

CALLAGHAN'S FINAL FIGHT

THE USS CALLAGHAN BECAME THE LAST US NAVY DESTROYER SUNK DURING WORLD WAR TWO

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A Fletcher-class destroyer, USS *Callaghan* (DD-792) was launched on 1 August 1943 by Bethlehem Shipbuilding in San Pedro, California. Commissioned on 27 November 1943, she reported to the Pacific Fleet. The destroyer sailed from the West Coast on 5 February 1944 to join the 5th Fleet in defending against air raids on the Palaus, Yap, Ulithi, and Woleai from 30 March to 1 April 1944. Based on Manus in April, *Callaghan* supported the Hollandia operation as a picked ship during air strikes and screening the valuable tankers.

From June to August 1944, *Callaghan* provided screen for escort carriers attacking Saipan, Tinian, and Guam. At Saipan, *Callaghan's* guns joined in driving off a heavy Japanese air attack on 17 June, helping shoot down three enemy aircraft. *Fanshaw Bay* was struck by a bomb in this attack and *Callaghan* escorted the crippled escort carrier back safely to Eniwetok. Late in August, the destroyer began operations as escort for air strikes on the Palaus, Mindanao, Luzon, and the Central Philippines

in support of the invasion of the Palaus, a stepping stone to the Philippines.

With the invasion of the Philippines scheduled for mid-October 1944, *Callaghan* steamed in the screen of the carrier force conducting essential preliminary neutralization of Japanese airfields in Formosa and Okinawa. During a heavy enemy air attack on 14 October, *Callaghan* joined in downing several planes. Sailing on to stand guard of the invasion area on Leyte, *Callaghan's* force contributed air power in the decisive Battle for Leyte Gulf, helping to ensure that the Allied advance in the Philippines against the Japanese efforts to break up the landings.

After pursuing the Japanese moving north, *Callaghan* returned to support the Philippine

operations, with the 3rd Fleet, for air strikes on Luzon. *En route* on 3 November, *Reno* was torpedoed and *Callaghan* stood by to protect the stricken light cruiser until relief forces arrived, when *Callaghan* was able to rejoin her group for the strikes. Through December, she participated in more air strikes on the Central Philippines and in January 1945, the destroyer sailed with the 3rd Fleet for air raids on Formosa, Luzon, Indo-China, Hong Kong, and the Nansei Shoto.

Through the following months, the destroyer operated at the same pace as she screened carrier strikes shelling Iwo Jima, Okinawa, and the Tokyo area. *Callaghan*

assisted in sinking a Japanese picket boat on 18 February and on 3 March joined the bombardment of Parece Vela. In late March 1945, *Callaghan* joined TF 54 at Ulithi and from this base sailed for the bombardment preceding the invasion of Okinawa where she undertook harassing fire of enemy positions on the night of 26 March. This initiated prolonged fire support and screening duty in the dangerous waters off

Okinawa during which, in addition to invaluable aid to the troops,

Callaghan joined in the sinking of a Japanese midget sub and shot down three dive-bombers. However, the crew began to see the heavy toll being taken by the new Japanese terror weapon of the kamikaze.

Callaghan underway in Camouflage Measure 32, Design 7D.



Captain Daniel Callaghan on the bridge of the USS San Francisco.



Starboard view of the USS *Callaghan* (DD-792).