12th Expeditionary Fast Transport Launched



A graphic illustration of the future expeditionary fast transport USNS Newport. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist Raymond Diaz

MOBILE, Ala. – The U.S. Navy's 12th expeditionary fast transport (EPF), the future USNS Newport (EPF 12), was launched at Austal USA's shipyard on Feb. 20, according to the Navy's Program Executive Office-Ships said.

The launching of an EPF is a multistep process. The ship modules are constructed in Austal's manufacturing facility, then transported to the assembly bay. When ready for launch, the ship is translated by heavy-lift machinery to a docking barge in the Mobile River and further translated onto a floating dry dock. From there, the dry dock is submerged and the ship is launched. The translation and launch takes place over the course of two days.

"We are excited to get Newport in the water, so we can shift focus to final outfitting and trials," said Tim Roberts, strategic and theater sealift program manager, PEO-Ships. "EPFs increase our reach, improving our ability to sustain our Navy and Marine Corps forces around the globe."

EPFs are versatile, noncombatant transport ships that are being used for high-speed transportation of troops, military vehicles and equipment. They support a variety of missions including overseas contingency operations, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, support of special operations forces, theater security cooperation activities and emerging joint sea-basing concepts.

EPFs can transport 600 short tons 1,200 nautical miles at an

average speed of 35 knots. Each vessel includes a flight deck to support day and night aircraft launch and recovery operations. The ships are capable of interfacing with roll-on/roll-off discharge facilities, as well as on/off-loading vehicles such as a fully combat-loaded Abrams tank.

The Newport is on track to be delivered later this year. Austal USA has also started construction of the future USNS Apalachicola (EPF 13) and is under contract to build the future USNS Cody (EPF 14).