



PRESS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

16 December 2021

Jacksonville Naval Museum sends USS Orleck Museum Ship to Drydock

Jacksonville, Florida – The city of Jacksonville and local Navy and military Veterans have something to be thankful for this holiday season! The Jacksonville Historic Naval Ship Association (JHNSA), parent owner of the future Jacksonville Naval Museum, has started the towing of the USS Orleck Naval Museum to drydock! The JHNSA took advantage of an opening in the drydock schedule. This is a critical step in the process of verifying the ship is able to continue to serve as a museum ship and is within the financial means of the JHNSA. This will also help satisfy the development agreement requirement of having evidence the ship is sound to serve as a museum ship in Jacksonville.

The *USS Orleck* departed Lake Charles, Louisiana on Wednesday, December 15th. The *Orleck* will arrive at Port Arthur, Texas on Thursday, December 16th. Smith Maritime Incorporated, of Green Cove Springs, is the company providing the tow. The cost of this first tow is \$105,000. While in Port Arthur, the ship will be put into drydock at the Gulf Copper and Manufacturing Corporation for inspection, hull strengthening, and preservation. The drydocking is expected to take place on Friday, December 17th. The preservation will be cleaning of the hull and painting of the exterior of the ship from top to bottom. This work is expected to take 30 days, with the dry dock working days taking place Monday through Saturday and closed for holidays. This will position the *Orleck's* tow for Jacksonville in mid-January with an arrival in late-January. The tow to Jacksonville is expected to take approximately 10 to 12 days.

The costs to JHNSA to bring the *Orleck* to Jacksonville has gone up considerably since the last estimate done in March of 2020. With \$250,000 of new repairs needed from last year's Hurricane Laura, cost increases for materials, fuel and labor – the project costs in the shipyard now stands at an estimated \$1.8 million plus \$65,000 for paint. This is up from previous estimates of \$1.3 million for the shipyards and \$56,000 for paint from 18 months ago. The JHNSA is grateful to have recently just received \$100,000 donation in October from an out of state Navy Veteran who supports strongly JHNSA's mission to create a naval museum and help save the historic *USS Orleck*. Since January of 2020, JHNSA has spent approximately \$164,000 on the *Orleck* for inspections, ship insurance, towing down payment, and other needs.

In dry docking the *Orleck* will receive an inspection of the hull to ensure it is capable of continued to service as a museum ship. It is expected the JHNSA will know the status of the inspection by Tuesday, 21 December. Should the hull be found beyond the JHNSA financial means for restoration, the decision will then be made by the Orleck Association with concurrence of the JHNSA to salvage the ship for scrap.

In Jacksonville, the ship will be moored stern in, starboard side to the 600' long "Pier 1". This is adjacent to the Berkman Marina along East Bay Street in the old Shipyards area of the Sports and Entertainment District in





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downtown, Jacksonville. The arrival date in Jacksonville has not been set and will be notified by future press releases. Once moored the JHNSA will continue to prepare the museum ship for opening as the Jacksonville Naval Museum. The “pier-side” preparation work is expected to be two to four weeks in length but may be extended as needed. Prior to the ship’s arrival, work will be done to prepare the pier. A separate modular building with ticketing, gift shop, and restrooms will be put on hold by request of the Downtown Investment Authority (DIA). The DIA has asked JHNSA to wait until plans are worked out for the Shipyards area.

The Jacksonville Naval Museum will feature the “US Navy Cold War Experience”, which is represented by the ex-USS Orleck. The Orleck, a WWII era Gearing Class destroyer, was heavily modified under the Fleet Rehabilitation and Maintenance (FRAM II) program in the early 1960’s. The Orleck embodies the Korean War, Vietnam War, and Cold War periods in US Navy history having served in all three. The steam powered, twin propeller, 4 boiler Orleck is much smaller than today’s modern-day gas turbine powered destroyers with a length of only 390 feet, 41’ wide beam, an “air draft” of 109’ at the top mast with a current empty displacement of approximately 2,350 tons. Having such a long and prolific service history the Orleck is the most decorated post-World War II ship ever built and was awarded 18 battle stars. After the Orleck’s US Naval service, she was transferred to the Turkish Navy and renamed the Yüctepe (D 345). She continued to serve until being transferred back to the United States in August of 2000 to become a museum ship.

The Jacksonville Naval Museum will honor past generations of Veterans and inspire future Patriots through STEM plus history education opportunities. The museum will serve as a gathering place for Naval Associations, crew reunions, and military conventions while supporting Veterans as a local resource and networking center. Future initiatives may include a Tall Ships Festival or Navy Fleet Week; increasing tourism to downtown Jacksonville.

Bringing the ship to downtown and creating the Jacksonville Naval Museum is a monumental undertaking, but we feel with the support of our local community – this long-standing dream will be turned into reality! We ask our local community to support us in any way possible: share the news of the museum coming, visit the museum once we are open, volunteer with us for the variety of positions that will be available, and donate to this worthy cause if possible. We named it the ‘Jacksonville’ Naval Museum because it really is about our community coming together to celebrate our rich military history, inspire patriotism, and honor our veterans and active-duty service members.

We look forward to bringing this “Bold Ship to the Bold City” that once was home to many Cold War era workhorses like the Oliver Hazard Perry Frigates, P-3 Orions, and MH-60 Seahawks. We are excited for the community to enjoy stepping back to the time of the Cold War onboard this piece of living history! With Jacksonville’s large Naval community, we feel the Orleck is a fitting tribute and terrific match to call Jacksonville home!





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MUSEUM WEBSITE, SOCIAL MEDIA, AND DONATION INFORMATION:

- **Website:** www.jaxnavalmuseum.org
- **Donation (electronic):** <https://www.jaxnavalmuseum.org/donate/>
- **Tow Donation Fund:** <https://jaxnavalmuseum.reasonfunding.com/campaign/towfund>
- **Donation (check via mail):** Please make checks out to “JHNSA”
 - JHNSA
2220 Country Road 210 West
Suite 108, PMB 314
Jacksonville, FL 32259
- **General Information:** info@jaxnavalmuseum.org
- **Volunteer Information:** volunteer@jaxnavalmuseum.org
- **Facebook:** www.facebook.com/jaxnavalmuseum/
- **Instagram:** @jaxnavalmuseum
- **Twitter:** @jaxnavalmuseum
- **LinkedIn:** <https://www.linkedin.com/company/jacksonvillenaivalmuseum>

INFORMATION REGARDING THE EX-USS ORLECK:

- Named after Navy Lieutenant Joseph Orleck, Commanding Officer of USS Nauset, who was killed in action on 9 September, 1943 during World War II and posthumously awarded the Navy Cross.
- Gearing Class Destroyer
- Built: Orange, Texas
- Launched: 12 May, 1945
- Length: 390 feet, 6 inches
- Draft: 14 feet, 4 inches
- Served: Korean War
- Recognized as the “Top Gun” in Vietnam firing over 11,000 rounds
- Major weapon systems: two dual cannon 5 inch gun mounts, Anti-Submarine Rocket Launcher (ASROC), and Drone Anti-Submarine Helicopters (DASH) system.
- Awards: 18 battle stars with the Navy Unit Commendation, Battle ‘E’, China Service Medal, World War II Victory Medal, Navy Occupation Service Medal, National Defense Medal (multiple awards), Korean Service Medal (multiple awards), Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal (multiple awards), Vietnam Service Medal (multiple awards), Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citation, Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross Unit Citation, United Nations Service Medal, and Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal.
- 14 Gearing Ships once called Mayport home
- Keel Laid: 28 November, 1944
- Commissioned: 15 September, 1945
- Beam: 40 feet, 10 inches
- Displacement: 2,616 Long Tons Standard
- Served: Vietnam War
- Nicknamed the “Grey Ghost of the Vietnam Coast”



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The Orleck Museum Ship being pulled away from her original home on the Calcasieu River in Lake Charles, Louisiana



Lead Tug Elsbeth III pulls the Orleck. Bridge behind is Interstate 10.





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The USS Orleck Museum ship passes by Cameron, Louisiana on her way to the Gulf of Mexico



Pier 1, future home of the Jacksonville Naval Museum and USS Orleck





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The USS Orleck as a museum ship



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