Ship
<b>AD</b>	Destroyer Tender
<b>ADC</b>	Dry Cargo Replenishment Ship
<b>ADG</b>	Degaussing Vessel
<b>AE</b>	Ammunition Ship
<b>AF</b>	Refrigerated Stores Ship
<b>AFDB</b>	Large Floating Drydock
<b>AFDL</b>	Small Floating Drydock
<b>AFDM</b>	Medium Floating Drydock
<b>AFS</b>	Combat Stores Ship
<b>AG</b>	Auxiliary, Generic/General (miscellaneous) use
<b>AGB</b>	Icebreaker
<b>AGD</b>	Seagoing Dredger
<b>AGDE</b>	Experimental Destroyer Escort

<b>AGDS</b>	Deep Submergence Support Ship
<b>AGER</b>	Experimental Research Ship
<b>AGF</b>	Fleet Flagship
<b>AGFF</b>	Experimental Frigate
<b>AGH</b>	Helicopter Support Ship
<b>AGI</b>	Intelligence Gathering Ship
<b>AGL</b>	Lighthouse Tender
<b>AGM</b>	Missile Range Instrumentation Ship
<b>AGMR</b>	Communications Major Relay Ship
<b>AGOR</b>	Oceanographic Research Ship
<b>AGOS</b>	Ocean Surveillance Ship
<b>AGP</b>	Patrol Craft Tender
<b>AGR</b>	Radar Picket Ship (converted cargo ship)
<b>AGS</b>	Surveying Ship
<b>AGSc</b>	Surveying Ship, Coastal
<b>AH</b>	Hospital Ship
<b>AHR</b>	Riverine Hospital Ship
<b>AK</b>	Cargo Ship
<b>AKA</b>	Attack Cargo Ship
<b>AKE</b>	Dry Cargo Ship
<b>AKL</b>	Light Cargo Ship
<b>AKN</b>	Net Cargo Ship
<b>AKR</b>	Roll-on/Roll-off Cargo Ship
<b>AKS</b>	General Stores-issue Ship

<b>AKV</b>	Aircraft Cargo Ship or Ferry
<b>AN</b>	Net Laying (Net Tender) Ship
<b>ANL</b>	Net Laying (Net Tender) Ship
<b>AO</b>	Fleet Oiler
<b>AOE</b>	Fast Combat Support Ship
<b>AOG</b>	Gasoline Tanker
<b>AOL</b>	Small Oiler
<b>AOR</b>	Replenishment Oiler
<b>AORL</b>	Small Replenishment Oiler
<b>AOT</b>	Transport Oiler
<b>AP</b>	Personnel Transport Ship
<b>APA</b>	Attack Personnel Transport Ship
<b>APB</b>	Barracks Ship
<b>APc</b>	Coastal Transport
<b>APD</b>	Troop Transport (High Speed)
<b>APH</b>	Troop Transport, Hospital
<b>APL</b>	Floating Barracks
<b>APM</b>	Mechanized Artillery Transport
<b>APR</b>	Rescue Transport
<b>APV</b>	Aircraft Transport
<b>AR</b>	Repair Ship
<b>ARB</b>	Repair Ship, Battle Damage
<b>ARC</b>	Cable Ship
<b>ARD</b>	Repair Dock

<b>ARDM</b>	Medium Repair Dock
<b>ARL</b>	Repair Ship, Landing Craft
<b>ARS</b>	Salvage Ship
<b>ARS(D)</b>	Salvage Ship, Lifting Vessel
<b>ARS(T)</b>	Salvage Ship, Tender
<b>ARV</b>	Aircraft Repair Ship
<b>ARVA</b>	Aircraft Airframe Repair Ship
<b>ARVE</b>	Aircraft Engine Repair Ship
<b>AS</b>	Submarine Tender
<b>ASE</b>	Submarine Ammunition Ship
<b>ASR</b>	Submarine Rescue Vessel
<b>ATA</b>	Auxiliary Ocean Tug
<b>ATGB</b>	Large Icebreaking Tug
<b>ATF</b>	Fleet Tug
<b>ATR</b>	Rescue Tug
<b>ATS</b>	Salvage Tug
<b>AV</b>	Seaplane Tender
<b>AVB</b>	Aviation Logistics Support Ship
<b>AVC</b>	Catapult Lighter
<b>AVD</b>	Aviation Tender (Converted Destroyer)
<b>AVP</b>	Small Seaplane Tender
<b>AVS</b>	Aviation Supply Ship
<b>AW</b>	Distilling Ship
<b>AWK</b>	Water Tanker

<b>AX</b>	Training Vessel (Current meaning) Auxiliary Tender, Large (Former meaning)
<b>AXS</b>	Sail Training Vessel
<b>AY</b>	VIP Yacht (Current meaning) Auxiliary Tender, Small (Former meaning)
<b>AZ</b>	Aerostat Tender

**Note:**

Attack Cargo (AKA) and Attack Personnel Transport (APA) ships differ from Cargo (AK) and Personnel Transport (AP) ships by being specially equipped to partake in amphibious landings. The AKA and APA designations were replaced by LKA and LPA as of 1 January 1969.

## Plan Orange Conversions

<b>XAV</b>	Seaplane Carrier, converted
<b>XAVP</b>	Small Seaplane Carrier, converted
<b>XCV</b>	Aircraft Carrier, converted

**Notes:**

During the 1920s and 1930s Plan Orange included mobilization and conversion of various merchantmen and liners into auxiliary warships. The number of suitable ships fluctuated throughout this period as older ships went to the breakers and new ships were completed. As of April 1939, ships available for conversions would have added five "fleet" carriers (none capable of more than 24 knots), two seaplane tenders and eight small seaplane tenders to the rolls. These plans were all abandoned in November 1940, mainly because the conversions would have tied up too much shipyard capacity for little real gain.

## Support Craft

<b>DSRV</b>	Deep Submergence Rescue Vehicle
<b>DSV</b>	Deep Submergence Vehicle
<b>IX</b>	Unclassified Miscellaneous
<b>IXSS</b>	Unclassified Miscellaneous Submarine
<b>NR</b>	Nuclear Powered Research Submersible
<b>SDV</b>	Swimmer Delivery Vehicle
<b>SLWT</b>	Side Loading Warping Tug
<b>TWR</b>	Torpedo Retriever
<b>WLB</b>	Seagoing Buoy Tender
<b>WLM</b>	Coastal Buoy Tender
<b>WLI</b>	Inland Buoy Tender
<b>WLIC</b>	Inland Construction Tender
<b>WLR</b>	River Buoy Tender
<b>X-1</b>	Midget Submarine (research vessel)
<b>YAG</b>	Miscellaneous Service Craft
<b>YC</b>	Lighter
<b>YCF</b>	Car Float
<b>YCV</b>	Aircraft Transportation Lighter
<b>YD</b>	Floating Crane
<b>YDT</b>	Diving Tender
<b>YF</b>	Covered Lighter
<b>YFB</b>	Ferry
<b>YFN</b>	Covered Lighter
<b>YFNB</b>	Large Covered Lighter

<b>YFND</b>	Dry Dock Companion Craft
<b>YFNX</b>	Special Purpose Lighter
<b>YFP</b>	Power Barge
<b>YFRT</b>	Range Tender
<b>YFU</b>	Harbor Utility Craft
<b>YGN</b>	Garbage Barge
<b>YHLC</b>	Salvage Lift Craft, Heavy
<b>YLC</b>	Salvage Lift Craft
<b>YM</b>	Dredge
<b>YMLC</b>	Salvage Lift Craft, Medium
<b>YMN</b>	Dredge
<b>YNG</b>	Gate Craft
<b>YO</b>	Oil Barge
<b>YOG</b>	Gasoline Barge
<b>YOGN</b>	Gasoline Barge
<b>YON</b>	Oil Barge
<b>YOS</b>	Oil Storage Barge
<b>YP</b>	Seamanship Training Craft
<b>YPD</b>	Pile Driver
<b>YPR</b>	Parasail Training Craft
<b>YR</b>	Repair Barge
<b>YRB</b>	Repair and Berthing Barge
<b>YRBM</b>	Repair, Berthing, and Messing Barge
<b>YRDH</b>	Hull Repair Barge



<b>YRDM</b>	Machinery Repair Barge
<b>YRM</b>	Missile Retriever
<b>YRR</b>	Radiological Repair Barge
<b>YRST</b>	Salvage Craft Tender
<b>YRT</b>	Torpedo Retriever
<b>YSR</b>	Sludge Removal Barge
<b>YTB</b>	Large Tug
<b>YTL</b>	Small Tug
<b>YTM</b>	Medium Tug
<b>YTT</b>	Torpedo Trials Craft
<b>YW</b>	Water Barge
<b>YWN</b>	Water Barge

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## Old Ships

As part of the 17 July 1920 redesignation system, a series of "old ship" or "second line" designations was created in order to distinguish between front line ships and those that were past their prime. As far as I have been able to determine, it would appear that these were not officially assigned to any ship. This may have been a result of these old ships being scrapped as a result of the downsizing of the fleet following World War I and the adoption of the Washington Naval Limitation Treaty.

<b>OBM</b>	Monitor, Second Line
<b>OCC</b>	Battle Cruiser, Second Line
<b>OCA</b>	Cruiser, Second Line
<b>OCL</b>	Light Cruiser, Second Line
<b>OCM</b>	Minelayer, Second Line

<b>OCV</b>	Aircraft Carrier, Second Line
<b>ODD</b>	Destroyer, Second Line
<b>OSS</b>	Submarine, Second Line
<b>OSF</b>	Fleet Submarine, Second Line

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## USS Constitution

The two hundred year-old USS Constitution is unique in that she is the only ship in the USN that does not have a classification other than her name. The Secretary of the Navy, J. William Middendorf, II, ordered her reclassification from "IX-21" to "None" effective as of 1 September 1975. She is now listed on the Naval Vessel Register (NVR) of active in-commission ships only by her name.

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## Ship Naming in the US Navy

Note: These links are to **OFF-SITE** webpages belonging to the U.S. Naval Historical Center.

[Click here for U.S. Naval History Center FAQ #63](#)

[Ship nomenclature and Ship types](#)

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### Page History

14 May 2007 - Benchmark

17 March 2009 - Added comments regarding redesignations of Mitscher class missile destroyers and extension of Arleigh Burke class DDG

17 September 2010 - Added "Old Ship" section and added information on Farragut class DLG designations

[Source: [http://www.navweaps.com/index\\_tech/index\\_ships\\_list.htm](http://www.navweaps.com/index_tech/index_ships_list.htm) Apr 2012 ++]