



American Merchant Marine Veterans

Serving America in Peace and War

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, May 31, 2024

Unveiling of a New Monument on Utah Beach Honoring U.S. Merchant Mariners' Actions during in D-Day

NORMANDY, FRANCE – On 5 June 2024, the American Merchant Marine Veterans will unveil a long overdue monument to the U.S. Merchant Marine on Utah Beach. The new monument, near the Lone Sailor monument and the Higgins Boat monument, will honor the valor and sacrifice of U.S. Merchant Mariners whose actions supported military operations on D-Day that took place 80 years ago on 6 June 1944. On D-Day, the Allies' armada and invasion forces landing in Normandy created the largest amphibious assault operation in the history of the world.

The Allies' D-Day armada had about 7,000 ships, including 200 U.S. merchant ships that were operated by U.S. Merchant Mariners and U.S. Naval Armed Guard crews. The monument, enshrined on Utah Beach where U.S. troops landed, will display a quote from General Dwight D. Eisenhower, inscribed for all visitors to see. On 8 May 1945, Gen. Eisenhower, Supreme Commander of Allied Forces in the European Theater, said:

“Every man in this Allied command is quick to express his admiration for the loyalty, courage, and fortitude of the officers and men of the merchant marine. We count upon their efficiency and their utter devotion to duty as we do our own; they have never failed us yet and in all the struggles yet to come we know that they will never be deterred by any danger, hardship, or privation. When final victory is ours there is no organization that will share its credit more deservedly than the merchant marine.”

Participants at the unveiling ceremony will include, Dave Yoho, a U.S. Merchant Marine WWII veteran; Charles de Vallavieille, Mayor of Sainte-Marie-du-Mont, Normandy, France; Capt. Dru DiMattia, president of the American Merchant Marine Veterans; and Rita Cosby, award-winning journalist, news anchor, and author. The small town of Sainte-Marie-du-Mont and the French people in Normandy have extended wonderful hospitality for the event.

Coordination in Normandy was kindly provided by the American War Memorials Overseas and the Utah Beach Museum. Travel and support for U.S. Merchant Marine World War II veterans was sponsored by the Gary Sinise Foundation, American Airlines, and Northeast Wisconsin Old Glory Honor Flight. USA Warrior Stories will record the event.

Funding for the monument was supported by donations from maritime unions, including: the Seafarers International Union, the American Maritime Officers, the Marine Engineers Beneficial Association, the American Maritime Congress, and other stakeholders.

The plaque for the monument, showing Gen. Eisenhower's quote in English and French and the USMM Atlantic War Zone service medal, was designed by Ian Watts of AMMV. The bronze plaque was manufactured in France by Cornille-Harvard. The Utah Beach Museum constructed the concrete base and completed the installation of the historic monument. AMMV appreciates the coordinated work of all those who contributed to the timeless monument that honors U.S. Merchant Mariners' actions and contributions to the success of D-Day.

Capt. Dru DiMattia, president of the American Merchant Marine Veterans, is proud of the historic unveiling of the monument to the U.S. Merchant Mariners' accomplishments on D-Day and during all sea operations during World War II. He said,

“The U.S. Merchant Mariners' heroic dedication to supply troops, ammunition, goods, and vehicles during D-Day enabled the Allies' remarkable success for the invasion of the Normandy beaches. Reinforcement and resupply by U.S. merchant ships in the weeks after D-Day allowed the Allies to push forward into France, which began the end of Nazi conquest, terror, and oppression in war-torn Europe.

The American Merchant Marine Veterans salute the U.S. Merchant Marine and all members of the Allies' invasion forces who struck a mighty blow for freedom on D-Day. The new monument unveiled on Utah Beach is a fitting tribute to U.S. Merchant Mariners' service and sacrifices. May their achievements on D-Day and during all of World War II never be forgotten!”

Since 1984, the American Merchant Marine Veterans has been a not for profit, pro-American organization established to gain recognition for what American Merchant Mariners have accomplished for our country in times of peace and war. We are dedicated to promoting and educating the American people and the U.S. Government about the services that American Merchant Mariners have provided to our Nation in connection with military sealift support and preservation of our national security through a strong maritime industry.

Capt. DiMattia is available for advanced interviews.

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