

## Carrier John F. Kennedy Leaves Philadelphia for Final Voyage to Texas Scrapyard

By John Grady, US Naval Institute, January 16, 2025



The hulk of John F. Kennedy (CV-67) was towed down the Delaware River on Jan. 16, 2025. Photo by Bryan J. Dickerson for USNI News

The remains of the Navy's last conventionally-powered aircraft carrier *John F. Kennedy* (CV-67) is on its way from the Navy's Philadelphia Inactive Ship Maintenance Facility to Brownsville, Texas for dismantling.

Shortly before 9 a.m., tugs maneuvered the hulk down the Delaware River and attached it via a tow line to the ship *Laney Chouest* and both headed to the Atlantic.

The first ship named for the former president was decommissioned in 2007 at Mayport, Fla., and has been in Philadelphia ever since.

At the carrier's Mayport decommissioning ceremony, Adm. John Nathman, then Fleet Forces commander, hailed "Big John," its nickname, as "an icon of American might and freedom."

*Kennedy*, built at Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Co., was commissioned on Sept. 7, 1968. The ship was christened the year before by the president's daughter Caroline, then 9. Her mother, Jacqueline designed the carrier's in-port cabin. A Navy spokesman at the time of the decommissioning said, "it is the only room on a Navy ship with wood paneling."

For 10 years in Philadelphia, the carrier, the first Navy ship named for Kennedy, was in donation status. That means it can be transferred to a qualified non-profit for restoration and repurposing, often as a museum.

The Navy is expecting delivery of the second John F. Kennedy (CVN-79), a year later than originally projected. USNI News reported earlier that the "The Navy is implementing a strategy to pull baseline work from the Post Shakedown Availability (PSA) into the construction period in order to provide more capability at ship delivery," the Navy's shipbuilding budget books [for Fiscal Year 2024] read.

The carrier will also be the second in the Ford-class. Like its predecessor, the carrier is being built in Newport News.

The Navy sold the original JFK to International Shipbreaking Limited/EMR Brownsville in 2021 for one cent. The work was expected to begin in late 2023, but was put on hold by the Navy until now, the Brownsville Herald reported.

The firm had just handled the dismantling of USS Kitty Hawk (CV-63) in 2023.

In 2023, Robert Berry, vice president of International Shipbreaking Ltd./EMR Brownsville, told the Brownsville newspaper the Navy “is taking a harder line on security with the JFK than he’s ever experienced in all his years of dealing with that branch of the military, and that this particular ship has more security surrounding it than the other carriers ISL has received in the past.”

The Naval Historical and Heritage Command noted in its ship’s history the original Kennedy conducted 18 deployments including to the Mediterranean, Tyrrhenian, Ionian, Ligurian, Aegean and Adriatic seas, during a period of escalating tension in the Middle East beginning with the 1973 Yom Kippur War between Israel and neighboring Arab states and off Lebanon in 1983 following the bombing of the Marine Barracks and French forces quarters that claimed more than 300 lives.

In 1991’s Operation Desert Storm, the liberation of Kuwait, the ship launched a total of 114 strikes and 2,895 combat sorties were flown for a total of 11,263 flight hours.

The carrier’s final combat deployment came in 2003 in Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, NHHC wrote. “Of note during the OEF deployment, *John F. Kennedy’s* aircraft dropped more than 62 million pounds of ordnance on Taliban and al Qaeda targets and supported U.S. and Coalition forces on the ground with close air support, on occasion working with Special Forces units.”

As *Kennedy* moved down the Delaware River, the historic passenger liner *SS United States* still remained pier side in Philadelphia. The liner was to be towed in November originally to Norfolk to be cleaned and prepped for sinking as an artificial reef for diving and fishing off Oskaloosa County, Fla., along the state’s Gulf Coast.



SS United States on May 23, 2023. USNI News Photo

Submitted by XAG2 Gary Cox, USN (Rel.)