

Muslim Civil Rights Group Protests Name 'Fallujah' for U.S. Navy Ship



The amphibious assault ship USS Tripoli (LHA 7) sails with the amphibious assault ship USS America (LHA 6) during a photo exercise in the Philippine Sea, Sept. 17, 2022. The future USS Fallujah (LHA 9) will be similar to these ships but equipped with a well deck. *U.S. MARINE CORPS / Lance Cpl. Christopher Lape*

ARLINGTON, Va. – A Muslim civil rights group is protesting the U.S. Navy's selection of the name "Fallujah" as the name of a future amphibious assault ship.

The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), self-described as the nation's largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization, "called on the U.S. Navy to change the name of the future America-class amphibious assault ship 'USS Fallujah,'" in a Dec. 15 press release.

Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro announced Dec. 14 that a future America-class amphibious assault ship, LHA 9, will be named USS Fallujah. The ship "will commemorate the First and Second Battles of Fallujah, American-led offensives during the Iraq War. The name selection follows the tradition of naming amphibious assault ships after U.S. Marine Corps battles, early U.S. sailing ships or legacy names of earlier carriers from World War II," the Navy release said.

The First Battle of Fallujah occurred in April 2004 in an effort to capture or kill insurgents responsible for the killing of four U.S. contractors, according to the Navy Department release. The Second Battle of Fallujah, fought between Nov. 7 and Dec. 23, 2004, was a major U.S. led offensive to retake control of the city from insurgents and

foreign fighters. With over 100 coalition forces killed and over 600 wounded, Operation Phantom Fury is considered the bloodiest engagement of the Iraq War and the fiercest urban combat involving U.S. Marines since the Vietnam War's Battle of Hue City.

CAIR has a different regard for the battles.

"The two battles fought in Fallujah, Iraq, in 2004, were the bloodiest fighting of the Iraq War. [Hundreds of civilians – including women and children – were killed](#) during the battles," CAIR said in the release. "To this day, the civilian population is reportedly being negatively impacted by the weapons used in those battles."

"Just as our nation would never name a ship the 'USS Abu Ghraib,' the Navy should not name a vessel after notorious battles in Fallujah that left hundreds of civilians dead, and countless children suffering from birth defects for years afterward," said CAIR National Deputy Director Edward Ahmed Mitchell, in the CAIR release. "There must be a better name for this ship – one that does not evoke horrific scenes from an illegal and unjust war."

The secretary of the Navy selected the name of the battles "to memorialize the Marines, Soldiers and coalition partners that fought valiantly and those that sacrificed their lives during both battles of Fallujah. This namesake deserves to be in the pantheon of iconic Marine Corps battles and the LHA's unique capabilities will serve as a stark reminder to everyone around the world of the bravery, courage and commitment to freedom displayed by those who fought in the battle."

"Under extraordinary odds, the Marines prevailed against a determined enemy who enjoyed all the advantages of defending in an urban area," said Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen. David H. Berger, in the announcement. "The Battle of Fallujah is, and will remain, imprinted in the minds of all Marines and

serves as a reminder to our Nation, and its foes, why our Marines call themselves the world's finest."