



Battleship, USS New Jersey *Dreadnought*

December 1968

by **Byron Simmons**

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U.S.S. New Jersey duty was probably the least hazardous duty in Vietnam. Who would want to fire on a ship with that type of fire power? We were off the coast in December 1968 on patrol between the coast and tiger island. A gun emplacement on tiger island decided to try their luck and lob a shot at us. I was on the mess deck when **Captain Snyder** announced over the loud speaker that we were going to *condition yellow*. Then he came back and told the crew that we had just been fired upon, said it looked like someone had *Teed-up* and hit a golf ball at us! Our 16 inch guns were at the ready and we were told that the battery would fire on the gun position. A few minutes later we were told that the gun emplacement had been silenced, *permanently*. Those 16 inch guns were awesome. I have spoken with marines that were in country who either heard the shells go over their heads toward targets or had seen the craters that they left.

The New Jersey received a presidential citation while serving in Vietnam. A marine fire base was being over run during the Tet offensive. We were called on line to offer support. The port five inch batter fired all night long. The marines called for fire right on top of their position, things were really bad for them. The morning after, I woke up feeling like I had not gotten much sleep. As usual, I was up early before reveille. I went to the mess decks and got a cup of coffee and went topside. I thought it was strange that the hatch was closed that went up to the fantail from the mess decks, had to crawl up through the scuttle. When I got up on the fantail, there were five inch 38 shell casings all over the deck, hip deep. I was amazed, at what I saw. I asked a gunners mate, picking up casings, what had taken place. Well he looked at me like I was out of it. Then he proceeded to tell me that we had been in a fire fight all night long. I had slept through the whole war! No wonder I felt like I had not gotten any sleep. My bunk was on the starboard side and that battery had never fired a round. There are some good photos in the cruise books photos (there were 3 of them produced The ships cruise book and then another by Neil Leifer when we decommissioned, I have all three (Being in supply did have some advantage). Dreadnought returns!

New Jersey's 9 16-inch guns broadside North Vietnam!



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