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Two U.S. Navy Vessels Named Flagships for BHR Expedition

Story Number: NNS060314-15

Release Date: 3/14/2006 5:00:00 PM

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Official U.S. Navy file photo of USS Bonhomme Richard (LHD 6).

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GROTON, Conn. (NNS) -- The multipurpose amphibious assault ship USS Bonhomme Richard (LHD 6) and guided-missile destroyer USS John Paul Jones (DDG 53) were named honorary flagships March 13 for the upcoming search for the remains of the original Bonhomme Richard, which sank in the North Sea in 1779.

The search project revolves around one of the most memorable battles of the American Revolution, where John Paul Jones, an American naval hero, uttered his legendary words, "I have not yet begun to fight!"

"It's entirely appropriate that these front-line warships are honorary flagships of the expedition, as they are representative of Jones' legacy," said Capt. Jack Ringelberg, president of the Ocean Technology Foundation (OTF).

LHD 6, homeported in San Diego, is the third U.S. warship to bear the name Bonhomme Richard. With a crew of 1,200 Sailors, today's Bonhomme Richard carries into action 1,500 Marines and their aircraft, vehicles and equipment. In 2005, Bonhomme Richard and embarked Marines delivered humanitarian assistance and disaster relief to Indonesian tsunami survivors and conducted security and combat operations in the northern Persian Gulf and Iraq.

"Capt. John Paul Jones and the crew of Bonhomme Richard established the U.S. Navy's reputation for courage and determination in battle, and we are proud and thrilled to be named a flagship for this historic expedition," said USS Bonhomme Richard's Commanding Officer, Capt. Stephen Greene. "Locating the original Bonhomme Richard some 227 years later would be a tremendous oceanographic technical achievement and fitting tribute to Jones and his crew."

DDG 53 is the sixth ship to carry the name of the U.S. Navy's founding father. John Paul Jones, an Aegis destroyer, has represented the ship's motto and Jones' own promise to go "In Harm's Way" during the global war on terrorism.

"The legacy of John Paul Jones is carried forth in our ship on a daily basis, and it is an honor to be associated with such an important research project, one that will hopefully enlighten us more about Jones' most famous ship and certainly, his most famous battle," said James Housinger, John Paul Jones' commanding officer.

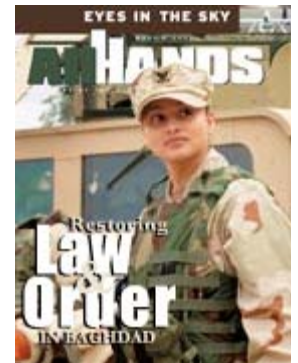
"This year marks the 100th anniversary of the celebrated return of Jones' body to the United States," said Ringelberg, "and it would be great to be able to say that we have helped bring closure to this chapter in U.S. naval history by locating the remains of his ship."

The OTF is a nonprofit organization based in Groton on the University of Connecticut's Avery Point campus. Its mission is to foster excellence in ocean exploration, marine research and education.

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