



THEIR GUNS WERE ALWAYS READY

BY JAMES THOMPSON

PHOTOGRAPHIC HISTORY OF THE MIGHTY IOWA-CLASS BATTLESHIPS – THE WORLD'S MOST POWERFUL WARSHIPS. THIS IS THE SEVENTH INSTALLMENT COVERING THE USS NEW JERSEY - PART TWELVE



Good morning, Beirut! *New Jersey* fires a salvo from her 16-inchers at Syrian-controlled targets while off the coast of Lebanon. On 23 October 1983, terrorist suicide bombers rammed trucks into barracks occupied by peacekeepers. Some 240 US Marines, 58 French paratroopers, and a *New Jersey* sailor were killed. However, there was no clear target to attack. Staying on station much longer than intended (she was the only operational battleship at that point), she was finally allowed to retaliate on 14 December 1983 — the first time her 16-inchers were fired in anger since Vietnam. Her shells landed 16 to 18 miles inside Syrian-controlled areas of Lebanon.



Back in action! While on her first cruise since reactivation, the *New Jersey* received orders on 9 September 1983 to head at top speed to Lebanon. The once peaceful country was in a terrible civil war after the 1982 Israeli invasion. Marines had been sent in to keep the peace but they were attacked and the *New Jersey* sped through the Panama Canal and the Atlantic to arrive on 25 September. The various hostile factions saw her and ceased action. USMC Gen. P.X. Kelly said, "There is no weapon system in the world that comes even close to the visible symbol and the enormous power represented by the battleship."