

Austal USA Starts Construction on T-ATS 13



MOBILE, Ala. – Austal USA has started construction on the future USNS James D. Fairbanks (T-ATS 13), the third of five steel U.S. Navy Navajo Class Towing, Salvage, and Rescue Ships Austal USA has under contract with the Navy. Construction is well underway on both the future USNS Billy Frank Jr. (T-ATS 11) and USNS Solomon Atkinson (T-ATS 12).

“It’s exciting to see another ship begin traveling down the steel production line which has been busy since we opened it just a little over two years ago,” Austal USA Vice President of New Construction Dave Growden said. “I’m proud of how well our workforce is handling the diversity of work we have taken on since the steel line became active.”

The ship’s namesake, James D. Fairbanks, was a Camp Pendleton Marine who also served in the Navy, where he became a prominent figure in the Seabees. Fairbanks grew up on the White Earth Indian Reservation in northern Minnesota and went on to compile an impressive service record. He first served with Second Battalion Eleventh Marines (2/11) at Camp Pendleton and then did two tours in the Navy. The first included service during Operation Iraqi Freedom, where he was awarded the Bronze Star. Fairbanks also was hailed for his service in the Seabees, the Navy’s storied construction battalion.

T-ATS will provide ocean-going tug, salvage, and rescue capabilities to support U.S. Navy fleet operations and will be a multi mission common hull platform capable of towing heavy ships. These ships will also support several missions, including oil spill response, humanitarian assistance, and wide area search and surveillance.