

USS Higgins, HMCS Ottawa Conduct Bilateral Operations



USS Higgins (DDG76) and HMCS Ottawa conduct maneuvers in international waters during exercise Noble Wolverine in the South China Sea on 11 January 2025. (Photo by Sailor 3rd Class Jacob Saunders/ Canadian Armed Forces).

From Commander, Task Force 71/Destroyer Squadron 15 Public Affairs, Jan. 15, 2025

USS Higgins (DDG76) and HMCS Ottawa conduct maneuvers in international waters during exercise Noble Wolverine in the South China Sea on 11 January 2025. Photo Credit: Sailor 3rd Class Jacob Saunders, Canadian Armed Forces Photo.

The U.S. Navy (USN) and Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) joined forces to conduct bilateral operations in support of a free and open Indo-Pacific in the South China Sea, Jan. 8-11.

The bilateral operations included the U.S. Navy Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Higgins (DDG 76) and the Royal Canadian Navy Halifax-class frigate HMCS Ottawa (FFH 341).

“Operating alongside our Royal Navy partners shows a unified front,” said Capt. Justin Harts, Commander, Destroyer Squadron 15. “We are committed to strengthening and demonstrating interoperability with our allies.”

During the operations, Higgins and Ottawa conducted maritime communications training and dynamic coordinated maneuvering.

“Exercise Noble Wolverine was, for our team, another successful integration between two highly trained and capable navies. The anti-submarine warfare, communications exercises and flying operations were seamless as usual, and occurred in the international waters of an area of the world where undisrupted movement of maritime trade is critical to the region and greater global community,” said Cmdr. Adriano Lozer, commanding officer of HMCS Ottawa. “This activity served once again to demonstrate how strong historic partners in defence at home and around the world, with enduring relationships that promote international law in a free and open Indo Pacific, can interchangeably play an active role in contributing to peace and security”

The U.S. Navy regularly operates alongside our allies in the Indo-Pacific region as a demonstration of our shared commitment to the rules-based international order. Bilateral operations such as this one provide valuable opportunities to train, exercise and develop tactical interoperability across allied navies in the Indo-Pacific.

DESRON 15 is the Navy’s largest destroyer squadron and the U.S. 7th Fleet’s principal surface force. It is forward deployed to the U.S. 7th Fleet area of operations in support

of security and stability in the Indo-Pacific.

U.S. 7th Fleet is the U.S. Navy's largest forward-deployed numbered fleet, and routinely interacts and operates with allies and partners in preserving a free and open Indo-Pacific region.

SECNAV Del Toro Names Future Aircraft Carriers CVN 82 and CVN 83

From SECNAV Public Affairs, Jan. 13, 2025

WASHINGTON – Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro announced the names of two future Gerald R. Ford-class of aircraft carriers as the future USS William J. Clinton (CVN 82) and the future USS George W. Bush (CVN 83).

The future USS William J. Clinton honors President William J. Clinton, 42nd President of the United States of America, serving two terms from 1993 to 2001. The future USS George W. Bush honors President George W. Bush, 43rd President of the United States of America, serving two terms from 2001 to 2009. This will be the first Navy vessel named for either president.

The names follow the Navy tradition of often naming aircraft carriers after U.S. presidents.

“President Clinton and President Bush led the United States through some of the most challenging moments in U.S. history,” said Secretary Del Toro. “Their legacies will endure through

these aircraft carriers, which serve as formidable platforms dedicated to safeguarding our national security and strengthening our resolve to protect this Nation against any who would threaten our freedoms and way of life.”

As Commander-in-Chief, Clinton was responsible for multiple military operations that achieved success with no combat casualties including Operation Uphold Democracy in 1994, Operation Deliberate Force in 1995, and Operation Allied Force in 1999. In response to a reported Iraqi attempt to assassinate former President H.W. Bush, President Clinton directed a U.S. Navy cruise missile strike against Iraqi intelligence headquarters in 1993, and another cruise missile strike in 1996, Operation Desert Strike, to deter Iraqi aggression. These strikes were followed in 1998 by Operation Desert Fox, an air campaign to degrade Iraqi capability to produce weapons of mass destruction. In 1996, he directed the largest deployment of U.S. naval forces since the Vietnam War in response to the Third Taiwan Straits Crisis to deter Chinese aggression.

Among his numerous diplomatic achievements, President Clinton had a pivotal role in the Oslo Accords, which established a framework for peace between Israel and Palestinians and was also instrumental in the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, which ended conflict in Northern Ireland. He declared Iran a “state sponsor of terrorism” and imposed substantial sanctions on Iran. An integral part of the “Agreed Framework” of 1994, his efforts temporarily halted North Korean attempts to develop nuclear weapons. He established full diplomatic relations with Vietnam and oversaw the first expansion of NATO since 1982, with the addition of Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic, as well as creating the Partnership-for-Peace program with nations of the former Soviet Union.

“It’s never far from my mind that the precious freedoms Americans enjoy are safeguarded by our armed forces, anchored by a strong, modern, and agile Navy. I’m honored that future

servicemembers carrying on that proud tradition will serve on a carrier bearing my name," said President Bill Clinton.

During a private ceremony at the White House on Jan. 3, 2025, along with the ship's name, Secretary Del Toro announced the sponsor for the future USS William J. Clinton (CVN 82) will be Ms. Chelsea Clinton, daughter of President Clinton. She will represent a lifelong relationship with the ship and crew.

As Commander-in-Chief, President Bush rallied the nation in the immediate aftermath of the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001. He forged an international coalition of 25 NATO members and 17 partner nations to execute Operation Enduring Freedom, dismantling terrorist networks in Afghanistan. He spearheaded the largest U.S. government reorganization since 1947, creating the Department of Homeland Security by combining 22 federal agencies and establishing the Office of the Director of National Intelligence to integrate operations across 18 intelligence agencies. He also signed the USA Patriot Act, updated the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, and directed deployment of aggressive financial measures to freeze terrorists' assets.

In 2003, he directed Operation Iraqi Freedom, which ended the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein and enabled Iraq's first direct elections in over three decades. On the global stage, President Bush supported a further expansion of NATO into Eastern Europe and the Baltic States, while working with Russia to reduce nuclear weapons stockpiles. Recognizing the evolving nature of global threats, he directed the establishment of the U.S. Africa Command and advanced the planning for U.S. Cyber Command. He also launched the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), a historic humanitarian initiative that saved millions of lives. Throughout his tenure, President Bush increased defense spending by more than a third to modernize the military and accelerate technological advancements, ensuring the United States Armed Forces remained the most capable in the world.

“I am honored that my name will be associated with the United States Navy and a symbol of our Nation’s might,” said former President Bush. “I have a special admiration for the men and women of our Navy – including my dad – and ask God to watch over this ship and those who sail aboard her.”

Aircraft carriers are the centerpiece of America’s Naval forces – the most adaptable and survivable airfields in the world. On any given day, Sailors aboard an aircraft carrier and its air wing come to the fight trained and equipped to fulfill a wide range of missions. They are ready to control the sea, conduct strikes, and maneuver across the electromagnetic spectrum and cyberspace. No other naval force fields a commensurate range and depth of combat capabilities.

**Ex-USS John F. Kennedy to
Commence Final Transit, Jan.
16**



By NAVSEA Public Affairs, Jan. 14, 2025

PHILADELPHIA – The ex-John F. Kennedy (CV 67) is scheduled to commence its final transit from the U.S. Navy's Inactive Ships Maintenance Facility in Philadelphia to Brownsville, Texas for dismantling, Jan. 16.

Upon departure early on Wednesday morning, the ship will be visible from the waterfronts along the Delaware River as the ship transits through the Delaware Bay and into the North Atlantic Ocean.

Commissioned on Sept. 7, 1968, CV 67 was the first Navy ship to be named John F. Kennedy and was the last conventionally powered aircraft carrier built by the U.S. Navy.

The ship conducted 18 deployments including to the Mediterranean, Tyrrhenian, Ionian, Ligurian, Aegean and

Adriatic seas, during a period of escalating tension in the Middle East and North Africa, often while under the surveillance of Soviet ships.

In the wake of the September 2001 terrorist attacks, the John F. Kennedy and her battle group established air security along the mid-Atlantic seaboard, "to help calm a fearful and shocked Nation," in support of Operation Noble Eagle. In February 2002, the ship deployed in support of Operations Anaconda and Enduring Freedom, followed by support of Operation Iraqi Freedom in July of 2004.

In 2005-2006, she served as a training platform and her final port visit was to Boston, MA in March 2007. After more than 39 years of conducting U.S. Navy missions worldwide, CV 67 was removed from service on August 1, 2007.

For more about Ex- USS John F. Kennedy's historic contributions to the nation, visit:

[USS John F. Kennedy \(CVA-67/CV-67\)](#)

or

[Photographs of USS John F. Kennedy \(CVA-67/CV-67\)](#)

BAE Systems Awarded \$85 Million Contract to Deliver Network Tactical Common Data Links to the U.S. Navy



NTCDL enhances situational awareness and tactical battlefield advantage of the U.S. Navy through real-time and simultaneous networked operations

From BAE Systems, Jan. 14, 2025

WAYNE, N.J. – Jan. 14, 2025 – In 2024, the U.S. Navy awarded BAE Systems an \$85 million production contract to deliver additional [Network Tactical Common Data Link](#) (NTCDL) systems. NTCDL will enable a real-time exchange of voice, data, imagery, and full-motion video from a variety of air, surface, subsurface, and man-portable sources. Systems under the company's current contract are presently being installed on U.S. Navy aircraft carriers and will be installed on new Constellation-class frigates.

“We have designed and produced a faster next-generation system to meet the demands of our customers’ evolving connectivity mission requirements,” said Amber Dolan, director of Adaptive Communications and Sensing at BAE Systems. “BAE Systems is committed to providing the U.S. Navy with a trusted and secure solution to transmit and receive the critical information needed to successfully accomplish its missions across the

fleet.”

NTCDL is a multi-platform solution for all U.S. Navy Common Data Link (CDL) requirements. It is a modular, scalable system designed to increase link capacity and embrace waveform evolution. NTCDL supports multiple, simultaneous, networked operations using currently fielded CDL equipment, as well as next-generation manned and unmanned platforms. It enables operators to simultaneously transmit and receive real-time intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance data from multiple sources and exchange command and control information across separate or independent networks. This allows for effective communication among forces to maintain an advantage.

This award modifies an existing BAE Systems contract to extend the program’s total period of performance by three years. As the original developer and manufacturer of the NTCDL system, BAE Systems has the engineering and production capabilities to meet the program’s urgent fielding timeline requirements.

Work on this contract is performed at BAE Systems’ facilities in Maryland, Colorado, New Jersey, and New York.

RTX’s Raytheon awarded \$333 million contract for SM-6 Block IA production



Missile supports anti-air, anti-surface warfare and sea-based terminal ballistic missile defense in one solution

From RTX, Jan. 13, 2025

TUCSON, Ariz., Jan. 13, 2025 /PRNewswire/ – Raytheon, an RTX (NYSE: RTX) business, was awarded a \$333 million contract from the U.S. Navy to produce [Standard Missile-6](#) (SM-6) Block IA missiles.

“SM-6 has a proven performance, and this contract is an important step for providing this urgently needed weapon to our armed forces,” said Barbara Borgonovi, president of Naval Power at Raytheon. “Raytheon continues to work closely with our customers to ensure our military has an unfair advantage at sea and to keep our adversaries guessing.”

Deployed on U.S. Navy ships, SM-6 delivers a proven, over-the-horizon offensive and defensive capability by leveraging the time-tested Standard Missile airframe and propulsion system. It’s the only missile that supports anti-air and anti-surface warfare and sea-based terminal ballistic missile defense in one solution, enabling the U.S. and its allies to cost-effectively increase the offensive might of surface forces.

SM-6 has been successfully fired from various U.S. Navy ships, unmanned vessels, and launchers on land. In March 2024, SM-6 demonstrated its anti-missile capabilities by [successfully intercepting](#) a medium-range ballistic missile target at sea during the Flight Test Aegis Weapon System (FTM)-32 exercise.

Production under this contract will be completed at Raytheon facilities in Tucson, Ariz., Huntsville, Ala., Andover, Mass., and Dine, N.M. with expected completion by 2027.

SECNAV Del Toro Names Future Columbia-class Submarine SSBN 828



From SECNAV Public Affairs, Jan. 13, 2025

WASHINGTON – Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro announced Jan. 13 that the newest Columbia-class ballistic missile submarine will be named the future USS Groton (SSBN 828).

The announcement was made during Del Toro's video remarks directed to the Department of Navy's (DoN) submarine community.

"Our ballistic-missile submarines form a critical pillar of the Nation's nuclear triad, playing an indispensable role in deterring conflict while upholding strategic stability," said

Secretary Del Toro. "Building on this strategic foundation, it is with great pride that I now turn to the next chapter in our Navy's capabilities."

Groton honors the port town in Connecticut and three previous vessels so named: a frigate (1944-1946), a patrol craft (1945-1960), and a nuclear fast attack submarine (1978-1997). USS Groton (SSBN 828) will be the third named Columbia-class submarine.

Both Senators for Connecticut expressed their appreciation for the naming and the constituents of the city of Groton.

"Naming the USS Groton recognizes this iconic Connecticut town as the submarine capital of the world – honoring the unsurpassed skill and dedication of men and women who work there. Groton has a rich shipbuilding legacy, and proven commitment to our national defense – manufacturing and maintaining vital weapons platforms, sustaining our undersea superiority," said Sen. Blumenthal. "It is a proud community of hard workers, veterans, patriots, and public servants, and this honor celebrates them."

"It's only fitting the U.S. Navy is naming our next Columbia-class submarine after Groton, Connecticut – the submarine capital of the world," said Sen. Murphy. "This is a well-deserved recognition of Groton's rich history as a global leader in submarine technology and innovation, and a home to the thousands of Electric Boat workers and small businesses who power our nation's naval defense. I will continue to use my seat on the Senate Appropriations Committee to make sure the next administration advances our submarine programs quickly and cost-effectively,

supports our maritime industrial workforce, and ensures the full and timely delivery of the cutting-edge submarines we need to uphold our national security."

Rep. Courtney highlighted the legacy of Groton and the impact

of Del Toro's decision to name SSBN 828.

"Today's decision by the US Navy to honor Groton, Connecticut as the name of its next submarine is welcome news. Groton is the birthplace of the modern nuclear-powered Navy under Admiral Hyman G. Rickover and home to our nation's oldest submarine base as well as the Electric Boat shipyard whose talented shipbuilders have played a leading role since World War II where they constructed 74 submarines to fight the Axis powers. The naming of the third Columbia-class submarine as the future USS Groton is a well-deserved badge of honor that rightly acknowledges our community's historic role in the United States submarine force," said Courtney.

Located on lands originally settled by the Pequot, Groton was founded in 1705 when it split from New London. The English settlers turned to shipbuilding, and Groton ever since has excelled in the industry. A Navy Yard was established in 1868. It became a submarine base during World War I and the home to Electric Boat, which launched 74 diesel submarines during World War II. Today, Groton is celebrated as the Submarine Capital of the World and hosts the Electric Boat Division of General Dynamics, the Naval History and Heritage Command's Submarine Force Library and Museum, and the first nuclear submarine, USS Nautilus.

The first Groton (PF 29) served on a North Atlantic weather station operating from Newfoundland and guiding wartime maritime traffic safely to Europe. She was subsequently transferred to the Coast Guard in 1946. The second Groton (PCE 900) operated in Hawaiian waters during World War II before serving as a Naval Reserve training ship out of Boston. Transferred to the Atlantic Fleet in 1955, she was renamed Groton and served until struck from the Navy List in 1960. The third Groton (SSN 694) completed an around-the-world cruise in 1980 on her first deployment to the Indian Ocean. She was decommissioned in 1997.

Along with announcing the ship's name, Secretary Del Toro announced the sponsor for the future USS Groton (SSBN 828) as Mrs. Cynthia M. Blumenthal, who in her role as the ship's sponsor will represent a lifelong relationship with the ship and crew.

Mrs. Blumenthal is not only the wife of Sen. Blumenthal, but she is also a military mother, who advocates for service members and their families. She has served as a senior advisor for fourteen successful campaigns for Sen. Blumenthal, while also serving on multiple boards for charitable organizations assisting wide-ranging communities, dedicating her life's work to supporting others.

"I am tremendously honored to sponsor the future USS Groton (SSBN 828) and look forward to a lifelong relationship with the ship and its crew. Connecticut's contributions to our nation's maritime strength and national security are a source of great pride to all Nutmeggers," said Cynthia M. Blumenthal. "On behalf of Connecticut's citizens, I thank the Secretary of the Navy for this recognition. As a military parent, I know firsthand the commitment military families make in support of their members who serve. Those families also serve. It is a privilege to be allowed to dedicate myself to both the USS Groton and the submariners who be deployed on her as she protects our shores and our people."

Sen. Blumenthal expressed his gratitude to Secretary Del Toro upon Mrs. Blumenthal's invitation to sponsor the future USS Groton.

"I am proud that my wife, Cynthia, will be the sponsor of the USS Groton and serve as a bond between the vessel, her crew, and our nation – an honor and privilege Cynthia is perfectly qualified to take on," said Blumenthal.

The Columbia-class submarine, formerly known as the SSBN-X Future Follow-on Submarine, is a new class of nuclear

submarines designed to replace the U.S. Navy's Ohio-class ballistic missile submarines.

The Navy's ballistic missile submarines, often referred to as "boomers," serve as an undetectable launch platform for submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs). They are designed specifically for stealth and the precise delivery of nuclear warheads.

U.S Navy to Christen Future USS Harrisburg



From the Navy Office of Information, Jan. 13, 2025

The U.S. Navy will christen the future USS Harrisburg (LPD 30) during a ceremony on Saturday, January 11, 2025, at 10:00 AM CST at HII's Ingalls Shipbuilding division in Pascagoula, Mississippi.

The Honorable Carlos Del Toro, Secretary of the Navy, will deliver the ceremonial address.

In a time-honored Navy tradition, the ship's sponsors, Pennsylvania residents Alexandra Curry and Jennifer Díaz, will christen the ship by breaking a bottle of sparkling wine

across the bow. Ms. Curry is the wife of the Honorable Jim Curry, Mayor of Middletown, PA, and Ms. Díaz is the wife of Mr. Chris Díaz, Chief of Staff to the Secretary of the Navy.

The city of Harrisburg is vital to the Navy as it hosts defense logistics and naval supply support activities and plays a central role in the Navy's national defense infrastructure. The city was originally a trading outpost and later became a top industrialized city in the 19th century with the construction of the Pennsylvania Canal and the Pennsylvania Railroad.

This is the second ship to honor the city of Harrisburg.

San Antonio-class amphibious transport dock ships (LPD) are warships that embark, transport, and land elements of a landing force for a variety of expeditionary warfare missions, humanitarian assistance, and disaster relief. They provide the Navy and Marine Corps with modern, sea-based platforms that are networked, survivable, and built to operate with 21st-century transformational platforms such as air-cushioned landing craft (LCAC), modern helicopters, and vertical take-off landing craft (MV-22). Harrisburg (LPD 30) is the first LPD Flight II ship, with additional follow-on ships (LPD 31-35) under contract with HII.

SECNAV Del Toro Names Future Amphibious Transport Dock the Future USS Travis Manion (LPD

33)



From SECNAV Public Affairs, Jan. 10, 2025

ANNAPOLIS, Md. – Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro announced that a future San Antonio-class amphibious transport dock (LPD 33) will be named USS Travis Manion. Secretary Del Toro made the announcement on January 10, during a ceremony with the Travis Manion Foundation.

The future USS Travis Manion honors Silver Star recipient, 1st Lieutenant Travis Manion and his service. The future LPD 33

will be the first Navy vessel named for Travis Manion.

“The San Antonio-class amphibious ship represents the combined power of the Navy and Marine Corps team and relies on the seamless integration of Sailors and Marines working together,” said Del Toro. “Here, at his alma mater, I am proud to announce that the next San Antonio-class amphibious transport dock, LPD 33, will be named USS Travis Manion, serving as a symbol of courage, bravery, and selfless service for all who follow in her wake.”

Born to a Marine family, Manion graduated from the United States Naval Academy in 2004. After completion of entry-level officer training, he was assigned to 1st Reconnaissance Battalion and deployed to Iraq for his first tour of duty. In 2006, he was assigned to a military transition team advising the Iraqi Army and returned to Iraq in December that year.

On patrol in April 2007, Manion and his fellow Marines were ambushed. With his corpsman wounded, Manion exposed himself to enemy fire to recover the corpsman. Attacking the ambushers, Manion again moved through enemy fire to rescue another wounded Marine. With Iraqi reinforcements blocked, Manion again exposed himself to fire in attempt to find a better fighting position. He was fatally wounded by an enemy sniper. For his actions, he was awarded a Silver Star.

Manion Hall, a student barracks at The Basic School aboard Marine Corps Base Quantico, Virginia, is named in his honor. This is the first ship to be named after 1st Lieutenant Manion.

“The naming of this ship, the USS Travis Manion, is an incredible honor for Travis and our family, and an honor for all of those who stepped up to serve when our country called after September 11, 2001,” said Col. Thomas Manion, USMC, (Ret.) and Chairman Emeritus, Travis Manion Foundation.

“Through the words he spoke before his final deployment, ‘If Not Me, Then Who...’, Travis left a legacy of service that lives on through the hundreds of thousands of veterans and families of the fallen across the country who share this ethos. Today, as our men and women continue to serve on the front lines, I know Travis would want this ship to be a tribute to this entire generation of veterans and a reminder to honor and remember their service and sacrifice.”

Along with the ship’s name, Secretary Del Toro announced the sponsors for the USS Travis Manion as sister, Ryan Manion, and nieces Maggie and Honor Borek. They, in their role as sponsors, will represent a lifelong relationship with the ship and crew.

“I never would have thought when we lost my brother Travis in 2007 that I – alongside Travis’ nieces, Maggie and Honor – would one day serve as sponsors of a ship named after him,” said Ryan Manion, CEO of Travis Manion Foundation. “Travis would be so proud to know that the USS Travis Manion will one day carry Marines – men and women like those he walked beside in the halls of Naval Academy and those he served beside on the battlefield. He’d also be adamant that this honor is not only about him, but about remembering the legacies of all of those who wore the uniform.”

Amphibious transport dock ships are warships that embark, transport and land elements of a landing force for a variety of expeditionary warfare missions. LPDs are used to transport and land Marines, their equipment, and supplies by embarked Landing Craft Air Cushion (LCAC) or conventional landing craft and amphibious assault vehicles (AAV) augmented by helicopters or vertical take-off and landing aircraft (MV 22). These ships support amphibious assault, special operations, or expeditionary warfare missions and serve as secondary aviation platforms for

amphibious operations.

SECNAV DeL Toro Names T-AGOS Explorer-Class and First Two Ships



From SECNAV Public Affairs, Jan. 10, 2025

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (Jan. 10, 2025) – Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro named the T-AGOS ocean surveillance ships the Explorer class, the future USNS Don Walsh (T-AGOS 25) and the second ship the future USNS Victor Vescovo (T-AGOS 26).

Del Toro made the announcement during a ship naming ceremony amongst members of Congress, National Geographic Explorers, local civic leaders, educators, scientists and a wide multitude of explorers at the U.S. Naval Academy in Maryland, on Jan. 10.

In 2022, the Navy procured the first of seven larger, faster surveillance ships known as T-AGOS 25. Today, I am proud to announce these vessels will be known as the Explorer-class of ocean surveillance ships, named in honor of those who made discoveries under sea, on land, and in the skies above.

“These ships are essential to maintaining strategic deterrence and operational awareness in the world’s oceans,” said Del Toro. “There is no one better to name for the first ship than Captain Don Walsh, a man whose life and career embody the very essence of exploration, innovation, and dedication to our Navy and our Nation. In naming the second T-AGOS, no one is more deserving than Commander Victor Vescovo, for his explorations in the air, on land and under the seas as well as his many scientific contributions. I am proud to name today, the future USNS Don Walsh (T-AGOS 25) and the future USNS Victor Vescovo (T-AGOS 26).”

Operated by the Military Sea Lift Command, the Explorer-class will play an integral role in the Navy’s anti-submarine warfare operations. T-AGOS ships align with the class’s mission of ocean surveillance and highlights the wide-range of careers in the Navy and Marine Corps, encompassing opportunities to explore land, air, and sea.

“I am honored to stand side-by-side with the Navy to launch the new Explorer Class of ocean surveillance ships” said Jean Case, Chairman of the National Geographic Society. “We could not be more proud that the inaugural vessel in this class honors our beloved National Geographic Explorer, retired US Navy Captain Don Walsh. We are grateful for the long-standing partnership the National Geographic Society and the US Navy have shared embracing the spirit of exploration and commitment to go to the front lines of the unknown. Together, we champion the courage and curiosity that drive humanity to discover, protect, and build a better understanding of our world.”

The future USNS Don Walsh is the first-in-class, named in honor of the late Captain Don Walsh, USN, a renowned explorer and pioneer of deep-see submergence. Walsh is a 1954 graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy and served first in the amphibious forces before being selected for submarine duty aboard USS Rasher (SS-269). Later while assigned to the staff of Submarine Flotilla 1, he volunteered for the fledgling deep-dive program and became Navy Submersible

Pilot No.1. On Jan. 23, 1960, Walsh, accompanied by scientist Jacques Piccard, successfully piloted bathyscaphe Trieste 35,797 feet down to Challenger-Deep, the deepest known point of the ocean, located southwest of Guam in the Mariana Trench. President Dwight D. Eisenhower subsequently presented Walsh with a Legion of Merit for his pioneering work in “innerspace.”

Walsh went on to earn a doctorate in Physical Oceanography while in the service and would ultimately command USS Bashaw (AGSS-241) before retiring as a Captain and going on to be a world-renowned ocean scientist and explorer, with countless awards and accolades. Captain Walsh recently passed away on Nov. 12, 2023, at his home in Oregon. This will be the first Navy vessel named for Walsh.

“My father was many things to many people- explorer, educator, colleague and mentor. But if you asked him what most defined his character, Navy Man, would be top of the list. His contributions to ocean exploration and advocacy spanned 60 plus years and he “wrote the book” on how we talk about, research and protect our planet’s circulatory system. His historic dive to Challenger Deep as a Navy Lieutenant was just part of what would become a life of service to the country, the oceans and the global community,” said Kelly Walsh, son of the late Don Walsh. “To me he was dad: a brilliant example of living a life full of adventure and curiosity. He shared the world with his family over the years, and in turn, we got to share him with the world. His legacy will remain- on the waves, over the horizon and just beyond the next great discovery. He will be there in practice and spirit.”

Secretary Del Toro named Mrs. Joan Walsh, spouse of the late Walsh, and his daughter, Liz Walsh, as sponsors of TAGOS-25. Sponsors are selected by the Secretary of the Navy and hold a unique role in maintaining a lifelong relationship with the ship and crew.

“The Walsh family is profoundly honored that the Navy has chosen to recognize Don Walsh’s lifetime of service and dedication by naming this new TAGOS ship after him. Don sometimes described being a kid in the San Francisco Bay area, daydreaming about where all those ships were going as they sailed to and for over the horizon; that little boy would certainly marvel that one day his legacy would be memorialized in such an enduring way,” said Liz Walsh. “As the ship’s Sponsors, my mother Joan and I are proud to now become a small part of the Navy’s future. We eagerly look forward to developing bonds with the future ship, officers, and crew who will be a key part in protecting America at sea.”

The future USNS Victor Vescovo is named to honor Commander Victor Lance Vescovo, USNR (Ret) (1966 – present). Vescovo, a

private equity investor, explorer, and retired naval intelligence officer who currently holds the world record for the deepest dive of a crewed vessel to Challenger Deep in the Mariana Trench, was the first person to reach Earth's highest and lowest points. Vescovo has also completed the Explorers' Grand Slam (Last Degree), in which he climbed the highest mountain on each continent and attained both the North and South Poles. Following his dive to Challenger Deep in his custom-built submersible Limiting Factor, Vescovo completed his own Five Deeps challenge, descending to the lowest points in the Earth's oceans.

He confirmed the identity of the wreck of Johnston (DD 557), which was sunk following a valiant stand against an overwhelming Japanese force during the Battle off Samar in Leyte Gulf, October 1944, which had been discovered but not confirmed by Vulcan, Inc., in 2019. The following year he discovered the wreck of Samuel B. Roberts (DE 413), lost in that same battle. Samuel B. Roberts is the deepest identified wreck at a depth of 22,621 feet. In 2021, Vescovo won the 2021 Captain Don Walsh Award for Ocean Exploration alongside Patrick Lahey for their 2019 Five Deeps Expedition and history of further dives of scientific and historical interest. There have been no previous Navy vessels named for Vescovo.

"It is a great privilege to honor my friend and colleague in the US Navy and ocean exploration, Captain Don Walsh. Vessels such as this upgraded T-AGOS class are essential to the US Navy's mission to safeguard the security of the world ocean as well as contribute to its greater understanding," said Vescovo, namesake of T-AGOS 26. "I am also beyond honored to follow in Captain Walsh's footsteps both to the bottom of the ocean and in the line of succession of naming these great ships."

During the naming ceremony, Del Toro also announced the sponsor of the future USNS Victor Vescovo, Victoria Vescovo

Webster, the sister of CDR Vescovo.

“The naming of this ship for my brother, as the USNS Victor Vescovo, is a very deep and moving honor to me and our family,” said Vescovo Webster. “The role of this ship will be such a perfect combination of his tremendous achievements as an explorer, and his service as a Naval Intelligence officer. I am truly grateful to be named as the sponsor for this ship, and will endeavor to fulfill that role with the same spirit of service as the ship’s namesake.”

T-AGOS 25 class will be part of the tactical auxiliary general ocean surveillance (TAGOS) ships fleet operated by the Military Sealift Command (MSC) of the US Navy. The Navy in FY2022 procured the first of a planned class of seven new T-AGOS 25 class ocean surveillance ships. T-AGOS ships support Navy antisubmarine warfare (ASW) operations and gather underwater acoustical data to support the mission of the Integrated Undersea Surveillance System (IUSS) by providing a ship platform capable of theater anti-submarine acoustic passive and active surveillance.

T-AGOS 25 class ships will be 356ft (110m) long and feature a steel small waterplane area twin hull (SWATH) design. The upper section of the ship is supported by two struts that reach down to a set of submerged hulls resembling those of a submarine. The struts feature a slender profile where they meet the waterline, resulting in a minimal waterplane area.

The ships will have an 8,500t displacement and accommodation for 68 personnel. They will support the navy’s Integrated Undersea Surveillance System (IUSS) for collecting underwater acoustical data, using Surveillance Towed-Array Sensor System (SURTASS) equipment. The high stability of the SWATH design in adverse weather conditions is useful for SURTASS operations.

The other associated electronic equipment on the ships will

help in processing and transmitting the data to shore stations through satellite, for evaluation. The ship will be able to sail at a maximum speed of 20 knots.

**Navy Names Third
Expeditionary Medical Ship
USNS Portsmouth (EMS 3)**



From SECNAV Public Affairs, Jan. 8, 2025

PORTSMOUTH – Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro named the future Bethesda-class expeditionary medical ship (EMS 3) USNS Portsmouth during a ship naming ceremony at Naval Medical Center Portsmouth on Jan. 8.

The decision to select Portsmouth was made to honor the legacy and commitment of the Navy doctors, nurses, corpsmen and staff of Naval Medical Center Portsmouth and the city of Portsmouth, Virginia.

“As Secretary of the Navy, I remain committed to the readiness of our Sailors and Marines and that readiness includes the crucial work to ensure the healthcare and vitality of our people,” said Secretary Del Toro. “I am proud to honor the city of Portsmouth and the Navy’s first operating hospital, Navy Medical Center Portsmouth, by naming the future USNS Portsmouth (EMS 3).”

The naming selection of the future USNS Portsmouth (EMS 3) follows the tradition of naming expeditionary medical ships after prominent military hospitals. Secretary Del Toro previously named USNS Bethesda (EMS 1) and USNS Balboa (EMS 2).

EMS 3 will be the fifth Navy vessel named Portsmouth. The four previous vessels were a full-rigged ship (1798–1801), a sloop-of-war (1844–1915), a light cruiser (1945–1970), and a nuclear-powered submarine (1983–2005).

Rear Adm. Darin Via, the U.S. Navy Surgeon General and chief, U.S. Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, who spent the majority of his professional military and medical life at the medical center, reaffirmed the Navy’s commitment to military readiness and healthcare support.

“USNS Portsmouth, a symbol of our Navy’s progress, also carries the weight of our history. It represents a significant advancement in our Navy’s warfighting capability and will provide essential medical support across the maritime environment,” said Via. “Together with USNS Bethesda and USNS Balboa, USNS Portsmouth will deliver agile and responsive medical care, advanced trauma management, and support to naval operations and humanitarian and disaster relief missions.”

Representing the city of Portsmouth, Mayor and Navy Veteran Shannon Glover spoke about the honor and meaning behind the naming of the Navy’s newest expeditionary medical ship.

“Today, we stand united in pride and gratitude as we honor the incredible contributions of the dedicated medical professionals at Naval Medical Center Portsmouth. For generations, they have provided compassionate care and unwavering commitment to our military families, veterans, and the Portsmouth community,” said Shannon Glover, Mayor of Portsmouth. “The USNS Portsmouth represents more than just a ship – it is a testament to the resilience, care, and service that define the heart of Portsmouth. And this is an appropriate and fitting tribute to the selfless men and women who serve at Naval Medical Center Portsmouth.”

Located along the banks of the Elizabeth River in Virginia, Naval Medical Center Portsmouth is a nationally acclaimed, state-of-the-art Defense Health Agency military treatment facility (MTF), where 5,000 medical professionals provide quality healthcare to warfighters, veterans, and their families in the Hampton Roads area.

Originally established in 1830 as the Navy’s first and oldest continuously operating hospital, today it is home to Navy Medicine Readiness and Training Command (NMRTC) Portsmouth, which provides a skilled and combat-ready medical force to support warfighting requirements and enables the Department’s highly skilled personnel to maintain mission critical proficiencies through valuable training in a military treatment facility. Navy medical personnel lead pioneering research and teaching programs to prepare new doctors, nurses, allied health professionals, and hospital corpsmen for combat operations and public health crises.

In addition to the medical center, the city of Portsmouth, Virginia, is home to the Norfolk Naval Shipyard, the Navy’s oldest shipyard (est. 1767) and one of its key facilities for overhauling and repairing its largest ships.

For every Navy ship named, a sponsor is chosen to advocate for both the ship and crew. Sponsors participate in key milestones in the life of their ship and form lifelong relationships that contribute to the well-being of the ship and her crew members. For the future USNS Portsmouth, Mrs. Terri Ann Via, spouse of Rear Adm. Via, Surgeon General of the Navy, was hand-selected for this important role.

“Portsmouth is more than just a name to me; it has been the cornerstone of my family’s life in the Navy. Portsmouth has been our home for as long as I can remember,” said Mrs. Via. “As the sponsor of the Portsmouth, I am committed to upholding the values of service, courage, and compassion that define both the Navy and Naval Medical Center Portsmouth. Having had the honor and opportunity to stand alongside my husband throughout his Navy career and now as the Surgeon General of the Navy, I look forward to sharing in the adventures, triumphs, and challenges that lie ahead for this ship and crew. May this ship always be a source of pride for our nation, a symbol of our strength and resolve, and a living tribute to the heroes of Naval Medical Center Portsmouth.”

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). 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.

Navy Medicine – represented by more than 44,000 highly-trained military and civilian health care professionals – provides enduring expeditionary medical support to the warfighter on, below, and above the sea, and ashore.