DECEMBER 6, 2012 — The U.S. Navy's Military Sealift Command yesterday accepted delivery of the Navy's first joint high-speed vessel at Austal USA's Mobile, Ala., shipyard.

Craig Perciavalle, Sr. Vice President of Austal USA, represented the shipbuilder at the signing event.

Austal USA Interim President and CFO Brian Leathers commented: "The delivery of the USNS Spearhead is a significant achievement for Austal and adds to the rich history of Mobile as a hub of shipbuilding activity in the United States. Austal USA has delivered 12 ships in 11 years, certainly a major contributor to the shipbuilding legacy of Mobile, Alabama."

MSC will own and operate Spearhead and the eight other JHSVs that are under contract, with the option of a ninth additional vessel, to be built for the Navy. Spearhead is crewed by 22 civil service mariners working for MSC who will operate, navigate and maintain the ship.

"Flexibility may be the best attribute of this ship," said civilian Capt. Douglas D. Casavant, Jr., Spearhead's civil service master who has been sailing for MSC for 23 years. "Our 20,000-square-foot mission bay area can be reconfigured to quickly adapt to whatever mission we are tasked with, for instance, carrying containerized portable hospitals to support disaster

relief or transporting tanks and troops."

The JHSVs are capable of transporting approximately 600 tons of military troops, vehicles, supplies and equipment 1,200 nautical miles at an average speed of 35 knots, and can operate in shallow-draft, austere ports and waterways, providing U.S. forces added mobility and flexibility.

The JHSVs' aviation flight deck can support day and night flight operations for a wide variety of aircraft, including CH-53 Super Stallions. Each JHSV has sleeping accommodations for up to 42 crew members and 104 mission personnel; and airline-style seating for 312 people.

As MSC assets, all of the JHSVs will be civilian-crewed. The first four of the 10 projected vessels, including Spearhead, will be crewed by civil service mariners, while the next six are slated to be crewed by civilian mariners working for a private company under contract to MSC. Military mission personnel will embark as required by mission sponsors.

Following delivery to the Navy, Spearhead will participate in operational testing before sailing to its layberth in Little Creek, Va. The Navy expects the ship to begin conducting missions in the first quarter of fiscal year 2013.

The ships of the JHSV 1 class are designed to commercial standards, with limited modifications for military use. The vessel is capable of transporting 600 short tons at least 1,200 nautical miles at an average speed of 35 knots and can operate in shallow-draft ports and waterways, interfacing with roll-on/roll-off discharge facilities, and on/off-loading a combat-loaded Abrams Main Battle Tank. Other features include an aviation flight deck to support day and night aircraft launch and recovery operations. JHSV 1 has airline-style seating for 312 embarked forces, with fixed berthing for 146.