

**THE OFFICERS AND CREW  
OF  
USS CONSTELLATION CV 64**



**WELCOME YOU  
ABOARD**

Dear Visitor,

Welcome aboard the best warship in the universe, USS Constellation. As you tour "America's Flagship", I'm certain you will see why I'm proud to serve as her Commanding Officer. The crew's pride and professionalism shows throughout the ship. Feel free to ask any questions along the way. The crew will be more than happy to answer them. Connie sailors are proud of their ship and are more than willing to show her to you. Enjoy your visit.

Warmest regards,

*J. J. Zerr*  
J. J. Zerr



## Captain John J. Zerr

### Commanding Officer

Capt. John J. Zerr was born on August 12, 1941 in St. Charles, Mo. After completing high school there, he enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 1959. He served aboard the USS Manley (DD-940) as an Electronics Technician. During his tour he was selected for the Navy Enlisted Scientific Education Program and obtained a B.S. degree in Electrical Engineering from Purdue University. He served aboard USS Gurke (DD-783) from 1965 to 1967 making a Western Pacific deployment to the Tonkin Gulf.

Capt. Zerr began flight training in 1968 and, after receiving his wings, was assigned to NAS Lemoore where he made two deployments to Vietnam with VA-55 embarked in USS Hancock (CV-19).

He then reported to the Naval Postgraduate School at Monterey, graduating in 1974 with a Master's degree in Aeronautical Engineering. He returned to VA-55 for the last deployment of Hancock and the A-4 aircraft. Capt. Zerr completed Test Pilot School in 1976 and then reported to VX-5 where he served as Head of the Projects Department. In 1980, he returned to Lemoore for his CO/XO tour with VA-192 flying the A-7E. Following the fatal mishap of the Commanding Officer, Capt. Zerr was moved to VA-94 to complete the command tour.

He served as Commander, Air Wing 14 aboard USS Constellation from 1983 to 1985 during the first deployment of the FA-18 "Hornet." Captain Zerr served as Director of the System Engineering Division at Naval Air Systems Command Headquarters in Washington, D.C. He was previously the Commanding Officer of the USS New Orleans (LPH-11).

Capt. Zerr's decorations include the Distinguished Flying Cross, Meritorious Service Medal, Air Medal, Navy Commendation Medal and various service and campaign medals.

Capt. Zerr is married to the former Karen Wilke of St. Charles, Mo. The Zerrs have five girls, Jennifer, Julie, Janine, Jodie and Jessica; and a son, John.

# USS CONSTELLATION

## A stellar record

Like her famous namesake, the current USS Constellation (CV 64) has a long and proud record of service. Built at the New York Naval Shipyard as the second ship in the "Kitty Hawk" class of aircraft carriers, Connie has nearly 30 years of service which has seen her sail into harms way from Yankee Station off the coast of Vietnam to the Gulf of Oman in the Indian Ocean.

Commissioned Oct. 27, 1961, Constellation sailed west to her only homeport of San Diego in July of 1962.

In Aug. 4, 1964, the American destroyers Maddox and Turner Joy were attacked by North Vietnamese patrol boats in the international waters of the Gulf of Tonkin. Constellation, visiting Hong Kong on a regularly-scheduled port visit, set sail immediately and began launching strikes against North Vietnamese vessels and bases.

For the next eight years, Constellation would return to the South China Sea for a total of seven combat cruises, conducting air strikes against heavily-fortified North Vietnamese positions, engaging naval targets and shooting down enemy aircraft.

The first American aces of the Vietnam War, Lt. Randall Cunningham and Lt. j.g. Willie Driscoll of VF-96, flew off Constellation's flight deck. Their success came during the ship's seventh WESTPAC, and her sixth combat cruise.

For her action in Southeast Asia, Constellation was awarded the coveted Presidential Unit Citation.

In 1975, Connie was redesignated "CV" from "CVA" with the addition of the S-3A Viking and F-14 Tomcat.

In 1982, Constellation celebrated her 21st birthday. Naval aviation had underwent vast changes since 1961, and to keep up with those changes, Connie once again went into the yards for modernization. When she came out of Bremerton in 1984, two weeks early and under budget, she had been modified to carry the Navy's new strike fighter, the FA-18 Hornet.

During WESTPAC 87, Constellation once again found herself in the spotlight, this time as she provided vital air cover for the escort of U.S.-flagged tankers through the Persian Gulf.

From her birthplace at the New York Naval Shipyard to her homeport of San Diego, from the troubled waters of the Gulf of Tonkin to the North Arabian Sea, Constellation has written an impressive record for the world to see. And it's been a stellar record to say the least!

***"Let friend and foe alike know that America has the muscle to back up its words with ships like this ...and men like you are that muscle."***

**President Ronald Reagan,  
to the crew of USS Constellation  
off the coast of California.**

**August 20, 1981**

# Vital Statistics

## Original Cost

\$400 million

## Flight Deck Area

4.1. acres

## Height

17 stories

## Average Draft

35 feet

## Displacement

85,000 tons

## Top Speed

In excess of 30 knots

## Propulsion

Four steam turbine engines

## Compartments and spaces

More than 3,000

## Population

More than 5000 with air wing

## Squadrons

VS-37 Sawbucks

(S-3A Viking)

VFA-113 Stingers

(FA-18 Hornet)

VFA-25 Fist of the Fleet

(FA-18 Hornet)

HS-8 Eightballers

(SH-3 Sea King)

VA-196 Milestones

(A-6E Intruder)

VAW-113 Black Eagles

(E2-C Hawkeye)

VF-21 Freelancers

(F-14A Tomcat)

VF-154 Black Knights

(F-14A Tomcat)

VAQ-139 Cougars

(EA-6B Prowler)

## On this date...

Oct. 27, 1961...Commissioned at New York Naval Shipyard.

July 12, 1962...Departs New York to sail around Cape Horn to San Diego.

Aug. 4, 1964...Launches strikes in response to Gulf of Tonkin incident.

May 10, 1972...Lt. Cunningham and Lt.j.g. Driscoll, flying off USS Constellation, become the first aces of the war by downing three MiGs in one day and five in four months.

Nov 23, 1974...Enters Persian Gulf while participating in MIDLINK 74, the first time an American carrier had been in those waters in 26 years.

July 1, 1975...Redesignated "CV" from "CVA", becoming a multi-use carrier with ASW capabilities.

Aug. 20, 1981...President Reagan declares Constellation "America's Flagship."

Feb. 21, 1985...Departs San Diego for WEST-PAC, the first deployment with the FA-18 Hornet.

Sept. 24, 1986...Becomes the first aircraft carrier to visit Anchorage, Alaska.

Aug. 3, 1987...Begins flying cover for escort of U.S.-flagged tankers through the Persian Gulf.

