

SECNAV Del Toro Names Future John Lewis-class Oilers T-AO 215 and T-AO 216

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Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro announced the names of two future John Lewis-class fleet replenishment oilers, T-AO 205-class, to be the future USNS Joshua L. Goldberg (T-AO 215), the future USNS Thomas D. Parham Jr. (T-AO 216).

Secretary Del Toro detailed the announcement Jan. 16 during video remarks directed to the Department of Navy's (DoN) chaplain corps.

"Our Navy Chaplains are more than just religious figures—they are beacons of hope, resilience, and unwavering support in the demanding world of naval service," said Secretary Del Toro. "These ships will carry forward their spirit of selfless service and will forever be a recognition of the invaluable contributions of Navy Chaplains."

The naming selection of the future T-AO 215 and T-AO 216 follows the tradition of naming John Lewis-class oilers after civil rights leaders and will be the first to bear her name. Secretary Del Toro previously named USNS Thurgood Marshall (T-AO 211), USNS Ruth Bader Ginsberg (T-AO 212), USNS Harriet Tubman (T-AO 213), and USNS Dolores Huerta (T-AO 214).

There have been no Navy vessels previously named for Captain Joshua L. Goldberg or for Thomas D. Parham, Jr.

"The heart of the Navy Chaplain Corps mission is to care for Sailors, Marines, Coast Guardsmen, and their families, always focused on serving them. Naming these ships after a couple of heroic chaplains is both humbling and reassuring that we have

the support of our military leaders in building the Spiritual Readiness of our flock," said Navy's Chief of Chaplains Rear Adm. Gregory N. Todd. "Chaplains Goldberg and Parham were model servant leaders and shone with the inner strength that comes from higher purpose, facing numerous challenges of their time strengthened by their connection to the Divine. Their example inspires all of us."

The naming of the future T-AO 215 honors Captain Joshua L. Goldberg, USN (1896-1994), the first Jewish rabbi to volunteer for naval service in World War II and the first to be promoted to O-6.

Born in the Russian Empire in present-day Belarus, Goldberg was drafted into the Imperial Russian Army during World War I. Deserting in 1916 and emigrating to the U.S., he subsequently enlisted in the U.S. Army, serving in Europe.

After leaving the service in 1920, he became a rabbi in 1926. Commissioning in the U.S. Naval Reserve in December 1941 and called to active duty in 1942, Goldberg actively ministered to Sailors with an inter-faith team, designed and wore the first prescribed Jewish prayer tallith, helped develop the radio program, "The Navy Goes to Church," and wrote Ministering to Jews in the Navy, which was intended to guide non-Jewish chaplains in ministering to the needs of Jewish Sailors ashore and afloat. He also served, in an unofficial capacity, as the Chief of Chaplain's consultant on Jewish affairs. He remained in the Navy following the end of the war, serving as District Chaplain to the Third District, and then as special consultant on Jewish matters to Armed Forces Chaplains Board in 1950.

He retired in 1960, receiving the Legion of Merit in recognition of his myriad contributions. The Goldberg Award, which is given to the O-3 or O-4 chaplain who has shown excellency in facilitating the religious needs of their Sailors, is named in his honor.

Secretary Del Toro named Teresa Todd, spouse of the Rear Adm. Todd and Debbie Anderson, spouse of the Navy's Program Executive Officer (PEO) Ships, Rear Adm. Thomas J. Anderson to serve as sponsors of the future USNS Joshua L. Goldberg.

They, in their role as the ship's sponsor, will represent a lifelong relationship with the ship and crew. The following individuals were identified as sponsors.

T-AO 216 is named to honor Navy Chaplain, Captain Thomas David Parham Jr., USN (1920-2007), the Navy's first African American Sailor promoted to O-6.

A daughter of the late Capt. Parham, Capt Mae Pouget, USN (Ret), expressed the family's gratitude to the Navy on the naming selection.

"Daddy served sailors and Marines with humility, empathy, and respect, showing love for all from his Heavenly Father. Chaplain Parham's legacy of military service lasted from 1944 to 2021, through himself, his children and his son-in-law," said, Capt. Pouget. "The family would like to thank Secretary Del Toro, U.S. Senate Chaplain Barry Black, Chaplain of the Marine Corps Rear Adm. Carey Cash, and Rabbi Arnold Resnicoff."

Ordained into the Presbytery of Mahoning (Youngstown, Ohio) in 1944, Parham commissioned as a Lieutenant (junior grade) in the U.S. Naval Reserve Chaplain Corps in September that same year. After a string of shore assignments in which he was mainly assigned to minister to Black units, he sought release from active duty in 1946.

With the onset of the Korean War, he returned to active naval service in 1951. Though he still faced discrimination, Rear Admiral Stanton Salisbury, then Chief of Chaplains, made it clear that the Chaplains Division had no plans to assign Parham to "segregated duty." After serving overseas in Japan from 1953-1955 and transferring to the U.S. Navy in 1955, he

was assigned to the First Marine Division as Chaplain in 1956. Following other assignments with the Marine Corps, he had duty afloat on-board Valley Forge (LPH 8) and subsequently served at Naval Air Station Newport, where he advanced to O-6 in 1966. Assigned to the Bureau of Personnel as Assistant Chief of Chaplain for Plans in 1967, Parham was actively involved in efforts to boost minority recruitment and address the Navy's recurring drug problems. He continued to undertake shore assignments in D.C., Maryland, and Virginia until his retirement in 1982.

Secretary Del Toro named Capt. Mae Pouget to serve as the sponsor of T-AO 216. Capt. Pouget served in the Navy as a medical officer.

"Having served on a submarine tender with sailors and civilian mariners, I have the utmost respect for the Military Sealift Command," said Capt. Pouget. "I will advocate for and attend to the USNS Thomas J. Parham Jr. (T-AO 216) and pray for her divine protection."

Fleet replenishment oilers are designed to supply fuel to the Navy's operating carrier strike groups. The oilers have the ability to carry a load of 162,000 barrels of oil and maintain significant dry cargo capacity