

# Future USS Richard M. McCool Jr. Keel Authenticated



PASCAGOULA, Miss. – The keel for the future USS Richard M. McCool Jr. (LPD 29) was ceremoniously laid during a ceremony at Huntington Ingalls Industries Ingalls Shipbuilding Division on April 12, the Naval Sea Systems Command said in a release.

Shana McCool and Kate Oja are the ship's sponsors and granddaughters of the namesake and authenticated the keel by etching their initials into the keel plate. This tradition symbolically recognizes the joining of modular components and is the ceremonial beginning of the ship.

"We are honored to have Ms. McCool and Ms. Oja with us today to recognize this major ship event," said Capt. Brian Metcalf, LPD 17 class program manager for Program Executive Office Ships. "The San Antonio class has proven essential to expeditionary warfighters, and we are excited to bring the 13th and final ship of the Flight I configuration to the fleet."

The ship is named in honor of Navy veteran and Medal of Honor recipient Capt. Richard M. McCool Jr. and is the Navy's 13th San Antonio-class amphibious transport dock ship. McCool was awarded the Medal of Honor in 1945 for the heroism he displayed after his ship was attacked by kamikaze aircraft in the Battle of Okinawa. Despite suffering from shrapnel wounds and painful burns, he led efforts to battle a blazing fire on his ship and rescue injured sailors.

Fabrication on LPD 29 began on July 30 and the ship is scheduled to be delivered in 2023. Eleven San Antonio-class ships have been delivered to date, the most recent being USS Portland (LPD 27), which was commissioned in 2018. LPDs 28 and

29 will serve as transition ships to LPD 30, the first ship of the Flight II. LPD 17 Flight II ships will replace the Navy's aging LSD 41/49 class ships.

The LPD 17 San Antonio class amphibious transport dock ships are designed to transport and deploy combat and support elements of Marine expeditionary units and brigades. The LPD 17 Flight I ships carry about 720 troops and can transport air cushion or amphibious assault vehicles. These ships support amphibious assault, special operations and expeditionary warfare missions through the 21st century.