

VFW Urges Navy to Honor Hero

Newest combatant ship could be named for Filipino-American Medal of Honor recipient

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WASHINGTON — In a letter sent to the Office of the Secretary of the U.S. Navy, Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) National Commander Matthew “Fritz” Mihelcic urged Secretary Carlos Del Toro to name the newest commissioned surface combatant ship the USS Telesforo Trinidad, after a sailor who earned the Medal of Honor for his actions more than 100 years ago.

“The VFW strongly believes this will honor Fireman Second Class Telesforo de la Cruz Trinidad’s extraordinary heroism while serving in the United States Navy,” Mihelcic stated in the letter.

Trinidad, born Nov. 25, 1890, in Aklan Province, Panay, Philippine Islands, enlisted in the U.S. Navy shortly after the Spanish-American War. While assigned to the cruiser USS San Diego in the Gulf of Mexico, Trinidad’s heroic actions on Jan. 21, 1915, during a series of boiler room explosions would save the lives of two of his fellow crewmembers. He was awarded the Medal of Honor on April 1, 1915, for his extraordinary acts of courage. Trinidad is the only Filipino in the U.S. Navy to be awarded the Medal of Honor, and is one of only two service members ever to receive the award in peacetime.

“The high honor of naming United States Navy ships is the prerogative of the Secretary of the Navy,” Mihelcic wrote, “and there is no ship in the United States Naval fleet with a name that recognizes the Asian Pacific Islanders legacy and their unique alliance forged in war and peace.”

After recovering from his injuries, Trinidad continued to serve in the Navy, participating in both World War I and World War II before retiring to his home in the Philippines. Trinidad passed away at the age of 77 on May 8, 1968, in Imus, Cavite, Republic of the Philippines.

“I urge you to support the naming of the USS Telesforo Trinidad, which would validate the exemplary service of Mr. Telesforo and serve as a testament to the generations of Filipinos

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who have served faithfully and loyally in the United States Navy for over 100 years,” Mihelcic ended.

The delivery of the letter coincided with Filipino American History Month, celebrated every October commemorating the history, heritage, culture, and contributions of Filipinos to America.