

# Future USNS Harvey Milk Christened at General Dynamics NASSCO San Diego



Military Sealift Command's newest ship, fleet replenishment oiler USNS Harvey Milk (T-AO 206), slides into the water during the christening ceremony at General Dynamic NASSCO, San Diego. The ship honors Navy veteran and LGBT activist Harvey Milk, one of the first openly gay candidates elected to public office as a member of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors in 1978. *U.S. NAVY*

SAN DIEGO – Fleet replenishment oiler USNS Harvey Milk (T-AO 206), the Military Sealift Command's newest ship, was christened during a ceremony at the General Dynamics NASSCO shipyard in San Diego, Nov. 7, Navy spokeswoman Sarah Burford said in a release.

The event was attended by the family of the ship's namesake as well as other dignitaries included Carlos Del Toro, secretary

of the Navy; former Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus; Vice Adm. Jeffery Hughes, deputy chief naval operations for Warfighting Development; Rear Adm. Stephen Barnett, commander, Navy Region Southwest; Rear Adm. Michael Wettlaufer, commander, Military Sealift Command; Capt. James White, Milk's civil service master; Todd Gloria, mayor, San Diego; former Rep. Susan Davis; Jen Campbell, San Diego Council president; Anne Kronenberg, activist and Milk's former campaign manager; members of the Harvey Milk Foundation, and members of the LGBTQ+ community.

The ship honors Navy veteran and LGBT activist Harvey Milk, one of the first openly gay candidates elected to public office as a member of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors in 1978. He was assassinated Nov. 10, 1978, 10 months after he was sworn in, by fellow City Supervisor Dan White. Milk was posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2009 for his activism. USNS Harvey Milk is the first ship named for an openly gay person.

"The secretary of the Navy needed to be here today, not just to amend the wrongs of the past, but to give inspiration to all of our LGBTQ community leaders who served in the Navy, in uniform today and in the civilian workforce as well too, and to tell them that we're committed to them in the future," Del Toro said, noting that Milk resigned his commission and was discharged from the Navy for being gay. "For far too long, sailors like Lt. j.g. Milk were forced into the shadows or, worse yet, forced out of our beloved Navy. That injustice is part of our Navy history, but so is the perseverance of all who continue to serve in the face of injustice."

"My uncle never dreamed of having a ship, or a street, or a park, or a school named after him," said Stuart Milk, Harvey's nephew and the keynote speaker at the ceremony. "What we celebrate today is that the Navy honors the difference between tolerance and acceptance."

The 746-foot Milk is the second ship in the new John Lewis-class previously known as the TAO(X). This class of oilers has the ability to carry 162,000 barrels of diesel ship fuel, aviation fuel and dry stores cargo. The upgraded oiler is built with double hulls to protect against oil spills and strengthened cargo and ballast tanks, and will be equipped with a basic self-defense capability, including crew served weapons, degaussing, and Nixie Torpedo decoys, and has space, weight, and power reservations for close in weapon systems such as SeaRAMs and an antitorpedo torpedo defense system. The Lewis-class of oilers will replace the current Kaiser-class fleet replenishment oilers and they age out of the MSC fleet.

“A Navy veteran and tireless advocate for equality and universal rights, having Harvey Milk as the namesake for this ship as she adds to our nation’s strategic advantage in agile logistics is absolutely awesome,” said Wettlaufer. “With enhanced capabilities in storage and delivery of fuel and cargo, Harvey Milk will support our Navy in the away game as we keep our country safe far from home and protect the sea lines of communication. Important to our economic vitality and assuring allies and partners, this ship will help promote freedom of access to international seas and the rules based international order that has sustained the peace over the last 70 years.”

Speaking before breaking a bottle of champagne across the ship’s hull, the ship’s sponsor, Paula Neira, clinical program director of the Johns Hopkins Center for Transgender Health and a Navy veteran, said, “When Harvey Milk sails, she’ll send a message both domestically and around the globe to everybody that believes in justice and freedom and liberty, that there is a place for you in this family.”

Following the traditional champagne christening, Milk slid

into the water with its horn blowing, streamers flying and music from the Navy Band Southwest playing.

Five more Lewis-class oilers are on order for the Navy. In July 2016, then-Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus said he would name the Lewis-class oilers after prominent civil rights activists and leaders including Earl Warren, Sojourner Truth, Lucy Stone and Robert F. Kennedy.

---

## **CNO Speaks with UK's First Sea Lord, Royal Navy Adm. Ben Key, on Key's 1st Day in Office**



Aboard Nelson's flagship Victory, Adm. Sir Ben Key, left, took over as first sea lord from Adm. Sir Tony Radakin, whose 29 months at the helm end as he moves on to become the new chief of defense staff. *U.K. ROYAL NAVY*

WASHINGTON – Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Adm. Mike Gilday spoke with Royal Navy Adm. Sir Ben Key, first sea lord and chief of the naval staff, on Nov. 8 to reaffirm the special relationship between the two navies and discuss areas for continued collaboration and cooperation, the CNO's public affairs officer said in release.

Gilday spoke with Key on his first day in office as first sea lord.

"I want congratulate Adm. Key on his appointment as first sea lord and I am excited to work closely with him," said Gilday. "Our navies enjoy a long tradition of sailing together from the Atlantic to the Indo-Pacific and we work tirelessly

and interchangeably to keep the maritime commons open and free. No doubt, our alliance is an anchor of peace and stability across the globe.”

Key echoed Gilday’s sentiment.

“I was delighted to be able to speak to Adm. Mike Gilday, the chief of naval operations, on the very day I took the helm as first sea lord,” he said. “The bonds between our two navies are deep and historic and I am determined to see they go from strength to strength. Having recently served as chief of joint operations, I have seen how closely we operate around the globe with our American cousins. From USS The Sullivans being an integral part of the HMS Queen Elizabeth Carrier Strike Group on her recent deployment to the Pacific, to our combined operations in the Atlantic in support of NATO, both our nations are benefitting from this outstanding strategic partnership with our shared endeavor to make the world a safer place.”

The U.S. and Royal Navy operate together around the globe regularly. Most recently, USS The Sullivans (DDG-68) took part in a six-month deployment as part of Carrier Strike Group 21 with HMS Queen Elizabeth (R08). Both navies also conducted multilateral naval training with Australia and Japan during Maritime Partnership Exercise 2021 in October.

---

## **Navy to Christen Future USNS Harvey Milk**





A photo illustration announcing that Military Sealift Command fleet oiler, T-AO 206, will be named USNS Harvey Milk. *U.S. NAVY*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Navy will christen the John Lewis-class replenishment oiler, the future USNS Harvey Milk (T-AO 206), during a 9 a.m. PDT ceremony Saturday, Nov. 6, in San Diego, California, the Defense Department said Nov. 5.

Stuart Milk, cofounder of the Harvey Milk Foundation and Milk's nephew, will deliver the principal ceremonial address. Remarks will also be provided by the Carlos Del Toro, secretary of the Navy; Vice Adm. Jeffrey Hughes, deputy chief of naval operations for Warfighting Development; and Rear Adm. Michael Wettlaufer, commander, Military Sealift Command. The ship's sponsors are U.S. Sen. Dianne Feinstein of California, and Paula Neira, Navy veteran and clinical program director of the Johns Hopkins Center for Transgender Health. Neira will christen the ship by breaking a bottle of sparkling wine across the bow in a time-honored Navy tradition.

"Tomorrow we christen the future USNS Harvey Milk," said Del Toro. "Leaders like Harvey Milk taught us that diversity of backgrounds and experiences help contribute to the strength and resolve of our nation. There is no doubt that the future Sailors aboard this ship will be inspired by Milk's life and legacy."

The Navy's Military Sealift Command will operate the future USNS Harvey Milk, the second ship in its class. The ship is named in honor of the late politician and civil and human

rights activist, who served in the Navy during the Korean War as a diving officer. After his naval career, Harvey Milk was elected to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors in 1977, becoming the first openly gay elected official in California. Milk was assassinated on Nov. 27, 1978.

The John Lewis-class ships are based on commercial design standards and will recapitalize the current T-AO 187-class fleet replenishment oilers to provide underway fuel replenishment to Navy ships at sea. Fleet replenishment oilers are part of the Navy's Combat Logistics Force.

In June 2016, the Navy awarded a \$3.2 billion contract to General Dynamics NASSCO in San Diego to design and construct the first six ships of the Future Fleet Replenishment Ship, the John Lewis-class (T-AO 205), with construction commencing in September 2018. The Navy plans to procure 20 ships of the new class.

---

## **Norfolk Naval Shipyard Returns USS Pasadena to the Fleet**





USS Pasadena (SSN 752) returned to the fleet Oct. 31 following successful completion of its Drydocking Selected Restricted Availability at Norfolk Naval Shipyard (NNSY). *NNSY / Tony Anderson*

NORFOLK NAVAL SHIPYARD, Portsmouth, Va. – USS Pasadena (SSN 752) returned to the fleet Oct. 31 following successful completion of its Drydocking Selected Restricted Availability (DSRA) at Norfolk Naval Shipyard (NNSY), said Michael Brayshaw, NNSY deputy public affairs officer for Norfolk Naval Shipyard.

The Los Angeles-class attack submarine spent just over a year at NNSY to replace, repair and overhaul components throughout the boat, as the shipyard's first DSRA in a decade.

Pasadena served as NNSY's pilot project leveraging the Naval Sustainment System–Shipyards (NSS-SY) program. NSS-SY is underway at all four public shipyards, leveraging industry and

government best practices on shipyard processes to drive quick and visible improvements in ship maintenance. During the overhaul, Navy leaders such as then-Acting Secretary of the Navy Thomas Harker visited NNSY and met with the Pasadena team to pledge their support and discuss the drive to “get real, get better,” encouraging shipyarders to candidly discuss any constraints so they can be resolved.

NSS-SY initiatives included establishing an Operations Control Center to drive project team communications and resolve barriers in work execution, and “crew boards” to track jobs supporting the boat’s overhaul. Deputy Project Superintendent Mike Harrell was brought onto the project for standing up the center and was instrumental in breaking down barriers to ensure non-stop execution of the critical chain of work, driving through issues and constraints to completion. While Pasadena did not meet its original completion date, these improvements helped deliver the boat back to the Fleet and are being implemented on other NNSY overhauls, to include USS Toledo (SSN 769) and USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN 69).

“Following a tremendous amount of effort and teaming on a very challenging availability, Pasadena has returned to the fleet to meet its significant operational commitment for our Navy and nation,” said Shipyard Commander Capt. Dianna Wolfson. “The Pasadena project team met our Navy leadership challenge to ‘get real, get better’ in several significant ways, and their efforts will pay off as we leverage their learning across America’s shipyard and our NAVSEA enterprise.”

Project Superintendent Frank Williams said the project team stayed focused throughout all phases of the availability on knowledge sharing and maintaining schedule. Beyond NSS-SY improvements, Pasadena’s team incorporated lessons learned from Portsmouth Naval Shipyard’s USS Newport News (SSN 750) DSRA in planning the availability and executing similar jobs. Additionally, when Pasadena missed its original

undocking date in the spring, the project team worked to perform more jobs with the boat on keel blocks to condense the schedule following undocking.

“Sailors and ships are meant to be at sea and not in a repair environment and throughout all phases of the availability, it’s been our job to get them back there,” said Williams. “The project team has done a great job keeping focused on this throughout the past 13 months. Thanks to all the efforts of our team and Ship’s Force, we have now gotten Pasadena back to sea where she belongs.”

---

## **Commandant: Many Unvaccinated Marines Swayed by Disinformation**



Marines and Sailors continue to receive the COVID-19 vaccine on Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, March 25, 2021. *U.S. MARINE CORPS / Lance Cpl. Rachelanne Woodward*

WASHINGTON – Because the U.S. Marine Corps is the nation's ready force, the commandant says he is concerned that "disinformation" has made thousands of Marines reluctant to get a mandatory vaccination against coronavirus.

With a Nov. 28 deadline looming for all active duty Marines to be fully vaccinated, an estimated 13,000 still have not gotten the first shot to counter COVID-19.

"I'm concerned about it because every Marine has to be ready to deploy," Gen. David Berger said Nov. 4 at the in-person 2021 Aspen Security Forum. "We are the ready force. We have to be ready to go."

Berger said he could not say exactly why so many Marines haven't rolled up their sleeves yet. Some have submitted requests for a religious or medical waiver.

"Those are being answered quickly. Within a week, they'll get

an answer back.” However, “Very few have been granted,” he said.

“The ones who flat out refuse? You’d have to ask each individual Marine their reasons why. I think we’re challenged by disinformation,” which Berger said raises questions “about how did this vaccine get approved? Is it safe? Is it ethical?

“All that swirls around on the internet and they read all that. They see all that,” Berger said. But Marines are trained and “taught that your unit is more important than you are.”

Berger is also concerned that 56% of Marines in the Ready Reserve have not been vaccinated. They have until Dec. 28 to do so. Berger said it is difficult to track vaccination rates among reservists because they are spread across the country in local units.

“We are one Marine Corps, active duty and Reserve, so it is important for them to get vaccinated as well,” he said.

Marine Corps Headquarters issued guidance Oct. 23 stating Marines who are not fully vaccinated by the deadline, without an approved administrative, medical or religious exemption, will be subject, pending appeal, to administrative separation from the Corps.

“A Marine who has not been fully vaccinated is not considered worldwide deployable and shall be assigned or reassigned, locally, to billets which account for health risks to the unvaccinated Marine and those working in proximity to the Marine,” according to the guidance. While their cases are under appeal, Marines who refuse vaccination, could also be barred from re-enlistment, promotion or holding a command.

“The approach we took is: Take all the ambiguity out of it. It’s black and white from the secretary of defense. We need to protect ourselves,” Berger said, explaining the hardline approach. “We wrote that instruction to make it clear all the

way down. There is no gray area. You must get vaccinated.”

He noted that Marine recruits already get 12 other vaccinations just to get through boot camp. Berger said he didn’t think the Marines will be losing thousands of Marines after Nov. 28 because of the mandatory vaccination order.

The number of vaccine refusals is changing every day, Berger said.

“Partly because we have a younger force and they wait to see how leaders do. And when the leaders do, they get in line quickly. I think it’s really hard to predict, because it’s not a straight line between now and the end of November.”

---

## **USS Connecticut Leadership Relieved by Fleet Commander**





The Seawolf-class fast-attack submarine USS Connecticut (SSN 22) departs Naval Base Kitsap-Bremerton for deployment, May 27. *U.S. NAVY / Lt. Mack Jamieson*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The leadership of the Seawolf-class attack submarine USS Connecticut (SSN 22) has been relieved and replaced by an interim leadership team, the Navy said Nov. 4.

The USS Connecticut grounded an uncharted seamount on the afternoon of Oct. 2 while submerged in the South China Sea, while operating in international waters in the Indo-Pacific region. There were no life-threatening injuries. The submarine made a transit to the naval base in Apra Harbor, Guam, for an assessment of the damage.

“Vice Adm. Karl Thomas, commander, U.S. 7th Fleet, relieved Cmdr. Cameron Aljilani as commanding officer, Lt. Cmdr. Patrick Cashin as executive officer, and Master Chief Sonar Technician Cory Rodgers as chief of the boat,” the release said.

Loss of confidence in the leadership team was the reason the



Navy cited in the release.

“Thomas determined sound judgement, prudent decision-making and adherence to required procedures in navigation planning, watch team execution and risk management could have prevented the incident,” the Navy said.

Capt. John Witte will assume duties as interim commanding officer, Cmdr. Joe Sammur will assume duties as interim executive officer and Command Master Chief Paul Walters will assume duties as interim chief of the boat, the Navy said.

The Navy said the Connecticut is undergoing damage assessment in Guam and will be repaired at Bremerton, Washington.

In January 2005, the Los Angeles-class attack submarine USS San Francisco (SSN 711) struck a sea mount while submerged southeast of Guam. The submarine’s bow sonar dome was crushed, but the pressure hull was not compromised. Dozens of crewmen were injured, and one later died of injuries. The submarine was repaired and returned to fleet service in 2009 with the bow from the ex-USS Honolulu installed.

The Connecticut, commissioned in 2005, is the second of the three-boat Seawolf class.

---

**AeroVironment Awarded \$20.3M  
SOCOM Contract for  
Switchblade Missiles**



A Switchblade 600 tactical missile system. *AEROVIRONMENT*  
ARLINGTON, Va., Nov. 4, 2021 – AeroVironment Inc. was awarded a firm-fixed-price contract Sept. 28 by the U.S. Special Operations Command for \$20.3 million for the procurement of Switchblade 600 tactical missile systems. Delivery is scheduled to be completed by January 2023.

“Switchblade 600 is an all-in-one, man-portable tactical missile that provides warfighters with the capability to fly, track and engage non-line-of-sight targets and light-armored vehicles with precision lethal effects,” said Brett Hush, vice president and product line general manager for tactical missile systems. “The tube-launched Switchblade 600 can be easily transported for deployment from fixed and mobile platforms in any environment, providing operators with superior force overmatch and minimizing exposure to direct and indirect enemy fires.”

Switchblade 600 is equipped with a high-performance electro-optical, gimballed sensor suite, precision flight control and more than 40 minutes of flight time to deliver unprecedented

tactical reconnaissance, surveillance and target acquisition. Its anti-armor warhead enables engagement and prosecution of hardened static and moving light armored vehicles from multiple angles without external ISR or fires assets. Switchblade 600's patented wave-off and recommit capability allows operators to abort the mission at any time and then re-engage either the same or other targets multiple times based on operator command, resulting in minimal to no collateral damage.

---

## **Ingalls Shipbuilding Successfully Completes Builder's Trials for LPD Fort Lauderdale**



Huntington Ingalls Industries has announced that its Ingalls Shipbuilding division recently completed the first round of sea trials for San Antonio-class amphibious transport dock Fort Lauderdale (LPD 28). *HUNTINGTON INGALLS INDUSTRIES PASCAGOULA*, Miss. – Huntington Ingalls Industries' Ingalls Shipbuilding division recently completed the first round of sea trials for San Antonio-class amphibious transport dock Fort Lauderdale (LPD 28), the company said Nov. 2.

"Shipbuilding is about teamwork. Our shipbuilders work as a team with our Navy partners to make these ships ready to join the fleet," said Steve Sloan, Ingalls' LPD program manager. "The success we achieved this week will propel us into a strong finish as we prepare for acceptance trials later this year. We are proud of the work our shipbuilders have accomplished so far and look forward to finishing strong."

LPD 28 is named Fort Lauderdale to honor the Florida city's historic ties to the U.S. Navy, which date back to the 1830s and include an important naval training center during World War II.

Ingalls has delivered 11 San Antonio-class ships to the Navy and has three more under construction including Fort Lauderdale (LPD 28), Richard M. McCool Jr. (LPD 29) and Harrisburg (LPD 30). Ingalls was awarded a \$1.5 billion contract for the construction of LPD 31 in 2020.

The San Antonio-class is the latest addition to the Navy's 21st-century amphibious assault force. The 684-foot-long, 105-foot-wide ships are used to embark and land Marines, their equipment and supplies ashore via air cushion or conventional landing craft and amphibious assault vehicles, augmented by helicopters or vertical takeoff and landing aircraft such as the MV-22 Osprey. The ships support a Marine Air Ground Task Force across the spectrum of operations, conducting amphibious and expeditionary missions of sea control and power projection to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief missions throughout the first half of the 21st century.

---

## **SOCOM Commander: Navy SEALs to Focus on Strategic Reconnaissance, Working with Partners**





A U.S. Navy SEAL throws an M18 colored smoke grenade during a sweep of a training compound during Sentry Rescue IV, a joint command initiative to develop tactics, techniques and procedures for personnel recovery scenarios, Arkansas, Aug. 26, 2021. *U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD / Tech. Sgt. Brigette Waltermire*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The commander of the nation's special operations forces said the Navy's SEALs will have an important role in the future in enabling commanders to understand the enemy's capabilities and intentions.

The SEALs, along with the special operations forces of the other U.S. military services, have had a super-sized role in the Southwest Asian wars since 9-11, serving at the forefront of U.S. and coalition forces in the low-intensity conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and other locations.

With U.S. focus on deterring a future conflict with China and shifting the focus to high-end operations, the 70-000-strong special operations forces (SOF) also are shifting focus.

Speaking to the Military Reporters and Editors at a symposium

in Arlington, Army Gen. Richard D. Clarke, commander, U.S. Special Operations Command, said the S0F are “more integrated than ever before,” including with inter-agency partners.

Clarke said he sees Navy SEALs as ‘working with partners, able to train, and also to conduct another key mission or activity, which is strategic reconnaissance. They can get in places that no one else can get they can be in the littorals – in subsea/subsurface domain – and are critical.”

Clarke said S0F are more than just a direct-action raid force, but the force will still maintain that capability, one which “we have honed to an exquisite degree.”

The commander said the S0F benefits from working closely with the general-purpose forces and that his command will look for every opportunity to leverage high-end training for its forces.

---

## **Submarine USS Connecticut Grounded on Uncharted Seamount, 7th Fleet Says**





The Seawolf-class fast-attack submarine USS Connecticut (SSN 22) departs Puget Sound Naval Shipyard for sea trials following a maintenance availability in this 2016 photograph. *U.S. NAVY / Thiep Van Nguyen II*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The nuclear-powered attack submarine USS Connecticut (SSN 22) “grounded an uncharted seamount,” 7th Fleet Public Affairs said in a Nov. 1 statement.

The Connecticut’s incident occurred on the afternoon of Oct. 2 while submerged in the South China Sea, while operating in international waters in the Indo-Pacific region. There were no life-threatening injuries. The submarine made a transit to the naval base in Apra Harbor, Guam, for an assessment of the damage.

“The submarine remains in a safe and stable condition,” the Navy said at the time. “USS Connecticut’s nuclear propulsion plant and spaces were not affected and remain fully operational.”

“The command investigation for USS Connecticut (SSN 22) has

been submitted to Commander, U.S. 7th Fleet for review and endorsement,” the Navy said in the Nov. 1 statement. “Commander, U.S. 7th Fleet will determine whether follow-on actions – including accountability – are appropriate.”

In January 2005, the Los Angeles-class attack submarine USS San Francisco (SSN 711) struck a sea mount while submerged southeast of Guam. The submarine’s bow sonar dome was crushed, but the pressure hull was not compromised. Dozens of crewmen were injured, and one later died of injuries. The submarine was repaired and returned to fleet service in 2009 with the bow from the ex-USS Honolulu installed.

The Connecticut, commissioned in 2005, is the second boat of the three-boat Seawolf class.

*Editor’s note: The original version of this article incorrectly described the Connecticut as having a 100-foot extension section for enhanced payloads. That submarine is the USS Jimmy Carter.*