Newest Navy destroyer pays homage to fallen Marine war hero

By MC3 Desiree Green, *USS Jason Dunham* Public Affairs

The Navy commissioned its newest Arleigh Burke-class destroyer *USS Jason Dunham* (DDG 109) during a ceremony in Port Everglades, Fla. Nov. 13.

The ship's commissioning ceremony paid homage to its namesake, Cpl. Jason Dunham, who selflessly sacrificed his life at age 22 in Iraq, April 14, 2004.

Dunham used his Kevlar helmet to cover a grenade and threw himself on top to smother the blast, which resulted in saving the lives of two of his fellow Marines.

"I am delighted to attend my first commissioning as Commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps, for a ship named after a true hero," said Gen. James F. Amos.

Former President George W. Bush posthumously awarded Dunham the Medal of Honor. Dunham is the first Marine to be awarded the medal for Operation Iraqi Freedom, and the first Marine to receive the Medal of Honor since the Vietnam War.

"The timing of this event could not have been better," said Amos. "I think it's fitting that we commission this ship, named after a Marine just three days after Nov. 10, a birthday shared by both Jason Dunham and the Marine Corps, and just two days after Veteran's Day when we honor all military members both present and past."

The pier welcomed more than 5,000 guests and supporters including family members of the crew and the Dunham family.

"I have military family, and I have a personal family," said Dunham's mother, Deb Dunham. "The kindness, the generosity and the strength that they have given Dan and I and the children has kept us going. The process has been a journey that I hadn't anticipated, but it's a ride I wouldn't miss. I have words for Jason later. I don't quite know what I'm going to say, but I have words."

Maj. Trent Gibson, Dunham's officer in charge, expressed his feelings about a ship being named in Dunham's honor.

"I think it's an indescribable honor," said Gibson. "The fact that his name is on a ship is going to perpetuate and inspire future generations of American sons and daughters of that impact. His name is already legendary in the Marine Corps, but to extend it to the Navy is truly special."

Since arriving in Port Everglades Nov. 5, the crew has volunteered for various community service projects throughout the week including visits to Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital, performing work on a Habitat for Humanity project, preparing meals for Feeding Florida, and visiting local schools.

"I am deeply proud and honored to stand here today to represent my Sailors; by far the greatest and most special group of men and woman that I have worked with in my entire 19-year career," said Cmdr. Scott Sciretta, *USS Jason Dunham* commanding officer.

Sciretta thanked everyone involved in planning the commissioning ceremony, the city of Fort Lauderdale for its hospitality and also Bath Iron Works who built the ship.

"Our ship and crew has much to be grateful for today," said Sciretta. "We are grateful to our commissioning committee, local Navy League councils and our Broward Navy team partners for organizing this week's events for our crew. Our heartfelt thanks to your city for making us feel like family."

Gen. James F. Amos, 35th Commandant of the Marine Corps, delivers his remarks during the commissioning ceremony of the Navy's newest Arliegh Burk-class destroyer *USS Jason Dunham* (DDG 109) Nov. 13. The ship is named after U.S. Marine Cpl. Jason Dunham who was mortally wounded by insurgents in Iraq in April 2004 and was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor January 11, 2007.
U.S. Navy photo by MC1 Martin Cuaron

He also offered thanks to Gibson who he deemed a "true brother." He then turned to Deb and Dan Dunham to express his love and appreciation for them, and the friendship that they had built through this experience.

"Deb and Dan, the past two years have been the most incredible journey of my naval career, having the distinct honor and privilege to spend so much personal time with you is beyond words," said Sciretta. "You are two of the most loving, caring, and giving people I have ever met. You are an example for every parent in our great nation, thank you from the bottom of our hearts for being who you are, for teaching us about love and life, and for the great sacrifice your son made for this nation."

The commissioning ceremony came to a close with Sciretta asking Deb Dunham to bring the ship to life. Dunham, stood poised and proudly addressed the crew.

"Crew of the *USS Jason Dunham*," she said, "man the rails."

And with that, the Navy welcomed its newest destroyer.

Enhanced FOCUS website offers robust support to Navy families

By Bureau of Medicine and Surgery Public Affairs

The Bureau of Medicine and Surgery (BUMED) recently redesigned the website for Project FOCUS (Families OverComing Under Stress) to better serve military families by building resiliency and coping mechanisms to deal with stress associated with multiple overseas deployments.

The FOCUS website, www.focusproject.org, now includes both a public section with open access, and a new "FOCUS World," which is a secure section, accessible only to military families.

According to Kirsten Woodward, BUMED Family Programs Division director, FOCUS World is an interactive website that teaches families resiliency training skills.

"In FOCUS World, parents will be able to create a family account that allows all members of their family to share memories, create family goals and chat in their own private chat room," said Woodward. "In addition, there are a variety of downloadable handouts that provide helpful education and activities for military families and brief videos that demonstrate helpful techniques used to talk about common family challenges."

FOCUS World provides parents and children with training in key resiliency skills, including communication, emotional regulation, problem solving, goal setting and managing deployment reminders. Such skills are taught through a number of interactive features, including the Family Narrative Timeline, Future Family and the Feeling Thermometer, all of which are designed to provide instruction and practice in the key FOCUS skills.

Family members are able to upload photos in order to share important events and in order to help families maintain cohesion during deployments. An 'i-chat' feature has been developed to allow service members to remain involved in parenting at a distance and to facilitate effective co-parenting. Modeling videos have also been created to provide guidance for parents around common challenges faced by military families experiencing multiple deployments.

"It is through technology and innovation that allows Navy Medicine to continue to serve the needs of families, both at the installation level, and the most geographically isolated locations," said Navy Surgeon General Vice Adm. Adam M. Robinson Jr.

For more information on Project Focus, visit www.focusproject.org. For more information on BUMED, visit www.med.navy.mil.