

NEWS RELEASE**June 11, 2008****For Immediate Release****RELEASED BY:**

National Park Service Fort Sumter Monument
 South Carolina African-American Historical Alliance
 South Carolina African-American Heritage Commission
 54th Massachusetts Voluntary Infantry USCT Re-enactors
 Robert Smalls Legacy Foundation, Inc.

**FIRST U.S. ARMY VESSEL TO BEAR THE NAME OF AN AFRICAN-AMERICAN,
 Army Reserve ship *Major General Robert Smalls* (LSV-8),
 to co-host a June 24, 2008, ceremony in Charleston S.C. honoring its namesake,
 Robert Smalls ~ Slave, Soldier, Statesman**

In 1862 Robert Smalls, a 23-year-old slave, commandeered *Planter*, a 147'-long Confederate transport steamer, from Charleston's Southern Wharf. With his wife, children and 12 other slaves aboard, he gave the correct whistle signal as he sailed past the rebel forts in the harbor. He then headed to sea and surrendered to the nearest Union blockading vessel. President Lincoln signed a Congressional bill awarding prize money to Smalls and his associates.

On Monday, June 23rd, 2008, one hundred forty-six years after Smalls' gallant dash to freedom, Vessel Master CW4 Steven Brown, commander of the U.S. Army Reserve's 203rd Transportation Detachment, and a licensed crew of 35 will make an historic sail past Charleston's Southern Wharf aboard the U.S. Army's largest asset. The \$25 million U.S. Army Vessel (USAV) *Major General Robert Smalls*, a Logistics Support Vessel (LSV-8), is 314'-long, with a 60' beam and a 2,000-ton payload. Like the ship Smalls sailed to freedom, the *MG Robert Smalls* is a transport vessel. The ship will re-supply soldiers worldwide. The *MG Robert Smalls* is the first Army ship to bear the name of an African-American and the first named for a Civil War hero.

Aboard the vessel when it passes Southern Wharf will be Kitt Haley Alexander, a Washington DC-area photographer and historian, who waged a 7-year solo campaign to have a ship named for Smalls. Also aboard will be the spirit of the late Dolly Nash, Robert Smalls' great-granddaughter, who collaborated with Alexander in creating the photographic exhibition, *Robert Smalls ~ Slave, Soldier, Statesman*.

In August 1862, at the request of 2 Union generals, Smalls met with President Lincoln and Secretary of War Stanton seeking permission to recruit 5000 black troops. Permission was soon granted. During the war, Smalls served under the command of both the Navy and Army, but was never a member of either service. In 1863, after an act of bravery under fire, Smalls became the first black captain of a U.S. vessel. He piloted *Keokuk*, an ironclad, in a failed Union attack on Fort Sumter. Robert Smalls was the most significant black participant in the Civil War.

After the war, Smalls helped draft the constitution of the state in which he had been a slave. He introduced language providing for "a system of common schools...to be open without charge to all classes of persons." He became a South Carolina legislator and a major general in the state's militia. He served five terms in the U.S. Congress. For nearly 20 years Smalls served as U.S. Collector of Customs in Beaufort, S.C., where he lived as owner in the house in which he had been a slave. Robert Smalls was the most powerful black man in South Carolina for 5 decades.

Robert Smalls is the embodiment of Army values - Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage, and is the epitome of the American Dream.

**Launch of the *Major General Robert Smalls* - MORE -
 April 21, 2004, Pascagoula, Ms.**



**Commissioning of the *MG Robert Smalls*
 September 15, 2007, Baltimore, Md.**

SHIP ARRIVAL: Monday, June 23rd, approximately 1 p.m..

BERTH: Cruise Ship Passenger Terminal, 196 Concord St. Charleston, S.C.

EVENT: Tuesday, June 24, 2008, 10 a.m. Open to the public. Ceremony commemorating the historic return to Charleston, S.C. of Slave, Soldier, Statesman Robert Smalls, as a national hero, embodied in the form of the USAV *Major General Robert Smalls (LSV-8)*.

LOCATION: Aboard the *MG Robert Smalls (LSV-8)*, Cruise Ship Passenger Terminal, 196 Concord Street

PUBLIC TOURS: Ceremony conclusion until 3 p.m.

2:30 p.m. – Pouring of Libation, Queen Quet, Marquetta L. Goodwine, Gullah Geechee Sea Island Coalition

SHIP DEPARTURE: Tuesday, June 24th, approximately 6 p.m.

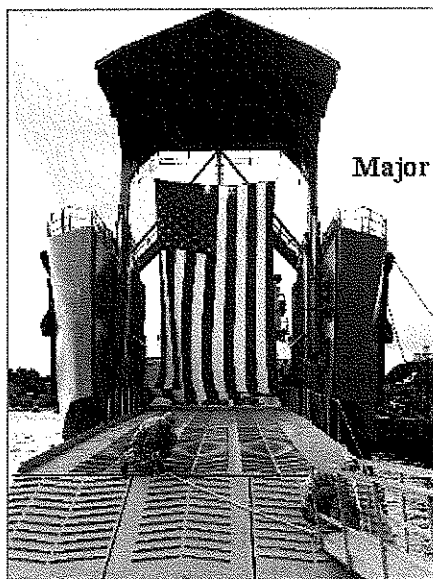
FOR MORE INFORMATION: Contact Michael Allen, National Park Service, Fort Sumter Group ~ 843-881-5516 ext. 12



Robert Smalls, 1862



Robert Smalls, c. 1880



Major General Robert Smalls (LSV-8)

