

# USS Pierre Commissioned 'Under the Bright Florida Sky'



PANAMA CITY, Fla. (November 15, 2025) – The crew runs aboard the Independence-variant littoral combat ship USS Pierre (LCS 38) as they bring the ship to life during the ship's commissioning ceremony in Panama City, Fla., Nov. 15, 2025. Pierre is the second U.S. Navy ship to bear this name and will be the final Independence-variant LCS to be commissioned in the U.S. Navy. (U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Kassandra Alanis)

By Lt. Brinn Hefron, Public Affairs Officer for Commander, Naval Surface Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet Public Affairs

PANAMA CITY, Fla. (Nov. 15, 2025) – The Navy commissioned its newest ship, the Independence-variant littoral combat ship USS Pierre (LCS 38) in a ceremony held in Panama City, Fla., Nov. 15.

During the ceremony, the guest speaker, Honorable John Phelan, 79th Secretary of the Navy, recognized the innovation of the Independence-variant littoral combat ship and thanked the leadership and crew of USS Pierre as they brought the ship to life and began her commissioned service.

“What an extraordinary day to stand beside to our newest warship under the bright Florida sky, surrounding by those who built her, those who will sail her, and those whose spirit she carries forward,” said Phelan. “It’s an honor to be here in Panama City, and for me to place the USS Pierre, the 19th and final Independence-variant littoral combat ship into commission.”

During the ceremony, Larissa Thune Hargens, Pierre’s sponsor and the daughter of South Dakota Sen. John Thune, gave the crew the order to, “man our ship and bring her to life,” after which the Sailors of Pierre responded, “aye, aye, ma’am” and ran aboard the ship.

“Today marks a moment of pride, purpose and profound connection between the ship, her crew, her namesake city of Pierre and our great nation. As the ship sponsor, I again commit my support and appreciation to each of you and each crew who follows in your wake,” said Hargens. “My connection to the Navy began long before this day with my grandfather. He was a Navy fighter pilot during World War II, flying missions over the Pacific. He was brave, determined, and deeply devoted to his country. Just as my grandfather once took to the skies to defend our freedom, you will take to the seas to protect it with the same bravery, discipline, and devotion to duty that have defined the Navy for generations.”

In the week leading up to the commissioning ceremony, the Pierre crew spent time around Panama City, hosted tours onboard for local organizations and built ties with the city hosting their ship’s commissioning ceremony.

“Many of you have traveled thousands of miles to celebrate this moment with us. To commission a ship that represents our nation’s free and independent spirit, the strength of our constitutional republic, and our willingness to fight for what’s right around the world,” said Cmdr. Justin Guernsey, commanding officer of USS Pierre. “To my coyotes, these past few months you’ve had the opportunity to become intimately familiar with the performance and capabilities of the Navy’s newest fighting ship. Carry our colors high as we bring this ship to life and forward into what action forward into what action may await.”

Other platform guests at the commissioning ceremony included U.S. Sen. John Thune, U.S. Senator Ashley Moody, U.S. Rep. Neal Dunn of Florida, Deputy Director, Joint Interagency Task Force South, Rear Admiral Jeff Jurgemeyer, Mayor of Pierre, South Dakota, Steve Harding, Mayor of Panama City, Florida, Allan Branch and President of Austal USA, Michelle Kruger. The master of ceremonies was Lt. Cmdr. Audrey Munji, executive officer of the USS Pierre.

The ceremony concluded with Guernsey beginning the ship’s motto, “On the move!” with the crew completing the phrase, “On the hunt!”

Independence-variant Littoral Combat Ships are fast, optimally manned, mission-tailored surface combatants that operate in near-shore and open-ocean environments, winning against 21st-century coastal threats. LCS ships integrate with joint, combined, manned, and unmanned teams to support forward presence, maritime security, sea control, and deterrence missions around the globe.

The mission of Commander Naval Surface Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet is to man, train, and equip the Surface Force to provide fleet commanders with credible naval power to control the sea and project power ashore.