

SEAGUARDIAN® USED BY USN IN SUPPORT OF INTEGRATED BATTLE PROBLEM



Series of ASW and MUM-T Exercises Showcase Advantages of UAS

[Release from General Atomics](#)

SAN DIEGO – 18 May 2023 – In support of the U.S. Navy's (USN) Integrated Battle Problem 2023 (IBP-23) exercise in May, General Atomics Aeronautical Systems, Inc. (GA-ASI) conducted a series of Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) exercises cooperatively with the USN Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadrons (HSM) 38, 49, 71, and 75. GA-ASI flew a company-owned MQ-9B SeaGuardian® Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) under a USN Flight Clearance. The HSM squadrons flew the MH-60R Seahawk helicopter flown out of Naval Air Station North Island off the coast of San Diego, Calif., on April 24-25, 2023.

The exercise was focused on Manned-Unmanned Teaming (MUM-T) to

conduct Cooperative ASW in the Southern California Offshore ASW range. During the two-day event, MH-60s dropped sonobuoys to detect a mobile training target. Using the combined SeaGuardian and MH-60R teaming concept, correlation and location of the target was expeditiously achieved and tactical reports – known as TACREPs – were then transmitted to Commander, Task Force (CTF) 34 Theater ASW Center at Naval Station Pearl Harbor via the MQ-9B crew. The CTF then directed a coordinated constructive “kill” of the simulated submarine with notional torpedoes dropped from the MH-60s. The ASW payload on the SeaGuardian uses the latest version of General Dynamics Mission Systems’ Sonobuoy Processor.

“These advanced tactics, techniques, and procedures utilizing MUM-T further reinforce the advantages to unmanned aircraft in combat with less risk to force,” said GA-ASI Vice President of DoD Strategic Development Patrick Shortsleeve.

The IBP-23 exercise is the third time GA-ASI’s MQ-9B SeaGuardian has supported this annual event. These exercises generate warfighting advantages for the Fleet by providing the operational environment to work through tactics, techniques, procedures, and command and control to refine and enhance warfighting. The Fleet IBP series is led by Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet and executed by Commander, U.S. 3rd Fleet and will continue throughout May 2023.

**HII’s Newport News
Shipbuilding Welcomes High**

School Seniors to Shipbuilding Careers



[Release from HII](#)

NEWPORT NEWS, Va., May 17, 2023 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) – HII’s (NYSE: HII) Newport News Shipbuilding division recently signed more than two dozen graduating high school seniors for careers in shipbuilding at the New Horizons Regional Education Centers (NHREC) Good Life Solution Program’s Career Selection Day, at a time the shipyard is executing on orders for mission-critical aircraft carriers and submarines in service of the U.S. Navy and the nation.

A total of 32 students accepted employment offers from NNS: 20 who will begin full-time trade positions within the shipyard and 12 who will attend The Newport News Shipbuilding Apprentice School. Funded by HII to train and develop the next generation of shipbuilders, The Apprentice School offers four-to eight-year, tuition-free apprenticeships in 19 trades and

eight optional advanced programs, to include accredited undergraduate degrees in engineering.

The Good Life Solution Program is a collection of partnerships between NHREC and local employers looking to improve the way they recruit, hire, train and retain entry-level new hires out of high school. The program has a one-year retention rate of 80%.

Photos accompanying this release are available at: <https://hii.com/news/hii-newport-news-shipbuilding-shipbuilding-careers-nhrec-2023/>.

“Each year, this program grows and is a clear demonstration that there is more than one path to success,” said Xavier Beale, NNS vice president of human resources and trades, who attended the event. “I’m honored to welcome these students into our shipbuilding family as they embark upon a remarkable journey. They will continue to develop their talents and grow their careers with us – all while serving our nation and building freedom.”

NNS plans to hire approximately 2,500 skilled trade positions this year to meet the shipbuilding needs of the Navy. The shipyard anticipates hiring nearly 19,000 people within the next decade as it fulfills orders for the U.S. Navy.

To learn more about the Good Life Solution Program, visit nhrec.org/gls.

QinetiQ to again partner with

US Navy and NATO to deliver Formidable Shield 2023



[Release from QinetiQ](#)

16/05/2023

QinetiQ, is once more assisting in the delivery of Exercise Formidable Shield (FS). Led by the U.S. Sixth Fleet with Naval Striking and Support Forces NATO (STRIKFORNATO) delivery, FS is a live-fire combined integrated air and missile defence exercise taking place at MOD Hebrides in Scotland, and Andoya in Norway. The mission rehearsal exercise will feature the armed forces of 13 NATO allies and partners and includes full multi-domain integration across the participating nations and multiple battlespaces.

Starting in 2015, the At Sea Demonstration/Formidable Shield training exercises have significantly enhanced the ability of NATO forces and international allies to defend against future threats. Formidable Shield 2023 will build on previous events, offering increased complexity in live weapons scenarios to assist forces to train as they fight.

The exercise will feature a significant increase in multi-nation participation, with more than 20 ships and 35 aircraft and nearly 4000 Allied military personnel from 13 nations taking part in live weapons and defence rehearsal scenarios.

The first portion of the exercise was on Andoya in Norway, the focus now moves to MOD Hebrides, which will play host to the majority of the three week event. Managed by QinetiQ as part of the Long Term Partnering Agreement (LTPA) agreement with the Ministry of Defence, MOD Hebrides provides ample space for the allies to test and evaluate their capabilities in a real-world setting. FS23 will occupy 115,000km² of sanitised airspace with unlimited altitude. To further support this endeavour, QinetiQ will be launching a number of targets developed by QinetiQ Target Systems, including the Banshee Jet80+. These and other targets will offer participants the opportunity to run integrated air and missile defence scenarios with ballistic missiles, supersonic sea skimming missiles and aggressor jets.

QinetiQ's test and evaluation expertise will support the safe delivery of the Formidable Shield exercise, allowing the participants to gain quality insights from this highly complex event. QinetiQ will be supporting fundamental test and evaluation on radar systems, communications systems and allowing assurance of tactics across NATO led operations.

Jim Graham, Managing Director, Air, at QinetiQ commented: *"MOD Hebrides is one of our key air ranges and a perfect location to facilitate this crucial U.S. Navy Sixth Fleet and STRIKFORNATO led mission rehearsal event. QinetiQ's Trials, Test, Training & Evaluation work has proved crucial in the delivery of several important training and analysis exercises for allied forces, improving national security. We are also proud to provide logistical and safety planning support for Formidable Shield 2023 and believe it will deliver a wealth of valuable insights for all NATO allies in attendance.*

We believe Formidable Shield 2023 represents another opportunity to demonstrate the effectiveness of collaboration between allied naval and air forces against emerging threats. We are looking forward to supporting allied forces in testing the capability of both missile attacks, anti-missile defence systems and implementing the insights gained to strengthen NATO defence.”

Naval Aviation Holds 2nd Annual Safety Summit



Vice Adm. Kenneth Whitesell, Commander, Naval Air Forces, gives remarks during the flag panel of the second annual Naval Aviation Safety Summit alongside (from left) Rear Adm. John Meier, Commander, Naval Air Force Atlantic; Rear Adm. Rich Brophy, Chief of Naval Air Training; and Rear Adm. Christopher Engdahl, commander, Naval Safety Command; in San Diego, May 9,

2023. More than 500 attendees involved in safety, maintenance, and aircraft handling across Naval Aviation gathered to build upon lessons learned to enhance the culture of safety and discuss the current state of the safety environment within the Navy and Marine Corps. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Aron Montano)

[Release from the By Naval Aviation Enterprise Communications Team](#)

SAN DIEGO – Commander, Naval Air Forces (CNAF) hosted the second annual Naval Aviation Safety Summit in San Diego, California, May 8-9. The event brought together safety experts, leadership and supervisory Sailors to discuss safety process improvements to protect the U.S. warfighting advantage—namely, people and platforms.

More than 600 attendees involved in safety, maintenance, and aircraft handling across Naval Aviation built upon lessons learned over the past year to enhance the culture of safety throughout the Naval Aviation Enterprise (NAE). Vice Adm. Kenneth Whitesell, CNAF, and often referred to as the Navy’s “Air Boss,” kicked off the Summit by discussing the current state of the safety environment within the Navy and Marine Corps, inviting the audience to learn from the speakers to “get better” on safety. He added that the Safety Summit was critical to achieving a collective warfighting advantage.

According to Whitesell, the purpose of the Safety Summit was to explore safety-related concepts and ideas currently working for other communities and turn those results into outcomes for Naval Aviation to reduce the damage to platforms and to protect Sailors and Marines.

Whitesell reflected on maintaining the operational capability of the “Air Wing of the Future.” He also stressed the

importance of gathering leaders, experts and “the flight line” together to discuss what is working, what is not and how initiatives are implemented to strengthen Naval Aviation today and in the future.

“The kids that are joining the Navy now are the same ones that will be the lieutenant commanders, the captains and the next Air Bosses, and they are going to be the next petty officers and chief petty officers who will lead the Navy over the next five, ten and even fifteen years, as they work their way through their careers,” said Whitesell. “This is a critical moment for us to understand our business, to understand where we are from a safety perspective, and where we can combine the safety and the operational sides of the house.”

Safety-related experiences and perspectives were also shared from the U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Army, U.S. Air Force, U.S. Coast Guard and FedEx commercial aviation.

On the summit’s last day, a flag panel question-and-answer session was held with Whitesell; Rear Adm. John Meier, Commander, Naval Air Force Atlantic; Rear Adm. Christopher Engdahl, commander, Naval Safety Command; and Rear Adm. Rich Brophy, Chief of Naval Air Training (CNATRA).

“As conditions change, it is incumbent on us to change the controls,” explained Meier. “Those conditions may be the experience of the workforce; it may be the workforce’s capacity; it may be the weather, the non-skid, you name it. My focus is on the controls. We measure success not by the absence of a mishap but by the presence of the controls.”

Guest lecturer and author Dr. Tim Ludwig addressed dysfunctional practices that degrade work culture and what to do about them. Ludwig has over 30 years of experience in research and practice in organizational behavior management. In that role, he has helped assess, design, and implement

behavioral safety and quality improvement programs for more than 50 companies worldwide as well as worked with Naval Sea Systems Command and Naval Information Warfare Systems Command. He also discussed how to develop systems to optimize employee performance by building upon the best safety behaviors and analyzing the behavior context.

Dr. Steven Spear, the author of the book *High-Velocity Edge*, discussed how to execute high-performance evolutions safely during high-risk operations. Troy Mueller, Director Nuclear Technology Division, Naval Reactors, who spoke at the first Safety Summit last year in Norfolk, Virginia, returned to share safety improvement approaches for the NAE to consider and adopt.

Other Naval Aviation experts provided presentations on topics including the year in review, command resiliency programs, and recently initiated safety programs across Naval Aviation. One of those programs involves CNATRA's overall progress with Bird/Animal Aircraft Strike Hazard commonly called BASH—efforts implemented across all training locations to keep student aviators and instructors safe as they train.

The Naval Aviation Enterprise is a collaborative warfighting partnership where Naval Aviation leaders leverage their assigned authorities to deliberate and resolve interdependent issues across the whole of Naval Aviation to provide combat ready naval air forces to the fleet.

Flag Officer Announcement



[Release from the U.S. Department of Defense](#)

MAY 16, 2023

Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III announced today that the president has made the following nomination:

Navy Vice Adm. Jeffrey W. Hughes for reappointment to the grade of vice admiral, with assignment as deputy chief of staff for Capability Development, Supreme Allied Command Transformation, Norfolk, Virginia. Hughes is currently serving as deputy chief of naval operations for Warfighting Development, N7, Chief of Naval Operations, Washington, D.C.

VSR700 tested at sea in full operational configuration



[Release from Airbus](#)

Marignane, 15 May 2023 – Airbus Helicopters and the French Armament General Directorate (DGA) tested the unmanned aerial system (UAS) VSR700 for the first time in an operational configuration from a ship at sea. At the beginning of May, the VSR700 performed 80 fully autonomous take-offs and landings from a civil vessel equipped with a helicopter deck, cruising off the coast of Brittany in the west of France.

“This flight test campaign was an important step for the

VSR700 programme as it allowed us to validate the excellent performance of the drone in operational conditions, which were representative of its future missions,” said Nicolas Delmas, Head of VSR700 programme at Airbus Helicopters. “The VSR700 prototype opened its flight envelope in winds above 40 knots, accumulated eight hours of testing in 14 flights, and made successful landings in several different sea states,” he added.

In 2022, the autonomous take-off and landing capabilities of the VSR700 were tested from the same vessel using an optionally piloted vehicle (OPV) based on a modified Guimbal Cabri G2 equipped with the autonomous take-off and landing (ATOL) system developed for the VSR700. This time the test campaign took place with the SDAM demonstrator and fully validated the capabilities of the system as part of the SDAM (Système de Drone Aérien pour la Marine) study that was awarded to Airbus Helicopters and Naval Group in 2017.

Autonomous take-off and landing capabilities are a key asset of the VSR700 and are made possible with the use of the Airbus DeckFinder system. This enables autonomous launch and recovery of unmanned air vehicles (UAVs) with an accuracy of 10-20cm during challenging operations in harsh environmental conditions, independently of GNSS/GPS and regardless of degraded visual conditions.

This new test campaign follows two series of trials that were conducted with the DGA in late 2022 and early 2023 from the Levant Island test center located in the south of France. During these trials, the SDAM prototype demonstrated its ability to operate in a maritime environment. The handling qualities of the aircraft were tested as well as the capabilities of the sensors (a maritime surveillance radar, an electro optical sensor, and an AIS receiver) alongside the mission system developed by Naval Group.

The next development steps will see the second VSR700 prototype perform its maiden flight ahead of flight testing onboard a French Navy FREMM during the second semester of this year.

AUSTAL USA DELIVERS THE FUTURE USS AUGUSTA (LCS 34) TO THE U.S. NAVY



[Release from Austal USA](#)

Mobile, Ala. – Austal USA delivered the future USS Augusta (LCS 34) to the U.S. Navy May 12. LCS 34 is the 17th

Independence-variant Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) delivered by the company and the second U.S. Navy vessel to be named Augusta in honor of Maine's state capital.

Delivery documents were signed on board the ship and followed the successful completion of acceptance trials during which the ship's major systems and equipment were tested to demonstrate mission readiness. The ship's pre-commissioning unit will now prepare the ship for fleet introduction.

"The delivery of the future USS Augusta is the result of a successful joint effort between Austal USA shipbuilders, our Navy teammates and suppliers from across the nation to produce a warship that will serve our country for years to come," remarked Rusty Murdaugh, president of Austal USA. "I am proud to maintain our commitment to the warfighter and our nation's defense."

LCS ships are designed to support forward presence, maritime security, sea control and deterrence missions. Several Austal USA built Independence-variant LCS have recently deployed to the western Pacific. The USS Mobile (LCS 26) got under way in March with an embarked USCG law enforcement team on the first deployment of the new Oceania Maritime Security Initiative with the objective of reducing illegal fishing, combating transnational crime, and enhancing regional security in the islands of the Western Pacific.

Austal USA is constructing the Navy's final two Independence-variant LCS including the recently christened future USS Kingsville (LCS 36) and the future USS Pierre (LCS 38).

USS Lenah Sutcliffe Higbee Commissions in Conch Republic Honoring Navy Nurses



Photo By [Petty Officer 2nd Class Nicholas Huynh](#) | 230513-N-IW125-1382 KEY WEST, Fla. KEY WEST (May 13, 2023) – The crew of the Navy's newest Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer, USS Lenah Sutcliffe Higbee (DDG 123) brings the ship to life during its commissioning ceremony in Key West, Florida. DDG 123 is the second U.S. Navy warship to honor Lenah Sutcliffe Higbee. Higbee was the first living woman to receive the Navy Cross for her leadership of the Navy Nurse Corps during World War I. Naval Air Station Key West is the state-of-the-art facility for combat fighter aircraft of all military services, provides world-class pierside support to U.S. and foreign naval vessels, and is the premier training center for surface and subsurface military operations. (U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Nicholas V. Huynh/Released) [see less](#) | [View Image Page](#)

[Release from Commander, Naval Surface Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet Public Affairs](#)

KEY WEST, FL – The U.S. Navy commissioned its newest Arleigh Burke-class destroyer USS Lenah Sutcliffe Higbee (DDG 123), May 13 in Key West, Florida.

Guest speaker Rear Adm. Cynthia Kuehner, Commander, Naval Medical Forces Support Command and Director of the U.S. Navy Nurse Corps wished the Corps happy 115th birthday and reflected on its being one of the “greatest enhancements to the fighting strength of our Navy over the past 247 years of its rich history” and celebrating the legacy of Lenah Sutcliffe Higbee.

“I and the nearly 4,000 active and reserve professionals represent will forever feel connected to this moment in history and words cannot fully express our gratitude for our presence and representation,” said Kuehner. “In honoring her selfless service we ensure that the permanence of her spirit is breathed into every space and crevice of this magnificent vessel as she comes to life.”

“The story of Lenah Higbee is the story of past, present and future Navy nurses and the undeniable, inseparable role of the Navy nurse in defense of our nation,” she continued.

“Our Navy, and in particular, our surface fleet, sends a strong signal that we remain committed to our values. Values that we share with our allies and partners around the world,” said Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro. “We will continue to put forth every effort to ensure freedom, stability, security, of sea lanes around the world. Today with the commissioning of the USS Higbee we add one more highly visible extremely capable warship to our Fleet.”

"It is fitting we commission this ship this week, which is National Nurses week, and particularly this day, the 13th of May. On this day our Navy Nurse Corps was established creating the institution that is the lifeblood of Navy Medicine," said Admiral Mike Gilday, Chief of Naval Operations. "Somebody once said, save a life and you're a hero. Save a hundred lives, you're a nurse."

Guest speakers for the event also included the Honorable Donald Norcross, U.S. Representative, New Jersey's 1st District and member of the House Armed Services Committee; the Honorable Teri Johnston, mayor of Key West; and Ms. Kari Wilkinson, president of Huntington Ingalls Industries-Ingalls Shipbuilding division.

The ship's sponsors are Ms. Louisa O. Dixon, former Commissioner of Public Safety for the State of Mississippi under former Governor Ray Mabus; Ms. Virginia Thompson Munford, former Chair of Mississippi Bar Committees; and Ms. Rolanda Pickett Wilson, former Special Advisor for Education and Intergovernmental Relations under former Governor Ray Mabus.

During the ceremony, USS Lenah Sutcliffe Higbee's commanding officer Cmdr. Douglas Brayton, reported the ship ready to Capt. Courtney M. Minetree, commodore, Destroyer Squadron 21, and all three sponsors gave the traditional order to "Man our ship and bring her to life!"

"If there's anything I want us all to take away from the commissioning of this ship is that we all have the ability to make a difference and make an impact. Whether you are the first group of 20 female nurses in the Navy, a new Sailor to the service, or someone just wanting to see what a ship commissioning is," said Brayton. "We all have the ability and choice to make a difference."

The future USS Lenah Sutcliffe Higbee, honors Navy Nurse Lenah Sutcliffe Higbee. Lenah Sutcliffe Higbee was the first woman to receive the Navy Cross while still living. Higbee joined the Navy in October 1908 as part of "The Sacred Twenty," the first group of women forming the Navy Nurse Corps. She became the second superintendent of the Navy Nurse Corps in January 1911, holding the position for 11 years. Higbee served in the Navy for 14 years, leading the Nurse Corps through World War I and the 1918 influenza pandemic.

Lenah Sutcliffe Higbee's example is part of the Navy's heritage – 247 years of standing the watch to protect the homeland, preserve freedom of the seas, and defend our way of life.

A Canadian by birth, Higbee completed her formal nursing training at the New York Postgraduate Hospital in 1899 and that same year married retired U.S. Marine Corps Lieutenant Colonel John Henley Higbee. Higbee worked in private practice following her marriage. Higbee's husband passed in April 1908 and she advanced her nursing career by completing a postgraduate course at Fordham Hospital in New York City.

On May 13, 1908, Congress passed legislation allowing for the establishment of Navy Nurse Corps – the equivalent of the Army Nurse Corps established in 1901. The Navy required members of its Nurse Corps to be unmarried and between the age of 22 and 44. The 36-year-old and widowed Higbee joined 19 other females to make up this first group of female Navy Nurses known as the "Sacred Twenty."

Higbee became Chief Nurse at Norfolk Naval Hospital in 1909 and the second Superintendent of the Corps in 1911. Higbee led the Nurse Corps through not only World War I, but the Spanish Influenza epidemic. Higbee was one of four Navy Nurses to be awarded the Navy Cross in 1920, however, the other three were victims of the flu and honored posthumously. Higbee retired

from the Navy in 1922.

Arleigh Burke-class destroyers are the backbone of the U.S. Navy's surface fleet. These highly capable, multi-mission ships conduct a variety of operations, from peacetime presence to national security providing a wide range of warfighting capabilities in multi-threat air, surface and subsurface.

UK Frigate Patrolling for CTF 150 Seizes \$6 Million Drug Shipment



230312-N-NH267-1539 GULF OF OMAN (March 12, 2023) Royal Navy

frigate HMS Lancaster (FFG 229), sails in the Gulf of Oman, March 12, 2023, during International Maritime Exercise/Cutlass Express 2023. IMX/CE 2023 is the largest multinational training event in the Middle East, involving 7,000 personnel from more than 50 nations and international organizations committed to preserving the rules-based international order and strengthening regional maritime security cooperation. **(Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Elliot Schaudt)**

[Release from Combined Maritime Forces Public Affairs | May 15, 2023](#)

MANAMA, Bahrain – A frigate from the United Kingdom Royal Navy seized \$6 million worth of hashish from a fishing vessel transiting the Arabian Sea, May 8.

HMS Lancaster (F 229) was operating in support of Combined Task Force (CTF) 150 when it discovered 3,000 kilograms of hashish on the smuggling vessel. The seizure occurred the same day the U.S. Coast Guard confiscated large quantities of methamphetamines and heroin from another fishing vessel while patrolling the Gulf of Oman under CTF 150.

“I am exceptionally proud of my team for their efforts,” said Cmdr. Tom Johnson, Lancaster’s commanding officer. “This success is shared with our international partners in CTF 150 who provided essential support to the operation.”

Currently led by the United Kingdom, CTF 150 is one of four task forces that form Combined Maritime Forces, the largest multinational naval partnership in the world. Efforts by CTF 150 in the Middle East this year have resulted in drug seizures worth a combined estimated U.S. street value of more than \$250 million.

CTF 150 conducts maritime security and counter-terrorism operations in the Gulf of Oman and Indian Ocean to disrupt criminal and terrorist organizations and their related illicit

activities, including the movement of personnel, weapons, narcotics and charcoal. These efforts help ensure legitimate commercial shipping transits the region free from non-state threats.

Combined Maritime Forces includes 38 nations and is headquartered in Bahrain with U.S. Naval Forces Central Command and U.S. 5th Fleet.

<https://www.cusnc.navy.mil/Media/News/Display/Article/3395014/uk-frigate-patrolling-for-ctf-150-seizes-6-million-drug-shipment/>

SECNAV Names Navy's First-in-Class Expeditionary Medical Ship after National Naval Medical Center Bethesda

[Release from the Secretary of the Navy](#)

Secretary of the Navy (SECNAV) Carlos Del Toro announced USNS Bethesda (EMS 1) as the name for the lead ship in the new Expeditionary Medical Ship (EMS(X)) class of ships during his mental health awareness month video. EMS(X) will now be referred to as the Bethesda Class Expeditionary Medical Ship.

The naming is to honor and immortalize the history and community of healthcare professionals that make up Naval

Support Activity Bethesda, who have saved and rehabilitated the lives of service members, veterans, civilians, their families, and even Presidents of the United States.

“For most in the armed services, the name ‘Bethesda’ is connected to the world-class medical center for healing that has served a countless number of service members since 1942,” Del Toro said. “The real strength of our Navy and Marine Corps are our people, and if they are willing to sacrifice all for service, they deserve the best medical care available. This ship will honor the medical staff, who compassionately dedicate their time and expertise to take care of our service members. Bearing the name Bethesda will continue the legacy of life saving and medical innovation.”

Former Assistant Secretary of the Navy (1913-1920) President Franklin Delano Roosevelt envisioned a Navy Medical Center and in 1937 Congress appropriated funds for construction of a new Naval Medical Center, with ground breaking on the site June 29, 1939, bringing to life what became the National Naval Medical Center (NNMC) and National Institutes of Health to Bethesda. Today, Naval Support Activity Bethesda is home to tenant commands such as Naval Medical Leader and Professional Development Command, Naval Medical Research Center, Navy Medical Support Command, Navy Medicine Readiness and Training Command, and the Navy Dosimetry Center. In 2011, due to the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure decision, Bethesda National Naval Medical Center and Walter Reed Army Medical Center consolidated into the current Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, located on the grounds of the former National Military Medical Center, Bethesda.

Secretary Del Toro has also invited the 63rd Governor of Maryland Wes Moore’s spouse, Dawn Moore to be the ship’s sponsor. Mrs. Moore has ties to the military as a former military spouse and is also an advocate for Marylanders living with a disability.

"This first-in-class ship will be state-of-the-art and the Navy's first medical ship in 35 years," said Del Toro. "This ship, designed with more expeditious and direct access to diagnostic, specialty and hospital care, will allow for increased capabilities and health care. Just as the hospital at NSA Bethesda has served as a beacon of hope to those who entered its doorways, USNS Bethesda (EMS 1) will serve as a beacon to those in need around the world."

The Bethesda-class expeditionary medical ships are designed as a dedicated medical ship that optimizes hospital-level medical care in support of distributed maritime operations (DMO). The EMS will feature a shallow draft enabling greater reach and allowing direct access to shallow austere ports, while also providing a flight deck that accommodates military helicopters. This design provides a full range of medical capabilities including triage/critical care, three operating rooms, medical laboratory, radiological capability, blood bank, dental, mental health, OB/GYN and primary care, rapid stabilization and follow-on evacuation of multiple casualties and combat search and rescue including recovery at sea. The primary mission of the EMS as a high-speed forward deployed medical ship is to provide rapid responsive sea-based and near-shore hospital level critical care, humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, non-combatant evacuation operations and special operations. The EMS is designed to respond and provide care at a more rapid pace than their predecessors, USNS Mercy and USNS Comfort, sailing at speeds of at least 30 knots with a range of 5,500 nautical miles at 24 knots.