Construction Begins on Fourth Expeditionary Sea Base Ship



An CH-47F helicopter lands aboard the expeditionary sea base USS Lewis B. Puller in May. Construction of the fourth ESB officially began June 25. U.S. Navy/Chief Logistics Specialist Thomas Joyce

SAN DIEGO – Construction of the fourth expeditionary sea base ship officially began June 25 at the General Dynamics National Steel and Shipbuilding shipyard, the Program Executive Office-Ships said in a release. Due to the COVID pandemic, the milestone was marked with an informal shipyard ceremony.

ESB ships are flexible platforms that are used across a range of military operations supporting multiple operational phases. Acting as a mobile sea base, they are part of the infrastructure that supports the deployment of forces and supplies to provide prepositioned equipment and sustainment.

"This is a great Navy day as we mark the start of construction on the fourth ship in a class of flexible, adaptable ships that will provide our combatant commanders with enhanced capabilities," said Tim Roberts, strategic and theater sealift program manager for PEO-Ships. "The ESB platform has proven to be a valuable addition to the Navy and Marine Corps battle force."

ESBs support aviation mine countermeasure and special operations force missions. In addition to the flight deck, the ESB has a hangar with two aviation operating spots capable of handling MH-53E equivalent helicopters, accommodations, work spaces, and ordnance storage for embarked force, enhanced command, control, communications, computers, and intelligence to support embarked force mission planning and execution and reconfigurable mission deck area to store

embarked force equipment to include mine sleds and rigid hull inflatable boats.

In 2019, the Navy made the decision to commission all ESBs to allow them to conduct a broader and more lethal mission set, compared to original plans for them to operate with a USNS designation.

ESBs are commanded by a Navy O-6 with a hybrid-manned crew of military personnel and Military Sealift Command civilian mariners. This designation provides combatant commanders greater operational flexibility as to how the platform is employed.

In addition to ESB 6, NASSCO is under contract for the construction of ESB 7, with an option for ESB 8, as well as the Navy’s John Lewis Class Fleet Replenishment Oilers.