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Secretary of Transportation John A. Volpe today launched, in New Orleans, Louisiana, the 378-foot Coast Guard cutter "Munro" at special ceremonies honoring World War II hero and Congressional Medal of Honor winner Douglas Munro.

Speaking at the Avondale Shipyards in New Orleans, Secretary Volpe praised the Coast Guard and outlined the heroic war-time accomplishments of Coast Guardsman Munro:

"Far out in the Pacific, September 27, 1942, on an island called Guadalcanal, the Marines were desperately trying to establish a new beachhead. Coast Guardsmen had carried the Marines ashore in small landing craft and the landings were a success.

"But the Marines met unexpected heavy resistance. They called for boats to take them off and the Coast Guard responded promptly. A flotilla of twelve boats headed for the beach, led by Signalman First Class, Douglas Munro, twenty-two years old. Munro ordered the boats to remain safely offshore while he went in alone to check the beach. He loaded thirty Marines aboard his small craft and hurried them offshore for transfer to one of the waiting boats. Then he led a small group of boats back to the beach to load the remaining Marines. Wounded Marines were dragged and carried to the waiting boats, and when all were loaded the boats began their retreat to safety only a few minutes away. But one boat grounded on a coral reef. Munro ordered his boat to go alongside to assist. He succeeded in getting a line over and yanked the boat into deeper water.

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"Just then, enemy machine guns on the beach sprayed the Coast Guard boats. Munro and his buddy Ray Evans manned their machine guns and returned the fire as they withdrew. The boat was soon out of range, but Douglas Munro had been hit and mortally wounded. His last words to his friend Ray Evans were "Did we get them all off?" They had. Nearly 500 Marines had been evacuated to safety. For his heroic actions that day, Douglas Munro was awarded our Nation's highest honor, the Congressional Medal of Honor."

In attendance at the launching was Mrs. James Munro, Douglas' mother, who joined the Coast Guard as a "Spar" officer after her son's death and served for two years before retiring. Also present was Commander Ray Evans, a veteran Coast Guardsman, who was awarded the Navy Cross for his heroic actions with Munro.

Mrs. Jennie Volpe, wife of the Transportation Secretary, christened the ship, the first of its class to receive the hero designation.

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