

SECNAV Celebrates Keel Laying of the Future Frigate USS Constellation



The U.S. Navy symbolically laid the keel to its first Constellation-class guided-missile frigate, the future USS Constellation (FFG 62) during a keel laying ceremony at Fincantieri Marinette Marine, Marinette, Wisconsin, April 12. Distinguished guests (left to right) pictured: James Dillenburg, Ceremony Chaplain; Admiral Lisa Franchetti, Chief of Naval Operations; Carlos Del Toro, secretary of the Navy; Jean Wagner, welder; Melissa Braithwaite, ship sponsor; Tony Evers, governor of Wisconsin; Mark Vandroff, CEO, Fincantieri Marinetti Marine; Marco Galbiati, CEO, Fincantieri Marine Group; Rear Admiral Kevin Smith, Program Executive Officer, Unmanned and Small Combatants.

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Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro traveled to Marinette, Wisconsin, to celebrate the keel laying for the future USS Constellation (FFG 62), April 12.

The Constellation is the first ship of the Constellation-class frigates awarded to Fincantieri Marinette Marine in 2020.

“USS Constellation and the Constellation-class frigates are a critical next step in the modernization of our surface ship inventory, increasing the number of players on the field available globally for our fleet and combatant commanders,” said Secretary Del Toro.

Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Lisa Franchetti joined Secretary Del Toro during the historic occasion.

“This ship will be critical in putting more players on the field,” said Franchetti. “The Constellation-class frigate,

named after the USS Constellation – the first of six frigates authorized by the Naval Act of 1794 and the first in-class designed and built by American workers – will ensure the free flow of American commerce by sea.”

The ship’s sponsor is Melissa Braithwaite, the spouse of former Secretary of the Navy Kenneth Braithwaite, who named the ship in 2020.

“I am truly honored to be here as the USS Constellation sponsor. It is one of the greatest honors of my life,” said Melissa Braithwaite. “Being a Navy wife and Ken’s long service in the Navy, today, I had the honor of truly belonging to the Navy myself.”

During his remarks, Del Toro thanked Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers for his leadership, pointing out that the state’s shipbuilding industry was integral to the national maritime statecraft efforts to rebuild commercial and naval power.

“This yard is teeming with activity – Americans from all walks of life coming together to build warships in a demonstration of our industrial might, and showcasing the talents of the skilled workforce that our nation must expand during this critical period in our world’s history, said Del Toro.

“After having helped support some of the efforts to update and expand Fincantieri’s facilities to meet the needs of an effort of this size, it is great to be here now to celebrate these projects and see how this hard work is paying off,” said Evers. “This contract to build these frigates is a great opportunity for Wisconsin to showcase our rich shipbuilding and maritime history and cement our role as leaders in this industry.”

The Constellation-Class Guided-Missile Frigate (FFG 62) represents the Navy’s next-generation small surface combatant. This ship class will be an agile, multi-mission warship capable of operations in both blue-water and littoral

environments, providing increased combat-credible forward presence that provides a military advantage at sea.

Read Del Toro's [full remarks here.](#)