

Navy to Commission Expeditionary Sea Base USS Hershel 'Woody' Williams



The Military Sealift Command expeditionary sea base USNS Hershel 'Woody' Williams (ESB 4) is at anchor in the Chesapeake Bay, Sept. 15, 2019 during mine countermeasure equipment testing. U.S. Navy/Bill Mesta

WASHINGTON – The Navy will commission its newest Expeditionary Sea Base, USS Hershel "Woody" Williams (ESB 4), during a 10 a.m. EST ceremony Saturday, March 7, in Norfolk, Virginia, the Navy's Office on Information announced in a March 6 release.

The future Hershel "Woody" Williams is the first ship to bear the name of Marine Corps Chief Warrant Officer Four Hershel Woodrow Williams, the last surviving Medal of Honor recipient recognized for heroism at the Battle of Iwo Jima during World War II.

U.S. Sen. Joe Manchin of West Virginia will deliver the commissioning ceremony's principal address. The ceremony will be highlighted by a time-honored Navy tradition when Ms. Tracie Jean Ross and Ms. Travie Jane Ross, ship sponsors and daughters of Hershel "Woody" Williams, will give the first order to "man our ship and bring her to life!"

"This ship honors a man who dedicated his life to service – heroic service as a Marine, and continued service to his fellow veterans," said Acting Secretary of the Navy Thomas Modly. "This dedication will live on in USS Hershel 'Woody' Williams as the ship is deployed around the world bringing additional capability to our growing fleet. The ceremony on Saturday will also represent the dedication to service demonstrated by the men and women who worked tirelessly to build this ship and their commitment to quality

and innovation.”

The future Hershel “Woody” Williams is optimized to support a variety of maritime-based missions and designed around four core capabilities: aviation facilities, berthing, equipment staging support, and command and control assets. ESBs can be enhanced to meet special operations force missions through increased communications, aviation and unmanned aircraft system support.

Built by General Dynamics NASSCO, the Montford Point-class is comprised of five ships across two variants: Expeditionary Transfer Docks and Expeditionary Sea Bases. Acting as a mobile sea base, ESBs are part of the critical access infrastructure that supports the deployment of forces and supplies to provide prepositioned equipment and sustainment with flexible distribution.

The platform has an aviation hangar and flight deck that include four operating spots capable of landing V-22 and MH-53E equivalent helicopters, accommodations, work spaces, and ordnance storage for an embarked force. The platform will also provide unmanned aviation vehicle operations, enhanced command and control, communications, computers, and intelligence capabilities to support embarked force mission planning and execution. The reconfigurable mission deck area can store embarked force equipment including mine sleds and rigid hull inflatable boats.