Keel Authenticated for Future USNS Harvey Milk



A U.S. Navy photo illustration announcing that T-AO 206 will be named for Harvey Milk.

SAN DIEGO – The keel for the future USNS Harvey Milk (T-AO 206), the Navy's second John Lewis-class fleet replenishment oiler, was laid at General Dynamics National Steel and Shipbuilding Company (GD NASSCO), Sept. 3, the Program Executive Office – Ships said in a release.

Due to ongoing health concerns associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, the keel was authenticated without ceremony. However, to commemorate the milestone, remarks were recorded for compilation and later release.

A keel laying is the recognition of the start of a ship's construction. It is the joining together of a ship's modular components and the authentication or etching of an honoree's initials into a ceremonial keel plate. The ship's sponsors, U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein and Paula Neira, had their initials etched into the keel plate by NASSCO welders Kyle Meinert and Julio Abril.

"The ship will significantly contribute to our Combat Logistics Force, serving as the primary fuel pipeline from resupply ports to ships at sea," said Rear Adm. Tom Anderson, Program Executive Officer – Ships. "This ship will ensure our warfighters stay supplied at sea, keeping them in the fight and combat ready."

As critical elements of the Navy's Combat Logistics Force, Fleet Replenishment Oilers directly contribute to Adm. Gilday's Future Navy efforts to make naval logistics more agile and resilient by enabling the employment of forces in dispersed and forward environments.

Harvey Milk will be operated by the Navy’s Military Sealift Command and is the first ship named after the Navy veteran and civil and human rights leader who became the first openly gay elected official in California when he won a seat on the San Francisco Board of Supervisors in 1977.

NASSCO is also in construction on the future USNS John Lewis (T-AO 205) with an additional four Fleet Replenishment Oilers on contract. The Navy’s program of record calls for the eventual procurement of 20 Fleet Replenishment Oilers to replace the aging T-AO 187 class.