

Navy Charges Crew Member for Bonhomme Richard Fire



A helicopter from Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 3 combats a fire aboard the amphibious assault ship USS Bonhomme Richard (LHD 6) at Naval Base San Diego, July 14, 2020. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Garrett LaBarge* ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Navy has brought charges against a Sailor who was a crew member of the amphibious assault ship USS Bonhomme Richard for starting the fire that resulted in the devastation of the ship, the U.S. 3rd Fleet said in a July 29 release.

“On July 29, charges under the Uniform Code of Military Justice [UCMJ] were brought forth against a Navy Sailor in response to evidence found during the criminal investigation into the fire started on USS Bonhomme Richard (LHD 6) on July 12, 2020,” said Cmdr. Sean Robertson, U.S. 3rd Fleet spokesperson. “Evidence collected during the investigation is sufficient to direct a preliminary hearing in accordance with due process under the military justice system. The Sailor was a member of Bonhomme Richard’s crew at the time and is accused of starting the fire.

“Vice Adm. Steve Koehler, commander, U.S. 3rd Fleet is considering court-martial charges and has directed a preliminary hearing at which an impartial hearing officer will make determinations and recommendations required by the UCMJ prior to any further trial proceedings – including whether or not there is probable cause to believe an offense has been committed and to offer a recommendation as to the disposition of the case.”

The Bonhomme Richard was pierside at the naval base in San Diego going through modernization when a fire started and spread through much of the ship over a period of days. The

Navy considered several options to repair the ship, possibly in another role, but the service decided to decommission and scrap it.

“Following an extensive material assessment in which various courses of action were considered and evaluated, we came to the conclusion that it is not fiscally responsible to restore her, then-Navy Secretary Kenneth Braithwaite said in a Nov. 30 release.