

Navy's giant, stealthy new destroyer gets hull wet (Update)

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The first-in-class Zumwalt, the largest U.S. Navy destroyer ever built, is seen in dry dock Monday, Oct. 28, 2013, in Bath, Maine. The ship features an unusual wave-piercing hull, electric drive propulsion, advanced sonar and guided missiles, and a new gun that fires rocket-propelled warheads as far as 100 miles. Unlike warships with towering radar- and antenna-laden superstructures, the Zumwalt will ride low to the water to minimize its radar signature, making it stealthier than others. (AP Photo/Robert F. Bukaty)

UPDATE: The largest destroyer ever built for the Navy is in the water

for the first time—and the stealthy vessel looks unlike any U.S. warship before.

Without fanfare, Maine's Bath Iron Works on Monday floated the 610-foot Zumwalt out of dry dock in the Kennebec River. It will remain dockside while shipbuilders will continue working on it through the winter.

A christening ceremony was canceled earlier this month because of the partial federal government shutdown. The Navy shipbuilder hopes to hold a rescheduled ceremony in the spring.

The warship features an unusual wave-piercing hull and electric propulsion. Its low-slung shape minimizes its radar signature, making it stealthy. There are so many computers and so much automation that it'll need fewer sailors too.

An earlier story is below:

There was no band. No streamers. No champagne.

The Navy's stealthy Zumwalt destroyer went into the water without fanfare on Monday, with shipbuilders moving the warship into the Kennebec River before it moves dockside for final construction.

The largest destroyer ever built for the Navy, the Zumwalt looks like no other U.S. warship, with an angular profile and clean carbon fiber superstructure that hides antennas and radar masts.

"The Zumwalt is really in a league of its own," said defense consultant Eric Wertheim, author of the "The Naval Institute Guide to Combat Fleets of the World."

Originally envisioned as a "stealth destroyer," the Zumwalt has a low-slung appearance and angles that deflect radar. Its wave-piercing hull aims for a smoother ride.

The 610-foot (185-meter) ship is a behemoth that's longer and bigger than the current class of destroyers. It was originally designed for shore bombardment and features a 155mm "Advanced Gun System" that fires rocket-propelled warheads that have a range of nearly 100 miles (160 kilometers).

Thanks to computers and automation, it will have only about half the complement of sailors as the current generation of destroyers.



The first-in-class Zumwalt, the largest U.S. Navy destroyer ever built, floats off a submerged dry dock in the Kennebec River, Monday, Oct. 28, 2013, in Bath, Maine. Unlike warships with towering radar- and antenna-laden superstructures, the Zumwalt will ride low to the water to minimize its radar signature, making it stealthier than others. (AP Photo/Robert F. Bukaty)

Critics, however, felt the Navy was trying to incorporate too much new technology—a new hull, computer automation, electric propulsion, new radar and new gun—into one package. At one point, the program was nearly scrapped because of the growing cost. Eventually, the program was truncated to three [ships](#), the Zumwalt being the first.

Dozens of local residents gathered to watch the hours-long process of floating the ship in a dry dock. In the water for the first time, the ship was a sight to behold.

"It's absolutely massive. It's higher than the tree line on the other side. It's an absolutely huge ship—very imposing. It's massively dominating the waterfront," said Amy Lent, executive director of the Maine Maritime Museum, who watched the process from her office down river from the shipyard.



The first-in-class Zumwalt, the largest U.S. Navy destroyer ever built, floats off a submerged dry dock in the Kennebec River, Monday, Oct. 28, 2013, in Bath,

Maine. Unlike warships with towering radar- and antenna-laden superstructures, the Zumwalt will ride low to the water to minimize its radar signature, making it stealthier than others. (AP Photo/Robert F. Bukaty)

The big ship was supposed to be christened with a bottle of Champagne crashed against its bow by the two daughters of the late Adm. Elmo "Bud" Zumwalt, but the ceremony earlier this month was canceled because of the partial federal government shutdown.

Workers at Bath Iron Works, part of General Dynamics, will continue working on the ship throughout the winter. The shipyard hopes to hold a rescheduled christening in the spring, with sea trials following in the fall. Bath Iron Works plans to deliver the ship to the Navy in 2015.

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