Keel Authenticated for Future USS Robert E. Simanek



The keel for the future USS Robert E. Simanek (ESB 7), a Lewis B. Puller-class Expeditionary Sea Base (ESB), was laid at General Dynamics National Steel and Shipbuilding Company (GD-NASSCO) shipyard in San Diego, Oct. 21. *GENERAL DYNAMICS NASSCCO*

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The ship is named for Private First Class Robert Ernest Simanek, who was awarded the Medal of Honor for shielding fellow Marines from a grenade at the Battle of Bunker Hill during the Korean War. The Medal of Honor was presented to him by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in a White House ceremony in

1953.

Simanek recently passed away on August 1, 2022. In addition to the Medal of Honor, he received a Purple Heart award, the Korean Service Medal with two bronze service stars, the United Nations Service Medal and the National Defense Service Medal. His daughter, Ann Simanek, is the sponsor of the ship and attended the keel laying ceremony.

“We are honored this ship will celebrate the late Robert E. Simanek’s legacy as a Medal of Honor recipient and Korean War veteran and his dedication to our country,” said Tim Roberts, Strategic and Theater Sealift program manager, Program Executive Office Ships. “ESBs provide a critical capability to the fleet and provide for increased flexibility.”

Expeditionary Sea Base ships are highly flexible platforms used across a broad range of military operations supporting multiple operational phases. Acting as a mobile sea base, they are a part of the critical access infrastructure that supports the deployment of forces and supplies to provide prepositioned equipment and sustainment with adaptable distribution capability.

These ships 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, workspaces and ordnance storage for embarked force, enhanced command, control, communications, computers and intelligence (C4I). These ships support embarked force mission planning and execution and has a reconfigurable mission deck area to store embarked force equipment, including mine sleds and Rigid Hull Inflatable Boats (RHIBs).

In 2019, the Navy decided to commission all Expeditionary Sea Base ships to allow them to conduct a broader and more lethal mission set compared to original plans for them to operate

with a USNS designation. A Navy O-6 commands ESBs and a hybrid-manned crew of military personnel and Military Sealift Command civilian mariners. This crew makeup provides combatant commanders with increased operational flexibility in employing the platform.

Construction of the future USS John L. Canley (ESB 6) and the Navy’s John Lewis Class Fleet Replenishment Oilers (T-AO) are ongoing at GD-NASSCO.