Future Attack Submarine Christened Montana at Huntington Ingalls

With one solid swing, the ship's sponsor, former Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell, christened the Virginia-class submarine Montana (SSN 794) as (from left) the ship's commanding officer Capt. Michael Delaney and Newport News Shipbuilding President Jennifer Boykin look on. Matt Hildreth / HII

NEWPORT NEWS, Va. – In its first ceremony celebrating the U.S. Navy's newest fast-attack submarine in front of a virtual audience, Huntington Ingalls christened pre-commissioning unit Montana (SSN 794) Sept. 12 at the company's Newport News Shipbuilding division, the company said in a release.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions on the size of public gatherings, the christening ceremony was hosted virtually at Newport News' Module Outfitting Facility.

"Yes, we are disappointed we couldn't host the normal pomp and circumstance today, and that our shipbuilders and their families couldn't be here in person to witness history. But as shipbuilders, we know the show must go on," said Jennifer Boykin, president of Newport News Shipbuilding. "Our work doesn't stop for a pandemic, just as the Navy's mission never ends. It is our honor, our duty and our calling to keep the wheels of shipbuilding turning, and in doing so, bring Montana one step closer to her ultimate mission of defending the United States of America."

Boykin also applauded the work and craftsmanship of more than 10,000 shipbuilders from Newport News and its partner, General Dynamics Electric Boat who continue to assemble Montana. She also acknowledged the support of the supplier base – more than

5,000 companies in all 50 states – that provided parts and materials critical to Montana's construction.

Former Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell, the ship's sponsor, smashed a bottle of sparkling wine across the bow to mark the christening of the submarine that honors the state of Montana.

"I am grateful to the shipbuilders and dedicated Navy officers and crew for building and readying Montana for service to our nation and the world," Jewell said. "It is a privilege to bless and christen this incredible submarine, and to join the current and future submariners as their shipmates for life."

The virtual event included pre-taped segments where maid of honor Mariah Gladstone, of the Blackfeet Nation in Montana, recited a Native American blessing and members of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, of Flathead Indian Reservation, performed a traditional Native American honor song. Rep. Robert C. Scott, of Virginia; members of the Montana congressional delegation including Sens. Jon Tester and Steve Daines, as well as Rep. Greg Gianforte; and General Dynamics Electric Boat President Kevin Graney also offered pre-recorded remarks celebrating the ship's milestone.

Vice Adm. Richard P. Snyder, the Navy's inspector general, also was in attendance.

In his keynote address, Acting Undersecretary of the Navy Gregory J. Slavonic said: "Montana will enhance our fleet with next generation stealth, surveillance and special warfare capabilities. This powerful platform is proof of an ironclad relationship between the Navy and industrial partners who form the backbone of our maritime strength. While this submarine has the capacity to project power on the surface and undersea, it's important to recognize the people in every stage of bringing this ship to life because our people make a difference. Montana is proof of what teamwork of all the

people – civilian, contractor and military – can accomplish together."

PCU Montana is the second Navy warship bearing the state's name. The first USS Montana (ACR 13) was an armored cruiser built at Newport News Shipbuilding and launched in 1906. During the ceremony, a replica of the bell that sailed on the first Montana was rung. The bell will be formally presented to the crew at the ship's commissioning and will be part of the submarine for its entire service life.

"Today is an exciting day for the Navy and the crew as our sponsor christened the Navy's newest Virginia-class submarine, the Montana," said Capt. Mike Delaney, commanding officer of the pre-commissioning unit. "While the coronavirus precluded most of the crew's participation in this ceremony, it in no way diminishes the great accomplishment. I couldn't be prouder of the way the crew of Montana alongside our shipbuilding partners have adapted to the new normal and focused on responsibly living up to our mission. This is not all too surprising given the innate resiliency and toughness I've seen my whole career in the submarine force. This submarine, like all the individuals who have contributed to getting it to this major milestone, will stand as a reflection of strength through adversity."

Three of Montana's crew members hail from the state of Montana.

Construction of Montana began in 2015 under a teaming agreement with Electric Boat. The submarine achieved pressure hull complete earlier this year and is about 85% complete. Montana is scheduled for delivery to the Navy in late 2021.