



SEALIFT

THE U.S. NAVY'S MILITARY SEALIFT COMMAND

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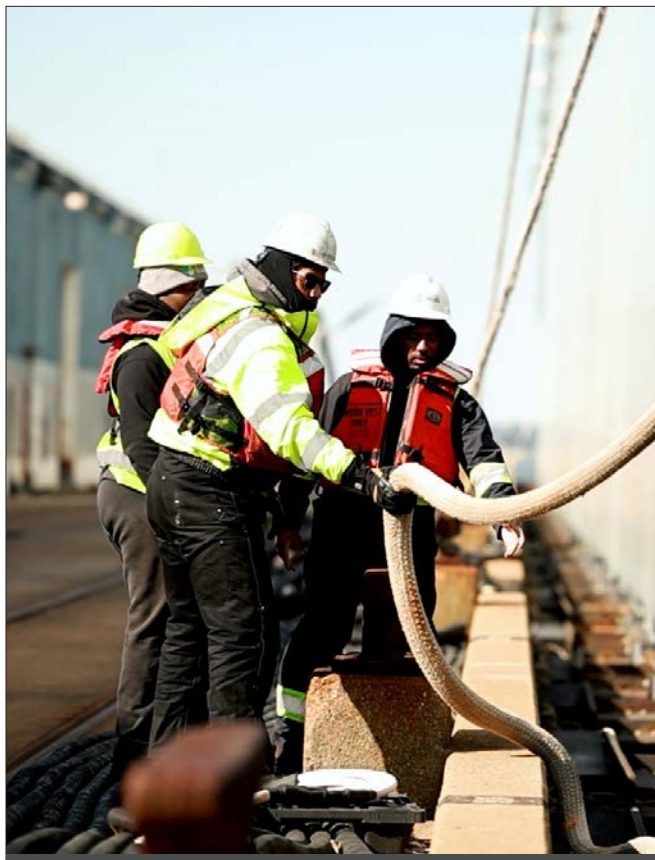
The Bob Hope-class MV Roy P. Benavidez (T-AKR 306) departs Newport News, Virginia, carrying heavy equipment and material needed to construct a temporary pier to support humanitarian aid to Gaza, March 21. (U.S. Navy photo by Ryan Carter)

MV ROY P. BENAVIDEZ DEPARTS IN SUPPORT OF JLOTS MISSION

From Military Sealift Command Public Affairs

The Bob Hope-class MV Roy P. Benavidez (T-AKR 306), a large, medium speed roll-on, roll-off ship, departed its pier in Newport News, Virginia, March 21, carrying heavy equipment and material needed to construct a temporary pier to support the flow of multinational humanitarian aid into Gaza.

The ship anchored briefly in the area to receive fuel prior to proceeding to the Mediterranean Sea.



Line handlers remove mooring lines from the bollards on the pier prior to MV Roy P. Benavidez (T-AKR 306) getting underway, March 21. (U.S. Navy photo by Ryan Carter)

MV Roy P. Benavidez, part of the U.S. Department of Transportation, U.S. Maritime Administration's (MARAD) Ready Reserve Fleet, is transporting components for a floating modular pier system which will be delivered to the U.S. Army's 7th Transportation Brigade who will construct the temporary pier in the Mediterranean.

This capability is known as Joint Logistics-Over-the-Shore, or JLOTS.

"JLOTS is a critical capability that allows ship-to-shore cargo distribution in the absence of a usable pier," said Army Lt. Gen. John P. Sullivan, deputy commander, U.S. Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM). "It can be used to augment an established port or to create a pier where one is needed, and allows us to support areas where large populations are isolated from food, water, and other forms of humanitarian aid."

JLOTS operations are part of USTRANSCOM's strategic sealift mission.

Operated by Military Sealift Command for the current JLOTS mission, MV Roy P. Benavidez is crewed by contracted merchant mariners and is a dry cargo surge sealift carrier capable of transporting up to 380,000 square feet of containerized cargo and rolling stock between developed ports.

"MARAD's ability to activate the Ready Reserve Force vessel MV Roy P. Benavidez is a hallmark of our strategic sealift capability," said Maritime Administrator Ann C. Phillips. "Missions like this — supporting the Armed Forces, highlight the cornerstone capabilities MARAD delivers in support of interagency operations."



MV Roy P. Benavidez (T-AKR 306) sits pier side as it prepares to get underway, March 21. (U.S. Navy photo by Ryan Carter)

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KEEL LAID FOR FUTURE USNS MUSCOGEE CREEK NATION (T-ATS 10)

From Team Ships Public Affairs



A keel laying ceremony for the future USNS Muscogee Creek Nation (T-ATS 10), the fifth ship of the Navy's Navajo class of Towing, Salvage, and Rescue vessels was held at Bollinger Houma Shipyards, March 20.

Sponsors Geri Wisner, Attorney General of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation; Nicole Foster, wife of Rear Admiral Calvin Foster; and Muscogee (Creek) Nation Principal Chief David Hill attended to authenticate

the keel. Members of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation were also in attendance. The keel laying ceremony formally marks the start of a ship's life and the joining of the ship's modular components. The keel serves as the symbolic backbone of the ship. During the ceremony, the keel authenticators watched a welder etch their initials into the keel plate and declared it to be "truly and fairly laid."

"We are honored to have representatives of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation here to celebrate this milestone with us," said Program Executive Office, Ships Auxiliary and Special Mission Ships Program Manager, John Lighthammer. "The ship is critical to the operations of our fleet. Today's ceremony is a reminder of the pride and determination of the Muscogee people it is named to honor."

The Navajo class of ships will provide ocean-going tug, salvage, and rescue capabilities to support Fleet operations. The 10 ships are intended to provide continuity of capability following on after the Powhatan and Safeguard classes of vessels, which are nearing the end of their expected service lives.

Navajo-class ships will be capable of towing U.S. Navy ships and will have 6,000 square feet of deck space for embarked systems. The platform will be 263 feet long, have a beam of 59 feet, and will be able to carry a load of nearly 2,000 tons.

In addition to the future USNS Muscogee Creek Nation (T-ATS 10), Bollinger Houma Shipyards is in the process of constructing the future USNS Navajo (T-ATS 6), USNS Cherokee Nation (T-ATS 7), USNS Saginaw Ojibwe Anishinabek (T-ATS 8) and USNS Lenni Lenape (T-ATS 9).

As one of the Defense Department's largest acquisition organizations, PEO Ships is responsible for executing the development and procurement of all destroyers, amphibious ships, auxiliary ships, special mission ships, sealift ships and support ships.

MILITARY TO MARINER: TRANSITIONING TO A REWARDING MARITIME CAREER AFTER SERVICE

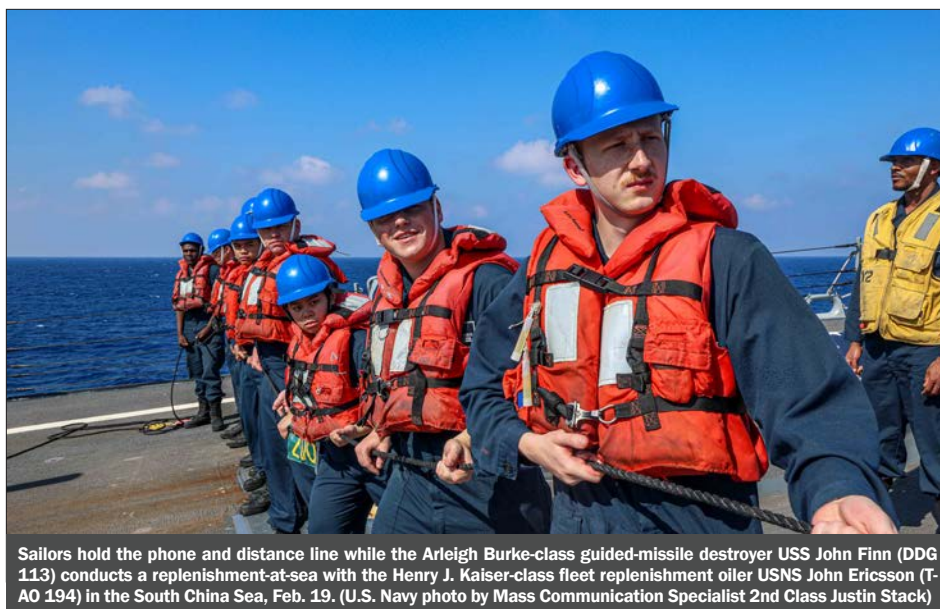
By Bill Mesta, Military Sealift Command Public Affairs

All service members have one thing in common; whether you are an officer or enlisted member, single-term or careerist, regardless of branch of service; you will eventually transition out of the military.

For many, transitioning out of military service can be challenging and scary, particularly when taking how you are going to ensure future income and professional satisfaction into consideration. One option for service members is to take advantage of the Military to Mariner Program, which provides service members an avenue to obtain credentials to become a U.S. Merchant Mariner, while still on active duty, separated or retired.

"The Military to Mariner program helps active duty and reserve service members, Coast Guard civilian employees and veterans smoothly transition to civilian employment in the maritime industry," according to Lt. Cmdr. Jim Fasoli, Military to Mariner Program Manager, U.S. Coast Guard Force Readiness Command. "It's a valuable initiative aimed at leveraging military skills into civilian mariner roles."

A U.S. Merchant Mariner, credentialed by the U.S. Coast Guard National Maritime Center, is someone deemed safe, suitable, and compliant to sail aboard U.S. flagged ships with national security requirements. This certification enables individuals to serve on Federally regulated vessels, in support of the nation's maritime activities.



Sailors hold the phone and distance line while the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS John Finn (DDG 113) conducts a replenishment-at-sea with the Henry J. Kaiser-class fleet replenishment oiler USNS John Ericsson (T-AO 194) in the South China Sea, Feb. 19. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Justin Stack)

The U.S. Merchant Marine community needs you. As a credentialed U.S. Merchant Mariner, you could sail aboard Military Sealift Command's fleet of 140 civilian crewed ships or you could seek employment with one of the numerous U.S. flagged commercial shipping companies.

"SWSC's Military to Mariner Program is designed to maximize the extent to which naval service, training, and qualifications are creditable toward merchant mariner licensing and certification," stated Kara Krenisky, Military to Mariner Program Manager at Surface Warfare Schools Command. "For those transitioning out of active-duty service, but still want to pursue a career either at sea or in operations related to sea-going vessels, a civilian mariner license will afford them the opportunity to do so. Pursuing a license while active duty provides Sailors the opportunity to submit applications free of charge and use naval experience towards licensing requirements."

U.S. Merchant Mariners are required to obtain and maintain U.S. Coast Guard certifications and licenses, which can be earned while on active duty via the Military to Mariner Program.

"Through the Military to Mariner Program, we work to assist service members in

navigating the application process, collecting the right service record documents, and ensuring the Fleet is aware of the capability to translate Naval service to civilian credentials," Krenisky said. "A large part of this program is getting current Navy training and qualifications certified as meeting the USCG National and International Standards of Training for mariners. In doing so, we are ensuring Sailors receive top-notch instruction, making them better prepared and professionally knowledgeable through high standards."

The U.S. Merchant Mariner community wants military Veterans to join its ranks.

"Veterans bring a wealth of valuable skills and discipline acquired during their military service, making them assets in maritime roles," said Fasoli. "The adaptability, leadership, and problem-solving abilities cultivated in the military contribute significantly to their success in civilian maritime endeavors."

"Military Veterans are assets to the U.S. Merchant Mariner community as they have already proven their physical and mental ability to serve, as well as the experience gained from military service provides a background in commitment, trustworthiness, and work ethic," Krenisky added.

As with many professional development opportunities, it can be difficult to figure out just where to begin.

"While on active duty, service members interested in transitioning into the Merchant Mariner community should proactively engage in the credentialing process," Fasoli stated. "Early completion of the Mariner Credential application is encouraged, providing insight into the sea-time evaluation process. The U.S. Coast Guard's Credentialing Assistance benefit, offering \$4,500 per year for eligible service members, is a helpful resource throughout one's military career."

"Documentation of sea time, advanced qualifications, and pursuing merchant mariner credentials while active duty are the best method of preparing to transition in the future," added Krenisky. "The earlier service members pursue U.S. Merchant Mariner credentials during their service the better, as they progress, they will be able to continue using sea time and experience to either upgrade their license or pursue additional qualifications."

The National Maritime Center credits military members for their time attached to a vessel at 60 percent.

Military to Mariner continued on page 8

MSC CHARTERED SHIP MV OCEAN GLADIATOR ARRIVES AT MCMURDO STATION ICE-PIER TO BEGIN CARGO OFFLOAD IN SUPPORT OF OPERATION DEEP FREEZE 2024

By Sarah Cannon, Military Sealift Command Pacific Public Affairs



The Coast Guard Cutter Polar Star (WAGB 10) is seen from overhead escorting the cargo ship MV Ocean Gladiator through the ice channel in the McMurdo Sound, Antarctica, Jan. 21. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Jeremy Burgess)

The Military Sealift Command chartered ship MV Ocean Gladiator has arrived at the ice-pier at McMurdo Station, Antarctica, in support of the annual resupply mission to McMurdo Station, Antarctica; Operation Deep Freeze 2024.

Ocean Gladiator moored at the McMurdo ice-pier on Saturday. Shortly after arriving, the crew and members of Navy Cargo Handling Battalion ONE began the offload of 407 pieces of cargo, consisting of containers filled with mechanical parts, vehicles, construction materials, office supplies and electronics equipment, and mobile office units; supplies needed to sustain the next year of operations at McMurdo Station, Antarctica.

Once the offload is complete, Ocean Gladiator will be loaded with ice core samples that will be stored on the ship in sub-zero freezer containers. The ice core samples will be delivered to the United States for scientific study. In addition, retrograde cargo will be loaded onto the ship for transportation off the continent. These include trash and recyclable materials for disposal and equipment no longer required on the station. They will then depart McMurdo station, en route the United States.

Following Ocean Gladiator's departure, MSC chartered tanker ship MT Acadia Trader arrived at the ice-pier, and and offloaded of over 7 million gallons of a special blend of diesel fuel mixed specifically for Antarctica called AN8; 1.5 million gallons of aviation fuel; and 155 thousand gallons of gasoline; 100 percent of the fuel needed for two years at the remote outpost.

Operation Deep Freeze is a joint service, on-going Defense Support to Civilian Authorities activity in support of the National Science Foundation (NSF), lead agency for the United States Antarctic Program. Mission support consists of active duty, Guard and Reserve personnel from the U.S. Air Force, Navy, Army, and Coast Guard as well as Department of Defense civilians and attached non-DOD civilians. ODF operates from two primary locations situated at Christchurch, New Zealand and McMurdo Station, Antarctica. An MSC-chartered cargo ship and tanker have made the challenging voyage to Antarctica every year since the station and its resupply mission were established in 1955.



The Coast Guard Cutter Polar Star (WAGB 10) is seen escorting the cargo ship Ocean Gladiator through the ice channel in the McMurdo Sound, Antarctica, Jan. 21. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Jeremy Burgess)

MEXICAN NAVY TRAINS TO MASTER UNDERWAY REPLENISHMENT SKILLS AT MILITARY SEALIFT COMMAND TRAINING CENTER

By Hendrick Dickson, Military Sealift Command Public Affairs

Six Sailors from the Mexican Navy (SEMAR) attended the Standard Tensioned Replenishment Alongside Method (STREAM) familiarization course at the Military Sealift Command's Underway Replenishment Training Center (MUTC) at Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek-Fort Story March 11-15.

This is the first step leading toward a historic Rim of Pacific (RIMPAC) 2024 exercise this summer where Navy leaders plan to have the SEMAR vessel receive fuel from a U.S. Navy ship.

"A priority naval effort between the SEMAR and the U.S. Navy is to conduct an UNREP during the upcoming RIMPAC exercise," explained Cmdr. Scott Stafford, Maritime Section Chief, Office of Defense Coordination Mexico City. "U.S. Fleet Forces Command and SEMAR agreed at the 2023 Maritime staff talks that a hard prerequisite for the UNREP would be an in-port and at-sea ship qualification trial in San Diego. That is scheduled for the week of April 22. A 'soft' prerequisite was attendance of SEMAR sailors to a U.S.-led UNREP basic training course, and this STREAM course was the most applicable course to meet that objective."



Instructors at the Military Sealift Command Underway Replenishment Training Center train Sailors from the Mexican Navy during the Standard Tensioned Replenishment Alongside Method familiarization course at the Military Sealift Command Underway Replenishment Training Center on Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek-Fort Story, March 13. (U.S. Navy photo by Cody Holliday)

Stafford said, developing SEMAR's ability to replenish supplies at sea from U.S. vessels establishes future interoperability operations, a commitment made by both militaries. During the annual Bilateral Military Cooperation Roundtable in April 2022, U.S. Northern Command and the Mexican military agreed on a number of bilateral objectives to guide mil-to-mil cooperation. One of the stated objectives is to "strengthen operational compatibility in the maritime domain," and another is to "increase coordination to strengthen logistics capacities and readiness at all levels to expand operational compatibility."

The MUTC is MSC's only fully-equipped and operational UNREP training center, and it is the Navy's Center of Excellence in the field of underway replenishment. The team of Civil Service Mariners (CIVMARS) and contractor technicians are the fleet's full service UNREP agents and the primary training pipeline for the more than 6,000 CIVMARS who serve in the fleet.

"At MUTC, it is our mission to provide all our students with "real-world" UNREP practical training in order to build a strong foundation that will set the student and the fleet up for success," said MUTC Site Director Cody Holliday. "Most importantly, we strive to set the standard and be the premier subject matter experts when it comes to underway replenishment across all platforms. Our goal is to make it easier for the ships to perform their mission by providing the fleet with knowledgeable and well-trained mariners."

During the five-day course, instructors trained the SEMAR Sailors, who are assigned to the frigate ARM Benito Juárez (POLA 101), on conducting STREAM operations at sea for transfer of ordnance/cargo and fueling-at-sea via connected replenishment (CONREP). They also discussed safety procedures; ordnance handling equipment, underway replenishment cargo handling procedures, material handling equipment operations, hazardous material, personnel transfer and emergency procedures.

MUTC continued on page 8

WE ARE MSC “75”–CAPTAIN KEITH WALZAK

By Hendrick Dickson, Military Sealift Command Public Affairs



An early career photo of Civil Service Mariner Capt. Keith Walzak, taken in the early 1980s. (U.S. Navy courtesy photo)

This year, Military Sealift Command is celebrating its 75th Anniversary. Since 1949, MSC has been the premier maritime logistics provider for the Department of Defense delivering equipment, supplies and personnel to the front-lines. To honor 75 years of maritime excellence, the “We Are MSC,” series will highlight some of the command’s longest-tenured Civil Service Mariners and staff members.

Ship’s Master, Capt. Keith Walzak, just completed a tour aboard USNS Leroy Grumman (T-AO 195) as part of a 44-year career with MSC. Walzak is a native of Kinnelon, New Jersey, and a graduate of the United States Merchant Marine Academy.

In 1980, he was a senior cadet trying to determine which path he should take. The shipping industry was in a downturn and companies were not hiring. Then, he was lured to MSC by happenstance, or perhaps some shrewd recruiting tactics.

“An MSC representative named Bob Warner came to the school to give a presentation and conduct interviews,” said Walzak. “He told me MSC had a location in Bayonne, New Jersey, at that time which was only 30 miles from home. He also said the pay and advancement was great and they had plenty of different types of ships. He made MSC seem like the perfect fit. But what he didn’t tell me was that MSC ships operated out of Norfolk and other areas around the world – not Bayonne.”

Putting that bit of miscommunication behind him, Walzak made the most of the opportunity and joined MSC. He focused on earning his qualifications and certifications and obtained his master’s license in just eight years.

“I sailed on my first ship, USNS Marias (AO-57) until I had enough time to sit for my Second Mate’s license, then USNS Pawcatuck (AO-108); USNS Truckee (T-AO 147) and USNS Rigel (T-AF 58) to get my time for Chief Mate,” he said. “Then I sailed aboard USNS Lenthall (T-AO 189), Truckee and USNS Joshua Humphreys (T-AO 188) for my Master’s time, I obtained my Master’s license in 1988.

“I’ve had over 40 ship assignments; including more than 30 master assignments,” he continued. “I was a plank owner master on USNS Butte (T-AE 27), USNS Mount Baker (T-AE 34), and USNS Cesar Chavez (T-AKE 14). I have also served as Port Captain for MSC Atlantic/Commander, MSC in 1993 and in 2016.”

Walzak said he could not have worked his way up the ranks alone. He learned from a few experienced CIVMARs early on. Watching their leadership styles and passion for MSC helped him carve out his own career path.

“I can name three Masters who helped shape my career; Capt. John Whieldon, Capt. Virgilio Rigobello and Capt. Greg Economon. They were all Masters on my first few ships, and they were ‘old school,’ ensuring that all rules and regulations were complied with and that the MSC mission came first. Their maritime knowledge was from experience, and they passed it along to mariners coming up behind them,” he said.

Over the years, Walzak has seen MSC advance into the 21st century and quality of life for mariners at sea seems to improve along with each deployment.

“We’ve come a long way from 16mm reel-to-reel movies, no television, email or Internet,” he said reflecting. “We actually had to write letters underway and mail them when we entered port. We had a system called “Class E,” that allowed us to send a 50-word telegram for \$10.95. Then, we got INMARSAT, which was a satellite system for making phone calls, but it cost \$10 a minute with a three-minute minimum charge.

“Now most ships have a Sailor Phone System at a discounted rate, and personal email that allows us to keep in touch with family and friends almost instantly and modern Internet access to keep up with world events in real-time.”

Walzak also shared his thoughts on the ups and downs of MSC through the years, particularly when it comes to competing with private industry to acquire talented mariners to crew the fleet.

“MSC has at times advanced faster than the commercial industry in areas such as safety, regulatory requirements, electronics and communications,” he said. “I think we’ve struggled in other areas. Our leave structure is constrained by government policies that keeps us from attracting new talent sometimes. However, recently we’ve been able to press forward and get additional leave benefits for our CIVMARs. I think will make a big difference in the future.”

Walzak said he plans to retire the end of this year or in early 2025. After four decades at MSC, he hopes he’s leaving a positive impact on the fleet and the CIVMARs he has had the honor of sailing alongside.

“I’ve had the pleasure of circumnavigating the globe during my career,” he said. “I’ll always remember the countries and ports we’ve visited, the friends I’ve made, both officers and unlicensed, and the success we’ve had completing critical missions for our country. I hope the lessons I learned and the knowledge I passed down to those under my command will continue to assist MSC to successfully support the Navy, Department of Defense and our allies.”

Walzak said none of his career success would be possible however, if it wasn’t for his family who stood by him through the early years of letter mail, \$30 INMARSAT phone calls, and months at a time away from home.

“My family has always been supportive of my career even though much of it has been from afar,” he said. “I never would have been able to have made it without the dedication of my wife Stephanie who I met in 1983 while assigned to a ship in a Boston shipyard. We’ve been together ever since, and she has provided physical, mental, emotional and spiritual support for me and our three children. They’ve been with me through the deployments and long distances.”

Even after that questionable recruiting pitch in at USMMA in 1980, Walzak said he doesn’t have any regrets, and he’s proud to have sailed for MSC.

“I believe now, as I have from the start, that a career with MSC is one of the most difficult, yet rewarding careers I could have had,” Walzak concluded. “Rarely was it easy from day to day, but I believe that there is nothing better I could have done for the command, country and my family.”

USNS WILLIAM MCLEAN RETURNS TO NORFOLK FROM U.S. 6TH FLEET DEPLOYMENT

By LaShawn Sykes, Military Sealift Command Atlantic Public Affairs

Military Sealift Command’s (MSC) USNS William McLean (T-AKE 12) returned to Naval Station Norfolk, March 11, after completing an eventful five-month deployment in U.S. 6th Fleet, as the primary Combat Logistics Force vessel assigned to USS Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group and USS Bataan Amphibious Readiness Group operations in the Mediterranean Sea.

Deployed with a crew of 119 Civil Service Mariners, 77 of which reside in the Hampton Roads area, William McLean safely executed the delivery of more than 6.2 million gallons for fuel and the transfer of 3,329 pallets of vital stores and ordnance.

“Your efforts were instrumental in increasing the sustainability of our Navy warships operating in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea,” said Capt. Jaime M. Murdock, Commodore of Military Sealift Command Atlantic in Norfolk, Virginia.

This was a very successful five-month deployment, said Capt. Timothy R. Lockwood, Ship’s Master of USNS William McLean. “The ability to sustain the warfighter, given the high op tempo of the Eastern Mediterranean, along with world events, was magnificent. I am so very proud of the William McLean crew who performed in an outstanding and professional manner while maintaining safety as a top priority.”

When called upon, MSC’s CIVMARS have a tradition of going into harm’s way, wherever and whenever, to deliver equipment and personnel to the Navy’s warfighters at sea.



Military Sealift Command’s USNS William McLean (T-AKE 12) returned to Naval Station Norfolk, March 11, after completing a five-month deployment in U.S. 6th Fleet. (U.S. Navy photo by LaShawn Sykes)

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MILITARY SEALIFT COMMAND VISITS 'LEARNING CENTER' KIDS DURING COBRA GOLD 2024

By Grady Fontana, Military Sealift Command Far East Public Affairs



Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Jasper Ramos, Reserve Unit Military Sealift Command Far East Headquarters, creates arts and crafts with a child while at a community outreach event, during exercise Cobra Gold 24, at the Learning Center of the Human Help Network in Pattaya, Kingdom of Thailand, Feb. 22. (U.S. Navy photo by Grady T. Fontana)

Members of the Military Sealift Command (MSC) Far East visited a learning center of the Human Help Network Foundation to interact with children during a community outreach event in Pattaya, Thailand, Feb. 22, during the 43rd iteration of the Cobra Gold exercise.

The learning center is a non-governmental organization and hosts about 85 children each day from neighboring nations, whose parents are day laborers in the Kingdom of Thailand.

Military Sealift Command (MSC) Far East deployed a team of Reservist from various Expeditionary Port Units (EPU) in support of exercise Cobra Gold.

The team is part of the Cobra Gold deploy detachment that assisted with the arrival of MSC chartered ship MV Cape Horn (T-AKR 5068) at Sattahip, Thailand, to offload equipment for CG24.



Chief Gunner's Mate Joshua Heitmann, Reserve Unit Expeditionary Port Unit Pearl Harbor, receives a memento from children while at a community outreach event, during exercise Cobra Gold 24, at the Learning Center of the Human Help Network in Pattaya, Kingdom of Thailand, Feb. 22. (U.S. Navy photo by Grady T. Fontana)

EPU members conduct expeditionary port operations in support of worldwide operations and contingencies. During CG24, the EPU's role was to ensure that proper contacts were made at the shipping port, to direct the ship on berthing, and to prepare for the ship's arrival.

After MV Cape Horn successfully completed the discharge for CG24, and during a lull in operations, the MSC team visited the Learning Center to interact with local children.

"I work at a children's hospital at home, so I see kids all the time; however, this is my first time in Thailand," said Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Jasper Ramos, Reserve-component Sailor with MSC Far East, Navy Reserve Center Alameda, California. "These types of interactions are very fun and easy for everyone and it has the ability to cross cultural barriers. At the same time, it instills their trust in us."

According to Lana Lam, a full-time Thai national volunteer, the children always get excited to see visitors.

"You can see how happy they are from their big smiles," said Lam. "Here, you see them running to the Sailors and giving them big hugs."

The service members laughed and cheered with the children while playing games, coloring, dancing and sharing language exchanges.



Information System technician 2nd Class Breanne Breese, Reserve Unit Expeditionary Port Unit Pearl Harbor, interacts with a child while at a community outreach event, during exercise Cobra Gold 24, at the Learning Center of the Human Help Network in Pattaya, Kingdom of Thailand, Feb. 22. (U.S. Navy photo by Grady T. Fontana)

"It's just good to see kids being kids. It's also nice for the kids to see that people care for them outside of this center," said Ramos. "I don't think they really see tourists or foreigners here too often. It's rewarding being a part in these kids' day. Maybe, if they are going through a hard time, we can make it lighter."

After lunch and an impressive English language demonstration by the kids, the MSC team departed with a sense of deep satisfaction.

Established in 1982 as a bilateral maritime exercise between the United States and Thailand, Cobra Gold has expanded throughout the past four decades to include other countries, including Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Japan and South Korea. The event is the longest-running international exercise in the world, a fact that exercise leadership attributes to a long-standing history of cooperation and enduring partnerships.

MSC PACIFIC HOSTS STUDENTS

By Sarah Cannon, Military Sealift Command Pacific and USNS Mercy (T-AH 19) Public Affairs

Military Sealift Command hospital ship USNS Mercy (T-AH 19) played host to 30 students from Coronado High School in at Naval Station San Diego, March 13.

The students, made up of members of the schools Navy Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (NJROTC), the Health Occupation Student Association Club (HOSA), and students taking Sports Medicine and Biomedical Innovation courses, were given a brief by area Navy recruiters on scholarship opportunities and Navy careers, followed by a tour of the ship by Mercy's Medical Treatment team. Capt. Micah Murphy, commander, Military Sealift Command Pacific also attended, taking time to engage with the students, sharing his personal experiences as an officer who received his undergraduate degree through a Reserve Officer Training Corps scholarship, and answering questions from the students.

"What a phenomenal experience and, literally, a once in a lifetime opportunity for all of us. I talked with a few students after, and they had huge smiles on their faces

when talking about what they enjoyed," said Kristen Caputo, Coronado High School Career Technical Education Director. "From a career perspective, I was struck by how many careers this one-hour tour touched upon and the expertise and skill that goes into making a ship work. The conversation about the placement of the CAT scan machine would be valuable for almost every discipline."

In addition to the Coronado High School tour, Murphy recently hosted 10 Maritime school cadets who are spending their 'Sea Year' on MSC fleet replenishment oilers USNS Pecos (T-AO 197) and USNS Guadalupe (T-AO 200) in the Pacific area of responsibility. Calling it "Coffee with the Commodore," the cadets were able to sit down and informally discuss future opportunities with MSC and to share observations with senior leadership.

U.S. ARMY ASSAULT HELICOPTERS CONDUCT DECK LANDINGS ON USNS DAHL

By Grady Fontana, Military Sealift Command Far East Public Affairs



U.S. Army UH-60M Black Hawk helicopter with 2nd Battalion, 2nd Aviation Regiment, 2nd Combat Aviation Brigade takes off from prepositioning ship USNS Dahl (T-AKR 312), March 7. (U.S. Navy courtesy photo)

Soldiers with 2nd Battalion, 2nd Aviation Regiment, 2nd Combat Aviation Brigade (2-2 CAB) conducted deck landings (DLQ) with U.S. Army UH-60M Black Hawk helicopters on prepositioning ship USNS Dahl (T-AKR 312), March 7.

Six aircraft crews from Assault Helicopter Battalion 2-2 CAB practiced single-spot deck landings aboard USNS Dahl, about five miles off the coast of Jinhae, South Korea, to certify air crew members and pilots in landing on a ship.

The DLQs were conducted through coordination between Military Sealift Command Office-Korea, USNS Dahl, and crews from Assault Helicopter Battalion 2-2 CAB to qualify or reset their crew on single-spot DLQ currency.

The training environment was also an opportunity for Army aircrews to ensure maritime air movement capability and readiness.

As a secondary training objective, MSCO-K and USNS Dahl aimed to develop interoperability and joint relationship with 2-2 CAB during ship flight operations.

This training event for the Army also proved to be equally valuable to the crew of USNS Dahl. While mariners conduct regular training on ship flight operations, the training environment is usually limited to classroom or computer simulations, which can sometimes not accurately reflect the challenges the crew may face at sea.

In preparation for the event, Dahl conducted a complete inventory and inspection of all flight deck equipment that included testing of all flight deck systems. In addition, Dahl conducted simulated flight deck operations, helicopter crash and fire drills in the days before the operation.

“All flight deck operations are inherently dangerous but DLQs add the wild card of potentially novice crews who are not familiar with either the vessel or ship flight operations in general,” said Contracted Mariner Capt. Deatra Thompson, Ship’s Master, USNS Dahl. “Additionally, unlike many USNS vessels, Dahl does not conduct flight operations often and many of the crew, while having received training and simulated operation, some have never been involved in real-life flight operations.”

To reduce danger, Dahl requested that the aircraft’s crew chief depart during the train-the-trainer initial landings to provide hands-on instruction to the Dahl Chock and Chain teams to ensure they were familiar with the methods and placement of the fastening equipment.

The event was executed safely and without incident and resulted in six single-spot deck-landing qualified crews across 2-2 CAB.

“This event demonstrated effective joint coordination and was a great chance for MSCO-K and USNS Dahl to support a valuable training opportunity for our U.S. Army partners stationed here in Korea,” said Cmdr. Patrick J. Moore, commanding officer, MSCO-K. “Overall, there was great collaboration between MSCO-K, USNS Dahl, and the soldiers of 2-2 CAB.”

Maritime prepositioning ship USNS Dahl is a Watson-class large, medium-speed roll-on/roll-off ship and is part of Commander, Maritime Prepositioning Ships Squadron 3.

Commander, Maritime Prepositioning Ships Squadron 3 supports warfighters from all the U.S. Armed Forces by prepositioning Military Sealift Command ships throughout the Indo-Pacific Region, ensuring Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps vehicles, heavy equipment, personnel and supplies are strategically positioned to support the full range of military operations.

Commander, Military Sealift Command Far East ensures approximately 50 ships in the Indo-Pacific Region, are manned, trained and equipped to deliver essential supplies, fuel, cargo, and equipment to warfighters, both at sea and on shore.

Celebrating its 75th anniversary in 2024, MSC exists to support the joint warfighter across the full spectrum of military operations, with a workforce that includes approximately 6,000 Civil Service Mariners and 1,100 contract mariners, supported by 1,500 shore staff and 1,400 active duty and Reserve military personnel.

USS HERSHEL “WOODY” WILLIAMS (ESB 4) JOINS FORCES WITH GHANA NAVY IN THE GULF OF GUINEA

By Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Ethan Morrow, USS Hershel “Woody” Williams Public Affairs



The Ghana Navy marching band plays the opening sound during a Flagging-Off Ceremony for Ghana Navy ships GNS Volta (P.40) and GNS Ankobra (P.43), March 19. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Ethan Jaymes Morrow)

The Lewis B. Puller-class expeditionary sea base USS Hershel “Woody” Williams (ESB 4) completed its participation in Exercise Sea Lion 2024 alongside the Ghana Navy in the Gulf of Guinea, March 21.

Sea Lion 24 brought together Hershel “Woody” Williams, currently the U.S. Navy’s primary ship assigned to U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM), and Ghana Navy ships GNS Volta (P.40) and GNS Ankobra (P.43). The exercise began with a flagging-off ceremony hosted by the Ghana military, with Ghana’s Chief of Defense Staff Lt. Gen. Thomas Opong-Peprah leading the ceremony.

In support of the exercise, Hershel “Woody” Williams hosted five Sailors from the Ghana Navy, while two U.S. Sailors embarked on the Ghana Navy vessels. During the personnel exchange, Sailors made their way to longitude and latitude 0° at the center of the Earth. The Sailors then swapped back to their own ship via two separate personnel transfers from Hershel “Woody” Williams’ rigid-hull inflatable boat crew.

“It was a pleasure hosting the Ghana Sailors aboard the “Woody” Williams and being able to learn more about their Navy and culture,” said Capt. Amy Lindahl, Commanding Officer of Hershel “Woody” Williams. “It was also amazing to see our two Sailors come back with big smiles and great stories to tell about their time on their respective ships.”

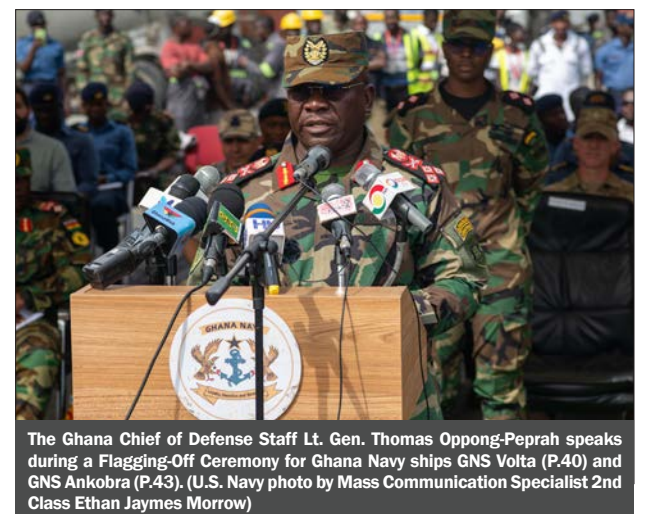
Once the ships reached longitude and latitude 0° the Sailors aboard the Ghana ships held a crossing the line ceremony.

“It was an awesome experience to go out there and really learn their culture and crossing the line ceremony,” said Chief Aviation Boatswain’s Mate (Handling) Andrew Hill, one of the Sailors that embarked aboard the Ghana Navy ships. “It was really great to work together with them because they were absolutely amazing hosts to us while we were aboard.”

Hershel “Woody” Williams is forward deployed to Souda Bay, Greece and serves as the first U.S. Navy ship

assigned to the AFRICOM area of responsibility. The ship is capable of conducting expeditionary missions, counter-piracy, maritime security, and humanitarian and disaster relief operations. Hershel “Woody” Williams’ unique capabilities are part of the critical access infrastructure that supports the deployment of forces and supplies to support global missions. The ship operates with blue and gold crews, allowing it to remain continually deployed throughout AFRICOM.

For over 80 years, U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa (NAVEUR-NAVAF) has forged strategic relationships with allies and partners, leveraging a foundation of shared values to preserve security and stability.



The Ghana Chief of Defense Staff Lt. Gen. Thomas Opong-Peprah speaks during a Flagging-Off Ceremony for Ghana Navy ships GNS Volta (P.40) and GNS Ankobra (P.43). (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Ethan Jaymes Morrow)

MSC75 Blast from the Past - USNS General R.M. Blatchford (T-AP 153)



as USAT General R.M. Blatchford in 1946. She was transferred to the Military Sea Transportation Service (MSTS), later renamed U.S. Navy's Military Sealift Command, on March 1, 1950, where she would be operated by a civil service crew, and transport thousands of troops from the West Coast in support of United Nations Forces in Korea.

On Feb. 11, 1961, USNS Blatchford sailed from New York for two and a half years of overseas service in the United Nations Congo sealift. Earning her the nickname of "Ambassador Ship," her crew cemented goodwill relations for the United States in the best traditions of the People-to-People Program while helping to keep the peace in the Congo. The veteran transport traveled 174,000 nautical miles in ferrying 36,809 passengers to and from the Congo, Morocco, India, Pakistan, Malaya, and Indonesia. She circumnavigated the African continent several times and crisscrossed the Indian Ocean repeatedly while rotating United Nations soldiers, doctors, nurses, and technicians assigned to the Congo.

She returned to New York, Aug. 11, 1963, with high praise from the government and United Nations Secretary General U. Thant who said, "The ship and her devoted Master and crew have been a mainstay of the United Nations Operations in the Congo, and they have never failed us, even when their duties must have seemed arduous and incessant."

She continued to operate in the Atlantic supporting U.S. Forces in Europe until being transferred to the Pacific in 1965 to carry troops to Vietnam. She continued this vital task until overhauled at San Francisco in January 1967 and entering ready reserve status.

USS General R. M. Blatchford (AP-153) was a C4 type ship named after Major General Richard Milford Blatchford, who served in the Spanish-American War and later was the Commanding General at Panama in 1918. The transport ship sailed for the U.S. Navy in World War II, before being transferred to the U.S. Army

MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

By Meghan Sullivan, Military Sealift Command Health Promotion Program

Mental Health Awareness Month was established in 1949 to increase awareness of the importance of mental health and wellness in Americans' lives and to celebrate recovery from mental illness. Mental health is vital for Mariners given how demanding the nature of their work is, both physically and mentally. Poor mental health amongst Mariners has been linked to workplace injuries, burnout, poor decision making, and attrition.

Below you will find ways to promote your own mental health and support the mental wellbeing of your shipmates. You will also find helpful resources for all stages of mental health support.

Self-care is important for your mental health.

Despite life's stressors, there are many things that you can do to maintain positive mental health, including self-care.

- Self-care looks different for everyone, but all self-care should include a well-balanced diet, daily exercise or intentional movement, and an adequate number of hours of sleep.
- Self-care can also include support groups, speaking to your provider about mental health concerns, or seeking counseling.
- We play a part in one another's mental wellness.
- Language matters. The language we use to talk about mental health can either perpetuate prejudice and discrimination or promote acceptance and compassion. When it comes to mental health, words matter.
- It is up to each of us to be a lifeline, sharing in a commitment to care for ourselves and those around us.
- When we use open and compassionate language around mental health issues, we empower ourselves and encourage others to find the help they need.
- No matter the situation, there is always help and there is always hope.
- Be aware of the signs and symptoms of mental health issues so that we can all work together to support one another.
- If you are worried about your mental health or are worried about someone you know, there are resources and people out there who are willing to help, no matter what your situation is.

Whether we share resources, encourage others to seek help or simply are there for someone when they need us, we instill hope and can help other to reach out when they need it most.

Resources:

- 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/988> or Call: 988
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help>
- DONCEAP-Department of the Navy Civilian Employee Assistance Program at <https://www.secnv.navy.mil/donhr/Employees/Pages/Default.aspx>
DONCEAP is available 24/7/365!!! Call: 1-844-DONCEAP (1-844-366-2327)

HPP is here for you! We encourage you to contact us with any questions or concerns you may have.

Health Promotion Coordinators: stephanie.rusnak.ctr@us.navy.mil or meghan.h.sullivan2.ctr@us.navy.mil



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Military to Mariner from Page 2

“Which means from the day they checked in to the day they checked out of a vessel, 60% of that time can count towards sea time,” Krenisky stated. “You should keep copies of advanced qualification designation letters, like Officer of the Deck and Engineering Officer of the Watch, as well as a copy of their History of Assignments and all fitness reports and evaluations.”

Interested service members seeking information about the Military to Mariner Program should contact their Career Counselor and their chain of command. Also, please go to <https://www.milsuite.mil/book/groups/swsc-military-to-mariner-program> for more information about the program or visit the Navy COOL/USCG COOL website Military to Mariner pages. You can contact Kara Krenisky, Military to Mariner Program Manager at Surface Warfare Schools Command at karalin.l.krenisky.mil@us.navy.mil or Lt. Cmdr. Jim Fasoli, Military to Mariner Program Manager, U.S. Coast Guard Force Readiness Command at CGM2M@uscg.mil for additional information.

“There are a number of resources out there for those interested in becoming U.S. Merchant Mariners,” according to Krenisky. “Navy COOL offers a Blueprint to

Mariner for Sailors transitioning, as well as their MilGears tool allows for Sailors to generate a template sea service letter based on their service record documents. The U.S. Department of Transportation (<https://www.maritime.dot.gov/outreach/military-mariner>) offers information for veterans looking to pursue a career in the Merchant Mariner community.”

The National Maritime Center website is the source for application, licensing, and testing information is an additional information resource:

https://www.dco.uscg.mil/national_maritime_center/ is also a valuable reference.

“For service members considering a transition to the U.S. Merchant Mariner community, early engagement is key,” Fasoli concluded. “Leveraging the U.S. Coast Guard Credentialing Assistance benefit and seeking assistance from the Military to Mariner program can significantly ease the transition process. Understanding the credentialing process, sea-time evaluation, and potential training requirements can lead to a successful and rewarding career in the civilian maritime sector.”

MUTC from Page 3

“They (SEMAR Sailors) demonstrated a quick grasp of the knowledge during the classroom and practical portion of the training,” he said. “We also talked with them about the importance of safety and maintaining positive communication. Any operation depends on these in order to be successful. We hope they can take what they learned here at MUTC and pass on the knowledge and skills to their fellow Sailors.”

While the MUTC staff has experience training with foreign navies, this was the first time they have worked with SEMAR sailors. Holliday says he hopes this will serve as a proof of concept and lead to more training with allied nations in the future.

“We believe joint training such as this is very effective in building relationships with our strategic partners and allies,” said Holliday. “The more our nations cross train on each other’s methods and techniques the more effective we can be as a unified fighting force.”



Instructors at the Military Sealift Command Underway Replenishment Training Center and Sailors from the Mexican Navy pose for a photo at the Military Sealift Command Underway Replenishment Training Center at Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek-Fort Story, March 13. (U.S. Navy photo by Cody Holliday)

CORRECTION
Sealift, February 2024

MSC.USFF.NAVY.MIL



Paragraph 12 of ‘Military Sealift Command Holds First Enlisted Navy Reservist Symposium’ has been corrected to read, ‘The Montford Point crew really did a great job showing what it is like to be a mariner,’ said King. ‘They were really excited about their job. From that tour, we actually got two Sailors who are interested in joining and want to be mariners now.’

FALLEN MSC TEAMMATE



**Ordinary Seaman
Sam Goodwin**
MSC Service 2023-2024

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.



Military Sealift Command

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