

SECNAV Names Future Destroyer after MoH Recipient Capt. Thomas G. Kelley



Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro announced the future Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer DDG 140 will be named USS Thomas G. Kelley, named after the Medal of Honor recipient retired Capt. Thomas G. Kelley, pictured above signing a young Sailor's book. *U.S. NAVY / Petty Officer 2nd Class Robert Hartland*

WASHINGTON – Secretary of the Navy (SECNAV) Carlos Del Toro announced during the Surface Navy Association Symposium that future Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer DDG 140 will be named USS Thomas G. Kelley (DDG 140), the Navy said in a Jan. 12 release.

The future USS Thomas G. Kelley will honor retired Captain

Thomas G. Kelley, a Medal of Honor recipient. The name selection follows the tradition of naming destroyers after U.S. naval leaders and heroes.

In 2020, former Secretary of the Navy Richard Spencer announced his intention to name a ship after Kelley but had yet to dedicate the name to an assigned hull number. Today, Del Toro assigns the name to DDG-140, which was appropriated in the fiscal year 2023 budget.

“It is with great admiration and great pride that I am announcing the naming of the DDG-140 after Captain (retired) Thomas Gunning Kelley,” said Del Toro. “May we all, especially the future men and women assigned to this ship, always be inspired by Kelley’s brilliant leadership, bold initiative, and resolute determination.”

Kelley was born in 1939 and grew up in Boston, Massachusetts. He graduated from the College of the Holy Cross in 1960 and was commissioned in the Navy. His early assignments as a Surface Warfare Officer included time aboard USS Pandemus (ARL-18), USS Davis (DD-937), and USS Stickell (DD-888). Kelley then volunteered to serve in Vietnam as a lieutenant commanding River Assault Division 152.

Riverine Action

On June 15, 1969, Kelley led river assault craft boats when they fell under attack. Kelley, while severely wounded, continued to protect and lead his men to safety. For this gallant effort, he was awarded the Medal of Honor. Kelley, despite his injuries, continued his naval career, taking on the position of executive officer of USS Sample (DE-1048) and commanding officer of USS Lang (FF-1060). While serving, Kelley earned his master’s degree in management from the Naval Post Graduate School and completed the Armed Forces Staff College course in Norfolk, Va. Kelley retired from naval

service as a Captain after thirty years, ending his tour as the director of legislation in the Bureau of Naval Personnel.

After his military service, Kelley became the Massachusetts Department of Veterans' Services commissioner and was named Secretary of the Department in 2003. In 2011, Kelley retired from public service and focused on charitable pursuits. He is close with the Medal of Honor Society, previously serving as president, Holy Cross' O'Callahan Society, Arlington National Cemetery, the Homebase Program which treats veterans and active military with the hidden wounds of war, in partnership with the Boston Redsox Foundation and Massachusetts General Hospital. He also serves on the board of directors of the USS Constitution Museum.

'Tremendous Honor'

"It is a tremendous honor and I am truly humbled, especially as a Surface Warfare Sailor," Kelley said. "I trust that those who sail in this ship will be reminded of service to their shipmates and that they will be carrying on a tradition greater than themselves."

Arleigh Burke-class destroyers, built around the Aegis Combat System, are the backbone of the U.S. Navy's surface fleet providing protection to America around the globe. They incorporate stealth techniques, allowing these highly capable, multi-mission ships to conduct a variety of operations, from peacetime presence to national security, providing a wide range of warfighting capabilities in multi-threat air, surface and subsurface domains. These elements of sea power enable the Navy to defend American prosperity and prevent future conflict abroad.