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{ A Section }

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PORT EVERGLADES



TO BROWARD: The USS Jason Dunham, leaving its Maine birth place, is on a training mission.

MEMORY OF MARINE REBORN IN NAVY SHIP

■ A newly minted Navy warship honoring a New York Marine's 2004 sacrifice is headed for South Florida and 10 days of celebrations capped by a Nov. 13 commissioning ceremony.

BY CAROL ROSENBERG
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It was a year into the U.S. invasion of Iraq, and a young Marine manning a checkpoint threw his body on a hand grenade.

Cpl. Jason Dunham saved the lives of two buddies but would die of his wounds days later.

Now, the 22-year-old Marine's sacrifice is being immortalized.

A warship bearing his name sailed from the General Dynamics Bath Iron Works in Maine on Wednesday morning, the start of a nearly monthlong training cruise down the East Coast ahead of a 10-day visit to South Florida.



DUNHAM

• TURN TO SHIP, 17A

FRONT PAGE

Memory lives on with new Navy ship

• SHIP, FROM 1A

It's expected to arrive on Nov. 5. And eight days later, the U.S. Navy will commission its newest \$1.1 billion destroyer, DDG 109, at Port Everglades. Name: the USS Jason Dunham.

"This is personal for all of us because the war with Iraq and Afghanistan does affect us all directly," said Broward County businessman Chuck Black, a retired Navy senior chief, head of the community's host committee for the USS Dunham's coming-out parties.

He called the upcoming festivities a chance to see the Navy in action.

The ship's sailors will visit hospitals, veterans groups and schools after the destroyer pulls into port. Black said they will also volunteer on projects to help house the homeless and feed the hungry.

Officially, a commissioning ceremony hands a ship to the U.S. Navy fleet. But, as Black describes it, "it's a big ceremonial event" — with speeches and music capped by

someone, in this instance Dunham's mother, Debra, instructing the crew to *Man our ship and bring her to life!*

But it's also a good opportunity to draw crowds to the host community, Fort Lauderdale, which will roll out the red carpet for the ship's Nov. 5 arrival.

Some 3,000 people can watch the Nov. 13 festivities, including members of the public who write in ahead for free-of-charge tickets, as well as family members of the 250-plus sailor crew.

In this case, it will also celebrate the valor of Dunham, a New York native, who, by order of former President George W. Bush, became the first Marine to receive a Medal of Honor since the Vietnam War.

The 510-foot destroyer's ultimate home base — or "homeport" as they call it in the Navy — is Norfolk, Va.

It is poised to join a carrier strike group in times of war. It also will sail on training and humanitarian missions.

South Florida has been commissioning destroyers since 1996, when Fort Lauderdale hosted the coming-out party for the USS Cole, the destroyer that was attacked by terrorists in October 2000 in a Yemen port.

Miami hosted the most recent commissioning, the February 2007 celebration for the USS Gridley, named for a storied Spanish-American war U.S. naval captain.

But while past commissionings have provided history lessons for veteran-rich South Florida, the commissioning of the USS Dunham invokes an episode of more contemporary heroism.

"We expect there will be several individuals who had very personal contact with this Marine at the event," said the ship's public affairs officer, Lt. Cmdr. Jonathan Blythe.

Invited guests include the Dunham family and the two fellow Marines who survived the grenade attack — Marine Sgt. Bill Hampton, who is still serving, and former Marine Cpl. Kelly Miller,

once again a civilian.

Destroyers are the multi-tasking warships of the U.S. Navy.

They can hunt submarines and fight off attackers from the air.

But they can also sail off the coast of an enemy nation and fire cruise missiles to land at a great distance.

If you go

What: Commissioning of the USS Jason Dunham, or the U.S. Navy's Destroyer No. 109

When: Nov. 13

Where: Port Everglades

Admission: Free and open to the public. But an invitation is required to attend the event, which will accommodate some 3,000 guests plus the families of the ship's 250-plus sailors.

Contact: South Floridians interested in attending the ship's commissioning should contact Chuck Black, the commissioning committee chairman, at cblack@signsbytomorrow.com or by telephone, 954-547-8858. All requests should be in by Oct. 15 and include the name and address of each person who would like to see the ceremony.