

## Fire on US Navy Ship Off Japan Extinguished After 12-Hour Battle

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A U.S. Navy warship caught fire off the coast of Okinawa, Japan, forcing crews to battle the blaze for nearly 12 hours before bringing it under control. Two sailors sustained minor injuries, but the ship, the USS New Orleans, remains afloat as investigators work to determine what triggered the incident.

The fire broke out on August 20 aboard the USS *New Orleans*, an amphibious transport dock commissioned in 2007. At the time, the 684-foot vessel, capable of carrying up to 800 personnel, was positioned near the White Beach Naval Facility in Okinawa. The crew responded immediately, working with support from the nearby U.S. warship USS *San Diego* and receiving additional assistance from Japan's coast guard and military. Coordinated firefighting efforts eventually brought the situation under control by the early morning of August 21.

The U.S. Navy's 7th Fleet confirmed that the entire crew remained on board during the ordeal. The two injured sailors were treated for minor wounds and are expected to recover. Naval officials have not provided details on the extent of the damage to the vessel, but they have confirmed that the ship is stable and an investigation is underway to establish the cause of the fire.

Incidents of this nature have raised concern within the Navy in recent years, particularly after a catastrophic fire aboard the USS *Bonhomme Richard* in 2020. That blaze, which burned for five days while the ship was docked in San Diego, resulted in extensive damage and ultimately forced the vessel's decommissioning. A subsequent inquiry revealed failures in command oversight, training, and preparedness, leading to disciplinary action against several officers. The Navy has since implemented reforms aimed at preventing a repeat of such costly mishaps.

While the scale of damage to the USS *New Orleans* has not been made public, the fact that the fire burned for nearly half a day before being extinguished is likely to prompt scrutiny of shipboard safety protocols. The incident also underscores the risks faced by naval crews operating in

forward-deployed environments such as Okinawa, a key hub for U.S. military operations in the Pacific.

The USS New Orleans, part of the Navy's San Antonio-class amphibious transport docks, plays a critical role in transporting Marines, equipment, and aircraft to support operations across the region. Its location near Okinawa reflects the Pentagon's continued emphasis on maintaining a strong naval presence in Asia amid ongoing tensions in the South China Sea and around Taiwan. Any disruption to its operational readiness, even temporary, carries implications for the fleet's overall capability.

As of now, naval officials have avoided speculating on potential causes of the fire. Investigators will be examining whether technical malfunctions, maintenance issues, or human error contributed to the incident. Until then, the focus remains on restoring the vessel to full operational status and ensuring the safety of its crew.

The episode highlights both the resilience and vulnerabilities of modern warships. While the rapid response of sailors and allied forces prevented the fire from spiraling into a disaster like the Bonhomme Richard case, the duration of the blaze raises questions about how effectively naval protocols have evolved since 2020. For now, the Navy faces the task of balancing transparency with operational security as it seeks to reassure both its personnel and the public that lessons continue to be learned from past crises.