

SECNAV Announces Sponsors of Future USS Charles J. French



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WASHINGTON DC (Dec. 12, 2024) – Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro announced the sponsors of the future USS Charles J. French (DDG 142) will be the Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Shalanda Young and the late French’s great niece, Ms. Vanessa French Wilson.

Del Toro made the announcement during a ship naming celebration held at the Eisenhower Executive Office Building, in Washington DC, on Dec. 12.

Sponsors are selected by the Secretary of the Navy and hold a unique role of maintaining a lifelong relationship with the ship and crew.

“The bond forged between a sponsor and their ship is a testament to the enduring spirit of the sea and the unwavering dedication of those who serve upon its waters,” said Del Toro. “I am honored to announce, today, that Director Shalanda Young and Ms. Vanessa French Wilson have accepted the invitation to serve as sponsors of this great ship.”

Shalanda Young, Director of OMB, joined Secretary Del Toro for the announcement.

“It is a profound honor to be named the sponsor of the USS Charles J. French,” said Director Young. “This ship will carry an important legacy, marking French’s bravery, resilience and duty after his vessel was attacked during the Pacific Theatre of World War II. Without hesitation, French rescued his fellow

sailors and swam through the night to bring them to safety, risking his life to ensure fifteen others could live theirs. For too long, French was denied the recognition he deserved from the government. But today, I am proud to immortalize the memory and service of one of America's most courageous heroes."

In January, Secretary Del Toro named the ship after Charles J. French during remarks at the Surface Navy Association 36th National Symposium. The ship's naming honors the tradition of naming Arleigh Burke-class DDGs after Navy and Marine Corps heroes.

Charles Jackson French was a Navy Mess Specialist 1st Class Petty Officer the night the USS Gregory (APD 3) was sunk by Japanese destroyers during the WWII Battle of Guadalcanal. French saved the lives of more than a dozen Sailors by swimming through the night, dragging a raft full of injured shipmates through shark-infested waters.

For his actions, French received a letter of commendation from Adm. William "Bull" Halsey, then commander of the Southern Pacific Fleet. In May 2022, he was posthumously awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Medal for his heroic actions. The award was presented at Naval Base San Diego, during a ceremony dedicating the base's rescue swimmer training pool in French's honor

"The naming of the USS Charles J. French (DDG 142) is a joyful, yet humbling experience for the French family," said Ms. Wilson, the newly named co-sponsor of the future DDG 142. "Thank you, Secretary Del Toro, for choosing to acknowledge the heroism of Charles Jackson French."

Fabrication of the ship is projected for 2026 with a projected keel laying set for 2027, projected christening in 2029, and delivery projected for 2031.

Arleigh Burke-class destroyers, built around the Aegis Combat System, are the backbone of the U.S. Navy's surface fleet providing protection to America around the globe. They incorporate stealth techniques, allowing these highly capable, multi-mission ships to conduct a variety of operations, from peacetime presence to national security, providing a wide range of warfighting capabilities in multi-threat air, surface and subsurface domains. These elements of sea power enable the Navy to defend American prosperity and prevent future conflict abroad.