

## USS Little Rock (CLG-4, later CG-4), 1960-1977



The light cruiser USS LITTLE ROCK (CL-92) was originally commissioned on 17 June 1945, then placed in “In Reserve / Not in Service” (“mothballed”) status in 1949. In June 1960, she was re-commissioned as CLG-4, after an extension conversion to a guided missile light cruiser (CLG).

The re-born LITTLE ROCK had been significantly modernized, including huge superstructures forward and aft of her two smokestacks, the forward one housing command spaces that gave the cruiser a new mission as a fleet flagship. The after superstructure held magazines and handling rooms for long-range “TALOS” air defense missiles, whose twin-armed launcher dominated the ship’s after deck. Topside, two tall lattice masts and the after superstructure were topped by an elaborate array of radars to detect and track enemy aircraft to guide the TALOS missiles.

On 30 June 1975, LITTLE ROCK's designation was changed from CLG-4 to CG-4, as part of an overall Navy ship mission and re-designation program. The ship was decommissioned in November 1976 and stricken from the Naval Vessel Register (ie, “scrapped”).

In June 1977 she was donated to the city of Buffalo, New York, where she is still serving as a memorial and museum.

Technically, the ship is carried on the Navy Vessel Registry as ex-LITTLE ROCK, in “DONATION” status

## The TALOS Guided Missile System



TALOS was a long-range high-altitude cruise missile (air breathing) designed to give the fleet stand-off protection against enemy aircraft and the ability to attack distant surface targets. It could attack aircraft, missiles, ships, radar installations and other shore facilities with either conventional or nuclear warheads.

One must remember that the use of this missile to protect a Battle Group was centered around the “Cold War” with the Soviet Union. The USSR had a large Naval Air Force, centered around land based, long and medium range bombers equipped with air to surface missiles intended to sink US Navy combat ships, in particular, Aircraft Carriers. Ships equipped with TALOS were part of each Carrier Task Force in order to provide their piece of the Task Force protection umbrella.

The missile was built by BENDIX, weighing 12,200 lbs including its booster section, and was 38 ft long. It was not a rocket, but a ram jet (air breathing) with a solid propellant booster for initial launch. It reached speeds of 250 of the speed of sound (Mach 2.5)

TALOS had an effective range of about 100 miles and could engage targets from 50 feet to at least 70,000 feet altitude. The complete TALOS system was heavy and occupied a huge amount of shipboard space. It made its ship platform very top heavy, which in turn effected the ship's stability in anything but steady sea states. It needed to be mounted on larger ships, rather than destroyers.

TALOS followed the ship's radar guidance beam until close to a target, then could home on that target using a short range, built-in terminal guidance radar.

The entire TALOS system and its equipment was complex but interesting, particularly since we have an excellent display of it on **LITTLE ROCK** at the Buffalo Naval Park.

For a more detailed discussion of the total TALOS system, see <http://www.okieboat.com/Talos%20fire%20control%20system.html>