

August 2021

The Honorable Carlos Del Toro
Secretary of the Navy
Office of the Secretary of the Navy
1000 Navy Pentagon, Room 4D652
Washington, DC 20350

Dear Secretary Del Toro,

Congratulations on your confirmation as Secretary of the Navy. We were honored to serve our Country in that position, and wish you all the best.

We are the fourteen living former Secretaries of the Navy. We served ten Administrations of both parties from 1967 through 2021. The Honorable John W. Warner, Secretary of the Navy 1972-1974, also agreed to sign this letter, but unfortunately passed away before your nomination.

We write to urge you to designate Philadelphia and the Delaware River as the site of the main 2025 celebrations of the 250th anniversaries of the founding of the Navy and Marine Corps in Philadelphia.

As part of the Semiquincentennial of the Independence of the United States, it is important to commemorate the events that enabled and protected that independence: the creation of the American military services in 1775. On October 13, 1775, the Second Continental Congress at Independence Hall in Philadelphia founded the Navy, whose first ship was soon commissioned on the banks of the Delaware. On November 10, 1775, the Second Continental Congress passed a resolution to raise the first battalions of Marines, who were recruited at Tun Tavern in Philadelphia. The Marines soon sailed down the Delaware on their first amphibious operation.

The Delaware Valley also has a long tradition of providing ships and leaders for the Navy and Marine Corps. The first Navy shipyard was in Philadelphia, built ships from 1776 to 1995, and still hosts Navy facilities. Innovative and productive shipyards on both sides of the Delaware produced the first U.S. Navy frigate, the largest ship of the line, first steam-powered frigate, first screw-driven frigate, first successful seagoing ironclad, first steel ship and cruiser, first U.S. Navy submarine, first designated destroyer, first battleship, first dreadnought, first commissioned aircraft carrier, first light carrier, first escort carrier, and largest and last battleships. From Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware came the Father of the Navy John Barry, the first Marine Corps Commandant Samuel Nicholas, such Navy legends as Truxtun, Bainbridge, Decatur, Macdonough, Dupont, Halsey, and Spruance, and legendary Marines like Smedley Butler and John Basilone. John Paul Jones was commissioned in Philadelphia, and on the Delaware first raised the first national flag.

Given this history, there is no more fitting place to celebrate the 250th birthdays of the Navy and Marine Corps than at their birthplace: Philadelphia and the Delaware River. A group of

Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware organizations and citizens have joined together as Homecoming 250 Navy Marine Corps to propose “Launching the Semiquincentennial” with exciting historic celebrations for the Navy and Marine Corps’ 250th anniversaries. In each celebration, there will be ceremonies, parades, flyovers, reenactments, and exhibits at Independence Hall, Tun Tavern, historic Philadelphia sites, and both banks of the Delaware. And for each celebration there is a highlight unequalled anywhere:

In October 2025, Homecoming 250 Navy Marine Corps will celebrate the 250th anniversary of the Navy’s founding by assembling on the Delaware River historical, replica, and active-duty ships representing every major war which the Navy has fought: the American Revolution, the War of 1812, the Civil War, the Spanish-American War, World War I, World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Cold War, and the conflicts in the Middle East. The Delaware is the best and indeed only location for this unprecedented exhibition of Navy history, as Philadelphia has preserved the USS *Olympia*, the sole surviving ship from the Spanish-American War, which also served in World War I, and Camden, its New Jersey neighbor, has preserved the USS *New Jersey*, the only battleship to fight in World War II, Korea, Vietnam, the Cold War, and the Middle East, and the most decorated Navy ship afloat.

In November 2025, Homecoming 250 Navy Marine Corps will celebrate the 250th anniversary of the Marine Corps by assembling for touring on the Delaware historic, replica, and active-duty ships with a special connection to the Marine Corps. Most importantly, the Marines’ 250th will be celebrated by rebuilding Tun Tavern, the hallowed birthplace of the Corps, near its original location on the Delaware River. The first Marines were recruited at Tun Tavern, and history was also made there by Ben Franklin, George Washington, John Adams, and others. The historic tavern, rebuilt and operating as a charity by the Tun Tavern Legacy Foundation, will provide a mecca for Marines and others for decades to come.

We ask that you support this Launching the Semiquincentennial proposal by designating Philadelphia and the Delaware as the site of the main celebrations of the 250th birthdays of the Navy and Marines. We request you authorize those services to participate and cooperate by bringing in active-duty ships, aircraft, and personnel to represent the Navy and Marine Corps of recent years, today, and the future.

Sincerely Yours,

DocuSigned by:

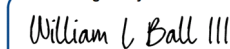


Honorable Paul Robert Ignatius
Secretary of the Navy 1967-1969



Honorable John Francis Lehman Jr.
Secretary of the Navy 1981-1987

DocuSigned by:



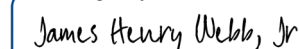
Honorable William Lockhart Ball III
Secretary of the Navy 1988-1989

DocuSigned by:



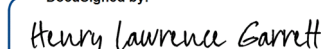
Honorable John William Middendorf
II Secretary of the Navy 1974-1977

DocuSigned by:



Honorable James Henry Webb, Jr.
Secretary of the Navy 1987-1988

DocuSigned by:



Honorable Henry Lawrence Garrett III
Secretary of the Navy 1989-1992

DocuSigned by:

Sean O'Keefe

Honorable Sean O'Keefe
Secretary of the Navy 1992-1993

DocuSigned by:

Richard Jeffrey Danzig

Honorable Richard Jeffrey Danzig
Secretary of the Navy 1998-2001

DocuSigned by:

Donald C. Winter

Honorable Donald Charles Winter
Secretary of the Navy 2006-2009

DocuSigned by:

Richard Vaughn Spencer

Honorable Richard Vaughn Spencer
Secretary of the Navy 2017-2019

DocuSigned by:

John H. Dalton

Honorable John Howard Dalton
Secretary of the Navy 1993-1998

DocuSigned by:

Gordon Richard England

Honorable Gordon Richard England
Secretary of the Navy 2001-2005

DocuSigned by:

RAYMOND EDWIN MABUS

Honorable Raymond Edwin Mabus, Jr.
Secretary of the Navy 2009-2017

DocuSigned by:

Kenneth John Braithwaite

Honorable Kenneth John Braithwaite
Secretary of the Navy 2020-2021