

Keel Authenticated for Future USNS Robert F. Kennedy



The Honorable Kathleen Kennedy Townsend etched her initials into the keel plate for the future USNS Robert F. Kennedy Dec. 5. *U.S. NAVY*

WASHINGTON – The keel for the future USNS Robert F. Kennedy (T-AO 208), the Navy’s 4th John Lewis-class fleet replenishment oiler, was laid at General Dynamics National Steel and Shipbuilding Company Dec. 5, Team Ships Public Affairs said in a release.

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, the Honorable Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, etched her initials into the keel plate.

“We are excited to celebrate this milestone as we work to bring another oiler to the fleet to support at-sea operations,” said Jana Polzin, deputy program manager, Auxiliary and Special Mission Shipbuilding Program Office. “The USNS Robert F. Kennedy will bring significant contributions to the fleet as the primary fuel pipeline to refuel ships at sea.”

USNS Robert F. Kennedy is based on commercial design standards and will recapitalize the current T-AO 187 Class Fleet Replenishment Oilers to provide underway replenishment of fuel to U.S. Navy ships and jet fuel for aircraft assigned to aircraft carriers.

The oilers feature substantial volume for 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.

NASSCO is currently in production on the future USNS Lucy Stone (T-AO 209) as well as in production on two Expeditionary Sea Bases (ESB) – the future USS John L. Canley (ESB 6) and USS Robert E. Simanek (ESB 7). They also have the future USNS Sojourner Truth (T-AO 210), the future USNS Thurgood Marshall (T-AO 211) and the future USNS Ruth Bader Ginsburg (T-AO 212) as well as ESB 8 under contract.