

MARAD Cuts Steel on New Training Ships, Congress Funds Fourth NSMV to Prepare New Mariners



An artist's conception of the purpose-built National Security Multi-Mission Vessel (NSMV), to which the Maritime Administration (MARAD) wants to transition to replace obsolete training ships. MARAD

America's merchant fleet and maritime industry are vital to the nation's commerce. The six state maritime academies together produce more than 70 percent of U.S. Coast Guard licensed officers each year. Along with the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, the schools are addressing the shortage of qualified seafarers for U.S.-flagged ships.

The six state maritime academies (SMAs) rely on dedicated platforms for at-sea training in in engineering, seamanship and navigation. Each of the schools have training ships owned by the Maritime Administration (MARAD), but the ships are getting old and challenged by maintenance, repairs and obsolescence, and were never intended for the school-ship role in the first place.

MARAD has embarked on an ambitious effort to replace the fleet of training ships with the new National Security Multi-Mission Vessel (NSMV).

Construction of the first two NSMVs will replace training ships at SUNY Maritime Academy and Massachusetts Maritime Academy, ships which are both more than 50 years old.

Steel was cut for the first NSMV Dec. 15 in Philadelphia. The keel laying is expected in about a year, with delivery

anticipated for early 2023. The new ship will replace SUNY Maritime Academy's current school ship, Empire State VI.

The current training ships are not representative of the types of vessels on which academy graduates may expect to serve. The NSMV will have a modern, efficient and environmentally compliant diesel-electric power plant and state-of-the-art navigation equipment, which is more typical in commercial shipping today.

Currently, all of the SMAs operate hand-me-down ships that have been adapted for the training mission. With the adoption of the NSMV, the academies will have a standardized and purpose-built state-of-the-art training platform.

NSMV will be 524.5 feet long with a beam of 88.6 feet and a draft of 21.4 feet. It will displace 19,237 tons. The NSMV is equipped with berthing, classrooms and laboratories to train up to 600 cadets, but can also support humanitarian assistance and disaster response (HA/DR) missions with medical facilities, a helicopter deck, roll-on/roll-off and container storage capacity, and the ability to accommodate up to 1,000 people in times of a humanitarian crisis. The ship is compatible with pier length, draft restrictions and mooring limitations at each of the academies, as well as being able to call at austere ports to conduct HA/DR operations.

Congress authorized funding for the fourth ship on Dec. 21, approving \$390 million to fund construction of a fourth NSMV, which will be assigned to the Texas A&M Maritime Academy at Texas A&M University at Galveston, and is expected to be delivered to campus in 2025.

"Having the ability to live, learn, and train together as a single unit is essential to meeting our mission in educating and training the next generation of merchant mariners who go on to serve in both our armed forces and the maritime industry," said Col. Michael E. Fossum, vice president of

Texas A&M University, chief operating officer of the Galveston Campus and superintendent of the Texas A&M Maritime Academy. The new ship will replace the 224-foot, 1,900-ton TS General Rudder, which began her career in 1983 as the USNS Contender, an ocean surveillance ship for the U.S. Navy.

“While the ship will serve as a state-of-the-art classroom for the maritime program at Texas A&M University at Galveston, it will also provide a key mission capability for disaster response along the Gulf Coast – able to respond to emergencies in other states and U.S. territories – and will provide a needed emergency response resource to Texas and the gulf,” said Nim Kidd, chief of the Texas Division of Emergency Management and vice chancellor for disaster and emergency services.

Herbert Engineering Corp. of Alameda, California, was responsible for generating the preliminary specifications and design. In May 2019, TOTE Services LLC was awarded a contract to be the vessel construction manager for the NSMV program. In April 2020, TOTE Services awarded Philly Shipyard Inc. the contract to construct up to five NSMVs. TOTE Services is working with its design partners – Glosten Inc., Philly Shipyard, and Philly Shipyard’s subcontractors, including the design team at DSEC – to deliver the first NSMV in early 2023. Key ship equipment includes GE Wabtec engines and generators, GE Transportation main generator engines, Cummins USA emergency generator sets and Bronswerk air conditioning systems.

“This program will further advance excellence in American maritime education and reignite the jobs engine that is America’s shipyards,” said MARAD Administrator Mark H. Buzby.

Current Training Ships

TS Empire State VI, ex-S.S. Oregon, ex-Mormactide
State University of New York Maritime College

Fort Schuyler, Bronx, NY

Built 1962/Converted 1989

Modified C4-S-1u commercial breakbulk freighter

USTS *Kennedy*, ex-USTS *Enterprise*, ex-MV *Cape Bon*, ex-MV *Velma Lykes*

Massachusetts Maritime Academy

Buzzards Bay, Massachusetts

Built 1966/Converted 2009

C4-S-66a break bulk cargo freighter

TS *State of Maine*, ex-USNS *Tanner* (T-AGS 40)/ex-*Upshur*, launched as ex-*President Hayes* 1952

Maine Maritime Academy

Castine, Maine

Build 1990/Converted 1997

Maury Class Hydrographic Survey Ship

T/S *State of Michigan*, ex- USNS *Persistent* (T-AGOS-6), ex-USCGC *Persistent* (WMEC-6)

Great Lakes Maritime Academy

Traverse City, Michigan

Built 1985/Converted 2002

Stalwart-class Tactical Auxiliary General Ocean Surveillance Ship (TAGOS)

TS *General Rudder* (ex- USNS *Contender* (T-AGOS-2), ex-T/V *Kings Pointer*)

Texas Maritime Academy

Galveston, Texas

Built 1984/Converted 1992

Stalwart-class Modified Tactical Auxiliary General Ocean Surveillance Ship

TV *Golden Bear* (ex-USNS *Maury* T-AGS 39)

California Maritime Academy

Vallejo, California

Built 1989/Converted 1996

Pathfinder-class survey ship

TV *Kings Pointer*, ex-MV *Liberty Star*

U.S. Merchant Marine Academy

Kings Point, New York

Built 1981/Converted 2013

MV *Liberty Star*, NASA-owned and United Space Alliance-operated vessel for solid rocket booster SRB recovery ship supporting space shuttle missions.