



USS *Van Buren*, PF-42

The eighth president of the United States and the names of cities in Maine, Arkansas, Missouri, and Ohio.

Builder: Consolidated Steel Corp., Los Angeles, CA

Length: 303' 11"

Beam: 37' 6"

Draft: 12' 8" fl

Displacement: 2,230 tons

Propulsion: 2-shaft VTE, 3 boilers

Range: 9,500 nm at 12 knots

Top speed: 20 knots

Complement: 190

Armament: 3 x 3"/50; 4 x 40mm (2x2); 9 x 20mm; 1 x Hedgehog, 8 x depth charge projectors; 2 x depth charge racks. For those frigates fitted out for weather patrol duty, the after 3-inch gun was removed and a weather balloon hanger was added aft.

History:

The second *Van Buren* (PF-42) was laid down under a Maritime Commission contract (MC hull 1453) on 24 June 1943 at Los Angeles, CA, by the Consolidated Steel Corp. She was launched on 27 July 1943 and was sponsored by Mrs. Edward J. O'Hara. *Van Buren* was commissioned at Terminal Island, CA, on 17 December 1943, under the command of LCDR Charles B. Arrington, USCG.

Van Buren conducted shakedown off the west coast before departing San Pedro, CA, on 9 March 1944, bound for the western Pacific. She sailed in company with sister ship *Ogden* (PF-39) and escorted the merchant tanker SS *Fort Erie* to Espiritu Santo from 23 to 29 March. Departing that port on the 30th, the frigate arrived at Mime Bay, New Guinea, on 2 April.

On 21 April, Vice Admiral Marc Mitscher's task force of carriers, battleships, cruisers, and destroyers began pounding Japanese airfields and defensive positions on Hollandia, Wakde, Sawar, and Sarmi, New Guinea, to neutralize them during an impending amphibious operation under the command of Rear Admiral Daniel E. Barbey. The next day, Army troops began splashing ashore at Aitape and Humboldt Bay. *Van Buren* escorted convoys supporting this operation into May and June.

As Army forces encountered stiff enemy resistance ashore, naval units were often called upon to render gunfire support. *Van Buren* received such a request on the afternoon of 9 June. At 1740, the patrol frigate opened with her main battery, firing salvos at Japanese troop concentrations near a road in the Sarmi-Sawar sector. Ten days later, the warship again conducted a gunfire-support mission for the Army, this time near Maffin Village. The following day, *Van Buren* lobbed 150 rounds of 3-inch and 180 of 40-millimeter into the troublesome Maffin Village sector. Directions from an Army spotting plane provided information on enemy positions. Lying to off the beach, *Van Buren* soon demolished her targets and started many fires. An Army plane again provided call-fire guidance on the 23d, when *Van Buren* once more supported Army troops struggling against the Japanese defenders ashore, breaking up troop concentrations and destroying communications and supplies.

Van Buren subsequently screened the ships supporting the Cape Sansapor operations in August and continued escort operations into the autumn. On 10 November, *Van Buren* departed Humboldt Bay, bound for Cape Sansapor with a convoy of four LST's (*LST-454*, *LST-465*, *LST-471*, and *LST-697*). En route on 16 November, the frigate saw an Army plane crash four miles away and altered course to close. The ship's motor whaleboat soon rescued the aircraft's crew unhurt.

One week later, while participating in operations in the Philippines, *Van Buren* went to general quarters when *El Paso* (PF-41) radioed a contact report of an unidentified plane closing their vicinity. *Van Buren's* SA radar picked up the enemy at 15 miles; her SL receivers picked up the contact at 6 miles. Although ready for action, the frigate did not get a chance to engage, as the plane veered away and passed along the opposite side of the convoy, well beyond the American warship's gun-range.

Van Buren continued her convoy escort and screening duties with the 7th Amphibious Force, in the Philippines, into late 1944. After escorting a convoy to

Leyte in mid-December, *Van Buren* sailed via Manus, in the Admiralties, to Hawaii. Arriving at Pearl Harbor on 2 January 1945, *Van Buren* operated as a training ship attached to the Pacific Fleet's destroyer forces through the spring of 1945. Shifting to the west coast of the United States soon thereafter, the patrol vessel arrived at San Francisco on 2 July. Assigned to Commander, Western Sea Frontier, the warship was fitted out as a weather ship and operated as such through the end of hostilities with Japan and into the year 1946.

Departing San Francisco on 13 March 1946, *Van Buren* transited the Panama Canal and arrived at Charleston, S.C., on 3 April. Decommissioned on 6 May 1946, *Van Buren* was struck from the Navy list on 19 June 1946 and sold soon thereafter to the Sun Shipbuilding and Drydock Co., of Chester, Pa., for scrapping.

Van Buren received three battle stars for World War II service.

Sources:

The Coast Guard At War, Transports and Escorts, Vol. V, No. 1.

Conway's All the World's Fighting Ships, 1922-1946. London: Conway Maritime Press, 1992, pp. 148-149.

Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships, Vol. VII, pp. 448-450.

