Military Sealift Command (MSC) hosted a National Maritime Day celebration aboard hospital ship USNS Comfort (T-AH 20), May 22, honoring United States Merchant Mariners.

The event commenced with remarks from Rear Adm. Michael Wettlaufer, MSC Commander, and featured keynote speaker Mr. Dave Yoho, World War II Merchant Marine Veteran.

“The Department of Defense depends on the Merchant Marine to support 90% of our sealift requirements in national emergency, crisis or conflict,” said Wettlaufer.

“Long serving as our nation’s ‘fourth arm of defense,’ American mariners bravely faced combatants and pirates, pandemics and natural disasters. They answer the call to serve their fellow Americans in ways and in places many of our fellow citizens don’t know about,” he added.

“Today, and every day, we honor our American Mariners, especially our MSC Civil Service Mariners, past and present, courageous women and men who serve our nation.”

In 1944, Yoho enlisted in the United States Merchant Marines at just 16 years old. He was assigned to a T/2 tanker ship, often referred to as a fleet oiler, which was sent to the South Pacific during World War II.

There was a great wave of patriotism after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, which inspired thousands to join the United States Merchant Marines. These mariners would become a part of the 250 thousand who served during World War II, said Yoho.

“They moved 15 million tons of goods to Europe and the United Kingdom, eight million tons of goods to the Mediterranean, 13 million tons of goods to the Pacific Ocean, and five million tons to Russia.”

During his speech, Yoho recalled his experience as a young Merchant Marine during wartime.

“We were in great trouble when the war started. We were out-manned, outmaneuvered, out-gunned, and out-financed, but we took a collective stand,” said Yoho.
SECRETARY OF THE NAVY ANNOUNCES END TO COVID-19 VACCINATION REQUIREMENTS FOR NAVY
KINGSVILLE (LCS 36) LAUNCHES USNS CODY (T-EPF 14) AND MSC SEALIFT

We were when many of these requirements were put into place. With the COVID-19 vaccine, we are in a different phase of our response to COVID-19 than when the start of the pandemic. Following a whole-of-government effort that led to a record number of nearly 270 million Americans receiving at least one shot of the COVID-19 vaccine, hospitalizations are down nearly 91%. Globally, COVID-19 deaths are at their lowest levels since the start of the pandemic. From January 2021, COVID-19 deaths have declined by 95%, and hospitalizations have declined by nearly 91%. The vaccination process to end their vaccination requirements for Head Start educators, CMS-certified long-term care and assisted living facility workers, long-term care and assisted living facility workers, and certain noncitizens at the land border.

“This first-in-class ship will be state-of-the-art and the Navy’s first medical ship in 35 years,” said Del Toro. “This ship, designed with more capabilities and direct access to diagnostic, specialty and hospital care, will allow for increased capabilities and health care. Just as the hospital at NSA Bethesda has served as a beacon of hope to those who entered its doorways, USNS Bethesda (EMS 1) will serve as a beacon to those in need around the world.”

The Bethesda-class expeditionary medical ships are designed as a dedicated medical ship that optimizes hospital-level medical care in support of distributed maritime operations (DMO). The EMS will feature a shallow draft enabling greater reach and allowing direct access to shallow austere ports, while also providing a flight deck that accommodates military helicopters. This design provides a full range of medical capabilities including triage/critical care, three operating rooms, medical laboratory, radiological capability, blood bank, dental, mental health, OB/GYN and primary care, rapid stabilization and follow-on evacuation of multiple casualties and combat search and rescue including recovery at sea. The primary mission of the EMS as a high-speed forward-deployed medical ship is to provide rapid-responsive, sea-based and near-shore hospital level critical care, humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, non-combatant evacuation operations and special operations. The EMS is designed to respond and provide care at a more rapid pace than their predecessors, USNS Mercy and USNS Comfort, sailing at speeds of at least 30 knots with a range of 5,500 nautical miles at 24 knots.

AUSTAL USA LAUNCHES USNS CODY (T-EPF 14) AND KINGSVILLE (LCS 36)

Recently, Austal USA launched two Navy ships, USNS Cody (T-EPF 14) and the future USNS Kingsville (LCS 36), demonstrating the efficiency of the shipyard’s launch process. Both ships are now docked pier side for final outfitting and system activation in preparation for sea trials later this year.

During the launch process, the ships – which weigh upwards of 2,500 metric tons – are lifted almost three feet in the air. Using transporters, the ships are moved approximately 400 feet onto a moored deck barge adjacent to the final assembly bay. The ships are transferred from the deck barge to a floating dry dock which is then submerged enabling the ships to float for the first time.

“The launches this week are a testament to the skill and capability of our shipbuilders but are also demonstrative of how we optimize efficiency through process discipline,” stated Austal USA Vice President of New Construction, Dave Growden. “Our test and activation, crane and rigging, and safety teams work methodically alongside our Navy partners and key vendors such as Berard. Those partnerships allow us to continually examine our process, identify opportunities for improvement, and more effectively achieve these major ship milestones.”

With both ships in the water, production efforts will transition to final outfitting and system activation to support the ships getting underway for sea trials. The USNS Cody, which was christened last month, is the Navy’s first Expeditionary Fast Transport (EFP) Flight II vessel. As the first EFP Flight II, the ship represents enhanced Naval medicine afloat capabilities and will provide critical combat care in austere and contested operating environments. As the Navy’s 18th Independence-variant Litoral Combat Ship (LCS), the future USNS Kingsville will be deployed to the Pacific fleet area of responsibility supporting forward presence, maritime security, sea control, and deterrence. Kingsville will be christened at Austal USA’s shipyard next month.

Both ships are aluminum builds and represent the nearing completion of the EFP and LCS new construction programs. USNS Cody is the 14th EFP and Kingsville is the 18th of 19 Independence-variant LCS that Austal USA is building for the Navy.
Military Sealift Command (MSC) conducted its first Operational Readiness Assessment (ORA) for Navy hospital ships during a Comfort Exercise (COMFEX) aboard hospital ship USNS Comfort (T-AH 20) at Naval Station Norfolk, May 1-5.

While COMFEX is a routine training exercise conducted aboard the ship, incorporating the ORA allows MSC, as type commander for hospital ships, to evaluate policies and requirements that are needed to ensure crew-members and staff are able to accomplish their mission when they deploy.

“We are looking to evaluate and assess the Comfort’s crew on how they work as a team on process development, basic requirements, and also how they work with the Civil Service Mariners to carry out their mission,” said Lt. Cmdr. Sasha Smith, MSC Action Officer.

During COMFEX, the hospital ship was fully staffed and operational to include members from Navy Medicine Readiness and Training Command Portsmouth. The exercise challenged the crew in a holistic mission-based environment that incorporated real world scenarios such as earthquakes, civil unrest and active-duty casualties to personnel aboard the ship.

“We’re doing mass casualty drills, shipboard fire drills, man overboard drills and abandon ship drills,” said USNS Comfort’s Command Master Chief (CMDCM) Tito Santa Cruz. “Then each individual directorate will have their own training scenario that’s specific to their specialty of care. Even support services have their own specific elements. You don’t often think about how important it is to feed a large crew, but we’ve activated the galley and they are training to accommodate a large crew as if we’re on a mission.”

MSC SENIOR LEADERS MEET FOR 2023 MASTERS AND CHIEFS SYMPOSIUM

By Sarah Cannon, Military Sealift Command Pacific Public Affairs

Military Sealift Command (MSC) Masters and Chief Engineers, from around the world, visited San Diego in April, for the annual Masters and Chiefs Symposium.

Nearly 100 people, including Rear Adm. Michael Wettlaufer, Commander MSC; Rear Adm. Jeff Spivey, MSC Deputy Commander; Steven Cade, MSC Executive Director; Gregg Pelowski, MSC Director, Total Force Management, as well as senior MSC leadership, Masters and Chiefs spent two days in discussion and working groups diving deep into issues that affect the mission capabilities and manning of MSC ships and programs.

“We’re taught in the Crash and Salvage crew proficiency is most paramount,” added Aviation Boatswain’s Mate (Handler) 2nd Class Herchiel Jones. “When a breakdown happens, you don’t have time think about it. Life doesn’t always present perfect scenarios, so we have to prepare for what we can’t prepare for.”

In addition to MSC Medical Force and various other MSC offices, other units involved in the assessment included, Afloat Training Group Norfolk, the Fleet Surgical Teams 2, Fleet Surgical Team 4 and the Naval Warfare Development Center. The assessment is not a graded event, but the primary focus is still about operational readiness.

“We’re getting the crew to their top level of readiness. It’s important that we are able to get underway, do our jobs and do what the nation needs us to do,” added MSC Force Medical Master Chief Hospital Corpsman Master Chief Nathan Marsh.

Smith said after the assessment, MSC will develop an after-action report identifying areas where the crew performed well and areas that need improvement. The report will be used to create policy driven by requirements necessary to allow the crew to perform successfully.

“The end state goal is to be able to conduct this type of assessment on the T-AH platform yearly and eventually to become a certified event. The next step is planning to conduct an Operational Readiness Assessment aboard USNS Mercy (T-AH 19),” she said.
USNS BRUCE C. HEEZEN HOSTS MONACO INTERNATIONAL HYDROGRAPHIC ORGANIZATION RECEPTION

By Christina Johnson, Military Sealift Command Europe and Africa Public Affairs

U.S. Navy’s Military Sealift Command (MSC) USNS Bruce C. Heezen (T-AGS 64), a Pathfinder-class oceanographic survey ship, hosted a reception for representatives of the 98 member states that make up the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) Assembly while the ship was pier side at Monaco’s Port Hercules, May 4.

Capt. Kenneth Pickard, Military Sealift Command Europe & Africa (MSCEURAF) Commodore/Task Force 63 Commander, attended the event along with Lt. Nikki Calhoun, MSCEURAF Special Mission Ships (SMS) mission planner who coordinated the week-long visit.

“The last time this ship was here, at this very port, was in 2012,” said Capt. Shane Morton, USNS Bruce C. Heezen’s Master. “We are very honored to have such distinguished guests aboard from the IHO Assembly, and to have the opportunity to show them the ship.”

Heezen pulled in, May 1, and began offering tours to IHO Assembly representatives the following two days. The visit culminated with a reception the evening of May 4.

According to the Naval Meteorology and Oceanography Command, this type of ship conducts scientific work such as oceanography, hydrography, and many other scientific fields from the ocean floor to the stars.

The U.S. and Monaco, along with the IHO, are committed to working together and improving collaboration on the collection of scientific data to help create a safer ocean for all.

EXPEDITIONARY PORT UNIT 104 NAVY RESERVISTS ASSIST MILITARY SEALIFT COMMAND IN GERMANY

By Christina Johnson, Military Sealift Command Europe and Africa Public Affairs

U.S. Navy Reserve personnel from Expeditionary Port Unit (EPU) 104, based out of New Castle, Delaware, assisted Military Sealift Command Europe and Africa (MSCEURAF) in offloading SS Gopher State (T-ACS 4), a U.S. Maritime Administration auxiliary crane ship, April 12.

In the U.S. Department of Defense’s continual support of real-world events, deliveries to various locations in Europe have nearly doubled in the past year. These shipments require coordination from MSCEURAF prior to arrival, at the pier and on the port. For this mission, Willie Jones, an MSCEURAF Marine Transport Specialist (MTS), received additional support from EPU 104.

“I personally love it,” said Master-at-Arms Chief Petty Officer James Fitzpatrick, senior enlisted leader of the team of three sent to assist and train at the Port of Nordenham, Germany. “The mission gives you a good sense that you are contributing to make a difference.”

The Navy Reserve mission for MSC is to provide EPLs for operations which require additional manpower not normally required during sustained peacetime operations, and are MSC’s manpower solution for surge mission sets. MSC has 15 EPLs aligned under five area commanders.

When mobilized, reservists quickly take charge of establishing MSC port offices to assist with sealift operations wherever and whenever needed.

“Going out where the Navy needs your support,” added Fitzpatrick, a third generation police officer in Utica, New York, “feels like it’s a better contribution to the bigger picture.”
Maj. Gen. Mark McCormack, Commanding General of Task Force Spartan. "This conduct deck landing qualifications and marksmanship training," said U.S. Army joined together with our partners in the U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps to "This week our combined arms CRTF consisting of aviation and infantry elements

In April, Soldiers assigned to Task Force Spartan, U.S. Army Central Command's Crisis Response Task Force (CRTF), trained with Marines and Sailors assigned to Naval Amphibious Task Force 51/5th Marine Expeditionary Brigade (TF 51/5) aboard expeditionary sea base USS Lewis B. Puller (ESB-3) to better enable crisis response options and joint-service interoperability within United States Central Command (CENTCOM).

"Here in CENTCOM it's vital that our joint services stay proficient at operating within a naval environment. "Here in CENTCOM it's vital that our joint services stay proficient at operating within a naval environment. Joint service training was vital to maintaining critical response capabilities in the CENTCOM area of operations for any potential employment and real-world crisis reaction. Task Force Spartan, the sailors of the USS Lewis B. Puller, and the Marines of MARECENT, are a lethal and ready force prepared to defend all national interests in the region."

Capt. Susan Orsini, USN, USN Carson City's Master, Capt. Glenn Kron, the ship's military detachment's officer in charge, and Lt. Jake Zier, military detachment's assistant officer in charge, met with Andrea Erzetic, a representative for the Koper mayor, and Capt. Bogomir Tomazic, Slovenia's 430 Naval Unit commanding officer. The ship's crew were greeted upon arrival in Koper and some were given a tour of the base's naval museum. In exchange, the local country hosts were presented with a photo of the ship and a command coin to commemorate the visit.

"The crew enjoyed the immense generosity and the warm welcome received during the port visit," said Kron. Military Sealift Command operates approximately 130 civilian-crewed ships which replenish U.S. Navy ships, strategically prepositions combat cargo at sea and move military cargo and supplies used by deployed U.S. forces and coalition partners around the world.

U.S. 6th Fleet, headquartered in Naples, Italy, conducts the full spectrum of joint and naval operations, often in concert with allied and interagency partners, to advance U.S. national interests, and promote security and stability in Europe and Africa.

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The U.S. Naval Community College officially began accepting applications for its Associate of Science in Logistics (Maritime) degree program, May 9.

USNCC worked with Arizona State University to provide a naval-relevant degree program focused on those who work in supply and logistics for the Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard.

“We’re excited to further the lifelong learning process of the naval logistics community,” said USNCC’s President Randi R. Cosentino, Ed.D. “These Sailors, Marines, and Coast Guardsmen will develop a set of skills and earn credentials that set them up for success for the rest of their lives.”

This degree includes the Naval Studies Certificate, a five-course, fifteen-credit program based on naval sciences courses taught in the U.S. Naval Academy and Naval ROTC programs. These 15 credits are applied to the associate degree programs and count towards the required courses for the degree. The courses include Naval Ethics and Leadership; Modern Naval History; Naval Force Design and Concepts; Civilian and Military Organization, Policies, and American Government; and the certificate capstone course Introduction to Geopolitics.

The Associate of Science in Logistics (Maritime) degree is completed completely online and has established pathways to one of several related four-year degrees with little to no loss of credit. The Associate of Science in Logistics (Maritime) with ASU, which is pending approval from the Arizona Board of Regents and ASU faculty governance, will have an established transfer path to a Bachelor of Science in Supply Chain Management, a Bachelor of Arts in Business (Global Logistics), a Bachelor of Arts in Applied Business and Technology Solutions, or Bachelor of Arts in Entrepreneurial Leadership offered by ASU. Included in the AS is the Certificate of Maritime Logistics.

“Whether it’s boots, beans, or bullets, these naval professionals make it happen,” said Sgt. Maj. Michael Hensley, USNCC’s senior enlisted leader, about the maritime logistics degrees. “We want our maritime logistics professionals to work smarter and more efficiently, and furthering their education will help impact the entire naval force for the better.”
**SPECIAL OBSERVANCE: MILITARY SEALIFT COMMAND HONORS ASIAN AMERICAN PACIFIC ISLANDER HERITAGE MONTH**

By Bill Mesta, Military Sealift Command Public Affairs

Service members and civilian teammates attached to Military Sealift Command gathered virtually to celebrate Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month, May 11.

The special observance gave the MSC team the opportunity to honor, recognize, and celebrate the rich diversity, leadership, and enduring empowerment of all Asian American and Pacific Islanders, and their dedicated service and contributions to the betterment of our nation.

“The contributions of Americans of Asian and Pacific Islander descent are firmly woven into the diverse fabric of our Nation. During Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, we celebrate the remarkable accomplishments of Americans of Asian and Pacific Islander heritage that have enriched our great country and helped define our history,” said Lt. Madison Stenzel, Mistress of Ceremonies for the special observance. “These Americans bolster our economy as entrepreneurs, business owners, and employees who initiate and expand opportunities for their families, communities, and country.

“Theyir languages, art, cuisine, and other cultural elements have enriched the American experience, and many have fearlessly answered the call of duty to defend our freedom as members of our Armed Forces,” she added.

The special observance included a video provided by the Defense Media Activity. “Asian American and Pacific Islanders have been serving honorably in the Navy since the early 19th century,” as stated by Petty Officer Jen Blake in the video. “Heritage is like the foundation of our country and it’s the foundation of the people within the Navy. And for the Navy, the benefit of having the diverse heritage, that we currently enjoy, be very strong.”

MSC’s special observance also included a presentation from Professor Shu Xiao, from the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering at Old Dominion University. Xiao’s presentation focused on the strengths of the Chinese culture before the implementation of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), 70 years ago.

“So imagine a world that human relationships are challenging. Self-centeredness is on the rise. There’s a disagreement about the best way to live,” Xiao stated. “That sounds like nowadays the world we are living in, right?”

Xiao went on to describe how prior to the CCP the Chinese people enjoyed a culture based on rich principles, virtue and wisdom.

“Western culture is based on linear logic,” according to Xiao. “We go from point A to point B and we connected dots (to accomplish things).”

“(Traditional) Chinese culture is indirect,” said Xiao. “There is no direct route (to achieve your objective). You must (evaluate your options) and figure out your own way.”

The theme for this year’s special observance was Advancing Leaders Through Opportunity.

Frank Cunningham, Military Sealift Command Total Force Management, concluded the special observance by addressing all of the Asian American Pacific Islanders who serve as Civil Service Mariners aboard MSC’s fleet of ships.

Our ships are crewed by a large number of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, who are sailing various types of ships around the world. Cunningham stated. Our nation is grateful for your significant contributions and we thank you.

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**JUNE IS MEN’S HEALTH MONTH**

By Leighanne Gerstbrein, Military Sealift Command Health Promotion Program

There are health conditions that affect only men, such as prostate cancer and low testosterone. Many of the major health risks that men face, like colon cancer or heart disease, can be prevented or delayed with lifestyle modifications and treated with early diagnosis. Screening tests can find diseases early when they are easier to treat.

It’s important to get the age-appropriate screening tests you need. For additional information, you can check out the US Preventive Service Task Force’s free online age-appropriate screening calculator at https://uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org

Get screening tests to find problems early. Screenings are medical tests that doctors use to check for diseases and health conditions before there are any signs or symptoms. Screenings help find problems early when they may be easier to treat.

Depending on your age and medical history, talk to your doctor about being screened (tested) for things like:

- Certain types of cancer
- High blood pressure or high cholesterol
- Diabetes
- STDs (sexually transmitted diseases)
- Mental health conditions, like depression

Take a proactive approach to your health, so you are not reacting down the road to more significant health issues that may be harder to resolve. Many people think of the doctor as someone to see when they’re sick. But doctors also provide services, like screenings and vaccines that help you from getting sick in the first place.

You can start by making small changes that may have a larger impact to lower your risk for heart disease (the number one killer of all Americans), and lower your risk of type two diabetes.

Here are some examples of small changes you can start with:

- Take a walk instead of watching TV. Better yet, invite a friend/accountability buddy!
- Try a green salad, baked potato, or even baked fries instead of fried French fries.
- Drink water with lemon or other fruit added for flavor, non-alcoholic drinks, or sugar free tea or lemonade instead of sodas or alcohol.

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“...we fight the battle for money. We fight the battle for recruitment. We fight the battle for pier space and maintenance contracts and for training. We fight the good fight, but these things come slowly,” explained Westlaufer. “We are learning how to speak to our programs and we need to make these things come faster. The bottom line is, if we can get the people, the machines and the training needed, we will have success.”

The two-day symposium allowed attendees to discuss the topics important to them as Civil Service Mariners with the senior MSC leadership. The goal was to bring everyone together to open dialect, and to share information, concerns and ideas to improve both communication and the ability to meet the mission objectives in support of the Navy worldwide.

“I really appreciated these symposiums,” said Capt. Dan Glazier, a MSC Master and symposium attendee. “Being able to meet with the leadership face-to-face, and interact with other ships’ crew members and to hear what they are thinking and experiencing, and how they deal with certain things, is really beneficial. Anytime you can share information is worth the time.”

SHIP DEPARTURES SIGNAL END TO FLEET WEEK PORT EVERGLADES

J ay Cope, Commander, Navy Region Southeast Public Affairs

With the brows pulled, the lines stowed and the ships slowly guided away from the pier, Sunday, April 30, marked the end of Fleet Week Port Everglades 2023.

The crews said farewell to Fort Lauderdale, having hosted more than 8,000 people aboard the USS Cole (DDG 67), USS New York (LPD 21), USNS Newport (T-EPF 12), USS Indiana (SSN 789) and USCGC William Flores (WPC-1103). The ships and service members left a strong impression upon the guests.

“This experience was great,” Brandey Edelson, outreach director of the U.S. House of Representatives 23rd District of Florida said after a tour of USS Cole. “It’s always great to see them in action and see how they live and operate. We appreciate having them in Port Everglades and spending time with us.”

Throught the week, the Sailors, Marines, Coast Guardmen and Civil Service Mariners engaged in more than 40 different events including various receptions to welcome the service members to the city and community volunteer projects.