

2020 AAPA Communications Awards
Entry Classification: Community/Educational Outreach
Category: 3

Port: Port Everglades

Title: Commissioning Ceremony of a U.S. Naval Destroyer

SUMMARY
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SUMMARY

After a year-long planning effort, Port Everglades hosted the U.S. Navy's Commissioning Ceremony of its newest Arleigh Burke-class destroyer, the *USS Paul Ignatius* in July 2019. This was an important event for the community as it generated a sense of pride for our nation and offered the Port a chance to be a focal point and site of this national and historic special event.

The commissioning of U.S. Navy vessels at ports other than Navy homeports is not regularly done, and the fact that Port Everglades was chosen to host a U.S. Navy ship commissioning for the sixth time in the past 32 years was an honor. However, due to the nature of the U.S. Navy's security concerns, the event was promoted as invitation-only. In addition, Port Everglades bars the general public from entering without a specific business purpose.

The two Communication staff leads were all in for making this a robust community outreach effort to elicit national pride despite the limited ability of the general public to attend the actual historical event.



CHALLENGES OR OPPORTUNITIES

For 30 years, the *Fleet Week Port Everglades* has been a signature annual event for South Florida-- as well as for the Navy, Marines, Coast Guard, and the nation -- bringing thousands of visiting military personnel to our community. The organization that handles the planning of this annual event, Broward Navy Days, Inc. (BND) was a natural choice for our military-welcoming community. Only a handful of ports in the nation have the experience associated with holding an annual Fleet Week tradition, which is the type of experience needed for a new military vessel's commissioning.

New U.S. Navy vessels are commissioned at Navy homeports. Port Everglades is a commercial port. The fact that Port Everglades was chosen to host a U.S. Navy ship commissioning for the sixth time in the past 32 years was an honor. We were pleased that the Navy chose us to meet their unique needs amongst the competition.

The commissioning was also going to have a greater historical significance because Secretary Ignatius, for whom the ship would be named, planned to be present for the ceremonies, making the *USS Paul Ignatius* the first destroyer to be commissioned with the honoree present. But given his age, 98, it was not known whether he would be active in the ceremonies. Mr. Ignatius was the 59th Secretary of the Navy (1967-69) during President Lyndon Johnson's Administration and a distinguished World War II veteran. One additional, sad setback was the passing of his wife seven months before the commissioning. She was the ship's sponsor and had a role in the ceremony.



Due to the nature of the U.S. Navy's security concerns the event was promoted as invitation-only. In addition, Port Everglades bars the general public from entering without a specific business purpose. The primary communications challenge was to garner favorable attention to the Port and engage the public without physically inviting them.

We strategized on how to make this important event attractive for the for the general community as it would generate a sense of pride for our nation and offer the Port a chance to be a focal point and a special site for this national and historical, special event. But we were also aware that the event could turn into a negative public relations fiasco if significant numbers of people were turned away from attending the event.

Another challenge was the size of the Port's pier and cruise terminal to accommodate the Navy vessel as a backdrop and stage for the event in front of an audience sitting in rows of chairs, especially in Florida's summer heat. Invitations to customers, business leaders, and elected officials had to be deliberate so as to have enough chairs for the three-hour-long event.

Security rules at ports is a general challenge when holding inaugural events. Special attendee passes and measures had to be predetermined to ease some of the controls. For example, using a dock area and cruise terminal that is located outside the secure port boundary for smoothness of traffic and parking. Reserving the use of a cruise terminal for an approximately a two-week period when cruise operations slow down, but are still in active use, was challenging for our Operations Division.

The heat of mid-summer to hold an event presented both a challenge and an opportunity. We hoped that most of whom RSVP'd would not be deterred from attending the free outdoor event in the heat, but strategized on promotional items that could be used to address the hot weather. We blended both the challenge and opportunity by purchasing commemorative hand-held fans that we distributed to all attendees.

Though this special event offered a valuable, long-lasting opportunity for the Port to present itself to the community in the midst of warm, patriotic feelings, it also presented a number of communications and planning challenges.

PORT EVERGLADES MISSION

One of the tenets of the Port's Mission Statement is to create social value, as well as economic value, for our customers and the community. This was an important event for the for the community as it would generate a sense of pride for our nation and offer the Port a chance to be a focal point and site of this national and historical, special event.

mission statement

Port Everglades is Florida's powerhouse global gateway. A respected leader in trade, travel and financial stability, we create economic and social value by working in partnership with world-class clients. We achieve advancements focusing on efficient facilities, trade and cruise expansion, jobs growth, safety, security and environmental stewardship for our customers, stakeholders and community.

<https://www.porteverglades.net/about-us/>

PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING

After a year-long planning effort, in communications and planning, Port Everglades hosted the U.S. Navy's Commissioning Ceremony of its newest Arleigh Burke-class destroyer, the *USS Paul Ignatius* in 2019. The USS Paul Ignatius (DDG-117) was the Navy's 67th Arleigh Burke-class destroyer and debuted the latest technology and weapon systems for the most advanced combat capabilities.

The first step in anticipating this enormous event was to establish a USS Paul Ignatius Commissioning Committee in September 2018, even before the Navy officially selected Port Everglades in May 2019 for the July Commissioning Ceremony. Members of the Commissioning Committee were selected from several Navy and military veterans' organizations and represented the entire Broward County community.



USS Paul Ignatius Commissioning Committee

Mary Anne Gray, *Chair*
Oscar Romano, *Vice Chair*
Joseph Giambrone, *Vice Chair*
Ron Perkins, *Treasurer*
J.W. Arnold, *Public Affairs*
Peter Swanson, *Gifts*

Jesse Adams
Maisy Albert
Lori Baer
Shelley Beck
Peter Casati
Lynn Drucker
Karen Drumheller
Patricia Dukfort
Lynn Eliaaser
Joe Farkas
Marianne Giambrone
Hon. Bob Graham
Robert Grant
Rebecca Heintz
Robert Jenkins
Denise Jones
Ellen Kennedy
Hon. Chaz LaMarca
Kitty McGowan
Richard Miller
Capt. Jeffrey Morse
Larry Ott
Gary Pirtle
Hon. Jack Seller
Hon. Ben Spensens
Alan Starr
Hon. Ted Deutch
Glenn Wiltshire

Port Everglades has been selected by the U.S. Navy to commission its newest Arleigh Burke-class destroyer, USS Paul Ignatius (DDG-117), on July 27, 2019. Named after the former Secretary of the Navy during the Lyndon Johnson Administration, the ship will be the sixth commissioned in Broward County, including the USS Leyte Gulf (1987), USS Cole (1996), USS Higgins (1999), USS Bainbridge (2005) and USS Jason Dunham (2010).

The time-honored tradition of commissioning a ship—one of the oldest ceremonies in our military—is a memorable experience as the officers and crew are ordered to "bring the ship to life" and place the ship into active service. The commissioning of the USS Paul Ignatius will be special because Sec. Ignatius is planning to be present at the ceremonies, a rare occasion.

To support the commissioning of a ship the local community and interested patriots from across the country come together and raise funds for the week-long events. The Navy is precluded by law to fund any receptions or crew activities.

Several members of the Council's Board of Directors are serving on the commissioning committee and we are reaching out to all Navy League members to request assistance with fundraising.

Please review the sponsorship material and choose a level that best works for you and/or your company. Please share this information with family, friends and business associates who would like to be a part of the commissioning.

We hope you will join us in this historic opportunity to support our nation's military and welcome this impressive ship and her first crew to South Florida. Please don't hesitate to contact us if we can provide any further information or assistance.

Council email: browardnavyleague@gmail.com

Commissioning Committee Member Marianne Giambrone giambrone11@gmail.com



DDG117 Fundraising
Request.pdf

The USS Paul Ignatius Commissioning Committee, chaired by the BND Executive Director, included four staff from Port Everglades, the Fort Lauderdale and Broward County Councils of the Navy League, and representation of other local organizations. The Commissioning Committee worked diligently with the U.S. Department of the Navy to plan the ceremonies as well as the welcoming activities for the ship's inaugural crew in the preceding days. The USS Paul Ignatius Commissioning Committee sought additional involvement as well as promote financial sponsorships given the large scope of the event.

www.BrowardNavyDaysInc.org/commissioning.html

We were proud that our South Florida community would host this important ceremonial event in the life of a new Naval warship and wanted to align our messaging with those feelings.

Goal:

To generate a sense of pride and honor by our community for our country through this important national and historical, special event hosted by Port Everglades and capture those feelings with the connection to their community port.

Objective:

Garner wide attendance and attention to the Port.
Drive people to live stream the ceremony

Target Audience:

Fleet Week Port Everglades stakeholders, the community at large, business leaders, elected officials at the local, state, and federal levels, Port tenants, business partners, maritime stakeholders and military families.

ACTIONS AND OUTPUTS

Strategies:

- Ensure consistent messaging for deliverables
- Leverage networks in the community to drive attendance
- Repeatedly steer the public to watch the ceremony via the live stream

Tactics:

- Invitations, website, press release to earn media, social media, promotional items
- Work with the Navy to establish a live streaming site for people to watch the ceremony in the comfort of their homes.
- Post several social media advisories in advance of the ceremony to encourage people to participate via live streaming

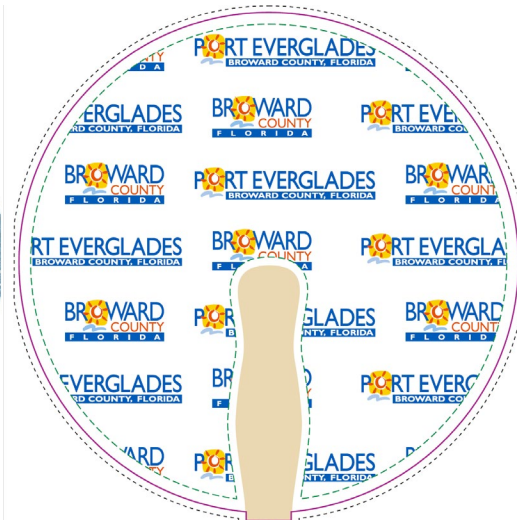
Collateral Material Development:

- Hand fans
- Building banners
- Electronic billboard
- Highway billboard
- Invitation list
- Speeches





PEV163_OOHBillboard_USSignatius_03.pdf



2019 Port Everglades Hand Fan.pdf

Media Relations:

- Press releases and tweets to earn media attention prior to, during and after the event
- Media Day with interactive briefing on the military ship in coordination with the Navy
- Ship's arrival
- Pre-publicity of live streaming to attend virtually
- News media access the day of the event

Social Media:

- Social Media platforms to gear up in anticipation of the event
- Live stream the Commissioning with a link to the Navy's webpage

Staffing:

- Glenn Wiltshire, Acting Chief Executive & Port Director, Port Everglades
- Ellen Kennedy, Assistant Director of Business Development/Communications, Port Everglades
- Maisy Alpert, APR, Communications Manager, Business Development, Port Everglades
- Robert Flint, Jeff White and Anna Silva from the Port Everglades Operations Division



Timeline:

- September 2018
 - Notified that the U.S. Navy was scouting for a location for the Commissioning of its newest warship
 - Formed an *USS Paul Ignatius* Commissioning Committee including local organizations, Port communications, management, and operations staff, and security and FBI
 - Drafted a press release for the announcement that the ship would be commissioned at Port Everglades, which was put on hold until we received an official letter from the U.S. Navy
- October 2018 to January 2019
 - Commissioning Committee meetings held at the Port
 - Awaiting decision by the U.S. Navy for Commissioning site, held press release distribution
 - The sponsor of the warship passed away, role of the sponsor and named in question
- January to May 2019
 - Continue Committee planning meetings held at the Port
 - Plan layout and logistics for the event day for both the cruise terminal and the docks
 - Plan activities and receptions for sponsors, stakeholders, and the ship's crew
 - Identify names for invitation list and contact them for spouse and family's personal information
 - Compile invitation list and submit for Navy clearance
 - Design and purchase promotional and demonstration items
 - Work with the Convention and Visitor's Bureau to borrow the use of a highway billboard sign located on a main road departing the international airport
 - Issue a press release about the upcoming event once the official Navy letter is received <https://www.porteverglades.net/articles/post/port-everglades-chosen-for-commissioning-of-uss-paul-ignatius/>
- June to July 2019
 - Continue Committee meetings held at the Port
 - Identify additional parking areas as invitation response exceeded estimates
 - Identify security and emergency procedures
 - Prepare for receiving dignitaries, including a Congresswoman and the Secretary of the U.S. Navy from Washington DC, and collaborate on security
 - Prepare a Public Affairs Plan and issue media alert for a Media Day aboard the ship, collect RSVPs and give security clearance
 - Identify outdoor locations for huge banners
 - Post the event on the electronic signs at the Port's entrances

- Write speeches
- Work closely with the Navy's Commissioning Team and defense contractor on details
- Event day: July 27, 2019
- Assist the Navy PAOs with media relations on event day
- Distribution of commemorative publication, hand fans, and bottled waters
- Post live stream from Navy site to social media for public viewing
- August to September 2019
 - Write a post-event notes and debriefing (may be useful for a future Navy ship being built, the *USS Fort Lauderdale*)
 - Media and social media coverage and analytics

Other actions provided:

- Reservation for the use of a cruise terminal and dock space. Identify additional parking areas.
- The Broward County Commission voted unanimously to waive dockage charges for the ship's call and provided use of a cruise terminal for the committee to hold weeklong events.
- Broward County Transit waived bus fares for the military crew of the ship during their week's stay.

OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION

Attendance at the event exceeded expectations with standing room only. Over 7,000 invitations were sent out and an estimated 5,000 were ticketed.

The livestream on the Navy's webpage reached approximately 40,000 viewers.

Social media measurements showed that the reach on Facebook platform was significant. Over 17,000 people reached and 144 comments garnered.



FB analytics.pdf

The meetings and planning sessions were well attended with over 34 members participating in the process, not including the event-day volunteers.

The earned media outreach resulted in notable national media coverage as well as local media outlets.



Selected articles:



AJOT 5-23-19



Military 5-23-19

port-everglades-chosnewest-us-navy-ship.pdf



fl-fea-postal-service-
uss-.pdf

The local Postmaster even created a postmark for the national historical event:

The goal was to generate a sense of pride and honor by our community for our country through this important national and historical, special event hosted by Port Everglades and capture those warm feelings in connection with their community port. We achieved that goal indicated by the response level.

Our objective was to garner wide attendance and attention to the Port. The special event, the Commissioning Ceremony of a U.S. Naval Destroyer hosted at Port Everglades, garnered wide-range attention for the Port through media coverage, live streaming, social media, and other tactical activities.