USNS Patuxent Performs 2 Rescues at Sea in 2 Weeks

By U.S. Naval Forces Central Command Public Affairs

U.S. Naval Forces Rescue Mariners from Sinking Ship in Gulf of Aden

A U.S. Naval ship assigned to U.S. 5th Fleet provided emergency assistance to a motor vessel in distress in the Gulf of Aden, June 7.

The Military Sealift Command fleet replenishment oiler USNS Patuxent (T-AO 201) was notified by the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations watch center that motor vessel Falcon Line had experienced engine failure and was taking on water.

Upon notification of the situation, Patuxent proceeded at maximum speed to rescue the crew of Falcon Line before the ship completely sank.

After arriving on scene, Patuxent shielded the Falcon Line crew from heavy winds and high seas so the crew could board lifeboats.

Patuxent safely recovered the 15 crew members and provided them with food, water and a medical screening. U.S. 5th Fleet is coordinating with the owner of Falcon Line and other authorities to determine the most appropriate location to disembark the crew members.

The U.S. 5th Fleet regularly works with coalition forces, regional partners and the shipping industry to maintain the regional awareness necessary to facilitate aid like this to mariners in distress.

“As professional mariners, our forces have a duty to help those in need at sea,” said Navy Capt. Michael O’Driscoll, commander of Task Force (TF) 53. “The Sailors and civilian mariners aboard ships like Patuxent have answered this call before, and they will continue to do so whenever possible.”

The 1974 International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) outlines the obligation of all mariners to provide assistance to those in distress at sea.

U.S. Naval Forces Rescue Mariners from Stranded Ship in Gulf of Aden

A U.S. Naval ship assigned to U.S. 5th Fleet provided emergency assistance to a motor vessel in distress in the international waters of the Gulf of Aden, June 16.

The Military Sealift Command fleet replenishment oiler USNS Patuxent (T-AO 201) identified a vessel flying the international distress flag and proceeded toward them to render assistance.
MSC Bids Farewell to 2 Senior Executive Service Leaders

By Bill Mesta, Military Sealift Command Public Affairs

Military Sealift Command recently bid farewell to two of its Senior Executive Service (SES) leaders who were assigned to the command’s headquarters on Naval Station Norfolk. John R. “Jack” Taylor, MSC’s Director, Maritime Operations (DMO) and Michael C. Morris, Director, Total Force Management (TFM) both retired from the SES community after completion of distinguished careers.

As DMO, Taylor led a staff of civilian and military personnel from nine functional directorates who are responsible for fleet operations, business management and contracting programs.

“We left מיד 1985, while working on the construction of the Milestone 3 nuclear power plant, and at the time frustrated where my career was going, a very dear friend mentioned that MSC was hiring. With blind aspirations, I called the MSC headquarters, where I was extremely fortunate to be hired on with MSC’s Engineering division,” according to Taylor. “It was a different time than today, where we were the first folks to install shipboard personal computers. And by the way, there was no such thing as cell phones or email.”

“In 1990 and again restless, I left MSC to re-enter the nuclear power field,” he added. “In April of 1998, I came back to the organization I have loved for so long to this, my final day at MSC.”

Taylor offered some advice for the MSC Team.

“Be keenly aware of humility in knowing you simply do not know all the answers,” Taylor offered. “Seek and surround yourself with like-minded people who want to work hard, to advance their careers and most importantly, seek out mentors who will spend their precious valuable time to help guide you.”

“Demonstrate the highest level of respect and dignity for people, with empathy and the sense of doing well for them. In turn, they will do for you as well,” he added. “Be the person that says, ‘I can do that’. Then with the highest gusto and determination, execute as best you can. People love that, and not matter if you fail, it is the respect of effort you gave that will place you forward. Lastly, be restless in your career aspirations and strive to become the best you can.”

Taylor was responsible for a portfolio of $800 million indirect cost each year. He was also responsible for developing and implementing processes and processes for ship support programs, fleet strategic planning, fleet scheduling, formulating and executing directorate budgets, developing and implementing ship support program structures, and developing and executing engineering and information technology strategies.

“Many people know I speak relevantly about MSC as family, a family run business,” Taylor concluded. “MSC will forever be the greatest workplace in my heart. I wish everyone the very best in life, health and careers at the greatest place to work, that of the Military Sealift Command.”

Taylor was selected for SES in 2007 and has 13 years of service in the commercial maritime and electric public utility sector.

As TFM, Morris was responsible for the civilian and military human resources (HR), manpower, and personnel medical programs for approximately 1,400 civilian employees who work ashore, approximately 350 active duty service members and roughly 1,000 Navy Reserve personnel.

Morris shared some of what motivated him during his time with MSC.

“Later I applied to MSC again, this time for a GS-12 position in new ship introduction, and was selected.” I moved to N1 a year later,” he added. “I had been in an MSC Navy Reserve unit before being hired here, had done a military recall with MSC, and the work seemed much more interesting than what I had been doing.”

Morris was also responsible for the HR, manpower and personnel medical programs for approximately 1,400 civilian employees who work ashore, approximately 350 active duty service members and roughly 1,000 Navy Reserve personnel.

“Plus no matter the job, I always liked the work, to the point that sometimes I would lose track of time and it would be 2-3 hours after I should have left for the day. Many mariners make huge sacrifices being away from family for extended periods, so they can provide for their loved ones.”

“I treasure the week that I spent on USNS Victorious, just out of the builder’s yard, and USNS Supply,” he added. “It was great walking around, asking mariners questions about their lives, their jobs, and their families. I took a lot of notes and learned a lot.”

“Ashore, many of the staff were like family and on Monday mornings we would often share with each other what we had done over the weekend,” Morris added. “The thing that kept me ‘pushing forward’ was periodical applying for a position that I considered myself well qualified for those particular positions.”

Morris joined the federal service in 1991, coming to MSC after seven years in the private sector working in ship acquisition and logistics. He began working in the HR field in 1992.

“I didn’t come to MSC ever thinking that I would become a member of the Senior Executive Service or even a GS-15,” according to Morris. “I thought that someday I might be promoted to GS-14, maybe. But one thing led to another. About 20 years ago a colleague told me, ‘I’m not like you - I work to live; you live to work.’ I don’t agree with that. But I could relate to the mission and I really did enjoy the work.”

“If I had any quality that may have helped, it might have been imagination - seeing how a piece of information could be useful in one or more areas. I tried to get others to enjoy the work, celebrate their accomplishments, and savor the fun moments,” he said. “I encouraged people to volunteer for inter-departmental work teams or cross assignments to learn more about MSC, and enjoyed doing that myself before becoming a supervisor. It enables more people to get to know you, and it’s interesting. I also tried to let people know how much I appreciated their efforts.”

Taylor has been replaced by Chris Thayer as Director of Maritime Operations. Morris has been replaced by Greg Pelowski as Director, Total Force Management.

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“I spent 29 years with MSC and expected that I would miss the mission, the people, and the tempo. I miss it already,” Morris concluded. “Working for MSC for 29 years has given me the financial security to take some risk and attempt to try something new before I’m no longer able to work. I’m not sure what that new thing will be, but it will be difficult to find something as meaningful and interesting as my time with MSC has been.”

Members of the SES serve in the key positions just below the top Presidential appointees. SES members are the major link between these appointees and the rest of the Federal workforce.
USNS Matthew Perry Crew Members Receive Navy’s Civilian Service Achievement Medal for Outstanding Deployment Support

By Sarah Burford, Military Sealift Command Pacific Public Affairs

Capt. Kendall Bridgewater, commander Military Sealift Command Pacific, recently presented crew members of the Military Sealift Command dry cargo, ammunition ship USNS Matthew Perry (T-AKE 9) with the Navy’s Civilian Service Achievement Medal for their outstanding service during their deployment support of the USS Nimitz Aircraft Carrier Strike Group.

The Nimitz strike group was the first carrier strike group to deploy following the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to ‘bubble’ measures to ensure the crews’ safety and health, the ships, including Perry were deployed for a longer period of time, compared to a typical six-month deployment.

“COVID, and all its restrictions made it incredibly difficult for the crew,” explained Capt. Mark Perdue, Perry’s Civil Service Master. “I’m just so proud that they got the job done, and were so professional in doing it!”

According to Perdue, obtaining items for the crew’s personal use was extremely challenging, especially medicines needed to control chronic conditions. To get what they needed, Perdue said, the ship’s crew worked with MSC Central Command, to obtain needed items by getting them onto Navy ships, and delivering them to Perry during underway replenishment evolutions.

“It seemed like every time we were sent back to support the strike group, we had another set of challenges to deal with,” said Perdue. “We were really forced to problem solve. We worked closely with ships in the areas where we were operating to help us get things; especially medications. MSC CENT really helped coordinate things for us. They were able to get us the things we needed. They really came through for us.”

Perry, along with the MSC fleet replenishment oiler USNS Yukon (T-AO 202) and the strike group operated in the Persian Gulf in support of U.S. Central Command during a tense time with Iran. It also participated in maritime exercise Malabar 2020 alongside Indian, Australian and Japanese ships.

According to Perdue, while his crew don’t expect awards, when someone takes notice and recognizes them for a job well done, it goes a long way and boosts morale.

“This award is definitely a good recognition for the crew’s hard work and dedication,” said Perdue. “This is a highly professional, hard-working, bunch of men and women, who supported a very tough deployment. They deserve to have their work recognized, and I couldn’t be prouder of them.”

The Navy’s Civilian Service Achievement Medal is awarded to Department of the Navy and U.S. Marine Corps civilians who, while serving in a capacity either within the Navy or Marine Corps, are to be recognized for sustained performance or specific achievement of a superlative nature at the equivalent level of the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal awarded to military personnel.

The award consists of a certificate and citation signed by the activity head, the medal on a suspension ribbon, and a lapel emblem. The award is the fifth highest Navy civilian award, ranking just behind the Navy Civilian Service Commendation Medal, and before the Navy Certificate of Achievement.

USNS Yukon Crew Members Receive Navy’s Civilian Service Achievement Medal for Outstanding Deployment Support

By Sarah Burford, Military Sealift Command Pacific Public Affairs

Crew members of the Military Sealift Command fleet replenishment oiler USNS Yukon (T-AO 202) have been awarded the Navy’s Civilian Service Achievement Medal for their outstanding service during their deployment support of the USS Nimitz Aircraft Carrier Strike Group.

Yukon was deployed for a lengthy 302 days, with 261 days at-sea. While underway, the oiler conducted 86 replenishments at sea, delivering nearly 16 million gallons of diesel ship fuel, nearly 11 million gallons of JP5 aviation fuel, and 2673 pallets of frozen food, dry goods, equipment and mail.

The Nimitz strike group was the first carrier strike group to deploy following the start of the COVID 19 pandemic. Due to ‘Bubble’ measures to ensure the crews’ safety and health, the ships, including Yukon were deployed for a longer period of time, compared to a typical six-month deployment.

“This is not the normal way we operate,” said Capt. Dan Glazier, Yukon’s Civil Service Master, “so that made this deployment exceptionally challenging.”

Yukon and the Strike Group operated in the Persian Gulf in support of U.S. Central Command during a tense time with Iran. It also participated in maritime exercise Malabar 2020 alongside Indian, Australian and Japanese ships.

According to Glazier, this deployment was exceptionally difficult for the crew. Not only was it longer than most, but due to COVID-19 restrictions and delays, receiving mail and supplies was challenging, and not just for items needed to support the mission. Crew members who ordered things such as medicines and comfort items from on-line companies such as Amazon, were delayed for weeks. The death of a crew-member during the holidays, further dampened the spirits of the crew.

“It was a tough time for these guys,” said Glazier. “It took an immense amount of effort, but we got through it. We met every commitment we were asked to do. We got the Navy everything they needed and asked for. We were out there for the Navy and proud to support them.”

Glazier explained that recognition such as the Civilian Service Achievement Medal, means a lot to the crew, who he calls “Unsung Heroes.”

“We are here for the Navy. We are here to keep them prepared for their mission,” he explained. “This is unsung heroism, and these guys are unsung heroes. We don’t get recognition very often, so when you get an award like this from the top, it really boosts morale. It’s good to see something like this come from the highest ranks of MSC headquarters. This was very hard earned!”

Yukon is currently undergoing scheduled maintenance at the Vigor Industrial Shipyard in Portland, Oregon. Upon completion, they will return to duty, providing logistics support to the United States Navy.
MSC Conducts Underway Replenishment Operations with Tanker Ship off the Coast of Southern California

By Sarah Burford, Military Sealift Command Pacific Public Affairs

Off the coast of Southern California, Military Sealift Command’s long-term chartered motor tanker ship Empire State (T-AOT 5193) conducted connected at-sea refueling operations (CONSO) with three MSC Combat Logistics Fleet (CLF) ships, July 11-14.

Empire State conducted five CONSO events with MSC dry cargo ammunition ships USNS Matthew Perry (T-AKE 9) and USNS Washington Chambers (T-AKE 11) and the MSC fleet replenishment oiler USNS Henry J. Kaiser (T-AO 187), delivering nearly 4 million gallons of diesel ship fuel.

CONSOs with tankers is nothing new for MSC. MSC reintroduced the ability to conduct tanker to oiler CONSOs-at-sea in 2015. In the 1960s and 1990s, MSC chartered Champion Class tankers (95 tankers) re-supplying Navy oilers was common place, especially in the Navy’s U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations. With the switch to privately owned, Navy chartered tankers, Navy oilers refueling at Navy owned fuel piers became the favored process. Civilian tanker ships, such as Empire State, still maintained the ability to fuel at sea; the demand for fuel consolidation (CONSO) at sea declined. Reintroducing the technology is a way to utilize a flexible platform that allows MSC to operate worldwide in a variety of missions.

For the Master on Empire State, the CONSOs were a welcomed change of pace for the crew of the 600-foot tanker. As he explained, transferring fuel at-sea has a different set of challenges then taking fuel from a commercial fuel pier, or from a fuel buoy, where harbor pilots maneuver the tankers into place. At-sea, the maneuvering and ship handling fall to the ships’ masters. As the on station ship, Empire State provided coordinates for the CLF ships, ensuring everyone was at the rendezvous point on time.

“The biggest challenge we face when doing a CONSO at-sea is good communication,” explained Capt. Andrew Miller, Empire State’s civilian master. “MSC always does a great job of working with us. The team at MSCPAC (Military Sealift Command Pacific) and the CLF crews are professional operators, so there is always a lot of good communications across the team. It really makes a difference when we are doing an operation like these.”

While CONSO operations with MSC have happened several times a year, since that first back in 2015, what makes this different is that three separate CLF ships received fuel over five separate fulling operations. In the past one ship would work with the tanker ship. This meant the evolutions had to be timed so that one ship could receive fuel and depart, leaving time for Empire State to reach the rendezvous point for the second ship. In one case, this was about an hour from the time one ship broke away and departed, and the second ship was in position alongside the tanker.
U.S. Naval Forces Africa Ships Participate in Exercise African Lion

From U.S. 6th Fleet Public Affairs

U.S. 6th Fleet ships, Expeditionary Sea Base USS Hershel "Woody" Williams (ESB 4), and Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Ross (DDG 71), and expeditionary fast transport USNS Trenton (T-EPF 5) participated in U.S. Africa Command’s (AFRICOM) largest and premier annual exercise African Lion, June 7-18.

Exercise African Lion 21, was a joint, combined exercise led by Southern European Task Force, Africa (SETAF-AF), and sponsored by U.S. Africa Command. In addition to U.S. forces, participants include allies and African partners from Morocco, Tunisia, and Senegal. Participants will work together to strengthen U.S. and partner nation’s capability to promote regional stability and support interoperability.

"Maritime security drives economic prosperity and it is imperative that we continue to exercise with our African partners to ensure security and stability in the region," said Rear Adm. Benjamin Reynolds, Director of Maritime Headquarters, U.S. Naval Forces Africa. "African Lion highlights our shared commitment to protecting and navigating the waters surrounding Africa and is a premier opportunity for our combined forces to rehearse and train together to strengthen collective defense capabilities and counter transnational threats."

"We share many of the same interests with our coastal partners as global commerce depends on freedom of navigation through the waters of the world to ensure economic prosperity," said Capt. Concannon. "As we work together to improve how we communicate and share information, we have the opportunity to learn from each other and make coastal Africa safer to the benefit of all of our African partners and allies."

The African and Euro-Atlantic navies share a myriad security interests in the Mediterranean Sea. U.S. Naval Forces Africa is committed to working alongside its Northern African and Euro Atlantic allies and partners to help improve maritime security in the Southern Mediterranean.

The visit included a meet and greet with U.S. leadership and Senegalese navy Capt. Ibrahima Sow speak with local media outlets during a tour of the ship in Dakar, Senegal, June 25. Hershel "Woody" Williams is on a scheduled deployment in the U.S. 6th Fleet’s area of operations in support of U.S. national interests and security in Europe and Africa. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Eric Coffer)

Senegal is an important partner of the United States in promoting peace and security in Africa. The U.S. works closely with Senegal on maritime security and maritime domain awareness. Additionally, Senegal participated in exercise Obangame Express in 2022. These exercises strengthen partnerships and allows countries to work more closely on shared transnational maritime challenges.

"As we work together to improve how we communicate and share information, we have the opportunity to learn from each other and make coastal Africa safer to the benefit of all of our African partners and allies."

The ESF ship class is a highly flexible platform that may be used across a broad range of military operations. Acting as a mobile sea base, they are part of the critical access infrastructure that supports the deployment of forces and supplies to support missions assigned.

The gold crew of Hershel Williams is nearing the end of a six-month deployment having completed operations around the African continent, including participation in exercises Phoenix Express and African Lion, helping to bolster African partner nation relationships in maritime domain awareness.

The expeditionary sea base USS Hershel ‘Woody’ Williams (ESB 4) arrived in Dakar, Senegal for a scheduled port visit, June 21-25. The visit included a meet and greet with U.S. leadership and Senegalese officers and dignitaries aboard the ship followed by a small reception.

"As the first ship permanently assigned to the U.S. Africa Command area of operations, we are here to work with our partners and allies to improve security, stability and prosperity of African nations," Capt. Michael Concannon, commanding officer, gold crew. "We have a unique manning construct with rotating military crews to support a persistent presence that allows us to operate at a higher tempo and be available to do more work with our partners."

Exercise African Lion involves U.S. service members from all service components, including the Reserves and National Guard. It provides a critical opportunity for members of the joint team to build and test their strategic readiness to deploy, fight and win in a complex, multi-domain environment.

The maritime portion of the exercise, led by U.S. Naval Forces Africa, includes a naval gunfire exercise, multiple sea-based maneuvers, and crisis response capabilities.

"Hershel ‘Woody’ Williams and her crew are proud to be a part of this important exercise as we do our part to help build a better recognized maritime picture and achieve improved maritime domain awareness so our partners have timely information they need to make decisions that impact safety and security," said Michael E. Concannon, commanding officer, Hershel ‘Woody’ Williams, Gold Crew. "I want our Moroccan and regional partners to see the capabilities of this ship and to know that we are here, as an enduring partner, committed to putting a stop to illicit activities and improving how we work together as partners to improve national and regional security, stability and economic prosperity."

The Spearhead-class expeditionary fast transport vessel USNS Trenton (T-EPF 5), (left) the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Ross (DDG 71) (center) and the Moroccan navy Sigma class frigate Allal Ben Abdellah (615), sail in formation to kick off exercise African Lion 2021 with the Moroccan and Senegalese navies. African Lion 2021 is U.S. Africa Command’s largest, premier, joint, annual exercise hosted by Morocco, Tunisia and Senegal, June 13. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Eric Coffer)
We Are MSC: Captain Alexandra Hagerty Shares Seafarer Experience
By LaShawn Sykes, Military Sealift Command Atlantic

Capt. Alexandra Hagerty, master of USNS Shughart (T-AKR 295), a Surge LMSR (large, medium speed roll-on, roll-off) 908-foot-long vehicle cargo ship, owned by Military Sealift Command and operated by Ocean Shiplifting, Inc., Houston, Texas. (U.S. Navy photo by LaShawn Sykes)

What is your name and title and what ship are you on?
I am Capt. Alexandra Hagerty, master of USNS Shughart (T-AKR 295), a Surge LMSR (large, medium speed roll-on, roll-off) 908-foot-long vehicle cargo ship, owned by Military Sealift Command and operated by Ocean Shiplifting, Inc., Houston, Texas.

She earned the rank of captain in 2020, making her then one of only 149 U.S. female captains to command a U.S. merchant marine workforce of 210,000.

When did you join MSC, and what is unique about your career with MSC?
In 2015, before joining MSC to work on government vessels, I served with the American Maritime Officers’ (AMO) Union, where I primarily worked on commercial vessels. Shortly thereafter, having successfully completed all of the government required classes, I began working on a plethora of different classes of ships, based in remote parts of the world. What’s unique about a career with MSC is the chance to work both statewide and afloat.

If you are interested in working in Japan, for example, there are a variety of MSC vessels that work in the Far East year-round. Over the years, I’ve found the work to be constantly dynamic and unique. Likewise, I’ve thoroughly enjoyed the opportunities, working on oceanographic survey vessels such as the USNS Bowditch (T-AGS 21), and operating with scientists in Japan and in other remote parts of the world. I specifically appreciate vessels like USNS Shughart (T-AKR 295), and her sister ship, USNS Bob Hope (T-AKR 300) because large, medium speed roll-on, roll-off ships are large vessels with amazing capabilities, in terms of power, speed, size, and cargo carrying capacity.

What is your job with MSC?
As the master of a Surge Fleet LMSR cargo vessel, I am often in charge of an entire U.S. Army Task Force ship load, which can include, but not limited to, 58 tanks, 48 other track vehicles, and more than 200 trucks and other wheeled vehicles. These vessels can get underway at a moment’s notice to provide personnel, supplies, and equipment to our troops overseas, and many other exigent circumstances.

Being a captain is a unique role as I work with multiple ship departments, from engineering to deck to storeroom to steward and all the other ship departments in between. As the master of Shughart, it is vital that I meet the needs of all ship departments, while simultaneously working with contractors on a regular basis. In addition to being in charge of all things operational, I am also responsible for all administrative issues: maintaining the ship’s budget, payroll, and inventory; keeping up with the ship’s progress reports, both weekly and monthly; participating in ship teleconferences, and preserving preventative ship maintenance measures.

Some may coin us with the term ‘Ship-komat’ instead of Diplomat, this is because of the varied roles I play in terms of managing crew relations to balancing company requirements with Military Sealift Command’s needs.

What does a typical day look like for you?
At 0530 hours, I start my day checking emails to learn about anything that may affect the ship’s or crew’s day in terms of contractors and MSC operations.

At 0800 hours, I meet with the crew to discuss projects, changes, upcoming deadlines, security, inventories, maintenance and repair, habitability issues, visitors, new US Coast Guard requirements, safety concerns, COVID updates, IMO (International Maritime Organization – Part of the United Nations) and company updates.

Throughout the day, various department heads, program managers, port engineers, contractors, and civilians on site work with me on various jobs and updates that may impact the ship. I use case studies and accident reports to teach the crew about safety and the importance safety has on our daily jobs. Typically, I work a 12-hour work day; however, it can be much longer depending on what contractors are aboard or ship operations that need to be completed.
Military Sealift Command Honors LGBTQ Pride Month 2021

By Bill Mesta, Military Sealift Command Public Affairs

Civilian Teammates and service members assigned to Military Sealift Command gathered at Vista Point on Naval Station Norfolk for a special observance held in honor of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Pride Month, June 10.

Pride Month commemorates the events of June 1969 in New York City, known as the Stonewall Riots, which are largely regarded as the beginning of the LGBTQ movement, and works to achieve equal justice and equal opportunities for LGBTQ Americans.

"On that day in 1969, patrons and supporters the Stonewall Inn in Greenwich Village resisted police harassment of the LGBTQ community," said Yeoman Second Class Alexa Spurgeon, Mistress of Ceremonies for the LGBTQ special observance. "The Stonewall Riots are recognized as the catalyst for the gay liberation movement in the United States." The Pride Flag is a symbol of the LGBTQ movement is most commonly flown with a red stripe on top, as the colors appear on a natural rainbow, according to the special observance program. Aside from the symbolism of a mixed rainbow, the colors were determined to symbolize life (red), healing (orange), sunlight (yellow), nature (green), harmony and peace (blue) and spirit (purple/violet).

"At that point in my life I had just kind of 'come out.' I knew I might be gay but wasn't really sure. When 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' came out I knew this could be a problem," Strange said. "So went to the U.S. Air Force recruiting station and told them that I wasn't sure I could join because of the policy and I'm gay." The recruiter informed Strange that even though his sexuality was not personally concerning to them, they were still required to report the information up their chain of command. As a result, Strange was prevented from joining the military.

"Sometimes it irritates me that I didn't fight back a little harder against that," Strange stated. "But we didn't know what we didn't know then. And of course years later the policy was rescinded."

The Key Note speaker for the special observance was Christian Strange, who represents the Hampton Roads LGBTQ Chamber of Commerce. In 1994 Strange decided to join the U.S. Air Force but was prevented from enlisting due to President Clinton's newly implemented 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' policy.

"Diversity is one of our nation's greatest strengths," she added. "During LGBTQ Pride Month in June, we celebrate our rich diversity and renew our enduring commitment to equality."

The Pride flag is a symbol of the special observance, according to the special observance program. Aside from the symbolism of a mixed rainbow, the colors were determined to symbolize life (red), healing (orange), sunlight (yellow), nature (green), harmony and peace (blue) and spirit (purple/violet).

August is National Immunizations Awareness Month

From Leighanne Gerstbrein, Military Sealift Command Health Coordinator

August is National Immunizations Awareness Month and you call the shots! Vaccines have been shown to significantly reduce the risk of various infectious diseases that have historically threatened infants, children, and adults. However, due to the unfortunate spread of myths and misinformation about vaccines, some communities are at risk.

Therefore, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention established Vaccinate with Confidence, a strategy to reinforce confidence in COVID-19 vaccines and prevent outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases in the United States. This program works to protect communities, empower families, and stop myths. If you would like to learn more, head to:

www.cdc.gov/vaccines/partners/vaccinate-with-confidence.html

It is our responsibility to work hand-in-hand with our health care provider to keep up with our shots, beyond just the yearly flu shot, and now the COVID-19 vaccination. Getting vaccinated will save yourself and your loved ones from serious diseases and can help keep you healthy to avoid missing time with your family, friends, and loved ones. See below for a list of adult vaccinations to have on your radar:

Young adults (and college-aged adults)

• HPV (Human Papillomavirus)—usually ages 13 to 21
• Meningococcal (Meningitis)—initial vaccine when you're about 11 years old with a booster around age 16
• InBody Screenings (measures percentage of body fat, muscle mass, basal metabolic rate, or how many calories you burn at rest in a day, and more)
• Individualized Health Coaching
• On line health education and exercise classes
• Weekly health newsletter, covering a variety of health and wellness topics
• Health Risk Assessment and subscription to on-line wellness portal
• SHIP FIT: A workout plan distributed quarterly with all bodyweight exercises that can be done while underway or at home

All adults

• Hepatitis A
• Hepatitis B
• MMR (Measles, Mumps, Rubella)
• Td/Tdap (Tetanus, Diphtheria, Pertussis)
• Varicella (Chickenpox)
• Zoster (Shingles)—usually given at age 50 and older
• Pneumococcal (for Pneumonia)

MSC has resources available for you. The Health Promotion program at MSC offers the free following services to its Civil Service Mariners:

• InBody Screenings (measures percentage of body fat, muscle mass, basal metabolic rate, or how many calories you burn at rest in a day, and more)
• Individualized Health Coaching
• On line health education and exercise classes
• Weekly health newsletter, covering a variety of health and wellness topics
• Health Risk Assessment and subscription to on-line wellness portal
• SHIP FIT: A workout plan distributed quarterly with all bodyweight exercises that can be done while underway or at home

If you or someone you know may benefit from any of the above listed services, or for more information on the Health Promotion program at MSC, contact one of your Health Promotion Coordinators:

CSU-East: Email: leighanne.gerstbrein.ctr@navy.mil
CSU-West: Email: kcutina@millenniumenterprises.net

For More Information About Military Sealift Command
Visit us at www.msc.usff.navy.mil
USNS Patuxent continued from page 1

The small vessel reported that it had been drifting for 12 days and was taking on water.

Patuxent safely recovered the four crew members and provided them with food, water and a medical screening.

The U.S. 5th Fleet regularly works with coalition forces, regional partners and the shipping industry to maintain the regional awareness necessary to facilitate aid like this to mariners in distress.

“This is the second time in under two weeks the Patuxent crew has answered the call to assist fellow mariners in distress,” said Navy Capt. Michael O’Driscoll, commander of Task Force (TF) 53. “I am extremely proud of them and I think this perfectly highlights the value of sustained maritime presence alongside our regional and coalition partners.”

The 1974 International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) outlines the obligation of all mariners to provide assistance to those in distress at sea.

The U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations encompasses about 2.5 million square miles of water area and includes the Arabian Gulf, Gulf of Oman, Red Sea and parts of the Indian Ocean.

The area is comprised of 20 countries and includes three critical choke points at the Strait of Hormuz, the Suez Canal and the Strait of Hormuz.

USNS Seay’s Crew Salutes Army Namesake

By Leslie Hull-Ryde, Military Sealift Command Far East Public Affairs

The U.S. Army may celebrate its birthday on June 14, but the crew of a Military Sealift Command ship salutes the service of its Army namesake Seay for all year long.

USNS Seay (T-AKR 302) is named for U.S. Army Sgt. William W. Seay, a driver with the 62d Transportation Company who served in the Vietnam War. During a resupply mission, the sergeant’s convoy was ambushed near Ap Nhi.

When the enemy force halted the convoy’s movements, Seay immediately took cover behind a truck filled with ammunition and started firing at the enemy, lobbing grenades intended for him and his fellow Soldiers back at enemy forces. Seay’s swift action not only saved American lives but also killed several enemy personnel. A sniper mortally wounded Seay as he provided fire cover for others in the U.S. Army’s transportation company.

President Richard M. Nixon awarded the Medal of Honor to Seay posthumously. Seay’s family accepted it during a ceremony at the White House on April 7, 1970. The ship named for Seay’s ‘conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty’ helps preserve the brave Soldier’s commitment to logistics support.

USNS Seay is a large cargo ship, almost the size of an aircraft carrier. It is part of Maritime Prepositioning Ship Squadron 2 and provides afloat prepositioned U.S. military cargo to U.S. Armed Forces operating throughout the Indo-Pacific Region.

“The ship’s preparedness and service it provides follow in the spirit of heroism demonstrated by Sergeant William W. Seay,” said Capt. Fred Walley, master of the ship.

He says members of the crew consider it a ‘privilege’ to serve aboard the vessel named for the brave Army Soldier. The captain added that the crew continues Seay’s legacy of service as each contract Mariner aboard is committed to the ship’s important mission.

Fallen MSC Teammates

The Lord is my Pilot;
I shall not drift.
He leadeth me across the dark waters and steereth me in the deep channels.
He keepeth my Log and guideth me by the star of holiness for His Name’s sake.
Yea, though I sail amid the thunders and tempests of life, I shall dread no danger, For Thou art with me, Thy love and Thy care, they shelter me. Thou preparest a harbor before me in the homeland of eternity;
Thou anointest the waves with oil, and my ship rideth calmly, Surely sunray and starlight shall favor me all the days of my voyaging, and I will rest in the port of my Lord forever.

Captain J. Rogers
Source: The Mast, September 1948

Boatswain Mate Ruth Pichadi
MSC Service: 2007-2021

Steward Cook Stephen Zimmerman
MSC Service: 2010-2021

Supply Utility Bentrell Newsome
MSC Service: 2012-2021

Able Bodied Seaman Brian Newbould
MSC Service: 2018-2021

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