

October 2007

# S.E.A.L.I.F.T

THE U.S. NAVY'S MILITARY SEALIFT COMMAND

**Prepositioning Ships  
play in Southeast Asian  
anti-terrorism exercise**



**INSIDE — MSC ships deliver globally for Army • MSC honors WWII Sailors**

# Risk management, safety and life – afloat and ashore

**R**isk. Baby boomers might remember the Parker Brothers strategic game called Risk. It was fun and exposed people to some basic lessons in risk management, but it really didn't go far enough. Risk management is a tool that we all use and it can be a life saver when it's applied automatically in everything we do, whether we're working or relaxing, aboard ship or ashore, having fun or being serious. It's a universal tool.

Risk management is mostly common sense, but it takes practice and pre-planning. It's a mindset that doesn't just practice safety on the job, but passes it on through your work processes and relaxation time habits.

Let's go back to the common sense aspect.

Okay, you're a young man, healthy, aboard ship and probably thinking you're pretty indestructible. You need to go to an upper deck, so you duck in the elevator and press the button. The car rises several feet and then stops abruptly. Pressing more buttons doesn't seem to do anything. There's a sign posted that tells you what to do in case of an emergency, but instead you see the escape hatch in the ceiling and go for it.

It's a relatively small elevator cage, so when you get on top of the car, it's kind of crowded. You close the hatch, which, of course, self locks from the inside. Now you're not only stuck between levels, you can't even get back in the elevator. You start to climb the ladder inside the elevator shaft. Then, to your horror, the elevator comes back to life and begins to rise.

Do you know how much clearance there is between the ladder and the elevator car? Will there be enough room for you? If you don't know for sure, you're about to find out. Hmmm-mm. I wonder what that sign in the elevator said about emergencies and what you should have done.

Does this sound far-fetched to you? It's a true story. It happened on an MSC ship. To one of us.

Safety and risk management are part of a mindset, one we should all have.

During a recent safety stand down, some of our crews took the time to really look at the factors that affect shipboard safety. Two big issues that surfaced were fatigue and complacency, a decidedly deadly duo.

Consider the master and crew in the middle of a carrier battle group work-up and a joint task force exercise. From midnight to 8 p.m., a total of 20 straight hours, they conducted replenishment-at-sea evolutions with nine ships, roughly one every two to three hours. The master couldn't give or get any rest, other than two or three 40-minute cat naps.

Nobody complained, and thank goodness, no one got hurt. But the potential was there for serious problems



with the constant repetition and not enough rest.

Being unfamiliar with your environment can also be a safety risk, especially when added to inattention, no matter how momentary.

An MSC forklift driver, having just transferred from an oiler to an ammunition ship, was working a vertical replenishment evolution moving large canisters from the staging area to the pickup zone on the flight deck. The cargo mate was acting as safety observer. He was wearing proper gear and doing his job, watching the forklift driver deliver another canister down the flight deck. As the canister was dropped off and the forklift began backing up, the cargo mate looked away, just for a second, to talk with someone. The forklift driver, not used to the differently shaped flight deck, changed his course as he backed up — right over the cargo mate. The promising young officer, well on his way to a master's license, can no longer work at sea. All his training, expertise, hopes and dreams crushed in a single moment.

How often does something like this happen? We've been averaging three forklift incidents a year for some time. And those are only the reported incidents. Near miss reports almost never see the light of day. But they should if the rest of us are going to learn any lessons.

Safety isn't just an individual issue; it's a team effort.

The commonality among all the incidents I just mentioned is that they were all preventable. Common sense says that you've got to get enough rest to do your job properly and safely. We're looking at the replenishment-at-sea scheduling function to see if we can do a better job of not overloading our crews.

At the same time, our managers and supervisors all need to make sure their people are thoroughly familiar with the requirements of their jobs and their working environments, especially when new crew members come aboard.

It's also the responsibility of each one of us to use our common sense when we approach any potentially

dangerous situation, which would include pretty much everything we do at sea and much of what we do ashore. Evaluate risks, look for ways to mitigate those risks and decide whether or not the remaining risk is acceptable.

Many of our shipmates are doing just that on a daily basis. The crew of MV PFC James Anderson Jr., one of our Maritime Prepositioning Ships, went 1,452 days without an accident that caused lost time away from the job. That's impressive!

During recent safety stand downs, the civil service mariner crews aboard USNS Flint and USNS Mount Baker conducted very thorough discussions and inspections. The feedback they provided to the rest of the MSC fleet was extensive and worthwhile.

Although USNS Henson, MV Cory Chouest, USNS Paul Buck, USNS Effective, USNS Heezen and MV SSG Edward A. Carter Jr., don't have forklifts aboard, during the stand down they all spent valuable time discussing crane and lifting safety, another area that is filled with opportunities for things to go wrong.

At the same time, the staff of Maritime Prepositioning Ship Squadron Two has done an excellent job of managing safety concerns, consolidating information and following up on safety issues with the ships in the squadron.

When it comes to safety, there are two things that stand out: common sense and lessons learned. They are closely related and interdependent.

It's common sense to want to achieve and maintain a safe operating environment. At least it should be. Common sense, after all, is risk management at the gut-instinct level. It's learning from mistakes, both your mistakes and mistakes made by others, then sharing the lessons so nobody makes the mistake again. It's focusing on getting the mission done safely instead of just focusing on getting the mission done. When safety is part of the operation, nobody gets hurt and nobody dies.

So you've got to take lessons learned to heart. It is said that those who do not pay attention to history are doomed to repeat it. The same holds

true for unsafe habits or operations. But the scariest things to me are the near misses that don't get reported. Those are the ones where we really need to share the lessons learned so a near miss doesn't become a hit with injuries or deaths as a result.

The MSC safety shop produces an excellent safety newsletter that is sent to the ships and posted on the MSC Web site at [www.msc.navy.mil](http://www.msc.navy.mil). Just click Safety Programs on the left menu block, and then scroll down to the Safety On Ships Newsletters. They're an excellent source of information.

They contribute to our database of common sense. They share lessons learned. They can save lives.

All these efforts to think safety and develop a safety mindset can help overcome complacency, fatigue and other factors that contribute to mishaps. It's necessary. It's important. Don't let it become a matter of life or death.

Keep the faith!

Robert D. Reilly Jr.  
Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy  
Commander, Military Sealift Command

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# MSC reps worldwide help ensure Army readiness

## a tale of two missions

By **Rosemary Heiss**  
MSC Public Affairs

In August and September, three Military Sealift Command ships overcame several challenges to load and unload more than 400,000 square feet of helicopters, tanks, Humvees and equipment for soldiers who were either in Iraq or getting ready to go there.

Maritime Administration Ready Reserve Force ship MV Cape Knox was under the operational control of MSC. It met severe time restraints, but loaded more than 115,000 square feet of cargo in two days — about half the time a ship normally has to load.

Large, medium-speed, roll-on/roll-off ship USNS Brittin, supporting the same mission, had to visit two ports to get nearly 100,000 square feet of cargo.

Another LMSR, USNS Seay, loaded about 200,000 square feet of cargo — one of the largest loads of the year for the Pearl Harbor pier where the ship was loaded.

And despite these challenges, MSC port representatives made adjustments on the go and kept the missions moving.

### Supporting Army Operations

Cape Knox and Brittin loaded helicopters, tanks, trucks and containers for the U.S. Army's 1st Infantry Division, 3rd Aviation Brigade in August in Beaumont, Texas.

Seasoned MSC representatives Lynn Flynn and Jack Davis Jr. oversaw the Beaumont loads, according to Charlie LeBlanc, MSC's operations manager there.

"Our [MSC] mission ... really begins and ends with them," he said.

With more than 65 years of combined experience, Flynn and Davis provided expertise to the Army — which owns the cargo — the stevedores who secure it and the ship's master, who oversees the loading.

Before the first load began, Cape Knox had to unload cargo coming back from Iraq.

"The crew not only worked the discharge, but they turned right around to start loading the ship," said Flynn, who was responsible for the Cape Knox load.

Flynn and the stevedores at the port off-loaded the old cargo Aug. 1-2 and then loaded the ship Aug. 3-4, meeting the deadline to get it underway Aug. 5.

"There was no window for error," Flynn said.

In the five days the ship was in Beaumont, it received fuel, minor repairs and adjustments, and about 10 new crew members.

"There's a lot going on during a load that many people don't realize," said Davis, who was responsible for the Brittin load. "A ship is a dangerous place, so we watch out for the people and the mission to ensure safety, safety, safety. I make sure everything runs smoothly."

Davis coordinated with the Coast Guard, the Army's Surface Deployment and Distribution Command, Army aviators, MSC headquarters and the port of Beaumont to safely load helicopters, Humvees and containers aboard Brittin.

Helicopters, some of which required about 20 feet of clearance, presented unique challenges not only because of their size but also because



**"There's a lot going on during a load that many people don't realize."**

**Jack Davis Jr.**  
Military Sealift Command representative in Beaumont

of the additional coordination required to load them.

"Stevedores don't touch them," said Davis. "Aviators load the choppers, and an Army maintenance crew secures them."

After procedures were completed to safely load the cargo, Brittin got underway Aug. 8, but the 950-foot ship had to stop in Charleston, S.C., to load more cargo before heading to the Middle East.

In Charleston, MSC representative Tom D'Agostino facilitated the load of about 30 trucks, 120 containers and 50 pieces of break-bulk cargo.

On Aug. 15, Brittin began its voyage across the Atlantic Ocean, off-loading in Ash Shuaybah, Kuwait, Aug. 28. Cape Knox off-loaded the rest of the aviation brigade's cargo 10 days later.

### Supporting Army Training

At about the same time as Cape Knox and Brittin were underway to the Middle East, Seay was underway to San Diego to deliver tanks, trucks and equipment for the 25th Infantry Division, 2nd Stryker Brigade. The unit needed it for predeployment training at the National Training Center in Fort Irwin, Calif.

MSC's Pearl Harbor operations manager David Carmody and port representative Woody Ross supervised the round-the-clock load from Aug. 2 to 5.

The 653 wheeled vehicles, five tracked vehicles, 287 trailers and about 250 large containers — nearly 200,000 square feet of cargo — was big for the Pearl Harbor pier, according to Carmody.

Only about two loads per year are that size in Pearl Harbor, Carmody noted.

"This was a big deal for us," he said. Soldiers from the 2nd Stryker Brigade began driving their trucks to the pier at night, positioning them to be loaded aboard Seay, about a week before the ship arrived.

Ross worked with the ship's crew and SDDC to develop a stable load plan for the vehicles and other cargo.

Once the nearly 9,000 long tons of cargo were loaded, Ross coordinated to have tugs get Seay underway for San Diego.

"We took the Army to California for their training, and when they're done training and ready to go to Iraq, we'll be ready to take them there, too," said Carmody. The ship off-loaded in San Diego in mid-August.



U.S. Navy photos by Mass Communication Specialist Marcos Hernandez

**Above:** At the Port of Ash Shuaybah in Kuwait, Army 1st Infantry Division, 3rd Aviation Brigade vehicles line up as they are off-loaded from Maritime Administration Ready Reserve Force ship MV Cape Knox, which was under the operational control of Military Sealift Command for the mission.

**Right:** Cape Knox unloads almost 115,000 square feet of Army cargo, including wheeled and tracked vehicles and equipment, Sept. 7.

# Prepo ships

## Lopez and Phillips unite to combat

**Article and photos by Edward Baxter  
SEALOGFE Public Affairs**

Royal Malaysian navy Lt. Sharil Tikri radioed his commander that the ship's cargo manifest and crew list all checked out.

Finding no reason to search the ship any further, the Malaysian navy allowed Military Sealift Command's prepositioning ship USNS 1st Lt. Baldomero Lopez to continue on its voyage.

Naval forces from the United States, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei and the Philippines participated in the annual Southeast Asia Cooperation Against Terrorism exercise Aug. 16-21.

Lopez, along with fellow Maritime Prepositioning Ship MV Pvt. Franklin J. Phillips, played the role of suspicious merchant vessels during the exercise. USS Jarrett, USS Ford and USS Harpers Ferry also participated in the exercise designed to highlight the value of sharing information in a multi-national environment, as well as conduct training in maritime interception operations.

Combined, Lopez and Phillips were boarded on five occasions by representatives from four Southeast Asian countries. "Lopez provides a realistic platform to conduct this type of training since, in many ways, it's just like any other commercial cargo vessel," said Lopez's master Capt. John Waters.

During the training scenarios, Lopez transited southwest from Phuket, Thailand, while Phillips left Brunei's capital, Bandar Seri Begawan, heading east through the South China Sea. Both ships were destined for Singapore.

"Terrorism is a major concern for every nation participating in SEACAT, and the exercise means we can network and learn to share information," said Lt. Surasak Inprom, a Royal Thai navy liaison officer embarked aboard Lopez.

The exercise kicked off when a U.S. Navy P-3 maritime patrol aircraft observed Phillips transferring cargo pallets to another commercial cargo vessel. The transfer stopped suddenly when the ship's crew spotted the passing P-3. Earlier, officials in Vietnam notified Brunei's authorities that Phillips' cargo manifest was not in order. In the exercise scenario, Vietnam was Phillips' last port of call.

After Brunei authorities received the intelligence, they dispatched one of their Air Force Bell 212 helicopters to land a boarding team. The team from Brunei's special forces regiment secured Phillips' bridge and engine room, checked crew members' passports and quizzed the master as to the ship's cargo and destination.

The Brunei team released Phillips after they found no legal reason to detain the ship, but acting on intelligence from Brunei, Malaysian authorities continued to monitor and track the ship.

"The exercise opens dialogue between participating nations and provides each nation an opportunity to test out its assets," said Phillips' master Capt. Alexander Olaes.

*Far right: During the annual Southeast Asia Cooperation Against Terrorism exercise in August, a Thai boarding team member on USNS 1st Lt. Baldomero Lopez covers the deck of the ship while other team members conduct a room-to-room search for suspicious personnel.*

*Above: A team from the Royal Thai navy boards Lopez off the coast of Phuket, Thailand, during the exercise.*

*Cover: Two boarding team members, participating in the exercise, prepare to enter a room to look for a person who pirates allegedly left behind as they fled from the ship.*

# provide partnership platform

## terrorism during Southeast Asia exercise

The next day, off the coast of Phuket, a team from the Royal Thai navy frigate RTN Chaophraya boarded Lopez after the ship issued a distress call that it was under attack by pirates. After Thai officials thoroughly searched the ship's living accommodations, they found a stowaway hiding in a closet.

The stowaway, played by U.S. Coast Guard Gunners Mate 1st Class Chris Barton, told Thailand's boarding officer Lt. Yuttapon Ruangrit that pirates left him behind after they fled from the ship in a panic. Barton also revealed that the pirates were looking for weapons since Lopez was reported to be an arms smuggler.

A four-man U.S. Coast Guard Team from Maritime Safety and Security Team 91107, based in Honolulu, Hawaii, was embarked aboard both Lopez and Phillips for the exercise — to assess where teams excelled and where they could improve.

"It's important for our team to work with other countries, share ideas and concepts, better communicate and get everyone on the same page," said U.S. Coast Guard Port Security Specialist 1st Class Edward Stankos.

After questioning the ship's master and checking out the ship's documents, Thailand's boarding team found no hard evidence to back the alleged pirate's claim. The stowaway was brought back for interrogation to the frigate where he revealed more details about Lopez's role as a smuggler. Thailand relayed the intelligence to Malaysia, which monitored Lopez through the narrow and busy Strait of Malacca.

With a Lynx helicopter hovering near Lopez's flight deck, the Royal Malaysian navy frigate KD Jebat deployed a team by small boat, Aug. 19. From the boat, they boarded Lopez just off the Malaysian coast.

The team secured the bridge and engine room and questioned the master about the ship's cargo, last port of call and destination. The Malaysian team later released Lopez but notified Singapore's navy to continue monitoring Lopez.

Just after sunrise, Aug. 20, an eight-man team from the Republic of Singapore navy and coastal police boarded Lopez by commercial pilot boat, as Singapore's naval patrol craft RSS Dauntless circled Lopez. Once on board, teams fanned out quickly over the main deck.

Other team members secured the bridge and engine room and checked the ship's documents.

Lopez's crew members were assembled in the crew's lounge, but one was reported missing. Alarmed, the boarding team searched the ship's living accommodations, finding the missing crew member sleeping in his rack. He was questioned extensively before Lopez's master confirmed him as a member of the crew.

The Singapore boarding team and U.S. Coast Guard team members held discussions to evaluate the performance of the exercise participants and to highlight lessons learned.

"The Singapore navy team was very systematic in its approach and asked some very good questions during the search," said U.S. Coast Guard Electronics Technician 1st Class Dustin McAninich.

The exercise scenario concluded with Singapore's boarding teams finding illicit weapons on board both Lopez and Phillips and taking the ships' masters and crews into mock custody immediately.

"SEACAT is an excellent opportunity to share information and learn from each other," said Singapore navy Capt. Ivan Chua, a liaison officer embarked aboard Lopez. "We watched how other navies conduct their boarding operations, and we'll pass that information back to commanders in Singapore."

Throughout the exercise, liaison officers from Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia were em-

barked aboard Lopez, and officers from Singapore and Brunei were embarked aboard Phillips. "We made new friends during the exercise," Chua said.

"We all shared stories about our naval careers, our families and our lives back home and grew quite close after just a few days together at sea."



## MSC ships in SEACAT



**USNS 1st Lt. Baldomero Lopez**



**MV Pvt. Franklin J. Phillips**

## HQ • HIGHLIGHTS

Military Sealift Command's Sealift Program tanker manager **John Joerger** received the National Defense Transportation Association's National Distinguished Service Award during the annual NDTA conference in September in Charleston, S.C.

During the awards ceremony, he also accepted three awards on behalf of the Washington, D.C., NDTA chapter for its programs in 2006, during which time he was president of the chapter.

At the conference, transportation and maritime industry leaders, military personnel, and government employees toured prepositioning ship USNS Pomeroy as Army Surface Deployment and Distribution Command loaded cargo aboard.

MSC welcomes Navy **Capt. Jesus Cantu**, Naval Fleet Auxiliary

Force Program; Navy **Cmdr. Michael Corsey**, contracts and business management; Navy **Lt. Lauren Zapf**, operations and plans; **Toni Murphy**, public affairs; **Richard Peck**, maritime forces and manpower management; **Eric Doerfler**, command, control, communications and computer systems; **Julianne Backiel**, engineering; **Antoinette Simms**, comptroller; and **Rajendra Soni**, contracts and business management.

The command bids farewell to Navy **Capt. David Brumfield**, Naval Fleet Auxiliary Force Program; Navy **Cmdr. Bradley Bergan** and **Charles Metzger**, contracts and business management; **Andria Davis**, Prepositioning Program; **Glenn Morrissey**, command, control, communications and computer systems; and **Patricia Geib**, comptroller.

## COMPASS • HEADING

Military Sealift Command's afloat computer network was put behind a Navy-managed firewall in August, and the MSC waiver on the use of Web-based personal e-mail has been replaced by a Naval New Warfare Command policy. Employees no longer have access to commercial Webmail from the ships. A U.S. Air Force-sponsored Webmail system provides an alternative called GI-Mail (<https://www.gimail.af.mil>). GI-Mail is a .mil account available to all Department of Defense employees. GI-Mail accounts are accessible on ships.

Aug. 17, Military Sealift Fleet Support Command's Ship Support Unit Singapore held a change of command ceremony where Navy **Lt. Cmdr. Michael Little** assumed command from Navy **Lt. Cmdr. Quentin Burns**. MSFSC acting Deputy Commander Navy **Capt. Al Woods** presided. Little arrived from Fleet Activities, Sasebo, Japan, where he was the operations officer.

**Chief Hospital Corpsman Rosetta Harris** received the Navy Marine Corps Commendation Medal Aug. 31. Harris served as the preventative medicine officer at SSU Singapore from July 2005 through August 2007. She reports to the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln.

MSFSC welcomes **Master Chief Donald J. Dennis** as its new fleet ocean tug and salvage and rescue fleet master diver. Dennis has worked with the salvage, towing and rescue vessels in MSC's fleet since 1993, when he was assigned to then USS Grasp.

MSFSC wishes fair winds and following seas to the following retiring civil service mariners: **Yeoman Storekeepers DeLoris Warren** and **Brenda Roberts**, **Assistant Cook Rudolfo Dela Torre**, **Junior Supply Officer Ernest Riodique** and **Medical Services Officer Jerome Skelton**.

## MSC helps MSC

An MH-60S Seahawk, from Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 28, prepares to transport cargo from Military Sealift Command combat stores ship USNS Saturn to MSC hospital ship USNS Comfort, Aug. 27.



U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Joshua Karsten

## EUROPE • NEWS

Sealift Logistics Command Europe Commander Navy **Capt. Nicholas Holman** was appointed as Commander, Task Group 60.5, U.S. 6th Fleet's newly established Southeast Africa Task Group.

It will work with partner countries in Southeast Africa to build maritime domain awareness and promote other initiatives that contribute to a safe and prosperous maritime environment in the region.

For the task group's inaugural mission, Holman and a small staff visited the Southeast African nations of Tanzania, Comoros, Mozambique and South Africa.

SEALOGEUR's operations department says farewell to operations officer Navy **Cmdr. Hitch Peabody**. Following his three-

year tour in Naples, Peabody will report to the operations and plans directorate at Military Sealift Command headquarters in Washington, D.C.

SEALOGEUR welcomes Navy **Cmdr. Dan Redmond**, who replaces Peabody as the command's operations boss. Redmond and his family report to Naples from the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md., where Redmond served as an instructor and the associate chair of the history department.

The command also welcomes chief staff officer Navy **Cmdr. Mark Hegarty**. He reports to SEALOGEUR from his post as chief staff officer for Commander Task Force 68 — U.S. 6th Fleet's Naval Expeditionary Combat Elements Task Force, in Rota, Spain.

## FAR • EAST • HAILS

A crew member from Maritime Prepositioning Ship SS Maj. Stephen W. Pless assisted in rescuing three Japanese fishermen near Saipan Aug. 20. While anchored at the edge of Saipan's harbor, Pless' **2nd Mate Earl Gray** spotted three fishermen clinging to a capsized 24-foot fishing boat. Gray radioed the Maritime Prepositioning Ship Squadron Three launch boat, which was on its way to Pless at the time, ordering it to divert and pick up the stranded fishermen. "Given the ship's anchorage and the strong local currents, this was probably the last opportunity for these men to be spotted and rescued before being washed out to sea," said MPS Squadron Three's chief staff officer Navy **Lt. Cmdr. Pablo Mir**. The fishermen were in good condition when they arrived ashore.

Navy **Capt. Ulysses Zalamea**, commander of MPS Squadron Three, visited Navy Rear Adm. William French, commander of U.S. Naval Forces,

Marianas, at Naval Station Guam on Aug. 7. Zalamea also visited with Navy **Capt. Scott Galbraith**, commander of Naval Station Guam.

Navy **Capt. Susan Dunlap**, commander of Sealift Logistics Command Far East, presented several awards during a ceremony at the command's Singapore headquarters Aug. 23.

**Lt. Cmdr. Charlie Brown**, who served the command as a mobilized Reservist, received a Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal for providing superb logistics support from April 2006 to June 2007. As a civil service employee, Brown is the command's current operations support assistant.

Sealift Director **Dennis Debraggio** was presented with a certificate for 20 years of government service.

Military Sealift Command Office Korea's administrative officer Navy **Yeoman 1st Class Rick Pettis** was selected for promotion to Chief Petty Officer.

## ATLANTIC • LINES

Rescue and salvage ship USNS Grasp provided a platform for a sea-bottom clearing job at La Maddalena, Italy, in August. Embarked U.S. Navy divers conducted more than 64 hours of diving, while they cleared and removed four tons of debris.

The Coast Guard and the FBI used large, medium-speed, roll-on/roll-off ship USNS Dahl as a training platform for vessel boarding and security tactics training Aug. 28-29. **Tom D'Agostino**, Sealift Logistics Command Atlantic's Charleston, S.C., representative, coordinated the training.

On Aug. 17, **Charlie LeBlanc**, SEALOGLANT representative in Beaumont, Texas, traveled to Corpus Christi, Texas, to oversee the transition of large, medium-speed, roll-

on/roll-off ships USNS Fisher and USNS Pililau to full operating status so that they could get underway to avoid Hurricane Dean. The ships were activated in less than two days.

**Jack Davis**, a marine transportation specialist with the SEALOGLANT office in Beaumont, traveled to New Orleans, La., Aug. 10 to assist in activating three ships. First was the dock trial, activation process and sea trial on fast sealift ship USNS Altair. He then assisted with the activation of fast sealift ship USNS Algol for its scheduled dry docking in Boston, Mass. Last, Maritime Administration Ready Reserve Force ship MV Cape Kennedy was activated for MSC to load Operation Iraqi Freedom cargo from Jacksonville, Fla., and Charleston.



U.S. Navy photo

**Navy Reserve Cmdr. Scott Evans, a former Sealift Logistics Command Atlantic Reservist, gives clothing to an Afghani child, Aug. 8. The clothing, along with school supplies, was donated by SEALOGLANT personnel. Evans, who is stationed at Camp Stone in Afghanistan, distributed the donated items to the nearby village of Chalangak. According to Evans, the villagers were very grateful for the generously donated items.**

## PACIFIC • BRIEFS

Fast combat support ship USNS Bridge embarked family and friends of crew members in Maui, Hawaii, in August and sailed to Naval Magazine Indian Island, Wash., where Bridge remained to conduct ammunition operations until September.

Fleet replenishment oiler USNS Henry J. Kaiser was the Southern California duty oiler for most of August. During a break, it underwent a Ship Material Assessment and Readiness Training (SMART) assessment in San Diego.

Fleet replenishment oiler USNS Yukon concluded maritime apprentice at-sea training with its 12 Mar Vista High School students in August. The ship also acted as the Southern California duty oiler for part of the month.

Fleet replenishment oiler USNS Guadalupe was the mid-Pacific duty oiler in August.

Maritime Administration Ready Reserve Force ship MV Cape Orlando — operating under the control of MSC

— entered U.S. 3rd Fleet's operational area from Australia in August. The ship's cargo, from Exercise Talisman Saber 2007, was off-loaded in Anchorage, Alaska. From there, the ship sailed to Port Hueneme, Calif., to discharge the remainder of Talisman Saber cargo. It also off-loaded equipment coming back to the United States from operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom.

Navy **Storekeeper 1st Class Celestino Manahan** reported to combat stores ship USNS San Jose. Navy **Information Systems Technician 3rd Class Francis Bartoszak** reported to combat stores ship USNS Niagara

Falls. Navy **Operations Specialist 2nd Class Darin Tate** reported to fleet replenishment oiler USNS Yukon. Navy **Operations Specialist 2nd Class Zane Forte** reported to fleet replenishment oiler USNS Tippecanoe, and Navy **Electronics Technician 1st Class Christopher Slate** reported to fleet ocean tug USNS Catawba.

Navy **Senior Chief Operations Specialist Geraldo Santiago** departed from fleet ocean tug USNS Navajo, and Navy **Information Systems Technician 2nd Class Steven Fryer** separated from the Navy from combat stores ship USNS Niagara Falls.

## CENTRAL • CURRENTS

Military Sealift Command's fleet replenishment oiler USNS Rappahannock departed the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations in September after a deployment supporting operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom. The ship's crew supported USS John C. Stennis and USS Nimitz carrier strike groups, as well as the USS Bonhomme Richard and USS Kearsarge expeditionary strike groups. Rappahannock conducted 41 underway replenishments and 14 in-port replenishments, and it transferred nearly 5 million gallons of fuel.

Commander Task Force 53, Navy **Capt. Anthony Dropp**, welcomes fleet replenishment oiler USNS Tippecanoe to 5th Fleet.

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Dropp, after 60 days in command at Sealift Logistics Command Central, answered questions about himself and the command.

**Q:** What is the most interesting thing you've learned about Military Sealift Command during your first two months on the job?

**A:** I would say the most interesting thing is the professionalism of the civil-

ian mariners who man the wide array of MSC ships. During my visits and embarkations, I have found the MSC crews to be as diverse and varied as those of the uniformed Navy, and I believe that diversity contributes to their strength.

**Q:** How have your previous experiences in the military prepared you for managing Navy logistics in the Middle East during ongoing military operations?

**A:** My experience has taught me to always remain responsive and flexible. As recipient of MSC services for the last 24 years, I feel like I know what people expect, and now in my position as commander of SEALOGLANT I keep those expectations in mind every day.

**Q:** What is your number one priority for the command?

**A:** My number one priority is to set the conditions that will make the logistics operations in this area adequately responsive to the always shifting requirements of our warfare commanders. Those conditions mandate that we have trained professionals, with the proper skill sets, who are properly or-

ganized to execute the mission without hesitation. The landscape of this area is forever changing, and that necessitates that we be able to respond to the latest requirements passed down from our commanders. Beyond the short-term, I hope to put into motion the proper steps required to increase our ability to conduct logistics operations anywhere in the area, whether that is something as simple as establishing 'fly-away' teams or as complicated as developing a port and airfield to support our logistics needs on a permanent basis.

**Q:** How does the SEALOGLANT staff spend its off-time since personnel serve unaccompanied tours in Bahrain?

**A:** With Bahrain's unaccompanied tour policy, service members who would have spent the majority of their free time with their families now need to find other things to do. Luckily, with today's communications technologies my staff members can e-mail or call their friends and family back home fairly inexpensively. I think NSA Bahrain does a great job of providing Sailors with many worthwhile things to do in their free time — from free college courses, to the base gyms and sports fa-

cilities, to video rental and the library, to free recreation rooms and Internet. Really, my staff spends its free time in much the same way that people do stateside, with the exception of spending time with family.

**Q:** What is the best piece of professional advice you ever received?

**A:** 'Be where you are supposed to be when you are supposed to be there.' I can't remember who said it, but it has served me well for the last 15 years. Of course just being somewhere isn't enough, you need to be prepared mentally and physically to be a productive contributor to whatever situation arises. When you live a lifestyle of mission readiness, both personally and professionally, I think you will find that things tend to go 'right' more often than they go 'wrong.' Beyond that advice though, I also highly recommend that you read. It almost doesn't matter what you are reading, whether it is fiction or non-fiction, a magazine or a newspaper. The important thing is that you take the time every day to do it. Many of the leaders whom I have admired are avid readers, and I do not think that is a coincidence.

(Lt. j.g. Michael Rigoni, SEALOGLANT, posed the questions.)

# USNS Niagara Falls hosts wreath-laying ceremony for Battle of Savo Island Sailors

By Lt. j.g. Garrett Stone  
USNS Niagara Falls

Aug. 25, while transiting the Solomon Islands, combat stores ship USNS Niagara Falls slowed its voyage for a memorial ceremony near Savo Island.

The crew held the remembrance at sea to pay respect to Sailors who died in the first battle of Savo Island in August 1942 during World War II.

This location, now known as 'iron bottom sound,' was the scene of a massive battle between the Imperial Japanese Navy and the U.S. Navy and its allies.

Three U.S. ships were sunk the night of the battle — USS Vincennes, USS Quincy and USS Astoria. One Australian ship — HMAS Canberra — sank the next day.

During the course of the battle, more than 1,200 service men were lost at sea. The battle was a large defeat for the United States, but



Combat stores ship USNS Niagara Falls master Capt. Dan LaPorte (left) and military department officer in charge, Navy Cmdr. Joe Russell, hold a wreath before laying it off the coast of the Solomon Islands in remembrance of the fallen Sailors at the Battle of Savo Island.

it ultimately inspired U.S. forces to victories in the battles of Cape Esper-

ance (the second battle of Savo Island) and Guadalcanal (the third battle).

"Today, 65 years later, we pause to honor their sacrifice," said Niagara Falls master Capt. Dan LaPorte, during the ceremony. "These men died in order that we could safely transit these waters today on a U.S.-flagged vessel as free Americans. I think that fact alone would make them proud."

The event was memorable for all the participants and attendees, but LaPorte was especially connected to the historic battle.

Leo Francis LaPorte, the master's uncle, was one of the men who fought and died while serving on board USS Vincennes that night. "To the whole crew, I thank you all for providing a meaningful ceremony that will remain in my mind for many years to come," said LaPorte.

## Sealift 'focus' of major Korean defense exercise

By Edward Baxter  
SEALOGFE Public Affairs

More than 50 Military Sealift Command Reservists joined U.S. Navy, U.S. Army and Republic of Korea forces to form a combined sealift coordination center during annual exercise Ulchi Focus Lens 2007, Aug. 20-31.

Ulchi Focus Lens is one of two major Republic of Korea defense exercises held each year and includes about 7,000 military personnel from the United States and South Korea.

Reservists from Navy Reserve Sealift Logistics Command Far East 101 and

102, along with Expeditionary Port Units 101, 111, 112 and 114, joined active duty and civilian personnel from MSC Office Korea in Busan to support Republic of Korea combined forces.

MSCO Korea deployed Sailors from Expeditionary Port Units to seaports throughout South Korea to train in handling hundreds of MSC ships that would deploy to the Korean peninsula in a real-world crisis.

"MSC Reserve and active commands work closely together throughout the year to coordinate and synchronize training, qualifications, equipment and manning," said MSC Office Korea com-

manding officer Navy Cmdr. Ron Oswald. "The hard work and preparation of MSC Reserve units during their monthly drills culminates with this intense annual training period when all units assemble as a single command focused on the defense of the Republic of Korea."

Additional MSC personnel staffed a forward-deployed headquarters in Yokohama, Japan, training in command and control of MSC ships going into and out of South Korea.

"We have progressively increased the complexity of our integrated training over the past year," said Oswald. "MSC Navy Reserve forces bring highly spe-

cialized skills that combine with the full-time organization to form a formidable team that shows up fully qualified, ready to train and ready to fight," said Oswald.

This year's Ulchi Focus Lens was the 31st of its kind.

The exercise is named for a famous Korean general, Ulchi Munduk, who served as commander-in-chief of the army of Kokuryu — an ancient Korean nation that existed from 37 B.C. to A.D. 668.

Despite being heavily outnumbered, the legendary general defeated invading Chinese forces.

## Newly transferred MSC ship earns SECNAV safety award

By Laura Seal  
MSC Public Affairs

Rescue and salvage ship USNS Grapple won the 2007 Department of the Navy Safety Excellence Award in the Military Sealift Command category, Secretary of the Navy Donald C. Winter announced Sept. 11.

The 255-foot ship operates out of Norfolk, Va., and is crewed by civil service mariners and a small military department of active-duty Navy Sailors.

Grapple's crew was recognized for successfully transitioning the ship from military to civilian personnel and safely completing its missions with a substantially smaller number of people.

"It's difficult taking a Navy ship of 20 years and converting it into civilian mode," said Capt. Curt Smith, Grapple's civil service master. "They had up to 120 crew members, and now we're operating on 26."



Not only did Grapple pass its first Ship Material Assessment and Readiness Training (SMART) assessment, but the crew has also initiated and hosted on-board safety training classes and de-

veloped a shipboard training manual outlining firefighting and lifesaving capabilities and functions of the ship.

"The entire crew is a part of our safety program," said Smith. "Safety isn't something we think about a couple of times a month. It's part of our routine."

The Department of the Navy Safety Excellence Award program recognizes Navy and Marine Corps teams, ships and installations for exceptional commitment to safety and operational risk management.

In the announcement message, Winter extended his personal congratulations to the winners, telling them, "Your achievements serve as visible examples of how increased safety performance directly contributes to improved mission readiness. Thank you for your initiative and ingenuity."

The award ceremony will be held in Washington, D.C., Oct. 16.