

Future Aircraft Carrier John F. Kennedy Establishes Crew



The upper bow unit of the future aircraft carrier USS John F. Kennedy is fitted to the primary structure of the ship on July 10 at Huntington Ingalls Industries' Newport News Shipbuilding. Huntington Ingalls Industries/Matt Hildreth
NEWPORT NEWS, Va. – Forty-three Sailors assigned to the future aircraft carrier John F. Kennedy attended a ribbon-cutting in Newport News, Virginia, on Oct. 1 to establish the ship's crew and open the building where they will work during the ship's construction, Naval Air Forces Atlantic public affairs said in a release.

"Today, we celebrate a truly historic event," said Capt. Todd Marzano, commanding officer of the pre-commissioning unit. "It marks the grand opening of Building 608, where we will work out of until our spaces on the ship are ready [as well as] the official stand-up of our command. And I couldn't be more excited, more motivated and more honored to be standing with you here today as we make naval history."

The ribbon was cut by Marzano with the help of Cmdr. David Skarosi, Kennedy's executive officer, and Master Chief Information Systems Technician Erica Barnett, Kennedy's acting command master chief, in front of Building 608.

"Today is a huge milestone," Marzano said. "We are now one step closer to accomplishing our mission. We will deliver to the fleet a combat-ready aircraft carrier, manned with properly trained warriors, in support of our nation's needs. We'll have a lot of hard work ahead of us, a lot of challenges, and a lot of long days, but with our skills, talents and dedication, we will be successful in building the best command in the United States Navy."

Pride in the event and the command was shared by many in attendance, including Information Systems Technician 1st Class Chandler Ragland, the first Sailor to be assigned to the Kennedy.

“The legacy of this ship is going to be around for a very long time, and to be able to say that I was the first plank owner is incredibly rewarding,” Ragland said. “I get to tell my daughter and family members down the road that I was the first one.”

Despite the small size of the crew, productivity among Kennedy’s Sailors is already high.

“Every member of the crew that’s come in after me has put forth everything they’ve got,” Ragland said. “I don’t see people turning down tasks and saying ‘no, that’s out of my realm.’ They’re always willing and ready to lend a hand and get the mission done. Everyone has the same work ethic, and it’s a long road, but we’re going to keep charging down it.”

Marzano added, “These Sailors have been screened and handpicked due to their outstanding professional records. Big Navy realizes the tremendous challenge and hard work we have ahead of us in standing up an aircraft carrier. It’s great for me as the CO, because I get a true A-team of folks.”

The event concluded with the observance of colors and then a cake-cutting.

John F. Kennedy, the second aircraft carrier in the Gerald R. Ford class, is under construction at Huntington Ingalls Industries’ Newport News Shipbuilding.