



USS Delaware is Coming Home for Commissioning

BY TOM CARPER



Delawareans will have the opportunity to witness a historic moment on April 4, 2020, as the U.S. Navy commissions the 7th vessel to bear the name of the First State. The USS Delaware, designated SSN 791, is a Virginia-class, nuclear-powered fast attack submarine that will make its way to the Port of Wilmington for a special ceremony to mark the beginning of its service to protect U.S. interests throughout the oceans of the world. Armed with

MK48 torpedoes and Tomahawk cruise missiles – and with a capability to carry special forces – the USS Delaware is the most modern fast attack submarine in the world.

Before Delaware ratified the Constitution to become the First State on December 7, 1787, Delaware played an important role in fighting for our young Republic's liberty and independence. The Continental Congress ordered that construction begin on the first USS

Delaware in 1775 in the Philadelphia shipyard. When she was completed in July 1776, the USS Delaware sailed the Delaware River, helping to protect Philadelphia from the advancing British fleet.

On September 26, 1777, the British fleet arrived in Philadelphia. Under the command of Commodore John Barry – whose namesake bridge connects Delaware and New Jersey today – the USS Delaware fought throughout the night against overwhelming odds, surrendering only after running aground and being surrounded by British vessels. Since the completion of the first USS Delaware in July 1776, six U.S. Navy ships have borne the name “Delaware,” including the most recent – a battleship that served for 14 years, including World War I.

I was privileged to serve as a naval flight officer for five years during a hot war in Southeast Asia and for another 18 years until the end of the Cold War as a Navy P-3 aircraft mission commander. In addition to flying thousands of surveillance missions in the Vietnam War, P-3 aircrews flew at least as many missions tracking hundreds of Soviet submarines throughout the Cold War, sometimes in concert with U.S. fast attack nuclear submarines. Aided by listening stations around the world, including one that was in Cape Henlopen State Park, and sometimes partnering with our fast attack submarine and Naval



surface vessels, we studied the tactics of the Soviets, their capabilities, and their operating procedures so that we would be prepared to destroy them if the Cold War ever turned into a hot one. Having spent nearly a quarter century studying these submarines and their operations, I know firsthand what a great honor it is to have one of these incredible vessels named after Delaware.

Here in the First State, ours is a military family that already features a world-class airlift facility at Dover Air Force Base. There, service men and women operate the C-5 and C-17 cargo aircrafts and a mortuary where the remains of our fallen heroes are returned to their loved ones with dignity and respect. In addition, outstanding citizen-soldiers and airmen and women serve in Delaware Army and Air National Guard units, as well as a unit of the U.S. Naval Reserves. Delaware also has an important Coast Guard

contingent at Indian River Inlet, and, of course, the more than 73,000 veterans who currently live in Delaware.

The USS Delaware is a testament to the duty, dedication and sacrifices of these brave service members, and all those who – for more than 200 years – served their country in defense of the American people.

I hope Delawareans young and old join us on April 4, 2020, at the Port of Wilmington to witness our state make history once again.

The USS Delaware will be in Wilmington for the week surrounding its Commissioning Ceremony in April and open to the public for tours. For more information and for tickets to the event, go to www.usdelawarecommissioning.org.