USS Hershel ‘Woody’ Williams Shifts Homeport to Greece

The Expeditionary Sea Base USS Hershel “Woody” Williams (ESB 4) arrives at the Marathi NATO Pier Facility in Souda Bay, Greece, August 18, 2020. U.S. Navy / Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Kelly M. Agee

NAVAL SUPPORT ACTIVITY SOUDA BAY, Greece – The Expeditionary Sea Base USS Hershel “Woody” Williams (ESB 4), shifted its homeport from Norfolk, Va., to Souda Bay, Greece, effective Oct. 1, 2020, the U.S. Sixth Fleet Public Affairs said in an Oct. 2 release.

Hershel ‘Woody’ Williams conducts U.S. Africa Command missions in the Mediterranean, and the waters around East, South and West Africa, to include the Gulf of Guinea operating with regional partners.

“Hershel ‘Woody’ Williams provides a new capability in the theater, which enhances our interoperability with our partners across the spectrum of maritime operations,” said Vice Adm. Gene Black, commander, U.S. Sixth Fleet. “The unique design of the ship fosters inter-service operations with our U.S. Marine Corps and Special Operations communities, which improves our ability to ensure maritime security and stability.”

Due to the ship’s extended overseas assignment, Military Sealift Command (MSC) will conduct her routine maintenance in existing facilities at NSA Souda Bay and other overseas ports.

“The ship truly demonstrates the U.S. Navy’s incomparable maritime flexibility and professionalism,” said Capt. David Gray, Hershel “Woody” Williams’ commanding officer, blue crew. “We operate with a crew of Sailors and civilians who, since our arrival in Sixth Fleet have supported U.S. Marine Corps

and Special Operations training, as well as partner nation missions from the Eastern Mediterranean to the Gulf of Guinea.”

The ship’s two-fold mission provides the U.S. a forward deployed naval presence in Africa, as well as increased naval power through Navy and Marine Corps integrated operations, including Marine aviation and support to amphibious operations. Other operations and training capabilities the ship performs include support to special operations, command and control, and staging of equipment.

NSA Souda Bay serves as a naval logistics hub for U.S. 6th Fleet, providing support to U.S. warships and logistics ships in the region.

U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa and U.S. 6th Fleet, headquartered in Naples, Italy, conduct the full spectrum of joint and naval operations, often in concert with allied and interagency partners, in order to advance U.S. national interests and security and stability in Europe and Africa.

VideoRay begins shipping Defender ROVs to U.S. Navy

A VideoRay Defender in action during an underwater deployment. Naval Information Warfare Center Pacific

POTTSTOWN, Pa. – Remotely operated vehicle (ROV) maker VideoRay has begun shipping its new Defender underwater robot to the U.S. Navy, the company said Oct. 1.

The shipments are done under an existing $49 million contract

to deliver the Navy's Next Generation ROV. The systems are being delivered with integrated sensors, tooling and software from Greensea, Blueprint Subsea, Nortek and Eddyfi, the company said.

The systems are being assembled at VideoRay's Pottstown, Pennsylvania facility and will be used by the Navy for operations including littoral mine countermeasures, port security missions, and hull and pier inspection. Defender ROV shipments will be completed under the contract by the end of the year.

Coast Guard Cutter Northland Returns Home from Patrol

The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Northland conducts a live firing of the MK 75 76mm weapons system while underway, September 20, 2020, in the Atlantic Ocean. The cutter returned to its homeport of Portsmouth, Virginia, Wednesday after a 47-day patrol . U.S. Coast Guard / Seaman Vincent Bologno

PORTSMOUTH, Va. – The Coast Guard Cutter Northland (WMEC-904) returned to its homeport in Portsmouth after a 47-day patrol conducting counter-drug and migrant interdiction operations in the Caribbean Sea and Atlantic Ocean, Sept. 30, the Coast Guard 5th District said in an Oct. 1 release.

The Northland deployed in August and offered pre-storm information and assistance to locals off the coast of Haiti.

Prior to the arrival of Tropical Storm Laura off the island of Hispaniola, Northland crewmembers located a disoriented fisherman who had drifted approximately 17 miles offshore. The

crew provided him with food and water as the ship escorted him back to land well ahead of the storm's passage.

The Northland also hosted a civilian Haitian-Creole interpreter for the majority of the patrol to assist with translations.

"Before this mission I did not know anything about the Coast Guard," said Rishi Jolivian, a Haitian-Creole interpreter aboard the Northland. "But, now I have so much gratitude and appreciation for what the Coast Guard does. I have tremendous respect for the Northland and it's truly an awesome place to be."

The Northland crewmembers provided Coast Guard presence along the north coast of Haiti by conducting 20 transits through the Canal de Tortue. The crew also maintained a robust training schedule earning more than 160 qualifications in addition to running over 60 shipboard drills and over 30 hours of small boat training. A highlight for the crew was the live-fire gunnery exercise of the 76mm Mk75 Gun Weapon System.

"I am truly humbled to command a crew that diligently works to get the job done," stated Cmdr. Patricia Bennett, commanding officer of of the Northland. "Their remarkable ability to overcome the inherent challenges of serving aboard an aging 36-year old asset downrange during a global pandemic cannot be overstated. The crew maintained a high level of morale and camaraderie that, in my opinion, is really only encountered by those of us who serve aboard Coast Guard cutters. This crew truly demonstrates the spirit of why I go to sea."

Upon the Northland's return to homeport, the crew will conduct critical maintenance and repairs to extend the ship's service life and will undergo a rigorous training assessment to ensure emergency readiness for future deployments.

The Northland is a 270-foot medium-endurance cutter homeported in Portsmouth, Virginia and routinely deploys in support of

counter-drug, migrant interdiction, fisheries, and search and rescue and homeland security missions.

U.S. Coast Guard Conducts Joint Arctic Operations, Scientific Research Off Greenland

USCGC CAMPBELL ventured into Disko Bay with the HDMS Knud Rasmussen for joint helicopter training exercises. Disko Bay is known for its heavy concentration of large icebergs calving off the Jacobshavn Glacier. U.S. COAST GUARD ATLANTIC DIVISION KITTERY, Maine – U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Campbell (WMEC 909) returned to homeport Tuesday, following a two-month deployment supporting joint Arctic operations off Greenland's western coast, the Coast Guard Atlantic Area said in a Sept. 29 release.

Campbell's crew contributed to joint exercises, research and development efforts, and critical diplomatic engagements while covering more than 11,500 miles (10,000 nautical miles).

"I am very proud of the efforts and adaptability of every one of Campbell's crew who demonstrated the ability to operate and execute our mission aboard one of the finest Famous-class cutters in the fleet, said Capt. Thomas Crane, commanding officer of Campbell. "Their dedication to duty and commitment to the Coast Guard helps to affirm the United States as an Arctic nation. It is also a credit to the name Campbell and

our five predecessors. In addition to notable narcotics seizures and being the command ship for the 1996 TWA 800 recovery, we are now the first 270-foot medium-endurance cutter to earn the Arctic Service Medal."

Campbell sailed with additional support, including an embarked MH-65 Dolphin helicopter and aviation detachment consisting of two pilots and four aircrew, including a rescue swimmer. In all, eight shipriders augmented the 100-person crew during the patrol, assisting in operations, providing health services, and documenting the journey.

"I am humbled by the opportunity to be a part of this historic mission and am glad our crew's experiences will be shared with family, friends and future generations," Crane said. "Going to sea is challenging and requires personal sacrifices both from our crew and loved ones left onshore. Still, the camaraderie, teamwork and pride of our crew are the reasons I go to sea. Campbell is a great ship with a great crew able to execute missions of strategic national significance amid a global pandemic."

In early August, Campbell departed Kittery for Nuuk, Greenland, to participate in joint search-and-rescue exercise operations with French and Royal Danish naval assets.

"This effort strengthens international partnerships and provides a foundation for standard operations in the rapidly developing Arctic maritime environment," said Vice Adm. Steven Poulin, commander U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area. "As interest and maritime traffic in the area increases, the importance of the U.S. Coast Guard's interoperability with allied partners becomes more critical to ensuring we protect national and shared security interests. Exercising our unique blend of polar operational capability, regulatory authority and international leadership across the full spectrum of maritime governance is vital to the future of the Arctic."

The Kingdom of Denmark defense force's Joint Arctic Command Search and Rescue Exercise ARGUS included 13 simulated coastal and open-ocean scenarios, evaluating processes and interoperability through communications testing, vessel towing evolutions, rescue boat training, and helicopter sea and land operations.

Campbell's crew employed its embarked Dolphin crew extensively, conducting joint evolutions and professional maritime exchanges with the Royal Danish navy vessels HDMS Knud Rasmussen and HDMS Triton. They also applied NATO procedures to test interoperability with regard to ship-controlled approaches, launch, recovery and hoisting. The crews conducted joint U.S.-Danish surface and air operations in Eternity Fjord and Disko Bay, Greenland, the most active iceberg-producing area globally.

Professional exchanges with HDMS Knud Rasmussen provide an opportunity to gain valuable navigation knowledge along Greenland's coastline and fjord system. Campbell patrolled the Labrador Sea waters, Davis Strait and the Baffin Bay, navigating Greenland's largely uncharted western coast, including ice-laden bays and fjords, often using rudimentary sounding data as electronic charts are unavailable for the area. Throughout the patrol, Campbell safely completed over 200 helicopter evolutions, including 16 joint evolutions with the Danish navy.

In support of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, International Ice Patrol, and Coast Guard Research and Development Center, Campbell's crew conducted testing of specialized equipment and resources in the Arctic environment. They deployed oceanographic research buoys across Baffin Bay, the Labrador Sea and the North Atlantic to measure ocean currents and wave heights that influence iceberg drift and deterioration.

“This valuable data can provide a better understanding of the lifecycle of icebergs that impact transatlantic shipping lanes,” said Mike Hicks, of the International Ice Patrol.

IIP also analyzed 317 synthetic-aperture radar and multispectral images from satellites to monitor iceberg danger during Campbell’s operations. This effort, led by IIP’s Lt. Don Rudnickas, denotes the first time in history, novel, scalable and tailored iceberg warning products were produced with only satellite observations, depicting iceberg danger at higher granularity using oceanographic models to provide forecasted iceberg positions.

“This input significantly shapes the future of iceberg warning products in the North Atlantic and expands the capability of IIP to provide direct, tailorable support to vessels operating independently: an ability beyond the IIP’s statutory mission, but one that is likely to become highly desired with increasing Arctic operations,” said Hicks.

Mr. Matthew Lees was the RDC Demonstrations Liaison and coordinated technology evaluations for the patrol. These included an Iridium Certus Terminal, which helped provide internet access for the crew to maintain communications with Atlantic Area; two different enhanced night vision goggle devices improved law enforcement and flight operations, even integrated into ship’s display screens; a long-range acoustic device was evaluated for enhanced communications with vessels at longer distances; and a handheld Glare Helios Green Laser tested for similar stand-off hailing capabilities.

The crew also learned essential lessons using a FiFish remotely operated vehicle in cold weather to conduct underwater inspections.

“As cruise ship and commercial vessel traffic increases

through the Northwest Passage, Campbell's recent patrol highlights our commitment to ensuring the safety and security of U.S. citizens," said Rear Adm. Thomas Allan, commander Coast Guard 1st District. "This was also a fantastic demonstration of how we work with our partners as we seek to respect sovereignty, maximize the use of our assets, and promote environmental stewardship."

They facilitated multiple key diplomatic engagement opportunities throughout their Arctic deployment. Campbell's crew welcomed aboard Danish Maj. Gen. Kim Joergensen, commander of Joint Arctic Command, and Sung Choi, U.S. consul in Nuuk. Campbell's diplomatic work was underscored by the opportunity to host Greenland's Premier, Kim Kielsen, signifying the importance of international cooperation for the region, according to the release.

"Campbell's efforts continue the United States' strong relationship with Greenland, furthering a positive foundation for how the Coast Guard will interact and operate in the region," said Poulin. "As an Arctic nation, cooperation and understanding of the dynamic and ever-changing Arctic operating environment is vital. The U.S. Coast Guard is the primary polar and Arctic surface operator of the U.S. military. The Coast Guard is committed to working collaboratively with like-minded partners through exercises like ARGUS strengthening global maritime security, regional stability, and economic prosperity."

USS Donald Cook Completes

Availability Ahead of Schedule

Sailors assigned to the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Donald Cook (DDG 75), heave around on a mooring line, Sept. 28, 2020. U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Will Hardy

ROTA, Spain – The Forward-Deployed Regional Maintenance Center (FDRMC) detachment Rota recently completed a surface incremental availability (SIA) for USS Donald Cook (DDG 75) five days ahead of schedule, returning the ship for continued operational tasking, the Navy's Team Ships Public Affairs said in a Sep. 30 release.

The USS Donald Cook is one of the Navy's four forward-deployed Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers homeported in Rota, Spain. These ships serve a vital role by supporting NATO's regional security and ballistic missile defense efforts through regular patrols and exercises in the U.S. 6th Fleet Area of Responsibility.

"With the early delivery of USS Donald Cook, the Rota team has successfully completed all four of its FY20 availabilities on time," said Capt. Gustavo Vergara commanding officer for FDRMC. "FDRMC is committed to returning ships on time in order to provide the fleet with the stability and operational readiness needed to achieve their mission."

An SIA is part of the planned maintenance cycle that keeps Navy ships ready and responsive by allowing numerous depot and intermediate level work items to be completed. The government and industry team completed the SIA in 55 days with the average time to complete being 60 days. FDRMC Rota managed to streamline and improve their typical SIA plan of execution to deliver the ship ahead of schedule.

“Finishing the availability ahead of schedule is a testament to the maintenance strategy FDRMC Rota is executing to maintain alignment with the requirements of the operational commander,” said Cmdr. Luis Socias, officer in charge with FDRMC det Rota.

FDRMC provides contract management oversight, fleet technical assistance, voyage repair and diving and salvage to Forward Deployed Naval Forces in Europe and the Middle East and for Deployed ships in the 5th and 6th Fleet areas of responsibility.

Ex-USS Ticonderoga to be Recycled in Texas

An aerial port bow view of the Aegis guided missile cruiser USS Ticonderoga (CG-47) underway during Standard II missile tests near the Atlantic Fleet Weapons Training Facility, Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico, on April 9, 1983. U.S. NAVY
BROWNSVILLE, Texas – A contract to recycle an out-of-service U.S. Navy guided-missile cruiser has been awarded to International Shipbreaking Limited LLC., one of the world’s largest green ship recycling companies, MarineLink reported on Sept. 29.

The USS Ticonderoga (CG 47), decommissioned in 2004, concluded its final voyage last week to the Port of Brownsville, Texas, where full dismantling will commence with 98% of all removed materials being recycled. The recycling work, which requires complete demilitarization of the entire ship, is scheduled to be completed in 2021.

Ticonderoga was built at Ingalls Shipbuilding, in Pascagoula, Mississippi, and delivered to the Navy on Dec. 13, 1982. The warship was the lead vessel of the Ticonderoga class of guided-missile cruisers and was the fifth ship in U.S. Navy history to bear the name.

The ship provided naval gunfire support off the coast of Lebanon on its maiden voyage in 1984. In 1986, it served as the lead ship crossing the "Line of Death" off the coast of Libya and removed surface-to-air missile batteries that had launched a SA-5 missile against an F-14 from USS America (CV 66). It was assigned to the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN 69) Battle Group and participated in: Operation Desert Shield in 1990, Operation Southern Watch (the enforcement of the no-fly zone over Iraq) and Operation Deny Flight, (the U.N.-mandated no-fly zone over Bosnia) in 1995. From 2001 to 2004, Ticonderoga participated in security and counter-narcotics operations out of homeport Pascagoula. Following the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, she got underway the next day at 8 a.m. to support Operation Noble Eagle (protecting airspace along the Gulf Coast).

"We take great pride in having been awarded the Defense Logistics Agency contract to recycle this historic vessel," said Chris Green, senior manager at International Shipbreaking Ltd. "The USS Ticonderoga has significant sentimental meaning to the men and women who served our country and spent a part of their lives with her. She will be recycled in a safe, respectful and environmentally responsible manner."

International Shipbreaking Ltd., part of EMR Metal Recycling, has three specialist facilities located in Brownsville, Texas; New Orleans and Amelia, Louisiana. These specialized facilities have recycled more than 400 ships and marine structures including USS Tripoli (LPH 10), USS Constellation (CV 64), USS Ranger (CV 61) and USS Independence (CV 62). The USS Cape Florida (AK 5071) currently is being recycled.

Coast Guard Interdicts 9 Cuban Migrants

A Coast Guard Cutter William Trump (WPC-1111) smallboat crew and a Coast Guard Station Marathon 33-foot Special Purpose Craft-Law Enforcement crew interdict a rustic vessel 10 miles south of Key Colony Beach, Florida, Sept. 27, 2020. U.S. COAST GUARD

KEY WEST, Fla. — The Coast Guard interdicted nine Cuban migrants approximately 10 miles south of Key Colony Beach, Florida, Sept. 27, the Coast Guard 7th District said in a Sept. 29 release.

Coast Guard Sector Key West watchstanders received a report of a migrant vessel with nine people aboard south of Key Colony Beach. Watchstanders launched a Coast Guard Station Marathon 33-foot Special Purpose Craft-Law Enforcement crew and launched Coast Guard Cutter William Trump (WPC-1111) crew.

Both crews arrived on scene and the cutter William Trump crew safely embarked the 9 male Cuban migrants. The Coast Guard Cutter Kathleen Moore (WPC-110) crew repatriated the nine Cuban migrants to Cabanas, Cuba.

The Coast Guard interdicted approximately 40 Cuban migrants who have attempted to illegally enter the U.S via the maritime environment in fiscal year 2020, which began Oct. 1, 2019, compared to 327 Cuban migrants in fiscal year 2019. These numbers represent the total number of at-sea interdictions, landings and disruptions in the Florida Straits, the Caribbean and Atlantic Ocean.

Once aboard a Coast Guard cutter, all migrants receive food,

water, shelter and basic medical attention. Throughout the interdiction Coast Guard crewmembers were equipped with personal protective equipment to minimize potential exposure to any possible case of COVID-19.

“The crew and I are extremely pleased with the outcome of the recent joint interdiction with our shipmates from Station Marathon,” said Lt. Kyle Pearson, command officer of the cutter William Trump. “Sector Key West’s readiness posture and increased Maritime Domain Awareness allowed for a prompt and safe interdiction, preserving both the safety of life at sea and the integrity of our maritime borders.”

Coast Guard Repatriates 20 Migrants to the Dominican Republic

The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Heriberto Hernandez (WPC-1114) cutter boat helps transfer 20 migrants, who claimed to be Dominican Republic nationals, to the Coast Guard Cutter Vigilant (WMEC-617) during a rendezvous in the Mona Passage Sept. 27, 2020. U.S. COAST GUARD

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – The Coast Guard Cutter Vigilant (WMEC-617) repatriated 20 migrants to the Dominican Republic between Sept. 27 and Sept. 29, following the interdiction of an illegal migrant voyage in the Mona Passage just off Rincon, Puerto Rico, the Coast Guard 7th District said in a Sept. 29 release.

The interdiction is the result of ongoing multiagency efforts in support of Operation Caribbean Guard and the Caribbean

Border Interagency Group CBIG.

“The crew of the Heriberto Hernandez is glad to help save all 20 lives from this grossly overloaded makeshift vessel,” said Lt. Andrew Russo, Coast Guard Cutter Heriberto Hernandez (WPC-1114) commanding officer. “Unfortunately like in most cases, the conditions these migrants faced placed their lives in great danger. These makeshift vessels are unstable; they are unseaworthy and continuously take on water. Throughout the voyage, the migrants are exposed to the elements and leaking fuel, and they rarely have any serviceable lifesaving equipment onboard.”

Coast Guard watchstanders at Sector San Juan received a communication late Saturday night from a Ramey Border Patrol Sector agent, who informed a Puerto Rico Police Joint Forces of Rapid Action marine unit was on scene with an illegal voyage, approximately five nautical miles southwest of Rincon, Puerto Rico. Coast Guard watchstanders diverted the Coast Guard Cutter Heriberto Hernandez to the scene.

Once on scene with the interdicted 20-foot makeshift boat, the crew of cutter Heriberto Hernandez safely embarked the migrants for safety of life at sea concerns. The migrant vessel was transporting 16 adult men and two women, as well as two male unaccompanied minors, who claimed to be Dominican Republic nationals.

Once aboard a Coast Guard cutter, all migrants received food, water, shelter and basic medical attention. Throughout the interdiction, Coast Guard crewmembers were equipped with personal protective equipment to minimize potential exposure to any possible case of COVID-19. There were no migrants in these cases reported to have any COVID-19 related symptoms.

Cutter Heriberto Hernandez later transferred the migrants to the cutter Vigilant, which in turn completed the repatriation of the migrants. Eighteen of the migrants were repatriated at

sea, where they were transferred to a Dominican Republic navy vessel Sunday, while the remaining two were repatriated and transferred to local authorities in Santo Domingo Tuesday morning.

Cutters Heriberto Hernandez is a 154-foot fast-response cutter homeported in San Juan, Puerto Rico, while the cutter Vigilant is a 210-foot medium-endurance cutter homeported in Port Canaveral, Florida.

Sea Machines, Metal Shark to Supply Coast Guard R&D Center With New Autonomous Vessel

The U.S. Coast Guard's Research and Development Center is evaluating the Sharktech 29 Defiant autonomous vessel. SEA MACHINES ROBOTICS

NEW LONDON, Conn. – Boston-based Sea Machines Robotics has partnered with shipbuilder Metal Shark Boats, of Jeanerette, Louisiana, to supply the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG)'s Research and Development Center (RDC) with a new Sharktech 29 Defiant vessel for the purposes of testing and evaluating the capabilities of available autonomous vessel technology, Sea Machines announced in a Sept. 29 release. The 29-foot, welded-aluminum monohull pilothouse vessel comes equipped with the Sea Machines SM300 autonomous-command and remote-helm control technology, offering the USCG capabilities including transit autonomy, collaborative autonomy, collision avoidance and remote vessel monitoring.

The RDC helps transition innovative technologies and provides

premier analysis and decision support to enhance operational performance across all Coast Guard missions. During demonstrations scheduled for October off the coast of Hawaii, the RDC team will test and evaluate the Sharktech vessel's autonomous capabilities for their potential in supporting USCG surveillance, interdiction, patrol and other missions. Following the Hawaii demonstrations, the autonomous vessel will be returned to the RDC's New London facility, where it will be used in additional testing to investigate application to various Coast Guard missions.

"As the premier USCG facility performing research, development, test and evaluation in support of the service's major missions, the RDC team is eager to observe Sea Machines' system in action," said USCG's Derek Meier, assistant demonstration director. "The exercises will ultimately help us determine how, when and if this innovative technology can be used to support personnel who are executing a variety of Coast Guard activities."

"Sea Machines is proud to actively support government agencies across a variety of projects and to expand that support to the Department of Homeland Security with this important demonstration being conducted by the U.S. Coast Guard," said Sea Machines' Phil Bourque, director of sales. "Our systems are being rapidly adopted by government and commercial operators alike, offering increases in on-water productivity and predictability, while reducing operational risk."

"Since the launch of our Sharktech Autonomous Vessels division in 2018 we have been working to position Metal Shark for the autonomy revolution," said Chris Allard, Metal Shark's chief executive officer. "We are committed to the advancement of autonomous technology, through our relationships with leading autonomy suppliers as well as through our own R&D, and we are engaged with multiple customers, from the USCG, the Department of Defense and commercial operators. With this latest delivery, Metal Shark is proud to play a role in the Coast

Guard’s autonomous technology R&D efforts.”

In 2019, Sea Machines partnered with Metal Shark to make available the Sharktech 29 Defiant vessel to commercial markets, under Metal Shark’s stock boat program. Most recently, in July, Sea Machines partnered with Huntington Ingalls Industries to accelerate the deployment of self-piloting technologies in the rising market of unmanned naval boats and ships.

USS Delbert D. Black Commissioned in Port Canaveral

The crew mans the rails of the Navy’s newest guided-missile destroyer, USS Delbert D. Black (DDG 119), in honor of the first Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy Delbert D. Black. DDG 119, is the first ship in naval history to be named Delbert D. Black,and will be homeported in Naval Station Mayport. U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Sarah Villegas

PORT CANAVERAL, Fla. – The U.S. Navy commissioned Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Delbert D. Black (DDG 119) Sept. 26, the commander, Naval Surface Forces said in a release.

Due to public health and safety concerns related to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the commissioning was a private event.

Secretary of the Navy Kenneth J. Braithwaite was represented by James F. Geurts, assistant secretary of the Navy for

Research, Development and Acquisition, with Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy (MCPON) Russell Smith placing the ship into commission. Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Michael Gilday was represented by Adm. William K. Lescher, vice chief of naval operations. The event was livestreamed to allow public viewing of the ceremony for the ship named for the first MCPON.

MCPON Russell Smith, currently serving as the 15th senior enlisted leader of the Navy, was the principle speaker. MCPON Smith fills the role begun by Black as advisor to the chief of naval operations and to the chief of naval personnel in matters dealing with enlisted personnel and their families.

“This is the first ship to honor a senior enlisted leader in such a way for their contributions in this realm and represents a significant milestone achievement that recognizes both the responsibility of the position to the Navy, as well the tremendous accountability to those enlisted Sailors we primarily provide advocacy for,” said MCPON Smith. “The vision and effort it took to move the idea of a Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy into an effective reality cannot be overstated, and all of us have been the benefactors of his legend of service by advancing the work that he began.

Rear Adm. Brad Cooper, commander, Naval Surface Force Atlantic, welcomed the ship that brings a wide range of warfighting capabilities in multi-threat air, surface and subsurface environments to the premier Surface Force in the world.

“The USS Delbert D. Black joins the Fleet during a time when its cutting-edge capabilities are most needed,” Cooper said. “I’m extremely proud of this crew and know the pennant of courage, teamwork, inclusiveness and sacrifice will be taken up and flown even higher with the Sailors who serve aboard the ship.”

Ima Black, MCPON Delbert D. Black's widow and a former Sailor, served as the ship's sponsor offering congratulations to everyone who played a role in delivering USS Delbert D. Black to service. Black served during World War II in the Navy WAVES, Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service.

Delbert D. Black's commanding officer, Cmdr. Matthew McKenna, reported the ship ready to Adm. Lescher.

The crew will kick off Tulsa Navy Week as part of their commissioning. "Being that Delbert Black was a native of Oklahoma, I'm ecstatic that Tulsa Navy Week will highlight the first Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy, namesake of our ship, virtually Oct. 5 through 11," said McKenna. "This is much more than a ceremony; the commissioning of a ship is a culmination of unwavering dedication. The ship is ready to be introduced to the fleet."

Delbert D. Black is the 68th Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer to be delivered to the Navy and the first to bear its name. DDG 119 honors the first Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy. Black is known for initiating the master chief program, ensuring enlisted leadership was properly represented Navy-wide.