

Air view of the New Mexico before it was cut adrift

Drifting Battleship is Found and Taken in Tow Off N. Y.

But Newark City Fireboats Stand by to 'Repulse'
the New Mexico in Fight Over Scrapping Project **1947.**

By The Associated Press

Newark, N. J., Nov. 13.—The decommissioned battleship New Mexico was temporarily lost off Long Island early today while en route to her last "battle."

She was found later by a Coast Guard plane 58 miles outside New York Harbor and taken in tow again by two tugboat crews, who were ready to rename her "Reluctant."

The 30,000-ton former dreadnaught, center of a controversy which has caused Newark officials to send out fireboats to blockade her from being scrapped on the city's waterfront, had been cut loose by the two tugs in heavy seas en route from Boston yesterday.

Skippers of the tugs said they eventually lost her and could not

find her this morning.

Three men were believed to be aboard the New Mexico.

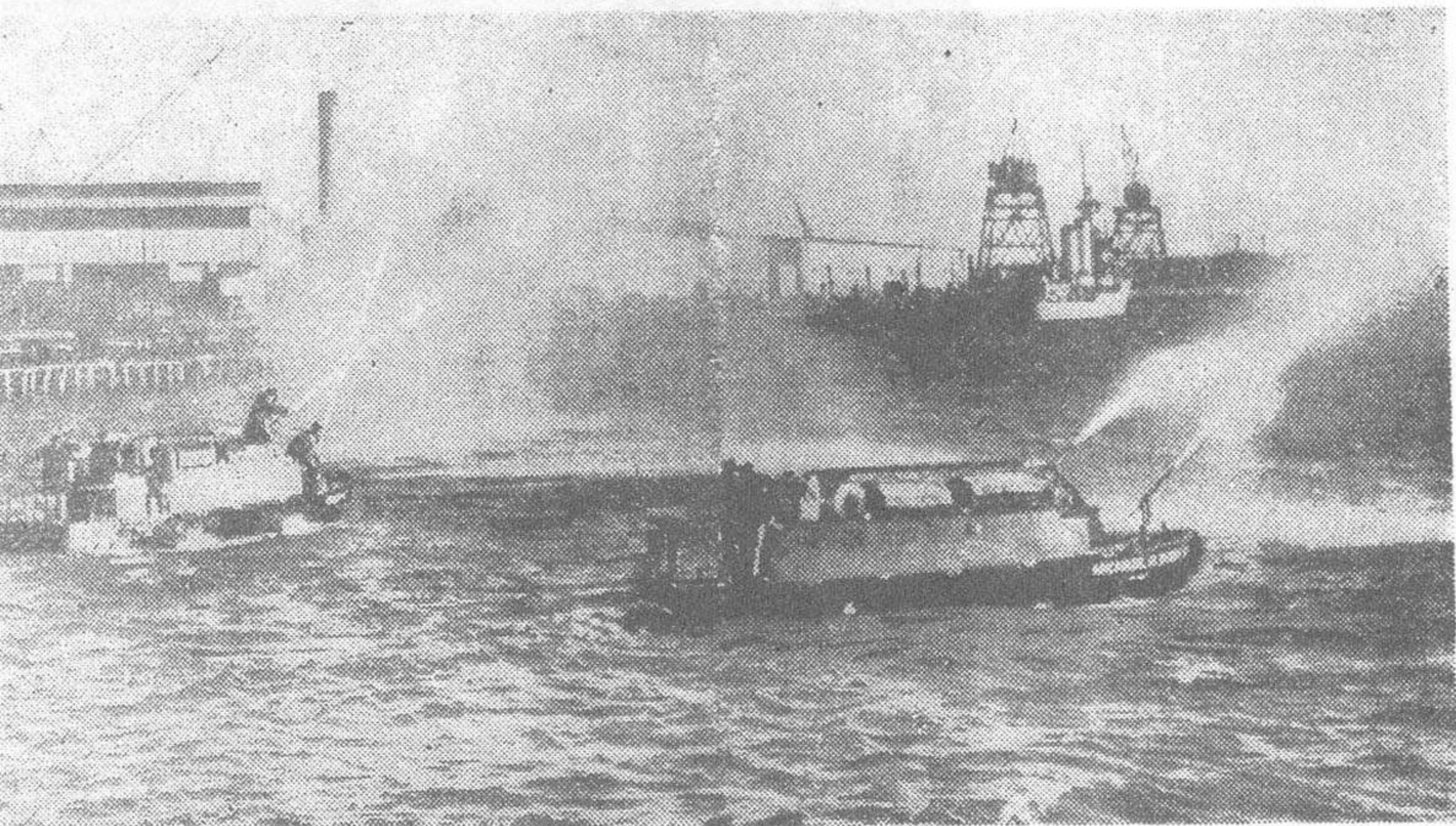
At the entrance to Port of Newark Channel inside New York Harbor two Newark fireboats meantime maintained a vigil to keep the former battleship out of Newark. City officials had sent out the fireboats armed with chemical sprays and water hoses to show they meant business.

The fireboats remained at their posts although Mayor Vincent J. Murphy said after a conference with Undersecretary of the Navy Kenney yesterday in Washington that some agreement to stave off the pending "battle" was in sight.

Despite the possibility of a Wash-

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NEWARK PREPARES WET RECEPTION FOR UNWELCOME WARSHIP



Associated Press Wirephoto

Newark, N. J., fireboats trying out water hoses in preparation to repel the decommissioned USS New Mexico en route to Newark Bay to be scrapped. City officials don't want it. The former battleship was cut adrift in a storm, but has been located

Battleship Adrift

(Continued from the First Page)

ington-enforced truce in the Battle of Newark Bay, new complications were reported brewing at Santa Fe New Mexico. The local chamber of commerce there said it plans to protest Newark's "slur" in refusing admittance of the one-time battleship bearing the State's name.

The New Mexico is owned now by Lipsett, Inc., a New York Salvage firm, which purchased it for scrap and also leased part of the Newark Navy Base for the dismantling job.

City officials previously had requested the Navy to give up its wartime base at Port Newark in order to permit a \$70,000,000 expansion program to get under way.

No Help From Halsey

The City of Newark will have to map out its own battle strategy without any help from New Jersey's best known naval authority, Admiral William (Bull) Halsey.

The former Elizabeth, N. J., resident and commander of the Third Fleet in the Pacific in the last war was reached by telephone at his Virginia home by a Newark co-belligerent in the impending (perhaps) battle of Newark Bay.

"I can't help Newark on strategy," said Admiral Halsey with a chuckle. "I don't know a damn thing about patrolling channels. I

1947 Newark Takes Steps to Guard Channel, halt Entry of Battleship for Scrapping

NEWARK, N. J., Nov. 11 (AP)—This city's navy—two 20-foot fireboats—was put on the alert today to guard the channel of Port Newark against any attempt to bring the onetime battleship New Mexico here for scrapping.

The former USS New Mexico, once de-commissioned and sold to Lipsett, Inc., for scrap, is under way from Boston. It is expected in New York harbor by 10 a. m. tomorrow, but will anchor at Graveyard bay to take on tons of water so that the stern may be high enough for navigation of the shallow channel to Port Newark the next day.

Thus, the showdown on whether the 29,000-ton New Mexico will slip through the channel or will halt in the face of a fireboat blockade is set for Thursday morning.

Before the "zero hour," however, Mayor Vincent J. Murphy, of Newark, who ordered the fireboats take their battle stations, Port Newark authority officials, and representatives of Governor Alfred Driscoll of New Jersey planned to call on the Navy department in Washington in an attempt to clear the situation which led to the present impasse.

Authorities here contend that the action of the Navy in contracting with the Lipsett firm for scrapping the New Mexico, the Wyoming and the Idaho here would jeopardize a recently signed lease between Newark and the Port of New York authority for a \$70,000,000 development of the city's air and sea ports.

Under terms of the agreement with the Port authority, the development would not be started until the Navy relinquished its wartime lease of part of the seaport.

Mayor Murphy instructed Pub-

lic Safety Director John B. Keenan today to have his fireboat fleet readied for action and to hire another tug, if necessary, so that a line could be stretched across the channel entrance.

Keenan made it clear the dispute was "not a fight with the Navy."

The Navy announced it was not concerned in the dispute.

The Navy responsibility for the New Mexico ended when it was turned over to the Lipsett firm at Boston, a naval spokesman said.

Battleship New Mexico Will Be Sold for Scrap

By the Associated Press 1947
NEW YORK, Aug. 30.—The 30,600-ton battleship New Mexico, built at an estimated cost of \$7,800,000 in 1918 and subsequently subjected to several expensive face-liftings, is up for sale.

Sealed bids from a American citizen must be submitted to the New York Naval Shipyard in Brooklyn by September 30, and the successful bidder will be required to scrap the vessel, now tied up at Commonwealth Pier 1, East Boston, Mass.

The Navy Vessel Disposal Office said the 624-foot ship contained four turbines each capable of developing 10,000 horsepower. Practically all that remains in the stripped hull is the propulsive machinery and twelve 14-inch and numerous 5-inch guns which have been spiked.

The world's first turbo-electric battleship when built, the New Mexico came off the ways too late to get into action in World War I. In the World War II she supported a dozen invasions of Pacific Islands, and on one occasion her guns roared continuously for 19 days.

Navy Returns Silver Of BB New Mexico

SANTE FE—The Navy has returned a unique 54-piece silver service to the State of New Mexico. The people of that state originally gave the silver to the battleship New Mexico during World War I.

The aircraft carrier Bon Homme Richard has had the service since the end of World War II when the battleship New Mexico was scrapped. New Mexico has insured the historical service for \$50,000.

Newark, N. J. Calls Its 'Navy' To Bar Junked Battleship

By The Associated Press 1947

Newark, N. J., Nov. 11.—The City of Newark, determined to battle against use of Port Newark as a scrapyard for warships, decided today to block the port's channel with fireboats to prevent entry tomorrow of the battleship New Mexico.

The old battlewagon is being towed from Boston toward Newark by tugs for scrapping by the Lipsett Co., which bought it along with the battleships Wyoming and Idaho.

Newark doesn't want the ships here, fearing that use of the port as a scrapyard would jeopardize a recently signed lease between Newark and the Port of New York Authority for development of the city's airport and seaport.

They're City's Entire Navy

Mayor Vincent J. Murphy took the occasion of an Armistice Day ceremony to tell reporters of the decision to pit the city's navy of two fireboats against the battleship.

The fireboats, the William J. Brennan and the Michael P. Duffy, are 35 feet long and manned by captain and crews of five. They carry a ton of foam powder and pumps as offensive weapons.

"I have given orders to the fire Department and the Police Department," said Public Safety Director, John B. Keenan after a conference with Murphy, "to employ whatever means are necessary, including the hiring of a tugboat, to block the channel completely."

No Graveyard Wanted

"I am not going to stand by and see the Port of Newark become a perennial graveyard for navy ships."

Keenan added:

"This is not a fight with the Navy. The only deal the city had was with Lipsett for dismantling the Normandie and the Normandie only."

Lipsett recently completed scrapping the former French liner at Port Newark.

Newark Navy Gets Respite; Battleship's Tug Disabled

New Mexico Proceeds at Reduced Speed Toward 'Cl
With Two Fireboats Guarding Harbor Entrance 1947

Newark, N. J., Nov. 12—(AP)—The decommissioned battleship New Mexico rolled toward her last battle—the Battle of Newark Bay—at reduced speed today as one of her two towing tugs became disabled.

A Coast Guard cutter and plane rushed to the aid of the tug which was helping tow the New Mexico toward a Newark scrapyard from Boston. Newark officials, who want no more ships scrapped on the city's waterfront, have sent two tugs armed with chemical spray and water hoses to block the New Mexico from the Newark Harbor channel.

The Coast Guard reported the tug C. Haywood Mesik had cast off from the 30,000-ton New Mexico in rough seas about 17 miles off Fire Island and 35 miles outside New York Harbor. The tug radioed she was in danger and might have to be abandoned, the Coast Guard said.

Meanwhile, the tug Dorothy Anne Mesik continued to lug the battleship along toward the entrance of New York Harbor, of which Newark Bay is a part.

Newark Navy Relaxes

Tense crews of the Newark navy relaxed momentarily.

The Michael P. Duffy, its deck guns capable of firing 2,000 gallons of water and foam a minute at a 400-foot range, remained on the alert against any attempt to slip the former battleship through the channel under cover of darkness.

Fire Captain Walter Danowski, in command of the flagship of the Newark task force, gave orders to his men to stand easy once the ship had cleared.

"Didn't think they'd dare to make a night raid on us," he said without the trace of a smile. "And good for them they didn't."

During the patrol, contact by radio had been lost with the Duffy's sister ship, the William P. Brennan.

The Duffy's fuel was running low but pleas for relief to "Admiral" John B. Keenan, who acts as Chief Public Safety Director in less crucial times, went unheeded.

City officials, who have requested the United States Navy to vacate its lease on part of the port in order to permit the start of a \$70,000,000 development program, said they wanted no more ships scrapped at Newark.

THE USS NEW MEXICO 1945

For the first time in her 26 years the USS New Mexico suffered battle damage on January 6 in action at Lingayen Gulf during the landings on Luzon.

The Jap bomb that struck the New Mexico hit on the port navigating bridge, causing heavy personnel losses, including her commanding officer, Capt. Robt. W. Fleming, U. S. N.

Among the 30 killed was Lieut. Gen. Herbert Lumsden, British Royal Marines, an observer.

The executive officer, Comdr. John T. Warren, U. S. N., assumed command. Repair parties quickly put out fires and cleared wreckage. Air attacks continued, but the New Mexico was able to throw intense anti-aircraft fire at the enemy.

Though casualties were severe, material damage to the ship caused little loss of battle efficiency. For the remainder of the day and until the beaches were secured some five days later, the New Mexico continued her scheduled bombardment.

Detached from Lingayen Gulf, the New Mexico was ordered to Pearl Harbor, where battle damage was quickly repaired. Within a month she put to sea again with a new commanding officer, Capt. John M. Haines, U. S. N.

The Philippines operation was the first in which the New Mexico was required to use her increased anti-aircraft batteries. Since the war started there had been a gradual strengthening of the anti-aircraft armament until it included not only 5-inch guns, but many 40-mm. and 20-mm. guns as well. The first 40-mm. guns and most of the 20-mm. guns had been installed at Pearl Harbor in 1942.

In early January the New Mexico left for Lingayen Gulf to support the Luzon landings. In addition to the staff officers of a battleship division, the "Queen" carried several distinguished visitors, including Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser, Royal Navy, and Lieut. Gen. Lumsden.

Arriving in the Gulf on the morning of January 6, a systematic bombardment of shore positions began with ~~less than expected opposition~~. Jap air attacks were fierce and frequent beginning about 10 a. m.

Although two of her anti-aircraft guns were knocked out by the Jap bomb, the battleship's gun crews effectively continued to fire at enemy planes.

The New Mexico had escaped battle damage up to this time, although her history bridges two wars.

Elderly and battlewise, the New Mexico earned the nickname "Queen" in peace time because of the extraordinary frequency with which she won fleet honors for gunnery, engineering, navigation, and battle efficiency. Even in sports, her crews regularly carried off honors. She has one of the longest histories

of a ship of the present Navy. Authorized by Congress in 1914, she was commissioned in 1918.

Like many things war-built, the New Mexico incorporated many advances in construction. Her hull was 16 feet longer than the preceding class of battleships. Her 14-inch, .50-caliber main battery was larger than any ship before her. And she was the first battleship equipped with turbo-electric drive.

Highlight of her activities between wars was her service in 1919 as escort to President Woodrow Wilson on his return home from the Paris Peace Conference. Later in 1919 the New Mexico became the flagship of the newly formed United States Pacific Fleet.

In 1920-21 and again in 1927-28 the "Queen" achieved the distinction of winning three major "E" awards simultaneously. The awards were won for gunnery, engineering, and battle efficiency.

When the Japanese struck at Pearl Harbor December 7, 1941, the New Mexico was operating with the Atlantic Fleet on neutrality patrol. She was soon transferred to the Pacific.

Ordered to the Aleutians in May, 1943, the New Mexico, then under the command of Capt. Oliver Lee Downes, U. S. N., participated in the recapture of Attu as flagship of a task group. Although thousands of shells were fired by the group with which the New Mexico was operating, little Japanese opposition was encountered. When assault forces landed on Kiska August 15, the New Mexico was part of the naval force covering the landings.

The New Mexico next participated in the recapture of the Gilbert Islands to the south and east of important Japanese bases in the Marshalls and Carolines. Commanded by Capt. Ellis Mark Zacharias, U. S. N., who relieved Capt. Downes in August, she heavily bombarded the shore of Butaritari Island in the Makin Atoll before the landings on November 20, 1943. No enemy opposition was encountered.

On January 30, 1944, the largest offensive operation yet undertaken was directed against the Marshall Islands by task forces under the command of Admiral (then Vice Admiral) R. A. Spruance, U. S. N. During these operations the New Mexico on January 31 bombarded Ebeye Island and, on February 1, Kwajalein. Troops landed at Kwajalein the next day.

During the Kwajalein bombardment the New Mexico achieved the incidental distinction of being the first battleship ever to enter the Kwajalein Lagoon.

The operation cost her the first casualty of the war. She had launched planes to spot targets. One of the planes, piloted by Lieut. Forney O. Fuqua, U. S. N. R., with Harrison D. Miller, Radioman 2c., U. S. N. R., as passenger, was struck by enemy fire. Lieut. Fuqua radioed his ship: "Cockpit full of gasoline fumes . . . hit very badly . . . am making emergency landing." He was overheard telling his radioman to take control and land the plane. The radioman brought the plane down, but it overturned in the water. A minesweeper operating inside the lagoon rescued the radioman, but the plane sank before Lieut. Fuqua's body could be recovered.

The Air Medal was awarded posthumously to Lieut. Fuqua. Miller won the DFC for his coolness and courage in the operation.

During the latter part of February, 1944, the New Mexico bombarded Tarao Island in the Maloelap Atoll and Wotje Island in the Wotje Atoll, both in the Marshalls. She carried the flag of the commander of a Pacific battleship division and was the first of the old battleships to operate with escort carriers. She was part of a task force which, early in March, bombarded Kavieng in New Ireland.

The next action involved the Marianas Islands, northwest of the Carolines and 1,400 miles east of the Philippines. The New Mexico bombarded Tinian in this group on June 14 and 15 and Guam on the 16th. Guam was hit again on July 12, 13, and 14. The task force with which she was operating temporarily withdrew. Returning three days before the scheduled assault on Guam, the New Mexico began a bombardment that continued until D-Day. After landings had been made, she provided harassing fire until the island was secured. She had fired almost continuously for 19 days.

For cool and courageous conduct while serving as the target spotting "eyes" of the battleship during these operations, two pilots—Lt. (jg) Thomas H. Moore, U. S. N. R., and Lt. (jg) Harold K. Anderson, jr., U. S. N. R.—missing in action, were awarded Air Medals by Vice Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner, U. S. N. At the same time Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, U. S. N., cited the rear-seat radiomen-gunnery—Alvin E. Cairns, Chief Aviation Radioman, U. S. N., and E. W. Kurzawa, Aviation Radioman 2c., U. S. N.—now missing in action, for efficiently carrying out "numerous naval gunfire spotting missions" during Marianas campaign. One of the planes was riddled by fragments of a Japanese shell while over Guam, while both planes encountered heavy-caliber and automatic anti-aircraft fire during their hazardous missions.

The Marianas campaign completed a year of heavy bombardment for the "Queen," and she returned to Puget Sound navy yard for new guns, overhaul, and leave. During this stay in the United States, Capt. Zacharias was detached and Capt. Fleming assumed command.

To sea again in October, the New Mexico headed for Leyte Gulf, where she participated in the securing of Leyte and Samar. Later she was part of the covering force which first entered the Surigao Straits, then passed through the Mindanao Sea into the Sulu Sea, protecting the Mindoro landings.