

SECNAV Names Future Arleigh Burke-class Destroyer USS J. William Middendorf



President Gerald R. Ford receives the prototype of the ceremonial Continental Navy Jack from Secretary of the Navy J. William Middendorf, II during a ceremony in Washington in October 1975. A smaller version of the flag was flown from the jack staff of every U.S. Navy ship in December 1976 as part of the Navy's bicentennial celebration. *U.S. NAVY / Chief Journalist Richard Montgomery*

ARLINGTON, Va. – Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro announced June 10 during the Naval War College commencement that future Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer DDG-138 will be named USS J. William Middendorf, the Defense Department said in a release.

The future USS J. William Middendorf will honor former Secretary of the Navy and U.S. Ambassador J. William Middendorf II. The name selection follows the tradition of naming destroyers after U.S. naval leaders and heroes.

In 2020, former Secretary of the Navy Richard Spencer announced his intention to name a ship after Middendorf but had not dedicated the name to an assigned hull number. Del Toro assigned the name to DDG-138, which was appropriated in the fiscal year 2022 budget.

“I am pleased to honor Secretary Spencer’s previous decision to name a ship after Ambassador J. William Middendorf and I am incredibly proud to announce it here, at the Naval War College, during the commencement of our future leaders,” said Del Toro. “Middendorf’s spirit of innovation and questioning helped champion programs that are still defending our nation today. This namesake ship will continue to inspire that

legacy.”

Middendorf was born in 1924, in Baltimore, Maryland. Throughout 1944-1946, while serving in the Navy aboard landing craft support ship, USS LCS(L)(3)-53, he earned his Bachelor of Naval Science. After a discharge from naval service he earned an additional B.A. from Harvard University and then an M.B.A. from New York University. In 1969, he was appointed U.S. Ambassador to the Netherlands and continued in the position until 1973. He then served as undersecretary of the Navy with an appointment from President Richard Nixon. On April 8, 1974, Middendorf became the 62nd secretary of the Navy. During his tenure as Secretary of the Navy, he championed the Trident submarine program, Aegis Missile system, oversaw the creation of the famed Marine Corps Marathon, and was instrumental in the development of the F/A-18 Hornet. In addition to his career in public service, Middendorf is widely respected philanthropist and an accomplished author, artist, and composer.

“I met with Middendorf recently, affirming my decision to move forward with the previous naming decision. His ongoing leadership and respect provides a worthy cause for the naming of a destroyer,” said Del Toro. “The men and women who will sail upon this vessel will undoubtedly be inspired and strengthened by legacy of the namesake, ultimately impacting actions and decisions that will further our nation and freedom across the globe.”