Construction Begins on Future USNS Hector A. Cafferata Jr.

Release from Naval Sea Systems Command

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Aug. 11, 2023

By Team Ships Public Affairs

SAN DIEGO – Construction started on the sixth Expeditionary Sea Base (ESB), the future USNS Hector A. Cafferata Jr. (ESB 8), at General Dynamics National Steel and Shipbuilding Company (GD NASSCO), Aug. 8.

The ESB ship class is highly flexible and used across a broad range of military operations supporting multiple operational phases, similar to the Expeditionary Transfer Dock class.

Acting as a mobile sea base, they are part of the critical access infrastructure that supports the deployment of forces and supplies to provide prepositioned equipment and sustainment with flexible distribution.

“The ESB platform has demonstrated they have not only the flexibility, but the capability the fleet needs while protecting our warfighting advantage,” said Tim Roberts, Strategic and Theater Sealift program manager, Program Executive Office (PEO) Ships. “The ship will support a variety of mission sets while focusing on its core capabilities of aviation facilities, berthing, special operations, equipment staging support, and command and control operations.”

In July 2023 the ship was named by Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro in honor of Medal of Honor recipient and Korean War veteran Hector A. Cafferata and is the first ship to carry his name.

GD NASSCO is also currently under construction on the future USNS Robert E. Simanek (ESB 7) as well as John Lewis-class Fleet Replenishment Oilers, USNS Earl Warren (T-AO 207), Robert F. Kennedy (T-AO 208), Lucy Stone (T-209) and Sojourner Truth (T-AO 210) with Thurgood Marshall (T-AO 211), Ruth Bader Ginsburg (T-ASO 212) and T-AO 213 under contract.

As one of the Defense Department’s largest acquisition organizations, PEO Ships is responsible for executing the development and procurement of all destroyers, amphibious ships, special mission and support ships, and boats and craft.

USS Mobile Bay Decommissions, Honors 36 Years of Service

Release from Commander, Naval Surface Forces Public Affairs

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From Commander, Naval Surface Forces Public Affairs

SAN DIEGO – USS Mobile Bay (CG 53) honored more than three decades of naval service during a decommissioning ceremony at Naval Base San Diego, Aug. 10.

Vice Adm. Roy Kitchener, commander, Naval Surface Forces served as the ceremony's guest speaker and wished the current crew fair winds and following seas as they bid farewell to their ship.

"The Sailors of USS Mobile Bay demonstrated time and time again the resolve and readiness the Surface Force provides

around the clock in support of our nation’s interests,” said Kitchener. “Everywhere this ship and crew deployed, Mobile Bay Sailors served their nation well, and lived up to the valor enshrined in the Battle of Mobile Bay.”

Commanded by Capt. Brandon J. Burkett, Mobile Bay maintained a crew of 30 officers and 300 enlisted members.

“It’s been an honor to be Mobile Bay’s last commanding officer,” said Burkett. “It has been a distinct privilege to work alongside some of the finest Sailors our Navy and our nation have to offer. Their persistence through adversity is commendable and truly represents the spirit of Mobile Bay’s motto, ‘Full speed ahead.’ They truly embody what it means to be a ‘MOBster.’ It is now my solemn responsibility as the ships final captain to order hauling down the colors and disembarking the crew. Though to many of us ‘MOBsters’ past and present, the feeling is deeper than that. Those who’ve gone to sea know that a ship is more than a machine that floats. When you are away from home for months on end your ship becomes your home and your protection. We take care of her and she takes care of us. Simply put, she becomes family. It has been an honor to serve with my crew on this exemplary warship.”

Mobile Bay was built by Ingalls Shipbuilding in Pascagoula, Mississippi and commissioned Feb. 21, 1987, Alabama State Docks in Mobile, Alabama.

The ship’s operational history includes the 1989 evacuation of U.S. Embassy in Beirut, Lebanon; launching 22 Tomahawk Land Attack Missiles (TLAMs) in support of Operation Desert Storm and evacuation of thousands of people displaced by the volcanic eruption of Mt. Pinatubo in the vicinity of Subic Bay, Republic of the Philippines during Operation Fiery Vigil in 1991; U.S. Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachment (CGLED) seizure of 10.5 metric tons of cocaine approximately 800 miles southwest of Acapulco, Mexico, and launching Tomahawk Land

Attack Missiles (TLAMs) in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003.

The ship's sponsor, Kathryn Jane Maury helped organize the National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia in the 1960s after her Navy pilot husband was shot down and captured in 1965. She was married to U.S. Sen. Jeremiah Denton, a Vietnam War veteran who was awarded the Navy Cross for his heroism while a prisoner of war. USS Jeremiah Denton (DDG 129), a Flight III Arleigh-Burke class destroyer is named for him. Mrs. Denton passed away on Nov. 22, 2007, at the age of 81.

The ship was the first named after and in honor of the Battle of Mobile Bay in August 1864. During the famous American Civil War naval battle between Union forces under the command of Adm. David Farragut and Confederate forces under Adm. Franklin Buchanan.

The ship's motto, "Full speed ahead," is based on Adm. Farragut's famous command issued during the battle and typifies the Admiral's key to success in war, straight thinking and determined action. Mobile Bay proudly carried on the tradition of patriotism and courage displayed by the ships and Sailors in the historic battle which concluded when Farragut's Union ships converged upon the Confederate ironclad CSS Tennessee firing broadsides and ramming it at full speed with their prows. After two hours, Tennessee was dead in the water, it's steering gone and stack shot away, filling the gun deck with suffocating heat and flames. Only then did the wounded Buchanan give the order to surrender. Tennessee's colors came down, concluding one of the most important battles in the Civil War.

Mobile Bay will be inactivated and towed to the Navy's Inactive Ship's facility in Bremerton, Washington where they will be in a Logistic Support Asset (LSA) status.

For more news from Naval Surface Forces, visit www.navy.mil/local/cnsp/, www.dvidshub.net/unit/COMNAVSURFPAC, and www.public.navy.mil/surfor/.

USS OMMANEY BAY (CVE 79) DISCOVERY TO BE DISCUSSED AT ESCORT CARRIER HISTORY SYMPOSIUM

27 July 2023
For Immediate Release:

WASHINGTON, DC – The Naval Order of the United States (NOUS) National Capital Commandery welcomes the Escort Carrier

Sailors and Airmen Association (ESCAA) to the nation's capital for a planned final reunion convention which will feature a day-long symposium on Friday August 25, 2023.

Escort Carriers often dubbed "Jeep Carriers" came into existence during World War II, serving with both the U.S. and Royal Navies in the Battle of the Atlantic to deter German U-Boats attacks on cross-Atlantic convoys. They provided the backbone to what became known as Hunter-Killer groups. One such group, centered around the escort carrier Guadalcanal, would capture the German submarine U-505 on June 4, 1944. Escort carriers also served in the Pacific. During the Battle for Leyte Gulf, the Gambier Bay was sunk by enemy gunfire and a Kamikaze claimed St. Lo. On January 4, 1945, another Kamikaze claimed Ommaney Bay off the Philippines and this past July 10th, 2023, the Naval History and Heritage Command confirmed its discovery. A briefing on this discovery by Naval History and Heritage Command underwater archaeology staff is planned for the symposium.

Escort Carriers went on to serve with the U.S. Navy in the Korean and Vietnam conflicts and with other navies. Given their significant contribution to naval history as illustrated by Ommaney Bay, the NOUS National Capital Commandery invites those interested in this unique aspect of naval aviation history to attend a one-day history symposium to be held at the Crystal City Doubletree Hotel in Arlington, Virginia. ESCAA has convened an impressive program with NOUS Companion Dr. David F. Winkler, author of a forthcoming book on the Navy's first aircraft carrier Langley, serving as moderator. Other experts who have accepted invitations to speak include Cdr. Stan Fisher of the U.S. Naval Academy History Department, Archaeologist Bradley A. Krueger, historians Robert Cressman and Guy Nasuti of the Naval Heritage and History Command, and Travis Bickford of the Library of Congress. The symposium has the strong support of the Director of the Naval History and Heritage Command, Rear Adm. Samuel Cox, USN (Ret.) who has

invited convention attendees to tour the Navy Museum the following day and will be the featured speaker at the convention's closing banquet that following evening.

For those interested in attending the one-day symposium which will include a lunch, the registration is found at www.ecsaa.org/symposium . For those interested in attending the entire reunion convention that includes the symposium, city tour, memorial service and banquet, further information can be found here at www.ecsaa.org/convention.

Though this is the last reunion event for the ESCAA, the NOUS National Capital Commandery commends this organization for its intent to forge on with a mission of preserving the legacy of this unique warship class. Promoting events such as this Escort Carrier History Symposium falls within the mission of the NOUS National Capital Commandery. For more on the Naval Order and eligibility to join, visit https://nouscap.org.

Media inquiries about the Escort Carrier History Symposium can be sent to ESCAA president Dave Ryan at dave.ryan@escaa.org.

Coast Guard, Partners Continue Mass Rescue Operations from Maui Fires

Release from Coast Guard 14th District

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Aug. 10, 2023

HONOLULU – The Coast Guard, federal, state, and local partners are responding to the Lahaina wildfires in Maui, HI.

The incident response includes the U.S. Coast Guard, Hawaii Emergency Management Agency, Maui Department of Fire and Public Safety, Maui Police Department, Department of Land and Natural Resources, National Guard, and the Department of Defense, who continue to support and closely monitor the rescue and evacuation efforts.

“On behalf of the U.S. Coast Guard, I wish to convey my sincere condolences to the communities who have been tragically affected by the fires in Maui,” said Capt. Aja L. Kirksey, Sector Commander of Coast Guard Sector Honolulu. “Our collaboration with partner agencies and neighboring jurisdictions remains steadfast, as we unite our resources,

knowledge, and equipment to ensure responder and public safety and amplify the impact of our response efforts.”

• At 5:45 p.m., Tuesday, Coast Guard Sector Honolulu watchstanders received reports regarding multiple persons in the water needing rescue after taking shelter from fire and smoke in Lahaina, Maui.

• Coast Guard Sector Honolulu watchstanders issued an Urgent Marine Information Broadcast Notice for a mass rescue.

• Watchstanders diverted the Coast Guard Cutter Joseph Gerczak, launched an Air Station Barbers Point MH-65 Dolphin Helicopter aircrew and a 45-foot Response Boat Medium crew from Station Maui. Two U.S. Navy MH-60 aircrews from Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron 37 were also deployed.

• Tuesday evening, the 45-foot Response Boat Medium crew arrived on scene and rescued 14 survivors from the Lahaina Harbor Breakwall with all survivors reported to be in stable condition.

• Current response efforts include multi-agency personnel remaining on scene with air coverage from Air Station Barbers Point MH-65 Dolphin Helicopter aircrews and Navy MH-60 aircrews from the Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron 37.

• A 45-foot Response Boat Medium crew from Station Maui remains on scene along with the Coast Guard Cutters Kimball and Joseph Gerczak.

We urge residents to heed the safety warnings from officials and to adhere to evacuation orders and safety guidelines issued by local authorities. Officials have issued a safety zone and temporary flight restrictions in the vicinity of the Lahaina Harbor and surrounding areas.

Contact the Maui Emergency Operations Center for emergency operations information at (808) 205-9328.

Updates will be provided via the Fourteenth Coast Guard District's social media page: @USCGHawaiiPAC

Media requests for additional information may be directed to the District 14 Public Affairs Office at uscgd14mauifires@gmail.com.

DOD Announces Establishment of Generative AI Task Force

Release from the Department of Defense

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AUG. 10, 2023

Today, the Department of Defense (DoD) announced the establishment of a generative artificial intelligence (AI) task force, an initiative that reflects the DoD's commitment to harnessing the power of artificial intelligence in a responsible and strategic manner.

Deputy Secretary of Defense Dr. Kathleen Hicks directed the organization of Task Force Lima; it will play a pivotal role in analyzing and integrating generative AI tools, such as large language models (LLMs), across the DoD.

"The establishment of Task Force Lima underlines the Department of Defense's unwavering commitment to leading the charge in AI innovation," Hicks said. "As we navigate the transformative power of generative AI, our focus remains steadfast on ensuring national security, minimizing risks, and responsibly integrating these technologies. The future of

defense is not just about adopting cutting-edge technologies, but doing so with foresight, responsibility, and a deep understanding of the broader implications for our nation."

Led by the Chief Digital and Artificial Intelligence Office (CDAO), Task Force Lima will assess, synchronize, and employ generative AI capabilities across the DoD, ensuring the Department remains at the forefront of cutting-edge technologies while safeguarding national security.

"The DoD has an imperative to responsibly pursue the adoption of generative AI models while identifying proper protective measures and mitigating national security risks that may result from issues such as poorly managed training data," said Dr. Craig Martell, the DoD Chief Digital and Artificial Intelligence Officer. "We must also consider the extent to which our adversaries will employ this technology and seek to disrupt our own use of AI-based solutions."

Leveraging partnerships across the Department, Intelligence Community and other government agencies, the task force will help minimize risk and redundancy while pursuing generative AI initiatives across the Department.

Artificial intelligence has emerged as a transformative technology with the potential to revolutionize various sectors, including defense. By leveraging generative AI models, which can use vast datasets to train algorithms and generate products efficiently, the Department aims to enhance its operations in areas such as warfighting, business affairs, health, readiness, and policy.

"The adoption of artificial intelligence in defense is not solely about innovative technology but also about enhancing national security," said U.S. Navy Capt. M. Xavier Lugo, Task Force Lima mission commander and member of the CDAO's Algorithmic Warfare Directorate. "The DoD recognizes the potential of generative AI to significantly improve

intelligence, operational planning, and administrative and business processes. However, responsible implementation is key to managing associated risks effectively."

The CDAO became operational in June 2022 and is dedicated to integrating and optimizing artificial intelligence capabilities across the DoD. The office is responsible for accelerating the DoD's adoption of data, analytics, and AI, enabling the Department's digital infrastructure and policy adoption to deliver scalable AI-driven solutions for enterprise and joint use cases, safeguarding the nation against current and emerging threats.

For more information about Task Force Lima, please visit the CDAO website at ai.mil. You can also connect with the CDAO on LinkedIn (@ DoD Chief Digital and Artificial Intelligence Office) and Twitter (@dodcdao). Additional updates and news can be found on the CDAO Unit Page on DVIDS.

Department of the Navy Two-Year Review

Release from the Secretary of the Navy

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Department of the Navy Two-Year Review

09 August 2023

Statement from Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro:

Today marks my second anniversary as your Secretary of the Navy, and it continues to be an honor to serve by your side.

In that time, our Navy and Marine Corps team has made much progress advancing our three enduring priorities: Strengthening Maritime Dominance, Building a Culture of Warfighting Excellence, and Enhancing Strategic Partnerships. Together, we are improving readiness and modernization in order to ensure we can always fulfill our mission to be combat-ready; our future depends on the work we do today to create a more ready, modern, and capable Navy and Marine Corps team.

Visiting you at naval bases, shipyards, depots, training ranges, tarmacs, and runways world-wide, I have witnessed firsthand the progress you have made towards improving the training, readiness, and modernization of our fleet and force. Along with your senior leaders throughout the Department, I strive to ensure you have the resources you need today and well into the future. Thanks to your collective efforts, we have worked effectively with Congress via the President's Budget Requests for Fiscal Years (FY) 2022-24 to increase the Department of the Navy's top line budget by more than $47 billion, a 23% increase from FY 2021. There is still much work to be done, and this increased investment in our fleet and force by the American people is a sacred trust that reflects the centrality of the Navy and Marine Corps to our national security strategy in this era of competition.

Read the full memo HERE.

Machinist Pipeline Program Creates Good-Paying Career

Pathways

Release from SENEDIA

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Five Graduate from Pilot Partnership Between SENEDIA and Nashua Community College

MIDDLETOWN, RI – The New England Submarine Shipbuilding Partnership, powered by SENEDIA, announced today the completion of a pilot Machinist Pipeline Program run in partnership with Nashua Community College. Five New Hampshire residents graduated from the program and were offered jobs with area companies.

Granite State Manufacturing in Nashua and Manchester, Mercury Systems in Hudson, Spraying Systems in Merrimack, and Sweeney Metals in Nashua each made offers to the newly trained graduates.

“Congratulations to the five New Hampshire graduates of the pilot Machinist Pipeline Program. This program will strengthen our state’s role in the defense shipbuilding sector, and I’m excited to see the future opportunities it will create for our communities,” said Senator Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), a senior member of the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee. “I want to thank SENEDIA and the hardworking team at Nashua Community College for developing this talent pipeline and creating world-class opportunities for New Hampshire families. I look forward to seeing the expansion of these critical training programs and will continue to fight for the defense workforce funding needed to grow talent right here in New Hampshire.”

“The Defense Cluster represents $12.5 billion in annual economic output in New Hampshire, and more than $119 billion across the New England region. To sustain the strength of the industry and further grow businesses locally and regionally,

we need a robust talent pipeline to meet the needs of tomorrow," said Molly Donohue Magee, SENEDIA executive director. "Programs like this are a win-win, for the participants pursuing new career pathways and for the businesses in need of a skilled workforce."

The Machinist Pipeline Program is a 10-week, hands-on training program to prepare participants for entry-level CNC and machinist positions. They received stipends and other financial support during the training thanks to MY TURN, an organization funded through New Hampshire Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funding that serves economically, socially, and educationally disadvantaged communities and connects them with workforce recruitment, education, preparation, and placement services.

A typical training day would begin with lectures and coursework at Nashua Community College, followed by shop floor training using CNC machines and related software.

"The men and women who serve within the defense industrial base are the future of our nation and will define where we go in the next decade, generation, and century," said Rear Admiral Scott Pappano, program executive officer, Strategic Submarines on the importance of building America's submarine fleet in an environment of increasing global threat. "The most important thing we need right now is to re-establish and continue to grow manufacturing; I'm glad we are making that a priority through talent pipeline programs."

The five graduates from this initial pilot cohort developed meaningful skills and technical competencies to begin rewarding and good-paying careers, as well as soft skills and professional connections to serve them throughout their careers.

Jose Arana was one of the five program graduates. He has accepted a position as machinist trainee at Spraying Systems

Co. in Merrimack, NH.

“I was looking for a stable and good-paying career with a company doing meaningful work, and I’ve found that thanks to the Machinist Pipeline Program,” said Arana. “I’m grateful for the opportunity and I encourage anyone joining the workforce or considering a change to learn more about training and support available to start your career in defense.”

Ronny Soria, another graduate of the program indicated, “I was bouncing from job to job. No path or career in sight. I heard about a ten-week program in manufacturing and signed up. This is the best decision I have made. I learned a valued skill in machining. I also learned soft skills such as time management, how to interview and what makes a good employee. I feel I am very well prepared to start my manufacturing career.”

Soria has accepted an offer with Sweeney Metals in Nashua, NH.

The next cohort of the Machinist Pipeline Program is slated to begin in October.

“We care deeply about the success of our students at NCC, so we jump at every available opportunity to partner with industry leaders and companies looking to hire. After 10 weeks of rigorous training and education, aligned to the needs of employers, we now have five lifelong learners who are starting exciting new careers,” said Mark Dodge, the Precision Manufacturing professor at Nashua Community College. “With the support of our dedicated faculty, this pilot shows what is possible when we collaborate and innovate across academia and industry, and we’re eager to welcome the next cohort of students to our campus.”

“This program is excellent for not only the students but industry partners as well. We are taking people off the street and giving them a start to a career in manufacturing. They are walking away with the basic knowledge they need and numerous

job opportunities. It is amazing to watch a student when the light goes on and he grasps the concept of the work. The staff and especially the Manufacturing staff got behind this program 110 percent and it shows in the five graduates," said Jon Mason, the director of workforce development at Nashua Community College.

To learn more about SENEDIA and its submarine shipbuilding workforce development programming, visit Submarine.SENEDIA.org

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TEXTRON SYSTEMS AWARDED UNCREWED AIRCRAFT SYSTEM (UAS) CONTRACTOR-OWNED/CONTRACTOR-OPERATED CONTRACT FOR THREE LITTORAL COMBAT SHIPS (LCS) BY U.S. NAVY

Release from Textron Systems

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August 9, 2023

AEROSONDE®AIR

AEROSONDE® UNCREWED AIRCRAFT SYSTEM (UAS) SUPPORTING SEVENTH U.S. NAVY SHIP WITH EXTENDED RANGE ISR SERVICES

Hunt Valley, Maryland, AUGUST 9, 2023 – Textron Systems Corporation, a Textron Inc. (NYSE:TXT) company, announced today that it has been awarded an initial contract valued at up to $19.5 million by the U.S. Navy's Naval Air Systems Command (NAVAIR) to provide UAS operational support to two Independence Class LCS and one Freedom Class LCS variants. This award joins the Expeditionary Sea Base (ESB)-4 and ESB-5, as well as two DDG- class ships, bringing the total number of U.S. Navy ships supported by the Aerosonde® UAS system to seven.

Textron Systems will deploy its Aerosonde UAS to provide mission overwatch and extended intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) services with enhanced mission payloads as seen aboard the ESB-5.

"Contractor-owned/contractor-operated contracts like this support the Navy's continued investments in uncrewed assets for their ships," said Wayne Prender, Senior Vice President, Air Systems. "We've seen the benefits of our Aerosonde UAS for DDG and ESB- class ships already, and we're honored to be expanding into this new ship class, allowing us to continue supporting maritime domain awareness and missions while delivering operational and logistical capabilities."

The Aerosonde system continues to set the standard for mission readiness and ease of use, amassing more than 600,000 flight hours serving multiple U.S. customers and allies. It is designed for expeditionary land- and sea-based operations with both fixed-wing and vertical takeoff and landing (VTOL) options. Textron Systems has provided turnkey, UAS operations for customers around the world for more than 10 years.

USS Porter, USNS William Mclean Perform Vertical Launch System Re-Arm Demonstration

NORFOLK, Va. (August 3, 2023)–Sailors assigned to the Arleigh Burke-class destroyer USS Porter (DDG 78) and Navy Expeditionary Logistics Support Group's Expeditionary Reload Team stow simulated ordnance in the ship's MK 71 Vertical Launch System (VLS) during a VLS re-arm demonstration held pier-side on Naval Station Norfolk, Aug. 3. The VLS demonstration was part of U.S. Fleet Forces Command's Large Scale Exercise 2023 which provides a venue to test and refine current and new technologies and platforms to reinforce our current position as a supreme maritime force and provide feedback used to inform future innovation. (U.S. Navy photo by Bill Mesta)

Release from U.S. Fleet Forces Command

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NORFOLK, Va. – The crews of the Arleigh Burke-class destroyer USS Porter (DDG 78) and Military Sealift Command’s (MSC) dry cargo ammunition ship USNS William McLean (T-AKE 12) performed a MK 41 Vertical Launch System (VLS) re-arm, pier-side, at Naval Station Norfolk, Aug. 3.

The Navy conducted the demonstration to provide proof of concept that a dry cargo ammunition ship can reload the weapons system pier-side and while the ship is at sea, with a goal of expanding the capability of VLS reloading in expeditionary environments.

“The Navy has been considering alternative vessels to move ordnance into a theater without an on-shore infrastructure to support,” according to Jerit Vanauker, of MSC’s Taluga Group. “One of the situations considered was the ability to re-arm VLS for Navy combatant ships in a contested environment, and so we considered the idea to use an MSC dry cargo ammunition ship.”

In addition to the crews of Porter and William McLean, U.S. 2nd Fleet, Navy Expeditionary Combat Command’s (NECC) Navy Expeditionary Logistics Support Group (NAVELSG), the Carderock Division of the Naval Surface Warfare Center (NSWC) and NSWC Picatinny supported the VLS re-arming. NECC’s expeditionary reload team from NAVELSG are expertly trained in ordnance transfer and handling and can operate in remote, complex, and austere environments to ensure naval forces remain forward and mobile.

“MSC’s role in developing and executing VLS is vital,” Vanauker stated. “We will bring the ordnance, and platform to deliver ordnance, in support of VLS re-arming of our combatant ships, so they can get back in the fight without traveling long distances to be resupplied.”

During the demonstration, Porter pulled into the naval station

and moored ‘skin-to-skin’ along-side William McLean, which was moored to the pier. The ships’ crews installed marine bumpers between the vessels to prevent damage to the ships during the VLS re-arm.

Once the ships were safely moored, the VLS team aboard William McLean prepared two simulated ordnance packages for delivery.

“The VLS handling team prepared and reviewed the necessary procedures, ordnance handling equipment (OHE) and tools to conduct the VLS re-arm,” said Vanauker. “All procedures were reviewed, OHE and tools were inspected and a safety brief was conducted.”

“Once inspection was complete, the canister was loaded into the tilt-fixture and vertical strong-back, secured and then attached to the crane hook,” he continued. “The tilt-fixture and vertical strong-back allows the canister to be tilted into a vertical position with assistance from the ship’s crane.”

Using the Mclean’s crane, two simulated missiles were lifted from the ship’s flight deck and swung over to Porter’s forward weapons cells. Porter’s VLS team received the simulated ordnance and stowed the missiles aboard in the ship’s MK 41 Vertical Launch System.

“The crane operator, with assistance from the Signalman, swung the simulated ordnance over to Porter, placing it over the open module cell hatch, and lowered into alignment with the available cell,” Vanauker continued. “In all, performing a VLS re-arm is a very simple evolution which requires patience and focus.”

The crane for the VLS re-arm demonstration was operated by Boatswain’s Mate Justin Bradley, one of William McLean’s Civil Service Mariners (CIVMARs).

“This was the first VLS re-arm to take place aboard William McLean,” according to Capt. John Stulz, USNS William McLean’s Master. “Our CIVMARs secured the USS Porter alongside, operated the crane and provided support on deck for this evolution. Cargo and ordnance operations are a part of daily life for MSC ships.”

“The crew of the William McLean performed with precision and professionalism during this movement, just like our counterparts do every day around the globe,” Stulz added.

The VLS re-arm demonstration was conducted as part of U.S. Fleet Forces’ Large Scale Exercise 2023 (LSE).

“Expeditionary logistics allow the Navy to quickly return to maintaining maritime dominance,” said Rear Adm. Brad Andros, Commander, Navy Expeditionary Combat Command. “Operating in support of Military Sealift Command during Large Scale Exercise 2023 provides our expeditionary reload teams the opportunity to train to different platforms so that they can continue to sustain capacity and increase the persistent combat power of naval forces.”

LSE 2023 provided a venue to test and refine current and new technologies and platforms to reinforce our current position as a supreme maritime force and provide feedback used to inform future innovation. LSE 2023 includes six Navy and Marine Corps component commands and seven U.S. numbered Fleets, including U.S. Fleet Cyber Command/U.S. 10th Fleet, operating seamlessly across 22 time zones.

Keel Authenticated for Future USNS Lucy Stone

Release from Naval Sea Systems Command

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SAN DIEGO – The keel for the future USNS Lucy Stone (T-AO 209), the Navy's 5th John Lewis-class fleet replenishment oiler, was laid at General Dynamics National Steel and Shipbuilding Company's (GD NASSCO) shipyard in San Diego, August 8.

A keel laying is the recognition of the start of a ship's construction. It is the union of a ship's modular components and the authentication or etching of an honoree's initials into a ceremonial keel plate. In recognition of their steadfast spirit and patriotic devotion over the past two decades to unite approximately 100 ships with ship sponsors,

ship introduction specialists and ship sponsors Alicia Aadnesen and Debbie Simmons etched their initials into the keel plate of the future USNS Lucy Stone.

The ship is named for American suffragist Lucy Stone, who joined other notable advocates such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Ernestine Rose, and Antoinette Brown Blackwell to petition for suffrage and abolition in the 19th century. Her efforts as a founder of the Women's National Loyal League were essential to the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment abolishing slavery.

"The future Lucy Stone's keel laying is a significant milestone, and we are excited to mark the beginning of great achievements to come for this ship," said John Lighthammer, program manager, Auxiliary and Special Mission Shipbuilding Program Office. "The fifth John Lewis-class oiler will enhance the fleet's ability to refuel ships at sea."

The oilers feature substantial volume for oil, a significant dry cargo capacity and aviation capability. The vessels have double hulls to protect against oil spills and strengthened cargo and ballast tanks. T-AOs will add capacity to the Navy's Combat Logistics Force and become the cornerstone of the fuel delivery system.

GD NASSCO is also in production on future T-AOs, USNS Earl Warren (T-AO 207), USNS Robert F. Kennedy (T-AO 208) and USNS Sojourner Truth (T-AO 210). They are also under contract on future USNS Thurgood Marshall (T-AO 211), USNS Ruth Bader Ginsburg (T-AO 212) and T-AO 213.

As one of the Defense Department's largest acquisition organizations, PEO Ships is responsible for executing the development and procurement of all destroyers, amphibious ships, special mission and support ships, and boats and craft.