

Navy to Christen Future USNS Harvey Milk



A photo illustration announcing that Military Sealift Command fleet oiler, T-AO 206, will be named USNS Harvey Milk. *U.S. NAVY*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Navy will christen the John Lewis-class replenishment oiler, the future USNS Harvey Milk (T-AO 206), during a 9 a.m. PDT ceremony Saturday, Nov. 6, in San Diego, California, the Defense Department said Nov. 5.

Stuart Milk, cofounder of the Harvey Milk Foundation and Milk's nephew, will deliver the principal ceremonial address. Remarks will also be provided by the Carlos Del Toro, secretary of the Navy; Vice Adm. Jeffrey Hughes, deputy chief of naval operations for Warfighting Development; and Rear Adm. Michael Wettlaufer, commander, Military Sealift Command. The ship's sponsors are U.S. Sen. Dianne Feinstein of California, and Paula Neira, Navy veteran and clinical program director of the Johns Hopkins Center for Transgender Health. Neira will christen the ship by breaking a bottle of sparkling wine across the bow in a time-honored Navy tradition.

"Tomorrow we christen the future USNS Harvey Milk," said Del Toro. "Leaders like Harvey Milk taught us that diversity of backgrounds and experiences help contribute to the strength and resolve of our nation. There is no doubt that the future Sailors aboard this ship will be inspired by Milk's life and

legacy.”

The Navy’s Military Sealift Command will operate the future USNS Harvey Milk, the second ship in its class. The ship is named in honor of the late politician and civil and human rights activist, who served in the Navy during the Korean War as a diving officer. After his naval career, Harvey Milk was elected to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors in 1977, becoming the first openly gay elected official in California. Milk was assassinated on Nov. 27, 1978.

The John Lewis-class ships are based on commercial design standards and will recapitalize the current T-AO 187-class fleet replenishment oilers to provide underway fuel replenishment to Navy ships at sea. Fleet replenishment oilers are part of the Navy’s Combat Logistics Force.

In June 2016, the Navy awarded a \$3.2 billion contract to General Dynamics NASSCO in San Diego to design and construct the first six ships of the Future Fleet Replenishment Ship, the John Lewis-class (T-AO 205), with construction commencing in September 2018. The Navy plans to procure 20 ships of the new class.