

Defense *advocate*

The Ford: the next-generation carrier

A keel-laying ceremony for the Navy's first *Ford*-class aircraft carrier was held on November 14 at Northrop Grumman Shipbuilding in Newport News, a major Hampton Roads employer and the sole producer of U.S. aircraft carriers.

Susan Ford Bales, former President Gerald R. Ford's daughter and the ship's sponsor, declared the keel "truly and fairly laid" in accordance with Naval tradition, and her initials were welded to a steel plate that will become part of the keel.

Bales said that her father was "very moved" when he learned that the carrier would be named after him before his death in 2006. "Dad was really proud of it, just incredibly proud." Ford served aboard a light aircraft carrier, the *USS Monterey*, during World War II.



Sen. Carl Levin, left, Adm. Kirkland H. Donald, director of Naval Nuclear Propulsion, Susan Ford Bales and Robert Bowker, a structural welder with Northrop Grumman Shipbuilding, display Bales' initials welded into a piece of steel during the keel-laying ceremony for the future *USS Gerald R. Ford*. U.S. Navy photo

The *Ford*-class represents the first major change in aircraft carrier design since the 10-ship *Nimitz*-class was introduced in the late 1960s. The *Ford* will have a larger flight deck, improvements in weapons and material handling, a new propulsion plant design that requires fewer personnel to operate and maintain, and a new smaller island that has been pushed toward the rear of the ship. In addition, the ship will have an electromagnetic aircraft launching system.



Then-Lt. Cdr. Gerald R. Ford in 1945.
U.S. Navy photo

"These and other changes mean that this carrier will be more capable, more flexible, and better able to protect America and the American way of life," said Northrop Grumman Shipbuilding President Mike Petters.

Guests in attendance included Sen. Carl Levin of Ford's home state of Michigan, Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus, U.S. Reps. Bobby Scott and Glenn Nye of Virginia, and the Director of Naval Nuclear Propulsion Adm. Kirkland H. Donald.

The *Ford* is scheduled for delivery to the Navy in 2015.

Coming Events

December 18, 2009

[Gov. Kaine's FY 2011-2012 Budget Released](#)
Richmond, Va.

January 13, 2010

[2010 Virginia General Assembly Convenes](#)
Richmond, Va.

January 16, 2010

[Governor-Elect Inauguration](#)
Richmond, Va.

January 27, 2010

[VNDIA Annual Board of Directors Meeting](#)

10 a.m., VNDIA Offices
901 E. Byrd St., 19th Fl.
Richmond, VA 23219

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Pirates & SEALs

Norfolk's *Nauticus* museum will have *Real Pirates*, a National Geographic exhibition, on display through April 4, 2010. Although the exhibit looks specifically at the 18th Century "golden age" of piracy, the museum will add artifacts and information on modern piracy.

One highlight will be the lifeboat in which the captain of the *Maersk Alabama* was held captive by Somali pirates in April 2009 before being freed when Navy SEALs fatally shot three of the pirates.

Visit www.nauticus.org.

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Happy Holidays from VNDIA

As another year comes to an end, the directors and staff of VNDIA would like to thank each of you for your support and cooperation in making Virginia a strong, stable and effective partner with the Department of Defense.

We'd also like to ask everyone to remember all of our service members, including thousands from Virginia or Virginia installations, who are deployed or afloat during the holiday season.

Home or away, at peace or at war, our service members are our neighbors, and an important part of the Virginia family. Thanks to them, and thanks to all of you.



On November 13 the Naval Support Facility Dahlgren in King George County celebrated the 200th birthday of its namesake, Rear Adm. John Adolphus Dahlgren. Philadelphia born, Dahlgren was the head of the Union Navy's ordnance department during the Civil War, during which time he designed several successful guns and cannons and became known as the "Father of American Naval Ordnance."

Earlier this year Quantico's National Museum of the Marine Corps returned the first gun ever fired on Dahlgren's Potomac Range, a massive World War 1-era track mounted artillery piece. It will be restored by the installation's Naval Surface Warfare Center and be the centerpiece of the base's 100th anniversary in 2018.

Dahlgren's 200th



Rear Adm. Dahlgren standing beside a 50-pounder *Dahlgren* rifle, on board the *USS Pawnee* in Charleston, S.C., 1865.



Dahlgren personnel prepare to off-load a World War I-era tractor-mounted artillery piece, the first gun test-fired at Dahlgren (then called Naval Proving Grounds Lower Station) on October 16, 1918. The 7-inch, 45 caliber gun will be restored by the Naval Surface Warfare Center Dahlgren Division. *U.S. Navy photo, July 20, 2009*