

Navy to Christen Amphibious Transport Dock Ship Richard M. McCool Jr.



The future USS Richard M. McCool Jr., launched earlier this year at Ingalls Shipbuilding Division. *HII*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Navy will christen its newest amphibious transport dock, the future USS Richard M. McCool Jr. (LPD 29), during a 9 a.m. CDT ceremony Saturday, June 11, at the HII Ingalls Division shipyard in Pascagoula, Mississippi, the Defense Department said June 10.

The principal speaker is Undersecretary of the Navy Erik Raven. Additional speakers include Lt. Gen. David Bellon, commander, United States Marine Corps Reserve and Marine Corps Forces, South; Vice Adm. Randy Crites, deputy chief of naval operations for integration of capabilities and resources; and Kari Wilkinson, president of Ingalls Shipbuilding. In a time-

honored Navy tradition, the ship's sponsors and granddaughters of its namesake, Shana McCool and Kate Oja, will christen the ship by breaking a bottle of sparkling wine across the bow.

The ship is named in honor of Navy veteran and Medal of Honor recipient, retired Capt. Richard Miles McCool Jr., who was awarded the Medal of Honor for the heroism he displayed June 10 and 11, 1945, in coordinating damage control and rescue operations after a series of Japanese kamikaze aircraft attacks during the Battle of Okinawa. On June 10, 1945, his leadership efforts greatly assisted in evacuating survivors from a sinking destroyer. After his ship was struck by a kamikaze June 11, then Lt. McCool Jr., despite suffering from shrapnel wounds and painful burns, led vigorous damage control efforts to save his ship from destruction and personally rescue Sailors trapped in blazing compartments. McCool passed away on March 5, 2008.

"Tomorrow we christen the future USS Richard M. McCool Jr., recognizing a Medal of Honor awardee and true American hero for his unwavering devotion to duty and service to our country," said Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro. "This historic occasion brings us one step closer to 'manning the rails' with the men and women who will carry on the proud naval tradition of defending our nation and working towards a more peaceful world."

The future Richard M. McCool Jr. is the 13th San Antonio-class ship, designed to support embarking, transporting, and bringing elements of 650 Marines ashore by landing craft or air-cushion vehicles. A flight deck hangar further enhances the ship's capabilities, which can support the MV-22 Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft.

San Antonio-class ships can support a variety of amphibious assault, special operations, or expeditionary warfare missions, operating independently or as part of Amphibious Readiness Groups, Expeditionary Strike Groups or joint task

forces. These capabilities allow the U.S. Navy to protect America's security abroad and promote regional stability and preserve future peace.