

USS Delbert D. Black Commissioned in Port Canaveral



The crew mans the rails of the Navy's newest guided-missile destroyer, USS Delbert D. Black (DDG 119), in honor of the first Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy Delbert D. Black. DDG 119, is the first ship in naval history to be named Delbert D. Black, and will be homeported in Naval Station Mayport. U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Sarah Villegas

PORT CANAVERAL, Fla. – The U.S. Navy commissioned Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Delbert D. Black (DDG 119) Sept. 26, the commander, Naval Surface Forces said in a release.

Due to public health and safety concerns related to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the commissioning was a private event.

Secretary of the Navy Kenneth J. Braithwaite was represented by James F. Geurts, assistant secretary of the Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition, with Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy (MCPON) Russell Smith placing the ship into commission. Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Michael Gilday was represented by Adm. William K. Lescher, vice chief of naval operations. The event was livestreamed to allow public viewing of the ceremony for the ship named for the first MCPON.

MCPON Russell Smith, currently serving as the 15th senior enlisted leader of the Navy, was the principle speaker. MCPON Smith fills the role begun by Black as advisor to the chief of naval operations and to the chief of naval personnel in matters dealing with enlisted personnel and their families.

“This is the first ship to honor a senior enlisted leader in such a way for their contributions in this realm and represents a significant milestone achievement that recognizes both the responsibility of the position to the Navy, as well the tremendous accountability to those enlisted Sailors we primarily provide advocacy for,” said MCPON Smith. “The vision and effort it took to move the idea of a Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy into an effective reality cannot be overstated, and all of us have been the benefactors of his legend of service by advancing the work that he began.

Rear Adm. Brad Cooper, commander, Naval Surface Force Atlantic, welcomed the ship that brings a wide range of warfighting capabilities in multi-threat air, surface and subsurface environments to the premier Surface Force in the world.

“The USS Delbert D. Black joins the Fleet during a time when its cutting-edge capabilities are most needed,” Cooper said. “I’m extremely proud of this crew and know the pennant of courage, teamwork, inclusiveness and sacrifice will be taken up and flown even higher with the Sailors who serve aboard the ship.”

Ima Black, MCPON Delbert D. Black’s widow and a former Sailor, served as the ship’s sponsor offering congratulations to everyone who played a role in delivering USS Delbert D. Black to service. Black served during World War II in the Navy WAVES, Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service.

Delbert D. Black’s commanding officer, Cmdr. Matthew McKenna, reported the ship ready to Adm. Lescher.

The crew will kick off Tulsa Navy Week as part of their commissioning. “Being that Delbert Black was a native of Oklahoma, I’m ecstatic that Tulsa Navy Week will highlight the first Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy, namesake of our ship, virtually Oct. 5 through 11,” said McKenna. “This is

much more than a ceremony; the commissioning of a ship is a culmination of unwavering dedication. The ship is ready to be introduced to the fleet.”

Delbert D. Black is the 68th Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer to be delivered to the Navy and the first to bear its name. DDG 119 honors the first Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy. Black is known for initiating the master chief program, ensuring enlisted leadership was properly represented Navy-wide.