



Charlene James Benoit, great-great-niece of Capt. Joshua James, smashes a bottle across the bow of the Ingalls-built Coast Guard Cutter James. Supporting her are, from left, Capt. Andrew Tiongson, the ship's prospective commanding officer; Vice Adm. Peter Neffenger, vice commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard; and Ingalls Shipbuilding President Brian Cuccias. Huntington Ingalls photo by Lance Davis.

Acquisition Update: National Security Cutter Program Continues Progress

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Two Coast Guard National Security Cutters – James and Hamilton – are steadily advancing toward completion.

James, the fifth NSC, was christened at Ingalls Shipyards in Pascagoula, Miss., Aug. 16, 2014. Hamilton, the fourth NSC, completed acceptance trials Aug. 11-14, 2014.

NSC 5 is named for Capt. Joshua James, who is considered one of the most celebrated lifesavers in the world. His lifesaving career began at age 15 when he joined the Massachusetts Humane Society and ended with his death while on duty with the U.S. Life-Saving Service at age 75. James is credited with saving more than 600 lives during his time with the U.S. Life-Saving Service, which merged with the Revenue Cutter Service in 1915 to create the modern U.S. Coast Guard.

James' great-great-niece, Charlene James Benoit, serves as ship sponsor and performed the traditional honor of breaking a bottle of American sparkling wine across the ship's bow during the christening ceremony.

Vice Adm. Peter Neffenger, Coast Guard vice commandant and the ceremony's principal speaker, said the NSC will help the Coast Guard continue James' legacy in the future. "The boundaries surrounding illegal migrant activity, weapons, drug smuggling and terrorism continue to blur and converge. The challenges created by that convergence

require a 21st century Joshua James. We need his spirit and his adherence to our values. We need his adaptability, his staying power and his multi-mission focus.”

The NSC is designed to meet the changing needs of the Coast Guard, Neffenger said. “New challenges, driven by complex and uncertain times, require new ways of thinking, new strategies and the right platforms for 21st century mission execution. Platforms like the National Security Cutter.”

James was launched May 3, 2014, and is scheduled for delivery to the Coast Guard next summer.

Acceptance trials for the Hamilton were completed in Pascagoula and at sea in the Gulf of Mexico by the Coast Guard and the U.S. Navy’s Board of Inspection and Survey. Acceptance trials are the final significant milestone before the government takes ownership of the new cutter. Representatives from the Board of Inspection and Survey inspected all of Hamilton’s systems, tested its shipboard equipment, examined the quality of the cutter’s construction and evaluated its performance and compliance with the contractual specifications to identify any noteworthy deficiencies that need to be corrected prior to delivery. Hamilton is scheduled to be delivered to the Coast Guard in mid-Sept., with commissioning set for Dec. 6, 2014. Both Hamilton and James will be homeported in Charleston, S.C.

“Hamilton’s acceptance trials demonstrated that Ingalls shipyard has built a superb ship that will endure for many decades,” said. Capt. Douglas Fears, prospective commanding officer of the Hamilton. “The exceptional craftsmanship in Hamilton will soon be met by the extremely talented Coast Guard men and women that will breathe life into this great ship. We are very excited to get Hamilton to sea and make the cutter’s new home in Charleston.”

The fourth NSC is the latest in a storied line of Coast Guard cutters named for Alexander Hamilton, the first Secretary of the Treasury and the driving force behind the establishment of the Revenue Cutter Service, a precursor to the modern U.S. Coast Guard.

The Legend-class NSC is the most technologically sophisticated cutter in the Coast Guard fleet, capable of performing critical homeland security, law enforcement and national defense missions in the most demanding open ocean environments. The cutter is replacing the aging 378-foot High Endurance Cutters, which have been in service since the 1960s. It is 418 feet long, has a top speed of 28 knots, a range of 12,000 miles and endurance to perform 60- to 90-day patrols. The NSCs’ design provides better sea-keeping and higher sustained transit speeds, greater endurance and range, and the ability to launch and recover small boats from astern, as well as aviation support facilities and a flight deck for helicopters and unmanned aerial vehicles.

The first three NSCs – Coast Guard Cutters Bertholf, Waesche and Stratton – are commissioned and performing operations from their homeport of Alameda, Calif.

The keel for the sixth NSC, Munro, will be laid this October, and delivery is scheduled in 2016. A production contract for NSC 7, Kimball, was awarded March 31, 2014, with production to begin early next year and delivery in 2018. A contract option for the initial order of long lead time materials for NSC 8, Midgett, was exercised June 30, 2014. Long lead time materials includes steel plating, propulsion systems, marine turbine/diesel engines, air search radar, ship integrated control system, switchboards, generators and other items needed for production.