

NAVAL HISTORY DIVISION

REAR ADMIRAL JAMES O. COBB, UNITED STATES NAVY, RETIRED

James Outtersson Cobb was born in Albany, New York, on January 9, 1910, son of Charles S. and Frances Elizabeth (Monte) Cobb. He attended high school in Pasadena, California, and entered the U. S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland, on appointment from California, on June 28, 1929. As a Midshipman he was a member of the Wrestling Squad four years; Trident Society, Literary; and the Quarterdeck Society. Graduated with the degree of Bachelor of Science on June 1, 1933, he was commissioned Ensign in the U. S. Navy from that date, and through subsequent advancement attained the rank of Rear Admiral, to date from July 1, 1961.

After graduation from the Naval Academy in June 1933, he served as a junior officer on board the USS COLORADO, of Battleship Division 4, Battle Force. In the summer of 1935 he was assigned duty as Survey Officer, Third Aleutian Islands Survey Expedition, then resumed regular duty in the COLORADO. Early in 1936 he was detached for flight training at the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Florida, where he was designated a Naval Aviator (hta) in April 1937. He served from that time until June 1938 with Bombing Squadron 3, based on the USS SARATOGA, Flagship of Aircraft, Battle Force, and Carrier Division ONE, Battle Force.

From June 1938 until June 1940 he was assigned to Cruiser Scouting Squadron 6, attached to the USS NEW ORLEANS, and for the next nine months served with Patrol Squadron 23. Reporting in April 1941, he was serving with Patrol Squadron 11 at the outbreak of World War II in December of that year, then had duty with Patrol Squadron 91 from November 1942 until March 1943. In June of that year he reported to the Naval Air Operational Training Command, Jacksonville, Florida, for training and duty on the Staff until February 1945. He was ordered to the Receiving Barracks, Tacoma, Washington, and after assisting in fitting out the USS SALERNO BAY (CVE-110), he served as Executive Officer of that carrier escort vessel from her commissioning in May 1945, throughout the last months of hostilities and until June 1947.

Duty on the Staff at the Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island, from July 1947 until November 1950, preceded his assignment as Aviation Plans and Special Weapons Officer on the Staff of Commander Naval Air Force, Pacific Fleet. In April 1953 he reported as Chief of the Operations and Training Branch, Headquarters, Naval Striking and Support Forces, Southern Europe. Transferred in February 1954 to Headquarters, Allied Forces, Southern Europe, he served as Chief of the Special Weapons Branch until July 1955, then had duty as a member of Nuclear Weapons Rainbow Team, Joint Strategic Plans Group, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Washington, D. C. In September 1957 he assumed command of the USS YORKTOWN (CVA-10) and in August 1958 was detached for service as Deputy Secretary, Joint Chiefs of Staff.

From April 14, 1960 to July 1961 he was Chief of Staff and Aide to Commander Carrier Division FIVE, after which he was in command of Carrier Division NINETEEN. In October 1962 he reported as Assistant Chief of Naval Personnel for Personnel Control, Navy Department and on May 28, 1964 became Deputy Chief of Naval Personnel and Assistant Chief of the Bureau of Naval Personnel. In July 1965 he assumed command of Carrier Division TWO and in January 1967 was assigned as Deputy Director (title changed in July 1968 to Vice Director) of the Joint Staff Office, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Washington, D. C. He continued to serve in that capacity until November 1968, when he became Chief of the Joint U. S. Military Group/U. S. Military Assistance Advisory Group, Spain, with headquarters in Madrid. In September 1970 he became Commandant of the Fifth Naval District with additional duty as Commander of the Naval Base, Norfolk, Virginia and served as such until relieved of active duty pending his retirement, effective February 1, 1973.

Rear Admiral Cobb was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross "For heroism and extraordinary achievement as Commander of a Patrol Plane during action against enemy Japanese Forces in the Solomon Islands Area from September 1, to October 23, 1942..." The citation continues:

"By means of flares, Lieutenant Commander Cobb illuminated the Japanese naval units which bombarded Guadalcanal on the night of September 5. Leading an aerial torpedo raid against a strong hostile force on the night of October 15, he not only scored a direct hit himself, but also remained in contact with the enemy and directed other attacking planes to the target. On the night of October 18, he led a successful bombing assault on Japanese shore installations on the island Guadalcanal. His superb flying skill and courageous devotion to duty, maintained with utter disregard of personal safety, were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

He was also awarded the Distinguished Service Medal and cited as follows: "For exceptionally meritorious service...as Deputy Director, Joint Staff, Joint Chiefs of Staff, from January 1967 to September 1968. In this assignment which embraces the development and prosecution of United States national political and military policy, (he) has displayed inspiring leadership and superb professional competence in supervising, coordinating, and guiding the Joint Staff and other agencies of the Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. During a period of recurrent serious international crises, he made significant contributions to the effectiveness and responsiveness of the staff support provided the Director, Joint Staff, the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Secretary of Defense. Rear Admiral Cobb was highly instrumental in the review of automation within the Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and in the planning, budgeting, developmental growth, and efficient use of automatic data processing in the Organization..."

In addition, he was awarded the Legion of Merit and a Gold Star in lieu of the Second Legion of Merit. The citations follow in part:

Legion of Merit: "For exceptional meritorious service as Chief, Joint United States Military Group-Military Assistance Advisory Group, Spain, from November 1968 to September 1970...His formulation of policies and programs, preparation of complicated and sensitive plans and implementation of projects of vital significance, have contributed significantly to the attainment of national objectives. (His) ability to analyze and report on a wide variety of important subjects has been cited as a model example of the vital role played by Military Assistance Advisory Groups in serving as military contact points for dealing with our allies..."

Gold Star in lieu of the Second Legion of Merit: "For exceptionally meritorious conduct...as Commandant of the Fifth Naval District and Commander Naval Base, Norfolk, Virginia during the period September 1970 through January 1973...Continuously exercising outstanding planning ability and sound judgment, (he) accomplished the many and varied facets of the Commandant's mission with the highest standards of performance and with singularly outstanding results..."

He has the Ribbon for the Presidential Unit Citation awarded the First Marine Division, Reinforced, with which he served on several occasions while flying with Patrol Squadrons 11 and 91, and the Ribbon for the Navy Unit Commendation awarded Patrol Squadron 91 for "Black Cat" and "Dumbo" (night fighting) missions in the Pacific. In addition to these and the Distinguished Service Medal, the Legion of Merit with Gold Star and the Distinguished Flying Cross, he has the American Defense Service Medal, Fleet Clasp; the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal; American Campaign Medal; World War II Victory Medal; Navy Occupation Service Medal (Europe and Asia Clasps); and the National Defense Service Medal with bronze star.