



## *Modoc*, 1922

WPG-46

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A small tribe of Lutuanian Indians from northeastern California, who, following a long series of wars with the whites, was placed part upon the Klamath Reservation, Oregon, and part upon the Quapaw in Oklahoma.

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*Tampa*-class cutter

Builder: Union Construction Company, Oakland, California

Commissioned: 14 January 1922

Decommissioned: 1 February 1947

Length: 240'

Beam: 39'

Draft: 13' 2"

Displacement: 1,506 tons

Machinery: 1 x General Electric 2,040 kVa electric motor driven by a turbo-generator; 2 x Babcock & Wilcox, cross-drum type, 200 psi, 750° F superheat boilers

Performance:

Maximum speed/endurance: 16.2 knots on trial (1921)

Maximum sustained: 15.5 knots, 3,500 mile radius (1945)

Economic speed/endurance: 9.0 knots @ 5,500 mile radius (1945)

Deck Gear:

Complement: 12 officers, 78 men (1930); 12 officers, 110 men (1945)

Armament: 2 x 5"/51s; 1 x 3"/50; 2 x 6-pounders (1922)

2 x 5"/51s; 1 x 3"/50; 2 x .50 caliber MGs; 2 x depth charge tracks; 4 "Y" guns (1941)

2 x 3"/50s; 4 x 20mm/80; 2 x depth charge tracks; 4 "K" guns; 2 x Mousetraps (1945)

Electronics:

Radar: SF-1; SC-3

Sonar: QCJ-3

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**Class History:**

by John Tilley

The four 240-foot cutters were conceived as the first true "multi-mission" Coast Guard cutters, equipped for police work in territorial waters, ice patrol, search and rescue, derelict destruction, and towing. Each ship had a remarkably heavy armament of two 5-inch guns, with a provision for the wartime installation of a third, and a 3-inch anti-aircraft gun. A turbo-electric drive system gave the cutters a top speed of sixteen knots, which seemed plenty for the Coast Guard's peacetime missions. The four ships were built by the Union Construction Company of Oakland, California. The entry of the United States into the Second World War sent the Coast Guard on a search for hulls that could be turned into convoy escorts. The 240-foot cutters were fitted out with depth charges, additional guns, sonar, radar, and any other gear that could be crammed into them. The *Modoc* and two of its sisters, *Mojave* and *Tampa*, were assigned to the treacherous Greenland Patrol; the fourth ship in the class, the *Haida*, spent the war in Alaskan waters. All four were decommissioned and sold in 1947.

Additionally, Robert Scheina notes that:

"The 240-foot cutters followed the traditional cutter hull form, having a plumb bow and counter stern. These features proved particularly undesirable while on International Ice Patrol. Heavy seas coming up under the counter caused severe shocks. The wardroom in this class was well forward; thus, the deck sloped upward. This feature was known as the 'Honeywell Hill,' in honor of the principal architect of the class."

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## History:

The *Modoc* was launched as a Coast Guard cutter by Union Construction Company in Oakland, California on 1 October 1921. She was sponsored by Jean Lemard. *Modoc* was placed in commission on 14 January 1922. She was one of four Tampa-class 240-foot cutters, the others being *Haida*, *Mojave*, and *Tampa*. These were the first turbo-electric drive vessels and were the largest and most advanced cutters for their time.

Home ported at Wilmington, North Carolina, *Modoc* began Atlantic ice patrol service with the International Ice Patrol in 1923. For much of the next 18 years, she and another cutter alternated on 15-day patrols off the Grand Banks, using Halifax, Nova Scotia, and Boston as their bases.

Transferred to the Navy by Executive Order No. 8029 of 1 November 1941, *Modoc* joined the Greenland Patrol, whose orders were to do "a little of everything." This duty involved keeping convoy routes open, breaking and finding leads in ice for the Greenland convoys, escorting the convoys and rescuing survivors from torpedoed ships, constructing and maintaining aids to navigation, and reporting weather conditions. Ships of the patrol were also expected to discover and destroy enemy weather and radio stations in Greenland, continue hydrographic surveys, maintain communications, deliver supplies, and conduct search and rescue operations. All of these duties, the Coast Guard performed with exemplary fortitude and faithfulness throughout the war. It was during this time that she was designated as WPG-46.

In both World Wars, when submarines were more of a menace than icebergs, the International Ice Patrol was suspended so that the cutters could perform more important escort duty. During these years there was but one major collision; British ship *Svend Foyn* struck a berg 21 January 1943. Before she sank *Modoc* rescued 128 survivors.

*Modoc*, in company with cutters *Northland* and *General Greene* rescuing survivors from torpedoed convoy ships, has also witnessed a large part of German ship *Bismarck's* death battle 23 to 27 May 1941. Close to midnight 24 May *Modoc* found herself in the midst of an attack in which eight planes and three warships were involved. Antiaircraft fire from *Bismarck* whizzed dangerously close to the cutter's port bow. HMS *Norfolk* was about to take the

cutter under fire until HMS *Prince of Wales* identified her as U.S. Coast Guard. The cutter was undamaged, although they were near the fighting and at times only six miles from *Bismarck*. The widespread movements of the combatants, 19 plus destroyers and smaller ships, had distributed danger over a wide area. Aircraft had played a continuous part in coordinating activities, thus adding to the danger of accidents to innocent bystanders, a role the cutters had to play prior to Pearl Harbor.

On the Greenland Ice Patrol plodded many of the Coast Guard's older, smaller, and slower ships. They endured much discomfort amid the dangers of fog, storms, ice, and German raiders, but their work was vital to victory in the Atlantic.

*Modoc* returned to the Treasury Department in accordance with Executive Order No. 9666 of 28 December 1945, and served as a patrol cutter until decommissioning in 1947. Sold to Manuel Velliantis in Honduras, she was converted for merchant use and renamed *Amalia V*. Registered in Ecuador in 1960 by Tropical Navigation Co., she was renamed *Machala*, and served as a merchantman until scrapped in 1964.

*Modoc* received one battle star for World War II service.

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#### **Sources:**

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Robert Scheina. *U.S. Coast Guard Cutters & Craft of World War II*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1982.

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