

USNS Sojourner Truth Christened as MSC's Newest Fleet Replenishment Oiler



From Sarah Cannon, April 28, 2025

SAN DIEGO – Military Sealift Command's (MSC) newest fleet replenishment oiler USNS Sojourner Truth (T-AO 210), was christened during a ceremony at the General Dynamics NASSCO shipyard in San Diego, Calif., last night.

The event was attended by Dr. Brett A. Seidle, performing the duties of the Under Secretary of the Navy; Vice Adm. John F. G. Wade, commander, U.S. THIRD Fleet; Capt. Micah Murphy, commander, Military Sealift Command Pacific; executives and employees of NASSCO San Diego; and the decedents of Sojourner Truth.

The ship honors Sojourner Truth, and escaped slave who became an American abolitionist and activist for African-American civil rights, women's rights, and alcohol temperance.

"We reserve the naming of our ships for special places, historic events and great people who represent the best among us, and who's distinguished contributions are worthy of our remembrances for generations to come," said Seidel. "In that vein, Sojourner Truth was a natural choice to be memorialized with a ship bearing her name."

The official christening moment happened when the ship's sponsor, Barbara Allen, the sixth-generation granddaughter of Sojourner Truth, broke a bottle of champagne over the ship's bow with the words, "For the United States of America, I christen you the USNS Sojourner Truth. May God bless this ship and all who sail on her." Following the christening moment, the ship blew her horns and slid down the rails, amid a fanfare of music from the Navy Band Southwest and a shower of red, white and blue streamers.

The 746-foot Truth is the sixth ship of the John Lewis fleet replenishment oiler class. Truth has the ability to carry 162,000 barrels of diesel ship fuel, aviation fuel and dry stores cargo. The John Lewis class is built with double hulls to protect against oil spills and strengthened cargo and ballast tanks and will be equipped with a basic self-defense capability. The Lewis-class of oilers will replace the current Kaiser Class fleet replenishment oilers as they age out of the MSC fleet.

“The greatness of this ship is only matched by the greatness of her crew who represent the thousands of Civil Service Mariners at sea today and the staff of Military Sealift Command who support them ashore,” said Murphy. “Our nation and our Navy are fortunate to have these Americans who step forward through the maritime academies, the union halls, the maritime industry, and many other walks of life, from all corners of the nation to serve in the United States Merchant Marine. In peacetime or war, U.S. Merchant Mariners have answered the call to service every time. They demonstrate a deep and rich history of professionalism, seamanship, and bravery across the globe.”

In addition to Truth, three more Lewis-class oilers are on order for the Navy. In July 2016, US Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus said that he would name the Lewis-class oilers after prominent civil rights activists and leaders including Harvey Milk, Lucy Stone, Thurgood Marshall, Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Harriet Tubman.

“The Navy’s ability to project power across the globe depends on sustained operations at sea and that simply wouldn’t be possible without ships like USNS Sojourner Truth,” said Murphy. “Without MSC’s Combat Logistics Force, carrier strike groups and amphibious forces would be tethered to shore-based support, severely limiting their reach and operational tempo. In short, these ships enable U.S. naval forces to remain forward-deployed, flexible, and ready to respond anywhere in the world on short notice.”

MSC directs and supports operations for approximately 140 civilian-crewed ships that replenish U.S. Navy ships at sea, conduct specialized missions, preposition combat cargo at sea around the world, perform a variety of support services, and move military equipment and supplies to deployed U.S. forces. MSC exists to support the joint warfighter across the full

spectrum of military operations, with a workforce that includes approximately 6,000 Civil Service Mariners and 1,100 contract mariners, supported by 1,500 shore staff and 1,400 active duty and reserve military personnel.