

Ties Between State and Navy Grow With USS Indiana

By Tom Schuman

The Naval Surface Warfare Center Crane Division in southern Indiana is the third largest naval installation in the world. An even lesser-known fact is that in a little more than a year, a fourth ship to be named after our state will be put into service with the commissioning of the USS Indiana (SSN 789).

By law, the Secretary of the Navy names all ships. The future USS Indiana (it is currently referred to as PCU Indiana – or pre-commissioning unit) was named in April 2012. A keel laying ceremony and official start of construction took place in May 2015. A christening of the Virginia-class submarine is expected in early 2017, followed by a commissioning later that year.

A few definitions, courtesy of the Navy and Ray Shearer, chairman of the USS Indiana Commissioning Committee:

- Virginia-class submarines will have the capability to attack targets ashore with highly accurate Tomahawk cruise missiles and conduct long-term surveillance. It is also designed for special forces delivery and support.
- Christening: The official ceremony recognizing the floating of a ship by name and marked with the traditional breaking of a bottle of champagne across the bow.
- Commissioning: Following sea trials, a private delivery ceremony and a sail away from the construction site, this marks the acceptance of the ship by the U.S. Navy. At the breaking of the commissioning pennant, the ship will “come alive” and the crew will ceremonially run aboard. The ship is then officially referred to as a United States Ship (USS).

Approximately 4,000 workers are building the submarine in Newport News, Virginia. It will weigh 7,800 tons, be 277 feet in length, be able to operate at more than 25 knots submerged and have a crew of approximately 135.

In addition to the heavy involvement of personnel at Crane, Shearer says more than 50 Indiana business are directly producing or manufacturing parts of the future USS Indiana. One of those is Mount Vernon-based Babcock & Wilcox (featured in *BizVoice*® previously for its work on small nuclear reactors).

A Marine veteran, Shearer states his involvement is “still about serving and giving back to the community. This ship will be representing our state, all of us, all over the world.”

The role of the commissioning committee, he offers, is very important. In addition to raising funds for the commissioning ceremony, it must facilitate lasting bonds between the state and the submarine. That includes themed decor on board that reflects major cities throughout the state, quality of life amenities for the crew that connect them to Indiana and much more.

“We’ll try to do some things differently, maybe a scholarship for crew members. There will be a gift to the ship that is a big part of the commissioning ceremony,” he shares. “A crest design competition (that received its final entries earlier this year) gave a rare opportunity for the public to be part of the construction of the ship.”

Shearer notes that many of the crew members are already in place as the Navy works to build an early bond between the namesake and the people who will be calling the ship home. Crew leaders visited schools in central and northern Indiana last fall and took part in ceremonies at the Navy-Notre Dame football game.

Shearer says donations to the USS Indiana Commissioning Committee are tax deductible and may also be made in honor of loved ones.

RESOURCE: USS Indiana at www.ussindiana.org

USS INDIANA HISTORY



The first *Indiana* (BB 1) was commissioned in 1895. She served during the Spanish-American War and later was a training ship for gun crews during World War I before being decommissioned for the final time in 1919.



Indiana (BB 50) was laid down at the New York Navy Yard in 1920, but her construction was canceled in 1922 in accordance with the terms of the Washington Treaty for Naval Limitation.



The third battleship named in honor of *Indiana* (BB 58) was a 35,000-ton battleship that was christened 17 days before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. She earned nine battle stars for World War II service that included downing several enemy aircraft during the Battle of the Philippine Sea in 1944. She was decommissioned in 1947 and sold for scrap in 1963.

The mast, prow and two gun mounts are on display outside Indiana University’s Memorial Stadium. Her anchor rests at Fort Wayne and other relics are on display in various museums and schools throughout the state. Teak planks from the main deck were used to construct a desk and presented to the then Governor of Indiana. It has been used by all subsequent governors.



Upon completion, the new USS Indiana will represent the state throughout the world.