

# New ship's Capt. Kirk is used to 'Star Trek' jokes

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In a Thursday, Oct. 31, 2013 file photo, the Navy's stealthy Zumwalt destroyer is moored at Bath Iron Works, in Bath, Maine. The skipper of the technology-laden Zumwalt is Capt. James Kirk, and his futuristic-looking vessel sports cutting-edge technology, new propulsion and powerful armaments, but this ship isn't the Starship Enterprise. The technology-laden Zumwalt taking shape at Maine's Bath Iron Works is unlike any other U.S. warship. (AP Photo/Robert F. Bukaty, File)

Captain Kirk's futuristic-looking vessel sports cutting-edge technology, new propulsion and powerful armaments, but this ship isn't the Starship Enterprise.

The skipper of the stealthy USS Zumwalt is Navy Capt. James Kirk, and yes, he's used to the jokes about the name he shares with the TV starship commander played by actor William Shatner.

Kirk takes it in stride.

"I don't take any offense," he told The Associated Press in an interview. "If it's a helpful moniker that brings attention to help us to do what we need to do to get the ship into the fleet and into combat operations, then that's fine."

While it's no starship, the technology-laden Zumwalt taking shape at Maine's Bath Iron Works is unlike any other U.S. warship.

The Navy's largest destroyer will feature a composite deckhouse with hidden radar and sensors and an angular shape that minimizes its radar signature. Its unusual wave-piercing hull will reduce the ship's wake.

It's the first U.S. surface warship to use electric propulsion, and its power plant is capable of producing enough electricity to light up a small city and to power future weapons like the electromagnetic rail gun.



In a Thursday, Nov. 21, 2013 file photo, Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel, center, tours the Zumwalt destroyer at Bath Iron Works during his first visit to Maine since being confirmed, in Bath, Maine. The skipper of the technology-laden Zumwalt Capt. James Kirk's futuristic-looking vessel sports cutting-edge technology, new propulsion and powerful armaments, but this ship isn't the Starship Enterprise. The technology-laden Zumwalt taking shape at Maine's Bath Iron Works is unlike any other U.S. warship. (AP Photo/Robert F. Bukaty, File)

Inside, it's just as unique. The number of sailors needed to stand watch will be reduced through the use of cameras and video monitors that show what's going on outside. The bridge will indeed look like something from "Star Trek" with two chairs surrounded by nearly 360 degrees of video monitors.

A handful of reporters accompanying Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel on Thursday got a first look at the ship's interior while it's under

construction. It's due to be christened in the spring.

The 610-foot (186-meter)-long ship has the highest level of automation on a U.S. surface warship, with systems in place to combat flooding and to put out fires, among other things. Because of automation and technology, the number of sailors needed to run it will be nearly half the number serving on the current Arleigh Burke-class destroyers.

All this whiz-bam technology comes at a price that sailors couldn't have imagined in the mid-1960s, when the first episodes of "Star Trek" aired on television. The first-in-class Zumwalt will cost northward of \$3.5 billion, a price tag so high that the Navy was forced to reduce the number of ships in the series to just three.

The "Star Trek" comparisons were inevitable even before "Star Trek" actor George Takei used his popular Facebook page to point out the similarities of Kirk's name.

Kirk, a Bethesda, Maryland, native and 1990 Naval Academy graduate, said the jokes about his name began early in his career, with colleagues telling him that they couldn't wait for him to reach the rank of captain.

The Navy skipper points out that his name is actually James A. Kirk, while the fictional Starship Enterprise captain was James "Jim" T. Kirk. But that didn't stop him from earning the call sign "Tiberius"—the fictional Kirk's middle name—while working with an aircraft carrier strike group. That was later shortened to just "T."

While he doesn't mind the Starfleet jokes, Kirk said that people sometimes focus too much on the technology incorporated in the futuristic-looking Zumwalt.

"Yes, we're going to talk about all of the wonderful [technology](#), but it

still requires the sailors who are going to bring her to life," he said.

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