Navy Commissions Newest LCS, USS Indianapolis



The crew of the Navy’s newest littoral combat ship, USS Indianapolis, brings the ship to life during its commissioning ceremony on Oct. 26. Indianapolis is the 19th littoral combat ship to enter the fleet and the ninth of the Freedom variant. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Timothy Haggerty

BURNS HARBOR, Ind. – The U.S. Navy commissioned its newest littoral combat ship, USS Indianapolis, on Oct. 26 at Burns Harbor.

“To the citizens of the great state of Indiana who have joined us here today, thank you so much for enduring the weather to show your support for the men and women of America’s military and this fantastic new addition to the fleet,” said Lisa W. Hershman, the Pentagon’s deputy chief management officer and the ceremony’s main speaker. “It is always a thrill to see a Navy ship commissioned, but it is truly a historic moment to do so on the shores of Lake Michigan.”

As part of the ceremony, Dick Thelen, a survivor from that incident, handed the long glass telescope to Lt. Julian Turner, navigator of the first watch.

“Now, a combat-ready ship is necessary but not sufficient for our Navy to fight and win decisively in combat,” said Adm. Christopher W. Grady, commander, U.S. Fleet Forces Command.

“To fight and win, you, the Hoosier Sailors of Indianapolis, must join as one and become a battle-minded crew. You must waste no time in preparing yourself to function as a team-of-teams, masterfully exercising your ship to the

very extent of its limits. Only through the combination of this combat-ready ship and you, its battle-minded crew, both blue and gold, can Indianapolis carry on the proud legacy of your predecessors."

The Oct. 26 ceremony honored veterans of USS Indianapolis, a World War II cruiser that was torpedoed and sunk in the final days of the war after completing a secret mission to deliver components of the atomic bomb that later would be dropped on Hiroshima. Much of the crew of the Indianapolis who awaited rescue in the water after the sinking were lost due to exposure, dehydration, saltwater poisoning and shark attacks.

The ship's motto, "Legacy of War," reflects that ships named Indianapolis have served in both world wars and the Cold War. LCS 17 is the fourth ship to bear the name of the state capital and most populous city of Indiana.

"I feel honored to represent the ship's namesake and the history that goes with that. Our crew has put in a tremendous amount of work preparing the USS Indianapolis," Lt. j.g. Eric Wilkerson said. "There is a lot of Navy pride here today. The support from earlier crews being here is a strong reminder of the commitment needed to defend our nation and maritime freedoms."

Jill Donnelly, the ship's sponsor, gave the first order: "Man our ship and bring her to life!" More than 8,000 people, including Indiana residents and friends and family of the crew, attended the commissioning ceremony.

"It was all-hands effort. We work together to get the ship up and ready to go. There is a lot of teamwork and everyone really does pull their weight to accomplish the mission," Operations Specialist 1st Class Devin Morris said. "It's a brand-new ship so everyone has to go through all the certifications to make sure we are mission ready."

Littoral combat ships are outfitted with mission packages that

deploy manned and unmanned vehicles and sensors in support of mine countermeasures, anti-submarine warfare or surface warfare missions. The warship’s modular mission packages can be quickly and cost-effectively updated with new weapons and weapon systems without taking the ship out of service for modifications and modernizations.

USS Indianapolis will be homeported in Naval Station Mayport, Florida.