Navy Names Third Expeditionary Medical Ship USNS Portsmouth (EMS 3)



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PORTSMOUTH – Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro named the future Bethesda-class expeditionary medical ship (EMS 3) USNS Portsmouth during a ship naming ceremony at Naval Medical Center Portsmouth on Jan. 8.

The decision to select Portsmouth was made to honor the legacy and commitment of the Navy doctors, nurses, corpsmen and staff of Naval Medical Center Portsmouth and the city of Portsmouth, Virgina.

“As Secretary of the Navy, I remain committed to the readiness of our Sailors and Marines and that readiness includes the crucial work to ensure the healthcare and vitality of our people,” said Secretary Del Toro. “I am proud to honor the city of Portsmouth and the Navy’s first operating hospital, Navy Medical Center Portsmouth, by naming the future USNS Portsmouth (EMS 3).”

The naming selection of the future USNS Portsmouth (EMS 3) follows the tradition of naming expeditionary medical ships after prominent military hospitals. Secretary Del Toro previously named USNS Bethesda (EMS 1) and USNS Balboa (EMS 2).

EMS 3 will be the fifth Navy vessel named Portsmouth. The four previous vessels were a full-rigged ship (1798–1801), a sloop-of-war (1844–1915), a light cruiser (1945–1970), and a nuclear-powered submarine (1983–2005).

Rear Adm. Darin Via, the U.S. Navy Surgeon General and chief, U.S. Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, who spent the majority of his professional military and medical life at the medical center, reaffirmed the Navy’s commitment to military readiness and healthcare support.

“USNS Portsmouth, a symbol of our Navy’s progress, also carries the weight of our history. It represents a significant advancement in our Navy’s warfighting capability and will provide essential medical support across the maritime environment,” said Via. “Together with USNS Bethesda and USNS Balboa, USNS Portsmouth will deliver agile and responsive medical care, advanced trauma management, and support to naval

operations and humanitarian and disaster relief missions.”

Representing the city of Portsmouth, Mayor and Navy Veteran Shannon Glover spoke about the honor and meaning behind the naming of the Navy’s newest expeditionary medical ship.

“Today, we stand united in pride and gratitude as we honor the incredible contributions of the dedicated medical professionals at Naval Medical Center Portsmouth. For generations, they have provided compassionate care and unwavering commitment to our military families, veterans, and the Portsmouth community,” said Shannon Glover, Mayor of Portsmouth. “The USNS Portsmouth represents more than just a ship – it is a testament to the resilience, care, and service that define the heart of Portsmouth. And this is an appropriate and fitting tribute to the selfless men and women who serve at Naval Medical Center Portsmouth.”

Located along the banks of the Elizabeth River in Virginia, Naval Medical Center Portsmouth is a nationally acclaimed, state-of-the art Defense Health Agency military treatment facility (MTF), where 5,000 medical professionals provide quality healthcare to warfighters, veterans, and their families in the Hampton Roads area.

Originally established in 1830 as the Navy’s first and oldest continuously operating hospital, today it is home to Navy Medicine Readiness and Training Command (NMRTC) Portsmouth, which provides a skilled and combat-ready medical force to support warfighting requirements and enables the Department’s highly skilled personnel to maintain mission critical proficiencies through valuable training in a military treatment facility. Navy medical personnel lead pioneering research and teaching programs to prepare new doctors, nurses, allied health professionals, and hospital corpsmen for combat operations and public health crises.

In addition to the medical center, the city of Portsmouth, Virginia, is home to the Norfolk Naval Shipyard, the Navy's oldest shipyard (est. 1767) and one of its key facilities for overhauling and repairing its largest ships.

For every Navy ship named, a sponsor is chosen to advocate for both the ship and crew. Sponsors participate in key milestones in the life of their ship and form lifelong relationships that contribute to the well-being of the ship and her crew members. For the future USNS Portsmouth, Mrs. Terri Ann Via, spouse of Rear Adm. Via, Surgeon General of the Navy, was hand-selected for this important role.

"Portsmouth is more than just a name to me; it has been the cornerstone of my family's life in the Navy. Portsmouth has been our home for as long as I can remember," said Mrs. Via. "As the sponsor of the Portsmouth, I am committed to upholding the values of service, courage, and compassion that define both the Navy and Naval Medical Center Portsmouth. Having had the honor and opportunity to stand alongside my husband throughout his Navy career and now as the Surgeon General of the Navy, I look forward to sharing in the adventures, triumphs, and challenges that lie ahead for this ship and crew. May this ship always be a source of pride for our nation, a symbol of our strength and resolve, and a living tribute to the heroes of Naval Medical Center Portsmouth."

Bethesda-class expeditionary medical ships are designed as a dedicated medical ship that optimizes hospital-level medical care in support of distributed maritime operations (DMO). EMS will feature a shallow draft enabling greater reach and allowing direct access to shallow austere ports, while also providing a flight deck that accommodates military helicopters. This design provides a full range of medical capabilities including triage/critical care, three operating rooms, medical laboratory, radiological capability, blood bank, dental, mental health, OB/GYN and primary care, rapid

stabilization and follow-on evacuation of multiple casualties and combat search and rescue including recovery at sea.

The primary mission of the EMS as a high-speed forward-deployed medical ship is to provide rapid responsive sea-based and near-shore hospital level critical care, humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, non-combatant evacuation operations and special operations. The EMS is designed to respond and provide care at a more rapid pace than their predecessors, USNS Mercy and USNS Comfort, sailing at speeds of at least 30 knots with a range of 5,500 nautical miles at 24 knots.

Navy Medicine – represented by more than 44,000 highly-trained military and civilian health care professionals – provides enduring expeditionary medical support to the warfighter on, below, and above the sea, and ashore.