

SECNAV Names Navy's First-in-Class Expeditionary Medical Ship after National Naval Medical Center Bethesda

[Release from the Secretary of the Navy](#)

Secretary of the Navy (SECNAV) Carlos Del Toro announced USNS Bethesda (EMS 1) as the name for the lead ship in the new Expeditionary Medical Ship (EMS(X)) class of ships during his mental health awareness month video. EMS(X) will now be referred to as the Bethesda Class Expeditionary Medical Ship.

The naming is to honor and immortalize the history and community of healthcare professionals that make up Naval Support Activity Bethesda, who have saved and rehabilitated the lives of service members, veterans, civilians, their families, and even Presidents of the United States.

“For most in the armed services, the name ‘Bethesda’ is connected to the world-class medical center for healing that has served a countless number of service members since 1942,” Del Toro said. “The real strength of our Navy and Marine Corps are our people, and if they are willing to sacrifice all for service, they deserve the best medical care available. This ship will honor the medical staff, who compassionately dedicate their time and expertise to take care of our service members. Bearing the name Bethesda will continue the legacy of life saving and medical innovation.”

Former Assistant Secretary of the Navy (1913-1920) President Franklin Delano Roosevelt envisioned a Navy Medical Center and

in 1937 Congress appropriated funds for construction of a new Naval Medical Center, with ground breaking on the site June 29, 1939, bringing to life what became the National Naval Medical Center (NNMC) and National Institutes of Health to Bethesda. Today, Naval Support Activity Bethesda is home to tenant commands such as Naval Medical Leader and Professional Development Command, Naval Medical Research Center, Navy Medical Support Command, Navy Medicine Readiness and Training Command, and the Navy Dosimetry Center. In 2011, due to the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure decision, Bethesda National Naval Medical Center and Walter Reed Army Medical Center consolidated into the current Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, located on the grounds of the former National Military Medical Center, Bethesda.

Secretary Del Toro has also invited the 63rd Governor of Maryland Wes Moore's spouse, Dawn Moore to be the ship's sponsor. Mrs. Moore has ties to the military as a former military spouse and is also an advocate for Marylanders living with a disability.

"This first-in-class ship will be state-of-the-art and the Navy's first medical ship in 35 years," said Del Toro. "This ship, designed with more expeditious and direct access to diagnostic, specialty and hospital care, will allow for increased capabilities and health care. Just as the hospital at NSA Bethesda has served as a beacon of hope to those who entered its doorways, USNS Bethesda (EMS 1) will serve as a beacon to those in need around the world."

The Bethesda-class expeditionary medical ships are designed as a dedicated medical ship that optimizes hospital-level medical care in support of distributed maritime operations (DMO). The EMS will feature a shallow draft enabling greater reach and allowing direct access to shallow austere ports, while also providing a flight deck that accommodates military helicopters. This design provides a full range of medical capabilities including triage/critical care, three operating

rooms, medical laboratory, radiological capability, blood bank, dental, mental health, OB/GYN and primary care, rapid stabilization and follow-on evacuation of multiple casualties and combat search and rescue including recovery at sea. The primary mission of the EMS as a high-speed forward deployed medical ship is to provide rapid responsive sea-based and near-shore hospital level critical care, humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, non-combatant evacuation operations and special operations. The EMS is designed to respond and provide care at a more rapid pace than their predecessors, USNS Mercy and USNS Comfort, sailing at speeds of at least 30 knots with a range of 5,500 nautical miles at 24 knots.