



SEALIFT

THE U.S. NAVY'S MILITARY SEALIFT COMMAND

JANUARY 2025



Members of Military Sealift Command's Resiliency/Health Promotion Team (left to right) Meghan Sullivan, MSC Resiliency Team/Health Promotion Coordinator, Erin Sager, MSC Afloat Workforce Development Civilian Mariner Training Development, Stephanie Rusnak, MSC Resiliency Team/Health Promotion Coordinator, Neafie Buck, MSC Afloat Workforce Development Cadet Shipping Program Manager, Chris Baker, MSC Afloat Workforce Development Instructional Systems Specialist and Lesa Barbour, MSC Afloat Workforce Development Training Administrator pose for a photo in front of supplies to be included in crew care packages, on Naval Station Norfolk, Jan. 10. The effort is designed to foster resilience for the Civil Service Mariners who crew MSC's fleet of ships. (U.S. Navy photo by Bill Mesta)

MILITARY SEALIFT COMMAND RESILIENCY TEAM DELIVERS CREW CARE PACKAGE TO USNS WILLIAM MCLEAN

By Bill Mesta, Military Sealift Command Public Affairs

Members of Military Sealift Command's Resiliency/Health Promotion Team visited the dry cargo ammunition ship USNS William McLean (T-AKE 12), while the Combat Logistic Force ship was pier-side on board Naval Station Norfolk, Jan. 13.

The Resiliency/Health Promotion Team visited the ship to deliver a crew care package and provide voluntary body composition assessments for the Civil Service Mariners (CIVMAR) who crew William McLean.

"The mission of the Resiliency/Health Promotion Team is to foster resiliency and promote healthy initiatives for the CIVMAR workforce," according to Meghan Sullivan, Military Sealift Command Resiliency

Team/Health Promotion Coordinator. "One way we are achieving this goal is by providing care packages of essential items designed to promote stress management, helping individuals cope with challenges while fostering a stronger, more resilient crew."

Some of the items in the crew care package included fiction and non-fiction books, card games, DVDs and DVD players for shared areas, sleep masks, craft kits, crossword puzzles, aromatherapy wipes, board games, and mindfulness and resiliency workbooks.

"William McLean is the first MSC vessel to receive the care packages," Sullivan stated. "We are working to identify nine other MSC ships that are currently deployed or will be deploying soon (for future care packages)."

In addition to Sullivan, Stephanie Rusnak, MSC Resiliency Team/Health Promotion Coordinator, Lesa Barbour, MSC Afloat Workforce Development Training Administrator, Chris Baker, MSC Afloat Workforce Development Instructional Systems Specialist, Erin Sager, MSC Afloat Workforce Development Civilian Mariner Training Development and Neafie Buck, MSC Afloat Workforce Development Cadet Shipping Program Manager are spearheading the crew care package effort.

"The care package initiative was launched in early November of 2024, with materials being ordered throughout November and December," said Sullivan. "We hope the packages are well received and plan to continue this effort moving forward, collaborating with the vessel crews to further tailor the contents and ensure they meet the crew's needs."



Ordinary Seaman Dezmon Harris, a Civil Service Mariner aboard Military Sealift Command's dry cargo ammunition ship USNS William McLean (T-AKE 12), receives a voluntary body composition screening (U.S. Navy photo by Bill Mesta)



Capt. Adam Streeper (right), Master of Military Sealift Command's dry cargo ammunition ship USNS William McLean (T-AKE 12), browses through the contents of a crew care package with Chris Baker (left), MSC Afloat Workforce Development Instructional Systems Specialist, and Erin Sager (center), MSC Afloat Workforce Development Civilian Mariner Training Development, while the ship was pier-side on Naval Station Norfolk, Jan. 13. (U.S. Navy photo by Bill Mesta)

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MILITARY SEALIFT COMMAND'S RON LAW SMALL ARMS MARKSMANSHIP TRAINING CENTER BUILDING DEDICATION

By Bill Mesta, Military Sealift Command Public Affairs

Military Sealift Command civilian teammates and service members attended the dedication ceremony for the Ron Law Marksmanship Training Center at MSC's Training Center Hampton Roads on Fort Eustis, Virginia, Jan. 23.

The facility will provide small arms training, qualification and re-qualification for new and current MSC Civil Service Mariners (CIVMAR).

Rear Adm. Philip Sobeck, Commander, Military Sealift Command, presided over the dedication ceremony.

"Today, we dedicate the Ron Law Small Arms Marksmanship Training Center, a facility that will play a critical role in the future readiness and safety of our CIVMARs," Sobeck stated to the audience. "These are the merchant mariners who operate U.S. Navy USNS ships, ensuring that vital supplies and support reach our fleet wherever they are needed."

"This center will allow us to consolidate all East Coast small arms training under one roof, increasing the number of mariners who can qualify on small arms each year and preparing them to defend themselves, their ships, and their crewmates," he added.



The plaque dedicated to Ronald "Ron" Law is unveiled during the Ron Law Small Arms Marksmanship Training Center (SAMTC) building dedication, held in the building Jan. 23, 2025. The building has been named after Ronald "Ron" Law, who dedicated 30 years of his life to Military Sealift Command as a Damage Control Officer and Small Arms Instructor. (U.S. Navy photo by Ryan Carter)

Rear Adm. Philip Sobeck, Commander, Military Sealift Command, delivers remarks during the Ron Law Small Arms Marksmanship Training Center (SAMTC) building dedication, held in the building Jan. 23, 2025. The building has been named after Ronald "Ron" Law, who dedicated 30 years of his life to Military Sealift Command as a Damage Control Officer and Small Arms Instructor. (U.S. Navy photo by Ryan Carter.)



The new training facility's namesake, Ron Law, was a 30-year MSC veteran where he served as an MSC Damage Control Officer and a Small Arms Instructor. It is estimated that Law trained over 25,000 students in small arms throughout his career. Prior to joining MSC, Law completed a 21-year U.S. Navy career where he retired as a Master Chief Engineman.

"Ron's impact wasn't just about numbers," Sobeck declared. "What made him truly special was his ability to connect with his students on a personal level."

Ron Law passed away at the age of 69 on July 13, 2023.

"He had an incredible memory and could recall students from years' past, making each one feel seen and valued," Sobeck continued. "Ron wasn't just an instructor; he was a mentor, a guide, and a role model. He had the unique ability to help even the most challenging students achieve their best, teaching with humor, fairness, and patience. His talent for making complex subjects understandable and his genuine care for his students made him an unforgettable teacher."

The new training center will carry forward the values Law instilled in every student he taught.

"This facility is more than just a building; it is a place where Ron's values of professionalism, readiness, and excellence will continue to inspire," Sobeck concluded. "Every student who passes through these doors will be carrying forward the lessons Ron taught, ensuring that they are prepared to meet the challenges ahead with confidence and skill."

All newly hired CIVMARs, both licensed and unlicensed, must successfully complete MSC's eight-week Basic Training curriculum, which includes small arms training and

NAVY NAMES THIRD EXPEDITIONARY MEDICAL SHIP USNS PORTSMOUTH (EMS 3)

From The Office of the Secretary of the Navy

Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro named the future Bethesda-class expeditionary medical ship (EMS 3) USNS Portsmouth during a ship naming ceremony at Naval Medical Center Portsmouth on Jan. 8.

Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro named the future Bethesda-class expeditionary medical ship (EMS 3) USNS Portsmouth during a ship naming ceremony at Naval Medical Center Portsmouth on Jan. 8.

The decision to select Portsmouth was made to honor the legacy and commitment of the Navy doctors, nurses, corpsmen and staff of Naval Medical Center Portsmouth and the city of Portsmouth, Virginia.

"As Secretary of the Navy, I remain committed to the readiness of our Sailors and Marines and that readiness includes the crucial work to ensure the healthcare and vitality of our people," said Secretary Del Toro. "I am proud to honor the city of Portsmouth and the Navy's first operating hospital, Navy Medical Center Portsmouth, by naming the future USNS Portsmouth (EMS 3)."

The naming selection of the future USNS Portsmouth (EMS 3) follows the tradition of naming expeditionary medical ships after prominent military hospitals. Secretary Del Toro previously named USNS Bethesda (EMS 1) and USNS Balboa (EMS 2).

EMS 3 will be the fifth Navy vessel named Portsmouth. The four previous vessels were a full-rigged ship (1798–1801), a sloop-of-war (1844–1915), a light cruiser (1945–1970), and a nuclear-powered submarine (1983–2005).

Rear Adm. Darin Via, the U.S. Navy Surgeon General and chief, U.S. Navy Bureau of



An artist's rendering of a Bethesda-class expeditionary medical ship. (Courtesy illustration by Austal USA)

Medicine and Surgery, who spent the majority of his professional military and medical life at the medical center, reaffirmed the Navy's commitment to military readiness and healthcare support.

"USNS Portsmouth, a symbol of our Navy's progress, also carries the weight of our history. It represents a significant advancement in our Navy's warfighting capability and will provide essential medical support across the maritime environment," said Via. "Together with USNS Bethesda and USNS Balboa, USNS Portsmouth will deliver agile and responsive medical care, advanced trauma management, and support to naval operations and humanitarian and disaster relief missions."

Representing the city of Portsmouth, Mayor and Navy Veteran Shannon Glover spoke

USNS Portsmouth continued on Page 8

SECNAV DEL TORO NAMES T-AGOS EXPLORER-CLASS AND FIRST TWO SHIPS

From The Office of the Secretary of the Navy

Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro named the T-AGOS ocean surveillance ships the Explorer class, the future USNS Don Walsh (T-AGOS 25) and the second ship the future USNS Victor Vescovo (T-AGOS 26).

Del Toro made the announcement during a ship naming ceremony amongst members of Congress, National Geographic Explorers, local civic leaders, educators, scientists and a wide multitude of explorers at the U.S. Naval Academy in Maryland, on Jan. 10.

In 2022, the Navy procured the first of seven larger, faster surveillance ships known as T-AGOS 25. Today, I am proud to announce these vessels will be known as the Explorer-class of ocean surveillance ships, named in honor of those who made discoveries under sea, on land, and in the skies above.

“These ships are essential to maintaining strategic deterrence and operational awareness in the world’s oceans,” said Del Toro. “There is no one better to name for the first ship than Captain Don Walsh, a man whose life and career embody the very essence of exploration, innovation, and dedication to our Navy and our Nation. In naming the second T-AGOS, no one is more deserving than Commander Victor Vescovo, for his explorations in the air, on land and under the seas as well as his many scientific contributions. I am proud to name today, the future USNS Don Walsh (T-AGOS 25) and the future USNS Victor Vescovo (T-AGOS 26).”

Operated by the Military Sea Lift Command, the Explorer-class will play an integral role in the Navy’s anti-submarine warfare operations. T-AGOS ships align with the class’s mission of ocean surveillance and highlights the wide-range of careers in the Navy and Marine Corps, encompassing opportunities to explore land, air, and sea.

“I am honored to stand side-by-side with the Navy to launch the new Explorer Class of ocean surveillance ships” said Jean Case, Chairman of the National Geographic Society. “We could not be more proud that the inaugural vessel in this class honors our beloved National Geographic Explorer, retired US Navy Captain Don Walsh. We are grateful for the long-standing partnership

the National Geographic Society and the US Navy have shared embracing the spirit of exploration and commitment to go to the front lines of the unknown. Together, we champion the courage and curiosity that drive humanity to discover, protect, and build a better understanding of our world.”

The future USNS Don Walsh is the first-in-class, named in honor of the late Captain Don Walsh, USN, a renowned explorer and pioneer of deep-sea submergence. Walsh is a 1954 graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy and served first in the amphibious forces before being selected for submarine duty aboard USS Rasher (SS-269). Later while assigned to the staff of Submarine Flotilla 1, he volunteered for the fledgling deep-dive program and became Navy Submersible Pilot No.1. On Jan. 23, 1960, Walsh, accompanied by scientist Jacques Piccard, successfully piloted bathyscaphe Trieste 35,797 feet down to Challenger-Deep, the deepest known point of the ocean, located southwest of Guam in the Mariana Trench. President Dwight D. Eisenhower subsequently presented Walsh with a Legion of Merit for his pioneering work in “innerspace.”

Walsh went on to earn a doctorate in Physical Oceanography while in the service and would ultimately command USS Bashaw (AGSS-241) before retiring as a Captain and going on to be a world-renowned ocean scientist and explorer, with countless awards and accolades. Captain Walsh recently passed away on Nov. 12, 2023, at his home in Oregon. This will be the first Navy vessel named for Walsh.

“My father was many things to many people- explorer, educator, colleague and mentor. But if you asked him what most defined his character, Navy Man, would be top of the list. His contributions to ocean exploration and advocacy spanned 60 plus years and he “wrote the book” on how we talk about, research and protect our planet’s circulatory system. His historic dive to Challenger Deep as a Navy Lieutenant was just part of what would become a life of service to the country, the oceans and the global community,” said Kelly Walsh, son of the late Don Walsh. “To me he was dad: a brilliant example of living a life full of adventure and curiosity. He shared the world with his family over the years, and in turn, we got to share him with the world. His legacy will remain- on the waves, over the horizon and just beyond the next great discovery. He will be there in practice and spirit.”

Secretary Del Toro named Mrs. Joan Walsh, spouse of the late Walsh, and his daughter, Liz Walsh, as sponsors of TAGOS-25. Sponsors are selected by the Secretary of the

Navy and hold a unique role in maintaining a lifelong relationship with the ship and crew.

“The Walsh family is profoundly honored that the Navy has chosen to recognize Don Walsh’s lifetime of service and dedication by naming this new TAGOS ship after him. Don sometimes described being a kid in the San Francisco Bay area, daydreaming about where all those ships were going as they sailed to and for over the horizon; that little boy would certainly marvel that one day his legacy would be memorialized in such an enduring way,” said Liz Walsh. “As the ship’s Sponsors, my mother Joan and I are proud to now become a small part of the Navy’s future. We eagerly look forward to developing bonds with the future ship, officers, and crew who will be a key part in protecting America at sea.”

The future USNS Victor Vescovo is named to honor Commander Victor Lance Vescovo, USNR (Ret) (1966 — present). Vescovo, a private equity investor, explorer, and retired naval intelligence officer who currently holds the world record for the deepest dive of a crewed vessel to Challenger Deep in the Mariana Trench, was the first person to reach Earth’s highest and lowest points. Vescovo has also completed the Explorers’ Grand Slam (Last Degree), in which he climbed the highest mountain on each continent and attained both the North and South Poles. Following his dive to Challenger Deep in his custom-built submersible Limiting Factor, Vescovo completed his own Five Deeps

challenge, descending to the lowest points in the Earth’s oceans.

He confirmed the identity of the wreck of Johnston (DD 557), which was sunk following a valiant stand against an overwhelming Japanese force during the Battle off Samar in Leyte Gulf, October 1944, which had been discovered but not confirmed by Vulcan, Inc., in 2019. The following year he discovered the wreck of Samuel B. Roberts (DE 413), lost in that same battle. Samuel B. Roberts is the deepest identified wreck at a depth of 22,621 feet. In 2021, Vescovo won

the 2021 Captain Don Walsh Award for Ocean Exploration alongside Patrick Lahey for their 2019 Five Deeps Expedition and history of further dives of scientific and historical interest. There have been no previous Navy vessels named for Vescovo.

“It is a great privilege to honor my friend and colleague in the US Navy and ocean exploration, Captain Don Walsh. Vessels such as this upgraded T-AGOS class are essential to the US Navy’s mission to safeguard the security of the world ocean as well as contribute to its greater understanding,” said Vescovo, namesake of T-AGOS 26. “I am also beyond honored to follow in Captain Walsh’s footsteps both to the bottom of the ocean and in the line of succession of naming these great ships.”

During the naming ceremony, Del Toro also announced the sponsor of the future USNS Victor Vescovo, Victoria Vescovo Webster, the sister of CDR Vescovo.

“The naming of this ship for my brother, as the USNS Victor Vescovo, is a very deep and moving honor to me and our family,” said Vescovo Webster. “The role of this ship will be such a perfect combination of his tremendous achievements as an explorer, and his service as a Naval Intelligence officer. I am truly grateful to be named as the sponsor for this ship, and will endeavor to fulfill that role with the same spirit of service as the ship’s namesake.”

T-AGOS 25 class will be part of the tactical auxiliary general ocean surveillance (TAGOS) ships fleet operated by the Military Sealift Command (MSC) of the US Navy. The Navy in FY2022 procured the first of a planned class of seven new T-AGOS 25 class ocean surveillance ships. T-AGOS ships support Navy antisubmarine warfare (ASW) operations and gather underwater acoustical data to support the mission of the Integrated Undersea Surveillance System (IUSS) by providing a ship platform capable of theater anti-submarine acoustic passive and active surveillance.

T-AGOS 25 class ships will be 356ft (110m) long and feature a steel small waterplane area twin hull (SWATH) design. The upper section of the ship is supported by two struts that reach down to a set of submerged hulls resembling those of a submarine. The struts feature a slender profile where they meet the waterline, resulting in a minimal waterplane area.

The ships will have an 8,500t displacement and accommodation for 68 personnel. They will support the navy’s Integrated Undersea Surveillance System (IUSS) for collecting underwater acoustical data, using Surveillance Towed-Array Sensor System (SURTASS) equipment. The high stability of the SWATH design in adverse weather conditions is useful for SURTASS operations.



An artist's rendering of a T-AGOS Explorer-Class ocean surveillance ship. (Courtesy illustration by Austal USA)

MSC FAR EAST DELIVERS CARE TO CHILDREN'S CENTERS IN THE PHILIPPINES

By Grady Fontana, Military Sealift Command Far East Public Affairs



Civilian mariner Larry P. Ejan, steward utilityman, with Military Sealift Command's (MSC) dry cargo and ammunition ship USNS Charles Drew (T-AKE 10), dances with a staff member of the Niños Pag Asa Orphanage Center, during a community outreach event in Olongapo, Philippines, Dec. 8, 2024. (U.S. Navy photo by Grady T. Fontana)

Approximately 30 Military Sealift Command (MSC) Civil Service Mariners (CIVMARs) partnered with Olongapo local organizations and visited two centers for children in order to interact with children and provide donations during a community outreach event in Olongapo, Philippines, Dec. 8, 2024.

The CIVMARs were from dry cargo and ammunition ship USNS Charles Drew (T-AKE 10) and fleet replenishment oiler ship USNS Rappahannock (T-AO 204).

They visited the Olongapo City Social Development Center for the Girls and the Niños Pag Asa Orphanage Center. The Olongapo Social Development Center provides refuge and rehabilitation for abused and orphaned girls, while Niños Pag Asa Orphanage Center helps provide the special needs of impoverished, malnourished, and sick children and young adults with disabilities and with deformities.

The two ships collected voluntary donations and purchased items such as rice, hygiene products, towels, games, and other food items for the two centers.

"The kids are very happy to receive visitors and gifts," said Araceli Menor, executive director and co-founder of Niños Pag Asa Orphanage Center. "You can see it in their faces. It makes them feel that they are still part of the community and that they are not left behind."

According to Menor, the orphanage, which houses 28 kids, was established in May 1984 with a military tie. She and a U.S. Marine Corps spouse started the program by going out to various towns to provide food to less fortunate kids. It shortly evolved into the development of the orphanage.

During the visit, each center's kids engaged in an entertainment program. While some kids sang and played musical instruments, others choreographed dance routines to showcase their unique talents.

"I love helping the kids," said Larry P. Ejan, steward utilityman, Charles Drew. "It makes me very emotional, but at the same time it makes me feel good helping those

who need help most. There's a lot of ways to help. It's not just about the money you can give, it's also about the amount of time you can spend with them. It makes them feel like they are still remembered and part of the community."

The Social Development Center provides a safe haven for young girls who endured abuse and neglect, and offers them a nurturing environment, education, and psychological support to help them rebuild their lives.

"These visits are very important to the kids," said Hana Linzaga, day care worker, Social Development Center. "Some of them don't have families that visit them. So, these visitors are like their family. Additionally, the donations really help."

While most members of the MSC were new to participating in community outreach events, some take every advantage to participate, when given the opportunity.

"I always try to go when there's a humanitarian event, and I always think it's great," said Lorraine Ninete, purser, Rappahannock. "I have 18 grandchildren and four great grandchildren. So, when I look at these children, they remind me of mine. I always have a soft spot in my heart for them. I see a lot of these children and I want them to know that they are loved."

MSC Far East organized the planning, coordination and execution, while the Charles Drew and Rappahannock crew members provided the donations.

"These events are an opportunity for the kids to receive all these different blessings," said Lt. Cmdr. Jamil A. Khan, chaplain, MSC Far East. "But for our CIVMARs, it's an opportunity to stay a little humble and change their perspective in realizing that they do have a home, especially, when some of them are so far from loved ones during the holidays."



Children with the Olongapo City Social Development Center for the Girls examine donated items from crewmembers of Military Sealift Command's dry cargo and ammunition ship USNS Charles Drew (T-AKE 10) and fleet replenishment oiler ship USNS Rappahannock (T-AO 204), during a community outreach event in Olongapo, Philippines, Dec. 8, 2024. (U.S. Navy photo by Grady T. Fontana)

CTF 63 AIR LOGISTICS: SCHEDULERS OF THE SKIES

By Ben Farone, Military Sealift Command Europe and Africa Public Affairs

When there's a need to move cargo, personnel, and even the Navy's four-legged law enforcement officers throughout the European theater, customers call the team at Commander, Task Force SIX THREE (CTF-63) Air Logistics.

"We are the point of contact customers reach out to when they require an airlift to be done. Whether that's passengers, mail, HAZMAT or even repair parts, we coordinate all of that," said Operations Specialist 2nd Class Aaron Glenn Santos, a diplomatic clearance clerk with CTF-63 from Rizal, Philippines.

"When a customer has a lift request, we draft the flight plan and send it through the Defense Attaché Office. We let them know which planes are headed where and they process the request through the local embassy," said Santos.

CTF-63 schedules a dozen different flight crews that provide logistics support in the European theater. Four of those crews are provided by rotational squadrons, manning the C-40 Clipper and C-130 Hercules aircraft. The other eight are permanently stationed onboard Naval Support Activity, Naples and Naval Air Station Sigonella, flying the C-26 Metroliner.

"On average, we coordinate about three flights per day. If we have a [U.S. Navy aircraft carrier] strike group in the region, that number can increase, and sometimes double," said Naval Aircrewman (Operator) 1st Class Samuel Ghinea, another diplomatic clearance clerk with CTF-63 and a native of Fremont, California.

"And we have a team of just seven to manage it all," Ghinea continued.

Two recent passengers requiring a flight to Paris were Brutus, a military working dog (MWD) stationed in Sigonella, and Brutus' Handler, Master-At-Arms 3rd Class Isaiah Koontz, from Massillon, Ohio.

At the direction of the United States Secret Service, Brutus and Koontz travelled to Paris to prepare areas being visited by U.S. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken.

Having a dedicated flight specific to this mission was an invaluable benefit according to Koontz.

"Traveling MILAIR [military aircraft] makes traveling a lot easier," said Koontz.

"I was able to access my dog really easily and make sure he was OK. It helps us get where we need to be faster and causes less stress. I think MILAIR is better for both the handler and the MWD."

MSC RESERVISTS SUPPORT OPERATION DEEP FREEZE 2025

By Sarah Cannon, Military Sealift Command Pacific Public Affairs

Navy reservists from Military Sealift Command Pacific's Expeditionary Port Unit (EPU) conducted cargo operations in Port Hueneme, California. The team oversaw the loading of supplies and equipment onto Military Sealift Command charter ship MV Ocean Giant in preparation for delivery to the remote Antarctica outpost of McMurdo Station, in support of the annual resupply mission; Operation Deep Freeze 2025.

Serving as liaisons between Ocean Giant's crew and Military Sealift Command, the EPU reservists oversaw the loadout of 327 pieces of cargo. The cargo consisted of containers filled with mechanical parts, vehicles, construction materials, office supplies and electronics equipment, and mobile office units; supplies needed for the year's survival at McMurdo Station, Antarctica.

In addition to the containers of cargo, 24-foot pieces, that will make up a 65-ton floating Marine Causeway System was also loaded onto Ocean Giant. The causeway will replace the ice-pier at McMurdo Station. Previously, an ice pier made up of rebar and frozen seawater, has been used for cargo offloads. Due to severe damage, the ice-pier is now unusable.

Once in Antarctica, the causeway will be assembled in sections on Ocean Giant's deck and placed into the water. Sections will be attached to the one another to form the final pier.

While the EPU team did not work on Christmas Day, they did work Christmas Eve, and the days after the holiday. This took them away from their families, but according to Master-at-Arms Chief Petty Officer, Jennifer Smith, EPU officer-in-

charge, making the sacrifice to be away from family during the holidays to support the mission, is something the team has taken on willingly.

"We are all excited to be here and supporting this mission," Smith said. "We are here as volunteers. No one forced us to be here. We are happily making the sacrifice to miss Christmas with our families, so other members of the EPU can be with theirs."

Ocean Giant will depart Port Hueneme before the New Year. Following a stop in Christchurch, New Zealand, where the ship will load additional cargo, it will travel to McMurdo Station, where members of Navy Cargo Handling Battalion One will conduct the offload. Before departing McMurdo station, retrograde cargo will be loaded onto the ship for transportation off the continent. This includes trash and recyclable materials for disposal and equipment no longer required on the station.

Operation Deep Freeze is a joint service, on-going Defense Support to Civilian Authorities mission in support of the National Science Foundation (NSF). NSF is the 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. MSC-chartered ships have made the challenging voyage to Antarctica every year since the station and its resupply mission were established in 1955.

ARMY AND NAVY TRANSPORTATION UNITS CONDUCT JOINT CARGO OPERATIONS IN NORTHERN GERMANY

By Ben Farone, Military Sealift Command Europe and Africa Public Affairs

Capt. Todd B. Penrod, Commander, Task Force 63 / Commander, Military Sealift Command Europe and Africa conducted a tour of port operations that included a visit to the Military Sealift Command (MSC) contracted vessel MV Sagamore as the ship was moored pier side at the EUROGATE Container Terminal in Wilhelmshaven, Germany Dec. 20.

Sagamore arrived at the port Dec. 18, under U.S. Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM) tasking, carrying 451 containers of cargo for distribution to U.S. Army units in the region.

Joining Penrod on the ship visit were U.S. Army Lt. Col. James Acevedo, Battalion Commander, 838th Transportation Battalion and the 838th's Command Sgt. Maj. Carlos Varas. Acevedo's team serves as the single port manager under the Military Surface Deployment and Distribution Command (SDDC). The 838th Transportation Battalion moves, deploys, and sustains Department of Defense forces in Europe.

"Anything from the cans that go into the commissary to household goods, POVs [privately owned vehicles] to the tanks that come into the theater; we're responsible for all of that," said Acevedo.

Acevedo also noted that this was the first time the EUROGATE container terminal was used since 2018, citing the importance of rotating through existing ports while exploring the viability of new ports. This movement provided an opportunity to identify infrastructure, processes, and procedures that can be improved upon to enhance military mobility in the European Theater.

"We have to have port diversification," said Acevedo. Testing new ports also involves our NATO partners, increasing interoperability. These port operations in Wilhelmshaven demonstrate U.S. joint forces [SDDC and MSC] providing proactive and scalable options for priority missions. Military mobility is about more than just roads and bridges, it is about exercising the processes and procedures necessary to deliver a large force from ports in the U.S. to ports in Europe, and then on to a point of crisis, wherever that may be across the theater," said Acevedo.

Seeing these operations first-hand helped Penrod gain a stronger understanding of the U.S. Army and SDDC's role in joint operations across the European theater.

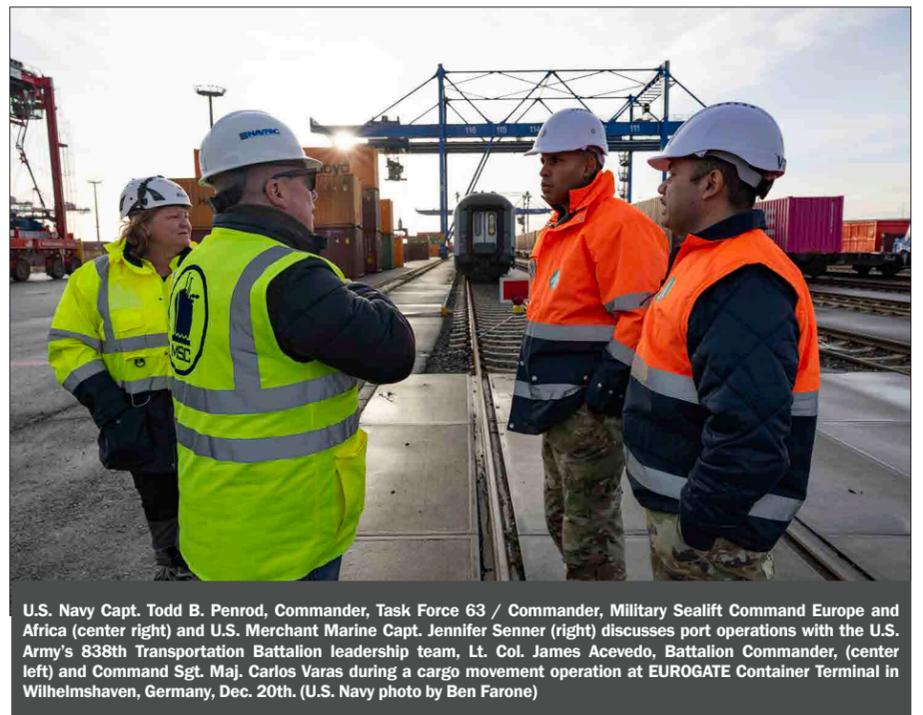
"Being here helped me get a better appreciation for what their [U.S. Army] processes look like," said Penrod. "Their ability to come in and do a security

assessment before the ship pulls in and to establish the connections with the port staff and infrastructure...it seems like it's a well-oiled machine," Penrod said.

Penrod went on to outline the true joint nature of operations like the one that took place in Wilhelmshaven.

"USTRANSCOM issues the orders and they [the 838th], representing SDDC, carry out their part as the Army's transportation arm. We at MSC, we represent the Navy's transportation arm, so you have by definition, a true joint environment, where Army and Navy are working together, sometimes in austere environments, to get cargo delivered throughout the continent."

MSC directs and supports operations for approximately 140 civilian-crewed ships that replenish U.S. Navy ships at sea, conduct specialized missions, preposition combat cargo at sea around the world, perform a variety of support services, and move military equipment and supplies to deployed U.S. forces. Celebrating its 75th anniversary in 2024, MSC exists to support the joint warfighter across the full



U.S. Navy Capt. Todd B. Penrod, Commander, Task Force 63 / Commander, Military Sealift Command Europe and Africa (center right) and U.S. Merchant Marine Capt. Jennifer Senner (right) discusses port operations with the U.S. Army's 838th Transportation Battalion leadership team, Lt. Col. James Acevedo, Battalion Commander, (center left) and Command Sgt. Maj. Carlos Varas during a cargo movement operation at EUROGATE Container Terminal in Wilhelmshaven, Germany, Dec. 20th. (U.S. Navy photo by Ben Farone)



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FUELING THE FIGHT: INTEGRATION WITH COMMERCIAL AND ALLIED VESSELS

From United States Transportation Command

Commercial oil tanker Overseas Mykonos provided fuel directly to the USS Abraham Lincoln in November 2024, marking the first time since the Operation Desert Storm era a U.S. commercial vessel has provided fuel through consolidated cargo operations, or CONSOL, to a U.S. aircraft carrier.

Military Sealift Command (MSC) contracted the Overseas Mykonos to provide fuel to the Defense Department. During these operations, JP5 fuel was transferred between the two vessels, demonstrating another option to the standard fuel delivery process. Typically, a commercial vessel transfers fuel to MSC's Combat Logistics Fleet, which then supports deployed units, such as a carrier strike group.

“Direct refueling with commercial tankers allows us to swiftly adapt to changing circumstances, and redirect forces without the constraints of limited fuel supplies,” said Rear Adm. Philip Sobeck, MSC commander. “The extended range becomes particularly invaluable in scenarios where the proximity of friendly ports is limited or during prolonged missions where ships are far from logistical support.”

MSC reintroduced commercial tankers to fuel transfers in 2015 to reduce port visits.

“When we combine our capabilities with those of our allies and our commercial partners, we multiply options and flexibility to fuel the force,” said Air Force Col. John Barry, U.S. Transportation Command Global Bulk Fuels Division chief.

While the Overseas Mykonos was providing fuel to the USS Abraham Lincoln in the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility, MSC-chartered Stena Polaris moored at Toulon Naval Base, France, and completed in-port refuel training with the French force supply vessel Jacques Chevallier, demonstrating the value of being able to refuel vessels belonging to allies and partners.



French Navy replenishment tanker Jacques Chevallier receives fuel from MSC-chartered Stena Polaris. (French Navy courtesy photo)

“History has shown us time and again that allied success on the battlefield depends upon the strength of the industrial base and our relationships with the commercial sector,” said Army Lt. Gen. Jered Helwig, USTRANSCOM deputy commander. “Our close relationships with the fuels industry and our allies have been and continue to be integral to safeguarding national interests at home and abroad.”

On Christmas Eve, the French force supply vessel Jacques Chevallier and Stena Polaris performed the same CONSOL operation at sea, demonstrating a new capability for the French Navy and increased capacity among allied nations.

“The changes to global bulk fuel delivery enhance resilience in a contested environment,” Barry said, “and improve how fuel is distributed, increasing deterrence and support during a crisis, while enhancing warfighting readiness. It has enabled critical efforts for multiple bulk fuel stakeholders and combatant commands in support of global operations.”

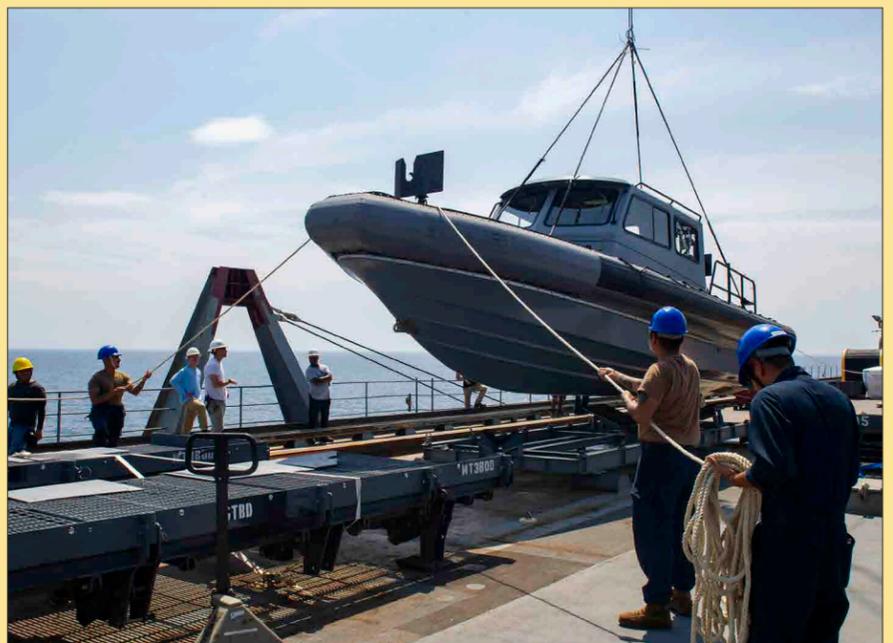
MSC anyday



Ensign Elise Lindsay, from Bowie, Maryland, assigned to the forward-deployed amphibious assault ship USS America (LHA 6), waves an American flag during a replenishment-at-sea with the dry cargo ship USNS Carl Brashear (T-AKE-7), Jan. 16. America, lead ship of the America Amphibious Ready Group, is operating in the U.S. 7th Fleet area of operations. U.S. 7th Fleet is the U.S. Navy's largest forward-deployed numbered fleet, and routinely interacts and operates with allies and partners in preserving a free and open Indo-Pacific region. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Sade' Anita Wallace)



The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Fitzgerald (DDG 62) conducts an underway replenishment with the fleet replenishment oiler USNS Henry J. Kaiser (T-AO 187) in the Pacific Ocean, Jan. 27, 2025. Fitzgerald is underway in the U.S. 3rd Fleet conducting routine operations. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Jesse Monford)



Sailors and Military Sealift Command Civil Service Mariners deploy a rigid hull inflatable boat from the submarine tender USS Emory S. Land (AS 39), which is anchored in the Andaman Sea, Jan. 13, 2025. Emory S. Land is on deployment supporting the U.S. 7th Fleet, the U.S. Navy's largest forward deployed numbered fleet, operating with allies and partners in preserving a free and open Indo-Pacific region. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Apprentice Mario E. Reyes Villatoro)

Chaplain's Corner: The New Year

By LCDR Billy Hardison, MSC Command Chaplain

Welcome to the year 2025!

As the New Year begins, are you feeling anxious, nervous, or fearful? Maybe you find yourself excited, hopeful, with a bit of adventurous anticipation? You may even have a mix of all these feelings!

Wherever you find yourself in start of the New Year, the reality is that 2025 will have its share of highs and lows, good days and bad days, laughter and sorrows. The pressing question for each of us as individuals is this, how will we approach each day, week, and month ahead of us? What is your spiritual, physical, emotional, and mental start point for this year? How are you approaching life in 2025?

If I may, I want to dig just a little deeper and ask how would you answer this: Do you have a spirituality, a committed faith, or religious practice—a Worldview—that makes sense of and answers the biggest questions of life? Many people have beliefs, values, principles, ideas, religious views, spiritual practices, etc., that guide their daily life.

However, the critical question each one of us should ask is, does my worldview or spiritual practice work, and does it make sense of the reality of the universe we live in? Does it sufficiently answer the big questions of identity, meaning, purpose and value; questions like these:

1. Who am I, and how did I get here?
2. Why am I here, and what should I be doing with my life—what's desirable, good, and worthy to pursue?
3. How do I make sense of evil, pain and suffering in the world?
4. Where is everything headed; what happens when I die?

So, I ask you to pause and think about these for a moment. Does your worldview or spirituality explain, prepare and sustain you for all the highs and lows approaching out on the horizon in front of you?

Have you taken the time to think through and evaluate your worldview, and how it impacts your everyday approach to life and its demands?

If you do have a worldview or spirituality that you trust and adhere to, great. For those that do, the New Year offers the perfect time for reflection to ask good questions, evaluating whether or not your worldview actually does sufficiently answer the big questions of life, and the reality of the world we live in, to your satisfaction. And if so, what commitments in daily life do you need to make, or adjust, to live fully committed to your worldview?

However, if you do not currently have a worldview or spirituality, or you feel your current beliefs do not sufficiently answers life's big questions. The New Year offers you the perfect opportunity to begin that journey.

Over the coming months, the MSC Chaplain articles will offer a roadmap to evaluate, develop and strengthen your worldview, shaping your answers to questions of identity, meaning, purpose, and value. Which, in the practical sense, directly impacts your life resiliency, satisfaction, and joy.

The New Year is here, the choice is yours. How will you approach the days and weeks ahead? What choices will you make to develop, and strengthen your worldview? I hope you will read, ponder, evaluate, and discuss with each other what we offer you in the coming months.

United We Sail!

Godspeed and God Bless,
Chaplain Billy Hardison

KICK OFF WITH A HEALTHY NEW YEAR

By Stephanie Rusnak, Military Sealift Command Health Promotion Program

Every New Year! You may tell yourself this will be the year you achieve your long awaited goals, only to reach the year's end without ever reaching those goals, then repeating the cycle over again the following year.

Research shows that 80% of New Year's resolutions fail by the beginning of February. Why is that? Because New Year's resolutions seldom have actionable steps. Instead, they are created out of peer pressure based on an arbitrary date.

This year, I encourage you to set SMART goals, not resolutions. SMART goals are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time bound.

The Health Promotion program at MSC offers the following free services to its Civil Service Mariners:

- InBody Screenings (measures percentage of body fat, muscle mass, basal metabolic rate, or how many calories you burn at rest in a day, and more)
- Healthy Lifestyle Sessions.
- Online health education and exercise classes.

- Subscription to Weekly Wellness newsletters, covering a variety of health and wellness topics.

- Health Risk Assessment and subscription to online wellness portal.

- SHIP FIT: A workout plan distributed quarterly with all bodyweight exercises that can be done while underway or at home.

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

Your Health Promotion Team is here for you! Contact us today!

Meghan Sullivan, Health Promotion Coordinator
meghan.h.sullivan2.ctr@us.navy.mil

Stephanie Rusnak, Health Promotion Coordinator
Stephanie.rusnak.ctr@us.navy.mil



Military Sealift Command East Health Promotion Coordinator Leighanne Gerstbrein leads group resistance exercises during MSC's East Coast Wellness Day. (U.S. Navy Photo by Hendrick Dickson)



Military Sealift Command East Health Promotion Coordinator Leighanne Gerstbrein observes as Civil Service Mariner Mark Appel takes an in-body screening during MSC's East Coast Wellness Day. (U.S. Navy Photo by Hendrick Dickson)

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USNS Portsmouth from Page 2

about the honor and meaning behind the naming of the Navy’s newest expeditionary medical ship.

“Today, we stand united in pride and gratitude as we honor the incredible contributions of the dedicated medical professionals at Naval Medical Center Portsmouth. For generations, they have provided compassionate care and unwavering commitment to our military families, veterans, and the Portsmouth community,” said Shannon Glover, Mayor of Portsmouth. “The USNS Portsmouth represents more than just a ship – it is a testament to the resilience, care, and service that define the heart of Portsmouth. And this is an appropriate and fitting tribute to the selfless men and women who serve at Naval Medical Center Portsmouth.”

Located along the banks of the Elizabeth River in Virginia, Naval Medical Center Portsmouth is a nationally acclaimed, state-of-the-art Defense Health Agency military treatment facility (MTF), where 5,000 medical professionals provide quality healthcare to warfighters, veterans, and their families in the Hampton Roads area.

Originally established in 1830 as the Navy’s first and oldest continuously operating hospital, today it is home to Navy Medicine Readiness and Training Command (NMRTC) Portsmouth, which provides a skilled and combat-ready medical force to support warfighting requirements and enables the Department’s highly skilled personnel to maintain mission critical proficiencies through valuable training in a military treatment facility. Navy medical personnel lead pioneering research and teaching programs to prepare new doctors, nurses, allied health professionals, and hospital corpsmen for combat operations and public health crises.

In addition to the medical center, the city of Portsmouth, Virginia, is home to the Norfolk Naval Shipyard, the Navy’s oldest shipyard (est. 1767) and one of its key facilities for overhauling and repairing its largest ships.

For every Navy ship named, a sponsor is chosen to advocate for both the ship and crew. Sponsors participate in key milestones in the life of their ship and form lifelong relationships that contribute to the well-being of the ship and her crew members. For

the future USNS Portsmouth, Mrs. Terri Ann Via, spouse of Rear Adm. Via, Surgeon General of the Navy, was hand-selected for this important role.

“Portsmouth is more than just a name to me; it has been the cornerstone of my family’s life in the Navy. Portsmouth has been our home for as long as I can remember,” said Mrs. Via. “As the sponsor of the Portsmouth, I am committed to upholding the values of service, courage, and compassion that define both the Navy and Naval Medical Center Portsmouth. Having had the honor and opportunity to stand alongside my husband throughout his Navy career and now as the Surgeon General of the Navy, I look forward to sharing in the adventures, triumphs, and challenges that lie ahead for this ship and crew. May this ship always be a source of pride for our nation, a symbol of our strength and resolve, and a living tribute to the heroes of Naval Medical Center Portsmouth.”

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). 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.

Navy Medicine – represented by more than 44,000 highly-trained military and civilian health care professionals – provides enduring expeditionary medical support to the warfighter on, below, and above the sea, and ashore.

MILITARY SEALIFT COMMAND TAKES DELIVERY OF USNS ROBERT F. KENNEDY

By Sarah Cannon, Military Sealift Command Pacific Public Affairs

Fleet replenishment oiler USNS Robert F. Kennedy (T-AO 208) was delivered to Military Sealift Command (MSC), Dec. 10.

The 746-foot Kennedy is the fourth ship in the John Lewis-class previously known as the T-AO(X). This class of oilers has the ability to carry 162,000 barrels of diesel ship fuel, aviation fuel and dry stores cargo. The upgraded oiler is built with double hulls to protect against oil spills and strengthened cargo and ballast tanks. The Lewis-class of oilers will replace the current Kaiser Class fleet replenishment oilers as they age out of the MSC fleet. Kennedy was built and christened at the General Dynamics NASSCO shipyard in San Diego.

The ship honors Robert F. Kennedy, an American lawyer and politician who served as the 64th United States Attorney General from January 1961 to September 1964, during his brother John F.

Kennedy’s presidency. He advocated for the civil rights movement, fought against organized crime and the Mafia, and was involved in U.S. foreign policy relating to Cuba.

Following his tenure as Attorney General, he served as a U.S. Senator from New York. In 1968, Robert Kennedy was considered a frontrunner for the Democratic Party’s presidential nomination. During a campaign event in Los Angeles, in June of that year, he was assassinated. A prominent member of the Democratic Party, Robert Kennedy has come to be viewed by some historians as an icon of modern American liberalism.

Following testing and various qualifications and inspection, USNS Kennedy will become operational and will deploy in support of national defense missions throughout the world.



John Lewis-class fleet replenishment oiler, USNS Robert F. Kennedy (T-AO 208) was delivered to the Navy on Dec. 10. (U.S. Navy Courtesy Photo)



Military Sealift Command

SEALIFT is an authorized publication for members and employees of the Navy’s Military Sealift Command. Contents of this publication are not necessarily the official views of or endorsed by the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense or the Department of the Navy. Sealift is published monthly by the Military Sealift Command Office of Public Affairs as authorized under NAVPUBINST 5600.42A. Submission of articles and letters should be addressed to:

Editor, Sealift, Military Sealift Command
 471 East C Street
 Norfolk, VA 23511-2419
 Commercial: 757-443-2839
 DSN: 646-2839
 EMAIL: msc_n02p@us.navy.mil

- CommanderRear Admiral Philip Sobeck, USN
- Director, Public AffairsJillian Morris
- Editor..... Jennifer Hunt, Norfolk, VA
- Visual Information..... Brian Suriani, Norfolk, VA
- Visual Information..... Ryan Carter, Norfolk, VA
- Writer Bill Mesta, Norfolk, VA
- Writer Hendrick Dickson, Norfolk, VA
- Writer Dave Griesmer Norfolk, VA
- Writer LaShawn Sykes, Norfolk, VA
- Writer Sarah Cannon, San Diego, CA
- Writer Grady Fontana, Singapore
- Writer Benjamin Farone, Naples

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