

## VANDENBERG TIMELINE: FROM LAUNCH TO ARTIFICIAL REEF

**Oct. 10, 1943:** Gen. Harry Taylor launched in Richmond, Calif.

**March 29, 1944:** Taylor acquired by the U.S. Navy.

**May 8, 1944:** Vessel commissioned U.S. Army Transport, Gen. Harry Taylor.

**June 23, 1944:** Taylor begins transport voyages between San Francisco and island bases in the Western Pacific, carrying troops and supplies.

**June 29, 1945:** Taylor departs San Francisco for duty in the Atlantic, including two "Magic Carpet" voyages carrying troops home from the European fighting.

**Jan. 3, 1946:** Taylor begins voyages between Germany and France.

**June 13, 1946:** Taylor decommissioned.

**March 1, 1950:** Taylor reacquired by the Navy for use by Military Sea Transportation Service.

**1957:** Taylor takes part in Hungarian Relief Program, transporting refugees from the Hungarian Revolution to Australia.

**July 10, 1958:** Taylor placed in the National Defense Reserve Fleet in Beaumont, Texas.

**July 15, 1961:** Taylor transferred to the U.S. Air Force and renamed Gen. Hoyt S. Vandenberg.

**1962-1983:** Vandenberg employed tracking missiles and spacecraft launches in the Atlantic and Pacific. Tasked as Advanced Range Instrumentation Ship (ARIS) USNS Vandenberg was designated ARIS 2; sister ship USNS Arnold was ARIS 1.

**1965:** Vandenberg placed under the operation of the U.S. Navy's Military Sealift Command and then redesignated as a U.S. naval ship.

**May 15, 1969:** Space Coast weekly newspaper ("Surfside Slant") reports that Vandenberg tracked a Russian SS-9 warhead in the north of the Sea of Japan. Story leaks classified information regarding secret missions to collect launch data of Russian ICBM missile tests. Decades later, several Vandenberg veterans confirm newspaper's report.

**January 1976:** Vandenberg relocates to Port Canaveral, Fla., where it will remain until 1983.

**October 1977:** Advanced radar-tracking equipment installed on Vandenberg as part of \$26 million RCA contract to track missile and rocket launches from Cape Canaveral over the Atlantic Ocean or Eastern Test Range.

**April 14, 1981:** Vandenberg is assigned to track the return of the solid-fuel rocket boosters following the launch of the Space Shuttle Columbia. Vandenberg's sister ship the Arnold is assigned to track the return of Columbia's external fuel tank in the Indian Ocean.

**1983:** Vandenberg retired and moved to James River, Fort Eustis, Va., for storage, however, a maintenance crew visits ship once every six months to energize and exercise electronic systems.

**April 1993:** Vandenberg struck from Naval Register, title transferred to the U.S. Maritime Administration (MARAD).

**Sept. 1996:** Vandenberg leased to Universal Studios as a "set" for the filming of the movie "Virus."

**June 1996:** From a list of about 400 ex-military ships at the time, Key West dive charter captain Joe Weatherby identifies Vandenberg as a top candidate for an artificial reef off Key West.

**June 1997:** Vandenberg returns to James River, Fort Eustis, Va.

**Jan. 1999:** "Virus" released starring Jamie Lee Curtis, William Baldwin and Donald Sutherland. Vandenberg "plays" role as a Russian science ship.

**Aug. 9, 1999:** Weatherby organizes Artificial Reefs of the Keys with the specific objective of acquiring the Vandenberg as best choice to become artificial reef off Key West, Fla.

**Nov. 2006:** eBay auction for naming rights to Vandenberg artificial reef project. There are three bids, but none come close to the \$1.3 million reserve.

**Jan. 2007:** Vandenberg's title transferred to the State of Florida for reefing in the Florida Keys.

**March 31, 2007:** Vandenberg withdrawn from the James River Naval Reserve Fleet and towed to Colonna's Shipyard in Norfolk, Va., for cleanup and preparation.

**April 2008:** Vandenberg seized by a federal judge and ordered sold at auction after a contractor fails to complete payments to Colonna's Shipyard.

**Dec. 2008:** First State Bank of the Florida Keys is top bidder at auction of Vandenberg, paying \$1.35 million, and subsequently transfers the ship's title to the City of Key West.

**Feb. 2009:** Vandenberg is moved to W3 Marine in Norfolk, Va., for final cleaning prior to being towed to Key West.

**April 12, 2009:** Vandenberg departs Norfolk on its 1,100-mile voyage to Key West, towed by the 90-foot-long oceangoing tugboat Elsbeth III.

**April 22, 2009:** Vandenberg arrives in Key West for final preparations to be sunk as an artificial reef about seven miles south of the island.