NAVAL AIR WARFARE CENTER TEAMS UP WITH MILITARY SEALIFT COMMAND, U.S. MARINES TO TEST UNMANNED AERIAL SYSTEM CONCEPT

By Bill Mesta, Military Sealift Command Public Affairs

A team of contracted civilian Unmanned Aerial System (UAS) specialists from Texas-based Skyways teamed up with the Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division’s (NAWCAD) Rapid Prototyping and Experimentation Division and VX-24 Unmanned Test Squadron, the U.S. Marine Corps, Military Sealift Command and the crew of MSC’s fleet replenishment oiler USNS Patuxent (T-AO 201) to test the Blue Water Logistic UAS’s ability to support expeditionary material transportation, while the ship was at sea in the Atlantic Ocean, June 11-12.

The Blue Water Logistics UAS, produced by Skyways, features a removable internal cargo bay capable of transporting small payloads of material from one location to another, autonomously.

The team performed UAS test flights as part of U.S. Fleet Forces Command and U.S. Marine Forces Command’s Fleet Battle Problem 23-1.

“The UAS specialist, shore-side Marines and USNS Patuxent successfully completed the first integration of a logistics drone into a Fleet exercise,” according to John Bruening, Military Sealift Command Taluga Group Director. “Over the course of two days, the UAS flew simulated re-supply missions in support of US Marine Corps troops ashore in North Carolina; making multiple deliveries of parts during Fleet Battle Problem 23-1.”

The team used two drones to perform five UAS test flights off the coast of North Carolina. Three of the flights demonstrated the UAS’s ability to deliver simulated critical repair parts autonomously from USNS Patuxent to Marines operating in an expeditionary environment ashore. The UAS also successfully made two autonomous flights transporting simulated cargo from the Marines ashore to the fleet replenishment oiler at-sea.

“Data analysis has shown that 90% of the high priority parts that are delivered from MSC’s Combat Logistic Force ships weigh less than 50 pounds,” Bruening stated. “Instead of using a helicopter or sailing ships close together to transfer these parts, we hope to use a logistics drone, which not only saves wear and tear on helicopters, it also provides flexibility to the warfighter while in support of Distributed Maritime Operations.”

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The hospital ship USNS Comfort’s (T-AH 20) Medical Treatment Facility (MTF) held a change of command ceremony at Naval Station Norfolk, June 16.

During the ceremony, Capt. Stephen Arles relieved Capt. Kathryn Elliot as Commanding Officer of USNS Comfort.

“Throughout history, hospital ships have been used to provide expeditionary health services in time of war. More recently, Comfort has been utilized both in disaster relief efforts and as a tool to advance regional partnerships. These missions are life changing, not just for the people we’ve interacted with, but for our crew as well,” said Elliot. “Comfort’s team stands ready to deploy when the nation calls. That readiness is not episodic, it is a result of the constant steady strain on the part of everyone aboard–mariners and Sailors alike.”

“The seven years I have spent with Military Sealift Command and, in particular, the last two as the Commanding Officer of Comfort’s Medical Treatment Facility have been the highlight of my Navy career.”

Rear Adm. Michael Wettlaufer, Commander, Military Sealift Command, presided over the ceremony.

“Kate, you and this Comfort team represented our nation at its finest, in the most public and visible way and changed lives for the better,” said Wettlaufer. “On behalf of a grateful Navy, I assert the outstanding performance of the military treatment facility under your command. Congratulations on a job exceedingly well done!”

“The greatest strength of the Navy is the incredible pool of talent we attract. We bear witness to this fact today. Just as we say goodbye to one outstanding leader, we welcome in another. Welcome aboard to Captain Stephen Arles.”

Capt. Arles reports from duty as the first Director of Maritime Operations at Naval Medical Forces Pacific.

“My team and I will work our hardest to continue the long and proud tradition of service the USNS Comfort has provided our nation,” said Arles. “We are committed to being ready, to answer the call whether it’s for disaster relief, humanitarian assistance, theater security cooperation, or in times of crisis or large-scale conflict. I will do my best to earn your confidence, trust, respect, and above all ensure we are ready for mission success.”


The ship is crewed by Civil Service Mariners, while the hospital, known as the Medical Training Facility, is staffed by Navy personnel. The embarked MTF is under the technical control of the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery. Military Sealift Command is the program manager for the two hospital ships and the type commander for the ship class.

The Medical Treatment Facility aboard USNS Comfort is one of the largest trauma facilities in the United States and offers a full spectrum of surgical and medical services.
Military Sealift Command welcomes NASA counterparts to attend Lean Six Sigma reciprocal sharing of Knowledge Management.

Military Sealift Command welcomed members of NASA Langley's Aeroscience Product Line to participate in a recent Lean Six Sigma (LSS) Yellow Belt class at Naval Station Norfolk.

MSC's Yellow Belt class aims to help students acquire an understanding of Continuous Process Improvement (CPI), and its importance to the mission, organization and the overall effectiveness and gain efficiency across missions and functions.

"The main goal is to foster a culture that focuses on CPI methodologies, tools and skills to improve their workplace in order to meet MSC objectives," said Amy Wolf, MSC CPI Program Technical Lead. "We want MSC employees to return to their department able to identify potential areas for improvement and armed with tools to assist in the effort."

The collaboration between MSC and NASA began when MSC Management and Program Analyst Stephanie Boyles began working with the team at Joint Base Langley-Fort Eustis while completing her Executive Leadership Program Project to help implement Knowledge Management best practices with NASA's Wind Tunnel teams. MSC's data science teams have since established a relationship and began discussing sharing best practices. They extended an invitation to NASA as a part of reciprocal sharing of Knowledge Management.

"One idea that we are exploring in order to reap the benefits of a number of MSC personnel who have already been trained at the Yellow Belt or Green Belt level, is the development of a GEMBA Day," said Dr. Clark Capshaw, MSC CPI Program Instructor. "GEMBA is a CPI concept that promotes cross-functional collaboration by the following steps: (1) Go see, (2) Ask why, and (3) Show respect. The way this would be implemented at MSC would be to recruit six to eight trained individuals who are willing to do a little work to outline their own work process, and to spend a day visiting one another to discuss and possibly modify some of their inefficient work processes."

DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE HICKS TELLS MERCHANT MARINERS THEY ARE READY TO LEAD

American Merchant Mariners are key to the U.S. economy, the defense of the country, and global well-being, Deputy Secretary of Defense Kathleen H. Hicks told the graduating class of the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy at Kings Point, New York, June 17.

Like DOD's military academies, the Merchant Mariners are commissioned officers that have a service obligation. Many of the new officers commissioned into active-duty service in the Navy, Marine Corps, Army, Coast Guard or Air Force with others serving as Navy Reservists, as they work in the U.S. maritime industry.

"All of you will be crucial in advancing the U.S. military's top priority: defending this nation," Hicks said. "And while we confront many challenges around the world, our greatest challenge is outpacing our strategic competitors."

China is at the top of the list as far as strategic competition goes. She told the new officers that China "is the only strategic competitor to the United States with the will and, increasingly, the capability to remake the international order that's given so much benefit to so many for so long."

With much of the world's goods passing through the Pacific, the new officers will be part of the effort to keep the sea lines of communication open and free to all. "Our goal is to deter aggression because competition does not mean conflict," she said.

"And part of deterrence is making sure our adversaries understand the costs and folly of pursuing outright conflict."

"As in any competition, our lead is not guaranteed," she said. "We have to earn it continuously. It really is all hands on deck. So, America will need her merchant mariners."

The U.S. Merchant Marine was key to victory in World War II. The service suffered the highest percentage of casualties of any service in their mission of delivering the fruits of the arsenal of democracy to the fighting fronts of that total war.

Merchant Mariners delivered for forces fighting in Korea and Vietnam, and they played a vital role in supplying troops deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan.

"Simply put: Again and again throughout history, America's Merchant Mariners have delivered," Hicks said. "Today, Merchant Mariners remain an indispensable component of our national defense, because they continue to deliver."

Merchant Mariners are key to American force projection — the ability to place troops and military capabilities anywhere in the world and sustain them.

She noted that more than 70 vessels have helped bring supplies and equipment to U.S. allies and partners after Russia again invaded Ukraine.

In the Indo-Pacific region, "multiple strategic sealift ships provide critical maritime prepositioning of U.S. military equipment and supplies," she said.

"What so many of you do as Merchant Mariners enables our ability to project power globally, to respond to crises and contingencies on short notice, and to campaign in support of joint operations," Hicks said.

The hulls to transport these supplies and capabilities are important, but "perhaps the most important advantage we have over our competitors is you — your talent, your training and the responsibility we place in you," Hicks said.

The new officers enter a complex world. The operating environment is challenging, complicated and contested, she said, "but in the face of friction and fog, I know you — our newest ensigns and second lieutenants, active-duty and reserve — will be America's saving grace; just like your predecessors."

The U.S. military trusts junior leaders in ways competitors — and some allies — do not. "In the U.S. military, we're confident in our junior officers' ability ... to get the job done, to lead," Hicks said. "So, the responsibility we place on you, that is a key ingredient in the 'secret sauce' that makes our military the finest and fiercest fighting force in the entire world. And that's why, here at the Merchant Marine Academy, the United States of America has been investing in you, making you into leaders. And we are all impressed by the results."

"You will rise and fall as a team, and that means you will have to look out for your people — those to the left, the right, and in front and behind you," she said. "And you will need to let them in to look out for you."
U.S. Navy Military Sealift Command (MSC) Expeditionary Port Unit (EPU), a team made up of five Navy Reserve personnel, assisted with the offload of U.S. Army equipment, including tactical vehicles, armor, and multiple containers of supplies, from MSC’s voyage-charter MV Ocean Grand cargo vessel for the largest yearly exercise hosted by U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM), African Lion 2023, May 12 – 16.

Members of EPU 105 and EPU 106 joined Military Sealift Command Europe and Africa (MSCEURAF) Marine Transportation Specialist (MTS) Willie Jones to coordinate the equipment offload that included tactical vehicles, armor, and multiple containers of supplies in support of the combined, joint exercise that takes place worldwide. According to the AFRICOM website, 18 nations and approximately 8,000 personnel are participating in the exercise.

“The EPUs have built a great relationship with MSCEURAF,” said Cmdr. James Conway, EPU 105 Commanding Officer. “Being able to support real world missions greatly prepares Reserve Sailors for the EPU mission.”

Conway explained that Expeditionary Port Units are in a slightly unique position and are able to deploy with relatively short notice anywhere in the world and establish themselves as a bridge between the world of shipping, the local host nation, and the client.

“We are also able to assist in the delivery of aid or other cargo wherever needed,” according to Conway.

EPU team members for the first phase of the exercise deployment included Conway; Chief Hospital Corpsman Matthew LavenSool, Information Systems Technician First Class Matthew Belyume, all from EPU 105, and Lt. Cmdr. Clif Golon, EPU 106 executive officer.

MSC’s voyage-charter MV Ocean Grand cargo vessel for the largest yearly exercise hosted by U.S. Africa Command, African Lion 2023. (U.S. Navy courtesy photo)

The submarine tender USS Emory S. Land (AS 39) returned to Naval Base Guam after a short underway due to the Super Typhoon Mawar, May 29.

The sortie lasted eight days, and the ship safely avoided the storm’s impacts.

“The whole point of a tender is to be mobile,” said Capt. Brent Spillner, the ship’s commanding officer. “When a storm approaches, we just move out the way, rather than risk damage that shore-based facilities might be unable to avoid. We can then return as soon as the harbor is reopened and contribute immediately to the recovery efforts.”

Sailors that stayed behind were tasked with preparing Polaris Point for the typhoon. Preparations included sandbagging, removing debris, removing hazardous materials from the waterfront, and ensuring the readiness of the Emergent Repair Facility.

After the storm passed safely, the stay-behind crew mobilized to assess the damage to Polaris Point, and assist with the cleanup and power restoration efforts in the area. Once safely moored, Emory S. Land will be ready to have units moor alongside.

“We’re able to provide all of the power and other services the tended units might need until Guam’s utilities are fully restored. I’m also very proud of the way our shore contingent contributed their labor and expertise to fixing equipment and restoring vital services at installations across the island as part of the Task Force West recovery team. It’s really just a larger-scale version of what tender Sailors do on a daily basis, and they relished the opportunity to pitch in and use their skills for the benefit of the whole community. Most importantly, I am grateful that all of our personnel and families are safe and accounted for, and came together so quickly under difficult conditions to assess needs and help each other out,” said Spillner.

MSC’s voyage-charter MV Ocean Grand cargo vessel for the largest yearly exercise hosted by U.S. Africa Command, African Lion 2023. (U.S. Navy courtesy photo)
Capt. Kenneth Pickard, Military Sealift Command Europe and Africa (MSC/EURAF) Commodore/Task Force 63 Commander, visited Viktor Lenac Shipyard, Rijeka, Croatia, to see two Military Sealift Command expeditionary fast transport ships (EPFs), USNS Trenton (T-EPF 5) and USNS Carson City (T-EPF 7), May 22.

The high-speed, rapid transport ships are currently in the Croatian shipyard, undergoing regularly scheduled maintenance periods. Trenton is undergoing a Mid-term Availability (MTA), scheduled every 15 months, and Carson City is there for a five-year Regular Overhaul (ROH) period that includes dry-docking. An MTA is normally 45 to 60 days in length and the approximate cost for the maintenance is nearly four million dollars; additionally, an ROH lasts around 60 days at a cost of nearly six million dollars.

“We consider Viktor Lenac a unicorn,” said Bryan Eubanks, the Naples-based MSC/EURAF Supervisory Port Engineer. He also explained that project managers are normally concerned with three specific areas when it comes to the scheduled maintenance for ships: cost of the maintenance/repair, staying on schedule, and that the necessary work is completed correctly.

“Usually, you’re happy when you hit two of the three of these areas,” stated Eubanks. “With Viktor Lenac, it’s normal to hit three out of three, and they not only provide maintenance at the shipyard, but they provide support to our ships all over Europe.”

Although Trenton was in dry-dock at the time of the Commodore’s visit, Pickard was able to reward a couple of Trenton’s military detachment with awards in the shadow of their ship in dry-dock.

Information Specialist Master Chief Petty Officer Shannon Naranjo, a mobilized Navy Reservist who served as Trenton’s Senior Enlisted Leader for 11 months, received an end-of-tour Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal, and Cryptologic Technician Maintenance Second Class Petty Officer Douglas Schouwller, a Navy Information Operations Command (NIOC) Hawaii nine-month individual augmentee, received an end of tour Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal.

Following the recognition of Trenton Sailors, Pickard was welcomed aboard Carson City to meet with the ship’s new MSC Master, Capt. Yamil Sanchez-Padilla, and host an ‘All Hands’ meeting with Carson City’s Civil Service Mariners (CIVMAR) to discuss new MSC initiatives and benefits, and to field questions and concerns to be answered locally or sent to MSC Headquarters for resolution.

CIVMARs shared their concern with the lodging that is provided when a ship is not inhabitable during a maintenance period. Various topics discussed were the hotels that were provided for the crew were not following the contract by turning off the air conditioning or providing microwaves when the hotels are in remote, isolated areas where transportation is not available or expensive to use to get to local restaurants or grocery stores.

“Quality of life issues are a huge focus for us,” said Pickard. “We cannot afford to lose a CIVMAR because of a quality-of-life matter that can be fixed once we hear about it during an ‘All Hands’ call.”

**USS HERSHEL “WOODY” WILLIAMS HOSTS MILITARY SEALIFT COMMAND EUROPE AND AFRICA DURING MALTA MAINTENANCE PERIOD**

U.S. Navy’s Military Sealift Command (MSC) USS Hershel “Woody” Williams (ESB 4) hosted a visit from Capt. Kenneth Pickard, Military Sealift Command Europe and Africa (MSC/EURAF) Commodore/Task Force 63 Commander, while the ship was in dry-dock at the Palumbo Malta Shipyard, May 24.

Hershel “Woody” Williams, a Lewis B. Puller-class expeditionary sea base that provides support for airborne mine countermeasures, expeditionary missions, counter-piracy, maritime security, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, is forward deployed to Souda Bay, Greece, and serves as the first U.S. Navy ship to provide support for airborne mine countermeasures, expeditionary missions, counter-piracy, maritime security, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief in the Mediterranean.

“The time in the shipyard is essential to the operational safety of the ship,” said Bryan Eubanks, the Naples-based MSC/EURAF Supervisory Port Engineer. He also explained how the ship was going through its planned Regular Overhaul (ROH) maintenance period that is scheduled every five years that includes dry-docking the ship.

“Additionally, having maintenance done on the ship in the central Mediterranean, is an ideal location for when the ship leaves the shipyard to be able reach many destinations quicker than if they were in a shipyard further away,” said Eubanks.

According to a press release from the U.S. Embassy Valletta, the maintenance visit to the Palumbo Malta Shipyard promotes the maritime partnership between the United States and Malta, provides required technical expertise for the maintenance work, and contributes significantly to the Maltese economy.

The ship is unique because it has a hybrid crew consisting of both military personnel and MSC Civil Service Mariners (CIVMARs), has both a commanding officer and MSC-assigned Ship’s Master and Chief Engineer, and operates with blue and gold military crews; a personnel rotation that allows for the ship to be continually deployed.

Pickard was greeted aboard the ship by Capt. Amy Lindahl, Hershel “Woody” Williams Blue Crew Commanding Officer, who recently assumed command in April 2023, and he let her know during an office call if that she encountered any issues where MSC/EURAF can assist, to please let him and the staff know.

“We’ve seen improvement in the support to the ship during your time as commodore,” said Capt. Joe Darlak, the ship’s Master during his meeting with Pickard. “ Especially you making sure the maintenance periods are consistent because not many shipyards can fit the size of the ship.”

Following the meetings with the ship’s leadership, Pickard held an ‘All Hands’ meeting with the CIVMARs in the crew’s galley to provide information on new MSC initiatives such as consistent practices by detailers between the East and West coasts, hiring more people to assist with travel issues, and a future MSC app that is fashioned after the MyNavy app currently used by active duty personnel.

“I am here to give you information and address issues to make your lives better,” Pickard told the group. “Everything you do, you do it as a representation of the United States in Africa, and what you are doing out here is appreciated.”

“Without Mariners, we don’t have a global Navy,” added Pickard.
One of the critical elements of maintaining readiness is keeping CIVMARs fit for duty. The health of the fleet has a direct impact on the ability to get ships underway. Promoting health and safety while improving fit-for-duty status is a priority for MSC’s Medical Force.

“From a readiness perspective, non-fit-for-duty (NFFD) statuses hurt our ability to get CIVMARs relieved on time,” said MSC Pacific Medical Officer, Cmdr. Jamie Vega. “The more CIVMARs we have who are not fit for duty, the more people we have out there on ships who can’t get relieved.”

Vega says the command has 375 NFFD cases, and about 122 of them have lasted beyond six months. The causes range from hypertension to sleep apnea and the most common, musculoskeletal issues, such as neck pain, shoulder pain, knee pain and other joint-related injuries.

“Currently our NFFD status is about 6.4 percent of our basic allowance,” said Vega. “What we’d like to do is to get that number down to 2.5 percent which is a lofty and ambitious goal, but we can do it in a number of ways.”

Vega says one of the ways to establish a consistent line of communication between medical and the CIVMARs that includes routine chart reviews, better case management and working with the CIVMARs to ensure they are meeting their appointments and staying medically compliant.

“It is a team effort with the mariner and medical staff,” said Vega. “It is incumbent upon the CIVMAR to provide their medical documents to us so we can review them. And important also that they provide updates routinely so that we will know what we can do to help end their non-fit-for-duty status or if we need to extend them.”

Establishing better dialogue between medical staff and CIVMARs is one approach toward getting current NFFD cases down, but Vega believes MSC already has programs in place that can preempt cases beforehand. MSC’s Force Safety and Health and Promotions Programs are tools that MSC staff and CIVMARs can engage with that will help their own health and fitness while keeping MSC mission ready.

MSC’s Safety and Occupational Health (MSOH) Program promotes safe and healthy working conditions for personnel in order to enhance operational readiness. The program aims to reduce occupational injuries, illnesses or deaths and material loss or damage through awareness.

“Safety has a direct correlation with readiness,” said Safety and Occupational Health Manager Scott Muller. “You can look at our program two ways. One is preventive or being proactive and in front of the issues by looking ahead. Then we are also, from time to time, reactive. When things do happen, we collect information and create a mishap report that documents the incident, either damage to equipment or injury to the person, and we use what we learn to raise awareness.”

The safety program’s hallmark is sharing information with the MSC staff and CIVMARs with the hope that it can prevent future incidents. They produce quarterly newsletters discussing the latest safety trends and policies and how they are impacting maritime safety.

“Learning from past instances and being better aware and prepared for future activities and implementing protective actions or risk assessments are all important factors in creating and maintaining a safe work environment,” said Muller.

Muller added that it is important that CIVMARs be willing to share information when mishaps happen. Obtaining mishap reports from ships is vital to safety promotion, including near miss and hazard reports. By Navy policy, MSC can only use reported information for safety purposes only and it cannot be used for enforcement action, we maintain confidentiality and do not share reported information with the U.S. Coast Guard. It is invaluable that

According to Force Medical, musculoskeletal injuries that make up 33 percent of the NFFD cases can be attributed to the way people lift things, move things around or even sit at their desks. MSOH also promotes the ergonomics training that shows employees how to establish and maintain a safe and comfortable work environment that could help suppress injuries.

“Ergonomics is really the study and the optimization of the workspace to the worker. To make it comfortable so that work can be more efficient. Like arranging chairs and desks to be conducive for the worker,” said Muller. “Making adjustments to the work environment can help prevent chronic conditions for the individuals in the long term.”

An article in one of MSOH’s recent quarterly newsletters, discussed the link between fit for duty and safety. Fit for duty is defined as a combination of physical and mental factors that enable people to carry out their jobs competently and safely. The article listed the main causes of degraded fitness for duty and how safety if affected:

Fit for Duty Causes:
- Misuse of alcohol and or drugs.
- Physical injury.
- Illness.
- Stress, worry, personal problems.
- Mental impairment.

Safety is affected through:
- Inability to concentrate.
- Confusion.
- Degraded situational awareness.
- Being distracted by feeling unwel.
- Poor physical coordination.
- Falling asleep.
- Communication failures.

Muller emphasizes that safety isn’t about one individual or one office. Its impact on improving MSC’s fit-for-duty posture requires cultural change.

“Safety is everybody’s responsibility,” he said. “We want to make a shift to where safety is embedded in our overarching mission. We are sharing literature, lessons learned and knowledge so that safety will be in play every day to prevent incidents and keep people healthy.”

MSC employees can get the latest Safety newsletter and more information on MSC’s portal at https://navy.deps.mil/sites/msc/Pages/MSCSafety.aspx.

MSC Health and Promotions Program Offers Tools for Healthy Living

MSC’s Health and Promotions Program (HPP) gives MSC staff and mariners the tools improve their individual help and puts them right at their fingertips. HPP’s mission is to improve the health consciousness and health status of MSC employees in order to increase operational effectiveness, efficiency and safety, and the programs offer numerous services that can help non-fit duty members return to their ships.

“CIVMARs have a variety of free services and taking advantage of these services will not only enhance their physical and mental well-being, but when they do take advantage, it tends to ripple down into all areas of lives, from enhancing their relationships with others to improving both their quality of work and quality of life,” said MSC Health Promotion Coordinator Leightonie Gumser.
Service members and civilian teammates assigned to Military Sealift Command gathered virtually to hold a special observance in honor of Juneteenth, June 15.

Juneteenth recognizes the end to slavery in the United States and is considered the longest-running African American holiday. The holiday represents victory over the institution of slavery and the beginning of the fulfillment of America’s promise of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness for African Americans, according to the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute.

This time of year is great for enjoying outside activities with friends and family and soaking up some much-needed Vitamin D. While sunshine is essential for your body to function optimally and process Vitamin D for strong bones and adequate energy, too much ultraviolet (UV) radiation can quickly damage your skin, no matter your skin tone.

Experts say that to maintain healthy blood levels (particularly of Vitamin D) aim to get 10-30 minutes of sunlight several times a week. If you find yourself in the sun more than that, here are steps you can take to protect yourself:

- Be mindful of time of day. The peak hours of strongest ultraviolet (UV) rays are between the hours of 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Try to avoid being outside for long periods in the sun and heat during these times and consider inside activities instead such as using the gym indoors and having indoor group gatherings when possible.

- Protect your skin and eyes. The skin is the body’s largest organ and it protects you from heat, sunlight, injury, and infection. Always wear sunscreen when outside during the summer months. In addition, consider wearing loose-fitting clothing, a wide-brimmed hat, and sunglasses or protective eye-wear when doing outdoor activities such as hammering, sanding, working with power tools or chemicals, “jumping” the battery of a motor vehicle, or any work that may produce particles or dust.

- Use the right sunscreen. This includes both the kind of sunscreen you are using and the amount. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration’s (FDA) recommends that your sunscreen has a sun protective factor (SPF) of at least 15, and should protect against both Ultraviolet A (UV-A) and Ultraviolet B (UV-B) rays. In addition, the National Council on Skin Cancer Prevention found that most people only apply 25–50% of the recommended amount of sunscreen. Remember, while you are out in the sun, apply at least one palm-full of sunscreen every two hours. Unless you are sweating and/or swimming (even if the sunscreen is waterproof), which will require you to re-apply more frequently.

By Bill Mesta, Military Sealift Command Public Affairs

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"This year’s theme is "Celebrating Freedom,"" according to Chief Warrant Officer 4 Christina Flores, the Mistress of Ceremonies for MSC’s juneteenth celebration. "“Juneteenth, an annual commemoration of the end of slavery in the in the United States after the Civil War, the Juneteenth National Independence Day Act, designated June 19, 2023, as a Federal holiday on June 17, 2021, although it has long been celebrated as the end of enslavement in the United States.”

"On Jan. 1, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, announcing that all persons held as slaves within the rebellious areas are, and henceforward shall be free," Flores added. “However, these words were not received nor acted upon within Texas, which was still under Confederate control.”

“"That changed on June 19, 1865, when Union forces led by U.S. Army Gen. Gordon Granger traveled to Galveston, Texas, and announced general order #3, which stated ‘the people of Texas are informed that in accordance with the proclamation from the executive of the United States, all slaves are free’,” Flores concluded.


“Juneteenth is also known as Freedom Day or Emancipation Day for African Americans,” read Cook. “Juneteenth has long been celebrated as the end of enslavement in the United States. Despite that, African American communities continue to face innumerable hardships due to a history of enslavement legalized segregation and inequitable access to opportunities.”

On July 26, 1948, President Truman issued Executive Orders 9980 and 9981, ordering the desegregation of the federal workforce and the military. President Truman’s decision to issue these orders, and his actions that led up to that decision, set the course for civil rights for the rest of the century.

"As the Secretary of Defense observed, ‘Juneteenth holds particular significance for the United States military because it builds upon that legacy of emancipation as we work to defend our freedoms and to make real the full promise of American democracy for all our citizens, on June 19 and every day’,” Cook continued.

“The Department’s ability to leverage our Nation’s best talent, wherever talent resides, is for the collective benefit of all Americans,” Cook concluded. “By championing diversity and inclusion in our Department, we will ensure each member’s contributions are valued and everyone is afforded equal opportunity to reach their full potential.”

Beginning in Texas, the Juneteenth holiday has expanded from a local event to one recognized across the nation.

By Leighanne Gerstbrein, Military Sealift Command Health Promotion Program

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The team also performed additional UAS flights in the vicinity of USNS Patuxent to test some of the Blue Water's new capabilities and technologies.

“The Blue Water UAS flights were very successful and we met all of our objectives,” according to Bruening. “We proved that we can operate the logistic drones from ships as well as from the shore in support of the Navy and Marine Corps.”

U.S. Fleet Forces Command and U.S. Marine Forces Command conducted Fleet Battle Problem-23, June 9-13, on land and off the coast of Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, and the Virginia Capes to further develop integrated maritime capabilities with the II Marine Expeditionary Force and U.S. 2nd Fleet.

“There was a lot of excitement aboard USNS Patuxent and with the ashore team to see this new capability,” said Bruening. “The harsh maritime environment adds technical challenges, but the Blue Water UAS team is ready to attack those issues and increase worldwide logistics delivery capability.”

Going forward, MSC and the Blue Water UAS team plans to continue adding capabilities to the drone as well as incorporate lessons learned from this underway period, according to Bruening.

“We will have to change the way we think about logistics when we start using unmanned systems,” concluded Bruening. “When the Skyways UAS launched from USNS Patuxent, the radar controller asked for a status check of the drone and to report how many people were in the aircraft as that question is always asked after an aircraft takes off. I answered ‘None, it’s a logistics drone.’ A new era has started!”

In 2021, earlier versions of Blue Water Logistics UAS successfully performed ship to shore cargo delivery from the fleet replenishment oiler USNS Joshua Humphreys (T- AO 188) and the guided missile destroyer USS Bainbridge (DDG 96). Also in 2021, a Blue Water Logistics UAS demonstrated the ability to deliver simulated supplies to the aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78).

HPP’s virtual classes are on-line and tailored toward encouraging healthy routines such as effective eating, working out and managing mental health:

- Virtual Health Education Classes offer a new class monthly on a variety of topics such as, Meal Planning; Weight Management; Exercise Basics and more. (link: www.milleniumenterprises.net/civmar-classes/)
- Virtual Fitness Classes, also monthly, focus on fitness workouts such as, 10-minute Ab Workout; 20-minute Full Body Workout; TurboKick and others. (link: www.milleniumenterprises.net/civmar-class-type/classes/fitness/)
- Virtual Meditation Classes are mind and body practices that promote calmness and physical relaxation, improved psychological balance, coping with illnesses, and enhancing overall health and well-being. Available classes include: Introduction to Mindful Meditation; Gratitude Meditation; Labeling Thoughts Meditation. (link: www.milleniumenterprises.net/civmar-class-type/classes/meditation/)
- SHIP FIT Workouts are distributed quarterly to all Medical Service Officers, Medical Department Representatives and Masters and provide beginner, intermediate, and advanced level workouts for CIVMARS to do while underway. The workouts require no equipment and are intended to be able to be done anywhere, anytime.

- Weekly Wellness Newsletters are distributed to the fleet every Monday. Often, the topic is in accordance with the monthly health observance, however input from CIVMARS and health risk assessment findings also contribute to the topic selection and design of the newsletter.
- The MSC Resiliency Team which aims to build resilience and morale among the CIVMAR population to increase employee satisfaction and decrease employee burnout, stress and workplace conflict.
- Health Risk Assessments give CIVMARS the ability to create their own free wellness profile at www.cmhwellnessportal.com. This provides them with access to a variety of resources such as sleep, food, water, physical activity, and weight tracking and logging devices and feedback, mindfulness practices, recipes to try, interactive learning, daily pursuits, a health library, social blogs, and a free health risk assessment.
- Health Coaching is a collaborative process by which coach and client work together to bring out the best in the client and help the client create and live the life they want to live.
- HPP recently launched a new Website that provides a “one-stop-shop” where CIVMARS could visit to learn about all of the HPP services and direct links to useful resources: https://civmar.sealiftcommand.com/health-promotion-program.

“Our health impacts everything we do,” Genthein said. “We can’t neglect it if we want to live a full, rich life. Taking responsibility of it means taking responsibility of our lives and putting us in a powerful position to get the most from life.”

Fit and Ready from page 6

MSC SEALIFT

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 sunlight and starlight
shall favor me all the days of my voyaging,
and I will rest in the port of my Lord forever.

Duane Sugiura
Electronics Technician
MSC Service: 2002-2023

Kevin Nixon
Able Seaman
MSC Service: 2010-2023

Fergus Duggan
Able Seaman
MSC Service: 2006-2023

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