

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



U.S. Navy and OpSail will commemorate Bicentennial of War of 1812 and Star-Spangled Banner with major events in 2012-2015

-- The Tall Ships of the world return to U.S. --

--“Our Flag Was Still There” theme marks festivities in seven ports and across the country --

Washington, D.C., (June 22, 2011) – U.S. Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus and the chairman of Operation Sail, Inc., Jose Fuentes, today announced a seven-port public/private partnership for the bicentennial commemoration of the War of 1812 and the writing of The Star-Spangled Banner.

“From 2012 to 2015, the United States Navy and its partners, including Operation Sail, Inc., will commemorate the War of 1812 and the writing of our national anthem, the Star-Spangled banner,” Mabus said. “It is remarkable that 200 years ago, one of the first wars in our country's history was fought against nations who have become our closest allies.”

Mabus and Fuentes said that week-long events, including parades of sail, public visitation, spectacular air shows, international athletic competitions, and community relations activities will mark the occasions in New Orleans, New York City, Norfolk, Baltimore/Annapolis, and Boston/New London. Similar events will take place in Great Lakes ports and across the nation.

They made the announcement in a ceremony at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, home of the restored Fort McHenry flag. The unifying theme for the events is drawn from the anthem itself: 'Our Flag Was Still There'.

The Chief of Naval Operations has invited 120 countries to send appropriate combat ships as well as their national academy sail training tall ships to America, Mabus noted.

"Navy and Operation Sail have partnered in producing major patriotic events for more than 50 years, and we look forward to another majestic spectacle of tall ships and international navy ships next year," Fuentes said.

OpSail, the Congressionally chartered non-profit producer of tall ship events, has partnered with the Navy for previous American milestones such as the 1976 bicentennial of American independence, the 1986 State of Liberty centennial, and Millennium in 2000.

"Bringing the tall ships of the world back to U.S. waters for the commemoration of this glorious American milestone excites the imagination," Fuentes said. "Throughout 2012-2015, millions of people will witness these graceful and majestic sailing ships as they parade in together, and celebrate brotherhood of the sea, and of our freedoms."

States, municipalities and civic organizations have formed host committees to organize the details of the week-long events in each port in concert with Navy officials and OpSail executives.

In 2012, a number of the Navy ships will continue into the Great Lakes for a series of high-profile port visits in cities along the Canadian and U.S. shorelines, Mabus said. Fleet Weeks, Navy Weeks and other annual events will use the commemoration as a teaching tool to impart important lessons about American heritage. As the commemorations extend into 2013, 2014 and 2015, numerous conferences, seminars, teaching moments and observances will take place in venues that were crucial to the outcome of the conflict.

"In each of the port cities, the navy ships and the tall sailing ships will be open for public visiting, and citizens will have the opportunity of interacting with the talented young sailors from around the world." Mabus added.

Fuentes noted the economic impact of the activities planned: "OpSail events contribute to the economy of participating port cities through increased hotel bookings, restaurant reservations, sales and new infrastructure," he said, "and they attract significant national and international media coverage."

Key dates for the Navy / OpSail ship visits include:

New Orleans, Louisiana, April 17-23
New York, New York, May 23-30 (Fleet Week)
Norfolk, Virginia, June 1-12 (Harborfest)
Baltimore / Annapolis, Maryland, June 13-19
Boston, Massachusetts, June 30-July 6
New London, Connecticut (Tall Ships only), July 6-8
Milwaukee, Wisconsin, August 8-13
Chicago, Illinois, August 15-20
Toledo, Ohio, August 22-27
Cleveland, Ohio, August 27-September 4
Detroit, Michigan, September 5-10
Buffalo, New York, September 12-17

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About the United States Navy

The U. S. Navy is the sea-service branch of the U. S. Armed Forces. The mission of the Navy is to maintain, train and equip combat-ready naval forces capable of winning wars, deterring aggression and maintaining freedom of the seas. The United States Navy - A Global Force For Good. For more information, please visit www.navy.mil and www.history.navy.mil

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About Operation Sail, Inc.

Operation Sail, Inc. is a non-profit organization established in 1961 with the endorsement of President John F. Kennedy. Backed by a Joint Congressional Resolution, its mission is to advance sail training and promote goodwill among nations. OpSail has produced five international sailing events in 1964, 1976, 1986, 1992, and 2000, each tied to a landmark historical event and culminating in a traditional Parade of Sail in New York Harbor. For more information, please visit www.opsail.org.

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