

USS Germantown decommissions after 40 years of service



SAN DIEGO – Whidbey Island-class dock landing ship USS Germantown (LSD 42) was honored at Naval Base San Diego, its original homeport, for more than 40 years of naval service during a decommissioning ceremony on Sept. 24.

During the ceremony, guest speaker Brig. Gen. Samuel L. Meyer, director, expeditionary warfare, paid tribute to the ship's enduring legacy and to the generations of Sailors, Marines and families whose devotion, sacrifice and steadfast service gave life to Germantown's proud history.

"Because of what this crew has done, they are setting the example of what defending the nation in the future looks like," Meyer said. "I am going to thank you for your support for enabling the soldiers from the sea known as the United States Marine Corps, because there is no soldier from the sea

without the Navy.”

Cmdr. Benjamin C. Pearlswig, final commanding officer of Germantown, reflected on the commitment of the current and previous crews who manned the vessel during four decades of operations, deployments and service to the nation.

“To the current and former crews, you are the heart and soul of this ship,” Pearlswig said. “A warship is nothing without the warfighters who walk their decks, that stand the watch and answer the call.”

Built by Lockheed Shipbuilding in Seattle, Germantown was christened June 29, 1984, and sponsored by Barbara Kelly, wife of Gen. Paul X. Kelly, the 28th commandant of the Marine Corps. The ship was commissioned Feb. 8, 1986, becoming the second U.S. Navy ship to bear the name.

Named for the Battle of Germantown, fought Oct. 4, 1777, during the American Revolutionary War, the ship carried forward a name rooted in courage, perseverance and American military heritage. Though the battle ended in a British victory, it reflected the determination and growing strength of the Continental Army and helped sustain the spirit and resolve that would shape the nation’s fight for independence.

From its original homeport of San Diego to its years forward-deployed in Sasebo, Japan, Germantown served as a vital amphibious warfare asset for the Pacific Fleet and forward-deployed naval forces. As the first dock landing ship to conduct Landing Craft Air Cushion amphibious operations, Germantown was at the forefront of a new era of amphibious capability for the Navy-Marine Corps team. It served during major operations including Desert Shield, Desert Storm, Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom.

Beyond warfighting, Germantown also carried out humanitarian missions in times of crisis. The crew supported disaster response efforts following the 1991 eruption of Mount Pinatubo

in the Philippines, the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and the 2011 earthquake and tsunami in Japan as part of Operation Tomodachi.

Throughout decades of service, Germantown participated alongside multiple partners and allies in joint operational rehearsals including Cobra Gold, Exercise Blue Chromite, Talisman Sabre and Rim of the Pacific. strengthening interoperability, reinforcing alliances and advancing maritime security across the Indo-Pacific region.

The success of USS Germantown is owed to its Sailors; over four decades of professionalism, resilience and dedication and steadfast support from their families. In recognition of that service, Germantown earned two Navy Unit Commendations, three Navy Meritorious Unit Commendations and six Battle "E" awards. Germantown maintained a crew of 22 officers, 391 enlisted Sailors, and had the capacity to embark a Marine detachment of 402, with space for an additional 102 personnel during surge operations.

"What you'll take from the Germantown will build on you personally, in your career in the Navy, and where you go from then on," said retired Cmdr. Terrance McKearny, the ship's first executive officer, speaking to the final crew.

The decommissioning of Germantown marks the end of a distinguished chapter in naval history. As the U.S. Navy continues to upgrade its warfighting capabilities to maintain its competitive edge, the legacy of Germantown will endure in the service, sacrifice and accomplishments of all who served aboard it.

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Pacific Fleet, 24 Sept. 24, 2026