

General Dynamics NASSCO Christens the USNS Thurgood Marshall, the Seventh in the T-AO Program



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SAN DIEGO – General Dynamics NASSCO has christened and launched the USNS *Thurgood Marshall* (T-AO 211), the seventh ship in the fleet oiler program built for the U.S. Navy. The ship is named in honor of Thurgood Marshall, the first African American appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court, serving from 1967 to 1991. He was a prominent civil rights lawyer who argued and won the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* case, which helped end racial segregation in public schools.

Maj. Gen. David Bligh, Judge Advocate General of the Navy, representing the Secretary of the Navy, served as the

principal speaker at the ceremony.

“The General Dynamics NASSCO team has been a strong partner of our forces for decades, particularly in the design and construction of our Naval auxiliary ships,” said Bligh. “There is a vital link between our defense industrial base and the effectiveness of our fighting men and women around the world.”

Remarks were also delivered by NASSCO President Dave Carver and representatives of the Navy. Following the remarks, ship co-sponsors Melonie Tibbs, Cecilia L. Marshall, and Alissa Kamens Marshall christened the vessel with the traditional champagne bottle break across the hull.

“What we christen tonight is not just a ship – it’s the embodiment of American unity that will carry Thurgood Marshall’s legacy, and the legacy of America, all over the world,” said Carver. “His name on the hull of this ship reminds us that service takes many forms – and that truth, courage, and conviction must always guide our mission.”

Fleet oilers serve as a supply lifeline for U.S. Navy vessels carrying out missions across the globe, including in the Western Pacific, Indian Ocean, and beyond. Crafted for underway replenishment, the oilers transfer fuel, lubricants, fresh water, and small amounts of dry cargo as part of the Navy’s combat logistics force. NASSCO designs all new vessels with double hulls to protect against oil spills and to enhance the durability of cargo and ballast tanks. The vessels measure 746 feet long, with a full load displacement of 49,850 tons. Each can carry 157,000 barrels of oil, along with significant dry cargo and aviation capability, and can reach a top speed of 20 knots.

“To the men and women of General Dynamics NASSCO, your work directly contributes to this nation’s security,” said Vice Adm. Douglas Verissimo, representing the Chief of Naval

Operations. “Your professionalism matters. You have not simply constructed a vessel – you have delivered operational capability and I truly thank you.”

The first five ships in the class – USNS *John Lewis* (T-AO 205), USNS *Harvey Milk* (T-AO 206), USNS *Earl Warren* (T-AO 207), USNS *Robert F. Kennedy* (T-AO 208), and USNS *Lucy Stone* (T-AO 209) – have all been delivered to the Navy. The USNS *Sojourner Truth* (T-AO 210) recently completed successful sea trials and is set to be delivered on Tuesday, June 9, 2026. The USNS *Thurgood Marshall* (T-AO 211), USNS *Ruth Bader Ginsburg* (T-AO 212), USNS *Harriet Tubman* (T-AO 213) and USNS *Dolores Huerta* (T-AO 214) are currently under construction.