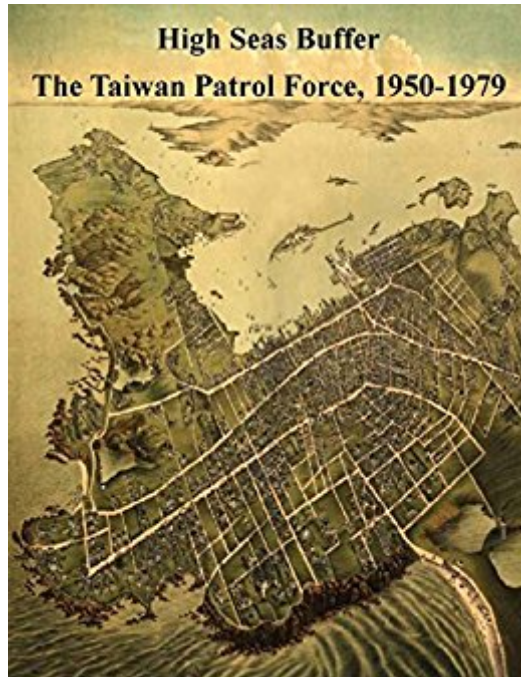


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High Seas Buffer : The Taiwan Patrol Force, 1950-1979



Synopsis

The U.S. Navy has had a long tradition of operating in East Asian waters. The first American warship to appear in those waters was the thirty-six-gun frigate USS Congress in late 1819, which called at Canton while providing protection to American merchant ships. In 1830, USS Vincennes, the first American warship to circumnavigate the globe, passed through the China seas and called at Macao. Two years later, in November 1832, the arrival of the sloop of war USS Peacock marked the beginning of a nearly constant presence of American warships in the Far East and the early beginnings of an American naval squadron cruising regularly to protect American shipping and business interests in the region. A dozen years later, in 1844, USS Brandywine brought the American envoy Caleb Cushing to Macao to negotiate the first treaty of peace, amity, and commerce between China and the United States, signed at the nearby village of Wanghai. Commodore James Biddle returned to China in the ship of the line USS Columbus in January 1846 to return America's formal ratification of that treaty. Among the officers in Columbus during this voyage was Midshipman Stephen B. Luce, who thus became the first in the long line of officers and faculty members at the Naval War College—the institution Luce founded nearly forty years later—to have had some direct experience of China. From that beginning, the College's body of expertise in and understanding of China, and of American experience in China, has grown exponentially. For over a century and a quarter, Naval War College students and faculty have had an interest in the subject. In the first part of the twentieth century, officers associated with the Naval War College served in—and even commanded—the Asiatic Fleet, the Yangtze Patrol, the Sino-American Cooperative Organization, and U.S. Naval Group China. Evidence of some of the College's past interests and connections in these areas may still be found and used in its archives and in its historical document and museum collections. Between 1950 and 1979, during the Cold War, much of the U.S. Navy's relationship with China centered around the Taiwan Patrol Force, whose duties included patrolling the international waters off mainland China's Fujian Province, which separates the mainland from the island of Taiwan. Based on Taiwan at Keelung in the north and at Kaohsiung in the south, U.S. Seventh Fleet sailors who were assigned to those patrol duties—mainly in destroyers and destroyer escorts—found on the island the only direct relationship available to them to interact with China and Chinese culture. Mainland China remained distant and obscure, sensed only by the distinctive smell of the land that many a sailor commented on in approaching the Chinese coast, even before it became distantly visible from the deck. American sailors in those years could get closer only during the occasional port visit to the British crown colony of Hong Kong, where they

could take an opportunity to go to the far side of Hong Kong's New Territories to peer across the closed border into the People's Republic of China and to try to imagine what the mainland was really like. In this volume, Bruce Elleman, research professor in the Maritime History Department at the Naval War College, applies his expertise as one of the College's specialists in Chinese language and history to provide a pioneering history of American naval experience in the Taiwan Patrol. His focus reflects the Naval War College's interests in the policy, strategy, and operational levels and is designed to provide a historical complement to other work on current issues being done at the Naval War College in the China Maritime Studies Institute and in other departments.

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