

ADMIRAL ARLEIGH A. BURKE, UNITED STATES NAVY, RETIRED

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BIO
Burke
Arleigh A.

Arleigh A. Burke was born far from the sea in Boulder, Colorado on October 19, 1901. On June 8, 1923, he was graduated from the U. S. Naval Academy, commissioned Ensign in the United States Navy, and married to Miss Roberta Gorsuch of Washington, D. C.

Throughout his professional career, Arleigh Burke had prepared himself for combat with the enemy having served in battleships, destroyers, and having received the degree of Master of Science in Engineering at the University of Michigan. Then, when World War II came, he found himself, to his great disappointment, in a shore billet at the Naval Gun Factory in Washington, D. C. After persistent effort on his part, he received orders to the South Pacific where, under Admiral Halsey, he successively commanded Destroyer Division 43, Destroyer Division 44, Destroyer Squadron 12, and Destroyer Squadron 23. This latter squadron, known as the "Little Beavers," covered the initial landings in Bougainville in November 1943, and fought in 22 separate engagements during the next four months. During this time, the "Little Beavers," were credited with destroying one Japanese cruiser, nine destroyers, one submarine, several smaller ships, and approximately 30 aircraft. Because he pushed his destroyers just under boiler-bursting speed, he became known as "31-Knot Burke."

From Destroyer Command in the South Pacific, he reported in March of 1944 as Chief of Staff to Commander, Fast Carrier Task Force 58, Admiral Marc Mitscher. While serving with this famed carrier force, Arleigh Burke was promoted to Commodore, and participated in all its naval engagements until June 1945 shortly before the surrender of Japan. He flew many combat missions. He was aboard both BUNKER HILL and ENTERPRISE when they were hit by Japanese suicide planes during the Okinawa campaign.

At the outbreak of the Korean war, Admiral Forrest Sherman, then CNO, ordered Admiral Burke to duty as Deputy Chief of Staff to Commander Naval Forces, Far East. From there, he assumed command of Cruiser Division Five, and in July 1951 he was made a member of United Nations Truce Delegation to negotiate with the Communists for a military armistice in Korea. After six months in the truce tents, he returned to the Office of Chief of Naval Operations where he served as Director of Strategic Plans Division until 1954.

In April 1954, he took command of Cruiser Division Six, and in January 1955 assumed command of Destroyer Force Atlantic Fleet in which capacity he served until he succeeded Admiral Robert B. Carney as Chief of Naval Operations in August 1955. He served an unprecedented three terms in that duty before being transferred to the Retired List on August 1, 1961.

Adm. A.A. Burke, USN, Ret.

Admiral Burke has received numerous combat awards during his forty-two years in the Navy including the Distinguished Service Medal, the Navy Cross, the Legion of Merit and the Purple Heart. But none are more cherished than two awards which came early in his career. In 1928 while serving aboard the USS PROCYON, he was commended for the "rescue of shipwrecked and seafaring men," and in 1939 while serving in his first command, USS MUGFORD, he was commended when his destroyer won the fleet gunnery trophy with the highest score that had been achieved in many years. His ship also stood third in engineering competition and high in communication competition.

29 January 1962

List of Citations which have been awarded
Admiral Arleigh A. Burke, U. S. Navy, Retired

For his service in Destroyer Squadron 23, Admiral Burke was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal, the Navy Cross, the Legion of Merit, and is entitled to the Ribbon for, and a facsimile of, the Presidential Unit Citation awarded Destroyer Squadron 23. The citations follow, in part:

Distinguished Service Medal: "For exceptionally meritorious service to the Government of the United States in a duty of great responsibility as Commanding Officer of a Destroyer Division and subsequently a Destroyer Squadron operating against enemy Japanese forces in the South Pacific Area from early February to December 1, 1943. Throughout this period, Captain Burke led his forces in many offensive operations... His indomitable fighting spirit and great personal courage contributed directly to the success of our forces in that area and were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

Navy Cross: "For extraordinary heroism and distinguished service ... as the Commander of a destroyer squadron operating in the Northern Solomon Islands area during the period from midnight October 30 to noon November 2, 1943. (His) squadron, as a part of a task force, participated in the first bombardment of the Buka-Bonis area and also in the first daylight bombardment of the Shortland area... During the night of November 1-2, a heavier gunned Japanese naval force was met and decisively defeated with the loss to the enemy of one cruiser and four destroyers sunk, and an additional two cruisers and two destroyers damaged. The action contributed much to the success of our operations at Empress Augusta Bay. Thereafter, a heavy air attack by sixty-seven enemy dive bombers was fought off with a total of seventeen enemy planes being destroyed..."

Legion of Merit (with Combat "V"): "For exceptionally meritorious conduct... as Commander Destroyer Squadron Twenty-three, in action against enemy Japanese forces northwest of the Bismarck Archipelago, at Kavieng, New Ireland, and Duke of York Island, February 17 to 23, 1944... (He) expertly directed his squadron in destroying two Japanese naval auxiliary vessels, one large cargo ship, a mine layer, four barges and inflicting severe damage on enemy shore installations and subsequently effected a skillful withdrawal without damage to his vessels..."

Presidential Unit Citation to Destroyer Squadron 23: "For extraordinary heroism in action against enemy Japanese forces during the Solomon Islands Campaign, from November 1, 1943 to February 23, 1944 ... Destroyer Squadron Twenty-three operated in daring defiance of repeated attacks by hostile air groups, closing the enemy's strongly fortified shores to carry out sustained bombardments against Japanese coastal defenses and render effective cover and fire support for the major invasion operations in this area... The brilliant and heroic record achieved

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by Destroyer Squadron Twenty-three is a distinctive tribute to the valiant fighting spirit of the individual units in this indomitable combat group of each skilled and courageous ship's company..."

As Chief of Staff, Commander Fast Carrier Task Force, Pacific (Task Force 38), Admiral Burke was awarded a Gold Star in lieu of the Second Distinguished Service Medal, the Silver Star Medal, a Gold Star in lieu of the Second Legion of Merit, and a Letter of Commendation, with authorization to wear the Commendation Ribbon. The citations follow in part:

Gold Star in lieu of Second Distinguished Service Medal: "For... outstanding service...as Chief of Staff to Commander First Carrier Task Force, Pacific, during action against enemy Japanese forces in the Pacific War area from December 15, 1944 to May 15, 1945... Commodore Burke was in large measure responsible for the efficient control under combat conditions of the tactical disposition, the operation, the security and the explosive offensive power of his task force in its bold and determined execution of measures designed to force the capitulation of the Japanese Empire...throughout the seizure of bases at Iwo Jima and Okinawa, including two carrier strikes on Tokyo, a carrier strike on the Kure Naval Base, and an engagement with the Japanese Fleet on April 7, in which several hostile men-o-war were destroyed by our aircraft..."

Silver Star Medal: "For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity as Chief of Staff to Commander FIRST Carrier Task Force in action against enemy Japanese forces in the Pacific War Area, May 11, 1945. When the flagship on which he was embarked was hit by two enemy suicide dive bombers, Commodore Burke proceeded to a compartment in which personnel were trapped by fire and heavy smoke, and succeeded in evacuating all hands. When the flagship to which he had removed his staff was in turn hit by a suicide plane on May 14, he again arranged for the transfer of his command to a new ship. In spite of all difficulties, he maintained tactical control of the Task Force throughout, thereby contributing materially to the success of the operations..."

Gold Star in lieu of the Second Legion of Merit: "For exceptionally meritorious conduct...as Chief of Staff to Commander, Carrier Task Force, Pacific Fleet, from March 27 to October 30, 1944...(He) planned and executed a long series of successful offensive operations in Support of the reduction of the outer perimeter of Japanese defenses in New Guinea, the Carolines, the Marianas, Halmahera, and the Philippine Islands. Largely as a result of Commodore Burke's superb professional skill, tireless energy and coolness of decision throughout these operations and during repeated air attacks carried out in strength against heavily fortified strongholds in enemy-controlled waters, the Pacific Fleet has been brought within range of the Japanese Empire itself to continue our relentless drive against the enemy."

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Letter of Commendation: "For distinguishing himself in action with the enemy, while serving as a Chief of Staff to Commander First Carrier Task Force, Pacific on 11 May 1945. When the ship in which he was embarked was hit by two enemy aircraft...with utter disregard for his personal safety, (he) efficiently organized the evacuation of endangered personnel. His courage together with his prompt and efficient action was responsible for saving these men..."

Admiral Burke is also entitled to the Presidential Unit Citation to the USS BUNKER HILL, the Presidential Unit Citation to the USS LEXINGTON, and the Navy Unit Commendation to the USS ENTERPRISE. Those vessels were, at various times during his period of service, flagships of the Fast Carrier Task Forces in the Pacific.

From September 1950 until May 1951, he served as Deputy Chief of Staff to Commander U. S. Naval Forces, Far East, and for "exceptionally meritorious conduct (in that capacity) from 3 September 1950 to 1 January 1951..." he was awarded a Gold Star in lieu of the Third Legion of Merit. The citation further states:

"Bringing a sound knowledge of Naval Administration and professional skill to his assigned task, Rear Admiral Burke reorganized the rapidly expanded staff to meet its ever increasing responsibilities and, through his unusually fine conception of the essentials of modern warfare, materially improved the mutual functioning of the Operations, Plans and Intelligence Sections of the Staff...(and) contributed immeasurably to the success of Naval operations in the Korean theater..."

While serving as Commander Cruiser Division Five from May to September 1951, and also as a Member of the Military Armistice Commission in Korea, Admiral Burke was awarded an Oak Leaf Cluster in lieu of the Fourth Legion of Merit, by the Army (Headquarters U. S. Army Forces, Far East) by General Order #5, as follows: "For exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services as a delegate with the United Nations Command (Advance) in Korea, from 9 July to 5 December 1951. Admiral Burke's keen discernment and decisive judgment were of inestimable value in countering enemy intransigence, misrepresentation and evasion with reasoned negotiation, demonstrable truth and conciliatory measures. As advisor to the Chief Delegate on all phases of the Armistice Conferences, he proffered timely recommendations for solutions of the varied intricate problems encountered. Through skillful assessment of enemy capabilities, dispositions and vulnerable abilities and brilliant guidance of supporting staff officers (he) significantly furthered progression toward success of the United Nation's first armed bid for World Peace."

Admiral Burke was presented a Gold Star in lieu of a Third Distinguished Service Medal by President John F. Kennedy at the White House on July 26, 1961.

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In addition to the Navy Cross, the Distinguished Service Medal with two Gold Stars, the Legion of Merit with two Gold Stars and Oak Leaf Cluster (Army), the Silver Star Medal, the Commendation Ribbon, the Purple Heart Medal (for wounds received while serving on board the USS CONWAY during July 1943), the Presidential Unit Citation Ribbon with three stars, and the Navy Unit Commendation Ribbon, Admiral Burke has the American Defense Service Medal, Fleet Clasp; the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with two silver stars and two bronze stars (twelve engagements); the American Campaign Medal; World War II Victory Medal; Navy Occupation Service Medal, Europe Clasp; the National Defense Service Medal; the Philippine Liberation Ribbon; Korean Service Medal, and United Nations Service Medal. He also has been awarded the Ul Chi Medal and the Presidential Unit Citation from the Republic of Korea and the Order of the Rising Sun, First Class by the Government of Japan.

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