

Coast Guard Commissions Sentinel-class Cutter Emlen Tunnell



The U.S. Coast Guard commissioned the USCGC Emlen Tunnell (WPC 1145), Patrol Forces Southwest Asia's fourth 154-foot Sentinel-class cutter, into service at Penn's Landing in Philadelphia on Oct. 15, 2021. *U.S. COAST GUARD / Senior Chief Petty Officer Sara Muir*

PHILADELPHIA – The U.S. Coast Guard commissioned the USCGC Emlen Tunnell (WPC 1145), Patrol Forces Southwest Asia's fourth 154-foot Sentinel-class cutter, into service at Penn's Landing in Philadelphia Oct. 15, the Coast Guard Atlantic Area said in release.

Adm. Karl Schultz, commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard, presided over the ceremony. Yvonne Gilmore Jordan, the eldest first cousin to Tunnell, is the ship's sponsor.

"We are so thankful to the Coast Guard for this incredible honor. I can't internalize the perils Emlen, and his shipmates endured. Emlen didn't want anyone calling him a hero, but the Coast Guard said yes, he is. As a relative, it is a privilege to be a participant in this commissioning as the Coast Guard Cutter Emlen Tunnell is placed into service," said Jordan.

The cutter's namesake is Steward's Mate 1st Class Emlen Tunnell, a native of Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, who served in the U.S. Coast Guard from 1943 to 1946. During this time, he rescued two shipmates. The first was aboard the USS Etamin at anchor in Papua New Guinea in 1944. When a crewman became engulfed in flame following a Japanese torpedo attack, he beat out the fire, sustaining burns, and carried him to safety.

The second rescue came aboard the USCGC Tampa in 1946 when a

shipmate fell overboard off Newfoundland. Tunnell risked the 32-degree Fahrenheit water suffering shock and exposure to save him. The U.S. Coast Guard awarded the Silver Lifesaving Medal to Tunnell posthumously for his heroism.

“What really defined Emlen was his character, that selflessness. It was who he was as a human being,” said Schultz. “When this cutter sailed unexpectedly to avoid tropical storm Elsa, Coast Guardsmen who are going to shape the future chapters of the Emlen Tunnell story stepped to the plate, as Emlen did years ago. Maybe not with as many heroics, but they did what Coasties do. They jumped into the breach.”

Tunnell was also a lauded athlete beginning in high school and then college before he joined the service. While in the Coast Guard, he played football and basketball, and upon his departure, he resumed college. Tunnell went on to play professional football for the New York Giants and the Green Bay Packers. He also served as an assistant coach for the Giants. Notably, Tunnell was the first African American to play for the Giants, African American talent scout, and African American full-time assistant coach. He is also the first African American inducted into the Pro-Football Hall of Fame.

The Emlen Tunnell was officially delivered to the U.S. Coast Guard on July 1 in Key West, Florida. It is the 45th Sentinel-class fast response cutter. Each of these cutters carries the name of a U.S. Coast Guard enlisted hero. While the ship commissioned in Philadelphia, it will homeport in Manama, Bahrain, part of U.S. Coast Guard Patrol Forces Southwest Asia. The crew will transit to homeport alongside their sister ship, the USCGC Glen Harris (WPC 1144), later this year.

Schultz added the Sentinel-class cutter is a game-changer in a time when the demand for U.S. Coast Guard services has never been higher. The Tunnell and Glen Harris will join two Sentinel-class ships already in service in the Arabian Gulf.

Two additional 154-foot cutters will join these in 2022 for a total of six in service at PATFORSWA.

Established in 2002 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, PATFORSWA played a crucial role in maritime security and maritime infrastructure protection operations. PATFORSWA is a maritime humanitarian presence on the seas, providing U.S. Navy's 5th Fleet with combat-ready assets. Utilizing the U.S. Coast Guard's unique access to foreign territorial seas and ports, our crews formulate strong and independent relationships throughout the Arabian Gulf and leverage the full spectrum of flexible vessel boarding capabilities at sea and maritime country engagements onshore.