

Keel Authenticated for Future USNS Earl Warren

WASHINGTON – The keel for the future USNS Earl Warren (T-AO 207), the Navy's 3rd John Lewis-class fleet replenishment oiler, was laid at General Dynamics National Steel and Shipbuilding Co. on April 30, Team Ships Public Affairs said May 2.

A keel laying is the recognition of the start of a ship's construction. It is the joining together of a ship's modular components and the authentication or etching of an honoree's initials into a ceremonial keel plate. The ship's sponsor, Supreme Court Justice Elena Kagan, had her initials etched into the keel plate by NASSCO welders.

"We are looking forward to getting these ships to the fleet to support at-sea operations," said John Lighthammer, program manager, Auxiliary and Special Mission Shipbuilding Program Office. "This new class of oilers is bringing much needed capability and capacity to the fleet."

The John Lewis-class T-AOs will be operated by Military Sealift Command to provide fuel and lubricating oil, and small quantities of fresh and frozen provisions, stores, and potable water to Navy ships at sea, and fuel for embarked aircraft.

The oilers feature the capacity to carry barrels of oil, a significant dry cargo capacity, aviation capability and a speed of 20 knots. NASSCO designed the new vessels with double hulls to protect against oil spills and strengthened cargo and ballast tanks. The new T-AOs will add capacity to the Navy's Combat Logistics Force and become the cornerstone of the fuel delivery system.