



Bicentennial of the War of 1812 and the Star-Spangled Banner

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Representatives from the United States Navy joined Maryland state and local officials in Baltimore, Nov. 17, for the announcement of a major maritime event in 2012, part of the Navy's Commemoration of the Bicentennial of the War of 1812 and the Star-Spangled Banner.

The Honorable Paul L. Oostburg Sanz, 22nd General Counsel for the Department of the Navy, and Rear Adm. William F. Moran, head of Maritime Aviation Programs for the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), represented the Navy as Md. Gov. Martin O'Malley, Baltimore Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, and other state and city officials launched Maryland's War of 1812 Bicentennial activities.

"It is certainly my pleasure to be here today," said Rawlings-Blake. "I love celebrating Baltimore's place in American history and these next few years are going to give us a unique opportunity to do that."

Maryland's "Star-Spangled Sailabration" is the fourth of 12 large-scale commemorative events in U.S. cities along the East and Gulf Coasts and within the Great Lakes. Chairman of Operation Sail (OpSail), Inc., Jose Fuentes said that he was very proud, as a sailor and a resident of Maryland, to see OpSail lending its best efforts to these commemorations.

"Working with our U.S. Navy partners, with a distinguished team of civic leaders, and with the captains of tall ships and trained vessel from around the world, we will produce a memorable, educational event here in Baltimore and in five other ports important to the study of the War of 1812," he said.

The week-long events will mark the opening of the Bicentennial in Baltimore-Annapolis, as well as Boston, Buffalo, N.Y., Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Milwaukee, New London, Conn., New Orleans, New York City, Norfolk, Va., and Toledo, Ohio. Rawlings-Blake expressed her excitement to learn that the events had been labeled one of the top 100 events by the American Business Association.

"This recognition and publicity of the event will bring a great number of groups to our city to enjoy all that Baltimore has to offer," she said. "As mayor I look forward to welcoming the thousands of visitors that will be coming to my home town. I know that this festival is going to be great for Baltimore, for its residents and for its workers."

Today's Navy can trace many of its fundamental tenets and traditions directly to the War of 1812. America's Navy responds to threats in distant locations in order to protect the United States; and keeping the sea free for the safe and efficient movement of commerce and communication is as important today as it was 200 years ago.

"This kickoff is our first opportunity to highlight the value of the U.S. Navy to the American people," said Moran. "The U.S. Navy was central to the victory in the War of 1812 and will be central to the commemorative events surrounding OpSail and the War of 1812."

"Over the next year the Navy will showcase itself in a series of great events including here in Baltimore," Moran continued. "Several U.S. ships, including the USS Ft. McHenry and the USS Monsoon will be here. We expect to see several of our foreign partners participating with their own war ships as well."

Over the course of the two-year celebration, Oostburg Sanz said that residents of Baltimore will be reminded of the Sailors, Marines and civilian Marylanders who stood the watch at Ft. McHenry on the USS Constitution and elsewhere in the defense of our country.

"The War of 1812 is historically significant to the Navy for many reasons," said Oostburg Sanz. "It was a forum for several important naval victories for our fleet against what was then a much larger and stronger royal navy."

"The War of 1812 was the last war fought under sail," Fuentes added. "Today the navies of the world bring out their tall ships only in ceremonial events; that's why OpSail and the CNO have invited those nations once again to form up a special squadron of training ships and help America commemorate this patriotic milestone."

"Baltimore today is as Baltimore has always been a port that is vital to free trade," Fuentes continued. "It is one of the largest and most important commercial ports in the United States. That is why it was important to help this port so long ago and why it is important to help Baltimore continue prospering today."

"We are truly stronger together," O'Mally added. "As a nation, our diversity is our strength and when we join forces together, regardless of how overwhelming the odds may appear to be, we can carry the day because we carry with us in our hearts the great idea of America the greatest republic in the history of the world."

Maryland's "Star-Spangled Sail-abration" is scheduled to take place June 13-19 in Baltimore's Inner Harbor and the Chesapeake Bay.

For more information about the Navy's Bicentennial Commemoration activities, visit www.ourflagwasstillthere.org.