Navy Christens the First Ship in the T-AO Fleet Oiler Program



Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi speaks at the christening of the future USNS John Lewis, the first ship in the U.S. Navy's new John Lewis-class fleet oiler program. *U.S. NAVY*

SAN DIEGO – The future USNS John Lewis (T-AO 205), the first ship in the U.S. Navy's John Lewis-class fleet oiler program, was christened July 17 during a ceremony in San Diego, the Navy said in a release.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-California, served as the principal speaker at the ceremony.

"As House Speaker, I am deeply honored to lead this congressional delegation of many friends of our beloved late Congressman John Lewis to honor his beautiful and saintly life," said Speaker Nancy Pelosi. "John Lewis was a warrior

for freedom and, as a titan of the civil rights movement, his courage and goodness helped transformed our nation. In the halls of the Capitol, he was fearless in his pursuit of a more perfect union, whether fighting to defend voting rights, end anti-LGBTQ discrimination or respect the dignity and worth of every person."

Following Pelosi, the ship's sponsor, Alfre Woodard Spencer, spoke briefly about the ship's namesake.

John Lewis "lives in the unalterable truths he spoke to power," said Spencer. "John Lewis lives in all those spaces where people reach out their hands to pull others up to the lives that they deserve. And now he lives in the name and the embodiment of this mighty sailing vessel and its mission of fortifying and sustaining those who have committed themselves to the service of our nation."

Following her remarks, Spencer christened the ship with the traditional champagne bottle break alongside the hull.

Additional remarks were provided by U.S. Navy representatives, Marcus Tyner, nephew of the ship's namesake, and Dave Carver, president of General Dynamics NASSCO.

"The christening ceremony today takes on a very special meaning, for it marks the one-year anniversary, to the day, of John Lewis' passing." Carver said. "Just as its namesake, this majestic vessel will be instrumental in shaping the future of our Nation. The shipbuilders of NASSCO are proud to ensure Congressman John Lewis' legacy will live on in this ship."

Former Navy Secretary Ray Mabus declared the John Lewis-class of oilers be named after leaders who fought for civil and human rights. The class and the first ship honors Congressman and American civil rights leader John Lewis.

In 2016, General Dynamics NASSCO was awarded the contract by the U.S. Navy for the detailed design and construction of the

next generation of fleet oilers, the John Lewis-class (T-AO 205), previously known as the TAO(X). The contract calls for the design and construction of six 742-foot-long oilers with a full load displacement of 49,850 tons. Designed to transfer fuel to U.S. Navy carrier strike group ships operating at sea, the oilers have the capacity to carry 157,000 barrels of oil, a significant dry cargo capacity, aviation capability and up to a speed of 20 knots.

In addition to the christening of this ship, three ships in the T-AO class fleet oiler program for the U.S. Navy – the future USNS Harvey Milk (T-AO 206), the future USNS Earl Warren (T-AO 207), and the future USNS Robert F. Kennedy (T-AO 208) – are currently under construction. The second ship, the future USNS Harvey Milk (T-AO 206) is scheduled to launch later this year.