

October 2008

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

THE U.S. NAVY'S MILITARY SEALIFT COMMAND



USNS Grasp completes mission to Caribbean

Capt. Doug Casavant, civil service master of rescue and salvage ship USNS Grasp, provides instruction to a sea cadet from the Barbados Coast Guard as she powers up the ship's engines Aug. 23. Thirteen cadets toured Grasp's deck department, engine department and dive locker.

U.S. Navy photo by Laura Seal

INSIDE — Mercy returns from Pacific Partnership 2008

MSC transformation virtually complete

Back in the 1990s, Military Sealift Command underwent a global reinvention, which led to new and improved ways of doing business. It also led to new locations — not all convenient — for some of the command's key functions.

The personnel function for our nearly 5,000 civil service mariners, which had been conducted at the two area commands in New Jersey and California, moved to a "temporary" location at Camp Pendleton State Military Reservation in Virginia Beach, Va.

The challenge was that Camp Pendleton was 28 miles from Naval Station Norfolk, the site for MSC's East Coast area command, called MSC Atlantic. So in 1997, we began to look for space at the naval station. In 2000, we were fortunate to be offered three buildings — all needing serious renovation — in the Breezy Point area of the base.

History

Originally the site of the 1907 Jamestown Exposition, Naval Station Norfolk almost came about in 1908 as Congress set aside money to purchase the land and buildings. However, then Assistant Secretary of the Navy Truman H. Newberry, given the choice between the naval station and a new coal ship, chose the ship as an absolute necessity.

After we entered World War I in April 1917, the secretary of the Navy was persuaded to buy the Norfolk property, and construction of a training camp began that July. When the available land became insufficient, a large part of the flats on the west and north were filled in due to dredging done to allow large ships to dock. By the end of the year, approximately 8 million cubic yards of dredging took place.

During World War II, dramatic expansion required more land and more dredging. By 1941, the Naval Air Station seaplane operating area at Breezy Point was constructed from the reclaimed marshlands at the mouth of Mason Creek.

Since then, both the naval air station and the separate naval station have grown considerably and merged into what is now Naval Station Norfolk, the largest naval base in the world.

Back to the 'future'

MSC began working, on paper, on the three buildings at Breezy Point in 2000, but in the aftermath of 9/11, the project was put on hold while additional force protection issues were addressed, such as installing explosive-proof glass for 250 windows to eliminate the shattered-glass factor and moving the 350-car parking lot at least 50 feet from the buildings.

Then, in 2003, Hurricane Isabel severely damaged the buildings, necessitating additional work. But, we needed the space, and when Military Sealift Fleet Support Command began its standup in 2005, the project pressed forward once again. With transformation and the realignment of MSC's



Military Sealift Fleet Support Command's new headquarters complex at Naval Station Norfolk, Va., is open, and the staff has started moving in. The dedication ceremony, which is scheduled for Oct. 30, will mark the completion of Military Sealift Command's worldwide transformation.

U.S. Navy photo by Susan Melow

workforce, the requirement for office space had grown from the original three buildings to what will be a total of 10 buildings.

MSFSC headquarters staff began moving into the new facilities in July 2008, and the majority of the personnel moves were scheduled for September and October. The last big project is to move the Real-time Residual Asset Management System facility with the MSC Technical Library into its new building, which will be finished in April 2009.

It will take about 10 months due to the amount of material and equipment to be moved, but will let us close a high-cost warehouse lease in Chesapeake, Va.

Mission impact

The new building complex, now headquarters for MSFSC, offers a single-campus concept that colocates MSFSC's senior management and their staffs and enhances productivity in support of the MSC mission. The complex enables a whole new level of support to MSC's center of gravity, our civil service mariners.

No longer will people from the personnel section have to travel an hour by road for staff meetings with the MSFSC director. And the unification will no doubt have a more than physical effect. I suspect a greater cohesiveness will be felt by all members of the staff because we finally have a united workforce at Naval Station Norfolk and room enough for everyone.

Dedication ceremony

A dedication ceremony and open house, on Oct. 30, will allow our union and industry partners to help us mark the beginning of a new and exciting chapter for MSC. That's important for us because we couldn't execute the MSC mission without our shipmates in the maritime industry.

We've also invited our CIVMARs to come to the ceremony, those whose schedules will allow, because this grand opening of our new facilities at Breezy

Point is for them, too. Seven of the 10 buildings will house departments that directly support CIVMARs.

— Building SP-64 is home for MSFSC's director, headquarters front office staff and members of senior leadership, including port captains and port engineers.

— Building SP-47 houses the human resources and manpower directorate and comptroller staffs.

— Building SP-48 will be home to the Office of Counsel, logistics directorate and personnel supporting the class managers.

— Building R-48 is where additional financial services branches of the comptroller shop will operate, the building where CIVMAR pay comes from.

— Building SP-312 is the new home for the Customer Support Unit East. CIVMAR medical support, a training center and the organization's mailroom will also reside here.

— Building R-52 houses MSFSC's afloat training team and military administration. SEALOGLANT will also work from this building.

— Building SP-257 will house our command, control, communication and computer systems personnel.

The quality support for the MSC mission given by the MSFSC staff is impressive already. Now the means exist to make it even better with these new facilities. MSFSC operates the Naval Fleet Auxiliary Force and keeps our government-owned, government-operated ships optimally crewed, equipped and maintained and our CIVMARs trained. Our shipmates at MSFSC are constantly improving their business processes and attacking costs. That's not easy during these demanding times, but MSFSC continues to do it.

Transformation complete

With the dedication ceremony and the final moves, MSC's five-year global transformation efforts will reach culmination. It hasn't always been an easy course to follow, but we've ended up as a true 21st-century organization —

more efficient, more effective and more responsive to our customers in the Navy, the Department of Defense and the federal government.

Thanks for all the hard work, shipmates. We are MSC, and we deliver!

Keep the faith,

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

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COMSC Director, Public Affairs Rear Adm. Robert D. Reilly Jr., USN
Editor Timothy Boulay
Writers Rosemary Heiss
Edward Baxter, Singapore
Bill Cook, Norfolk, Va.
Susan Melow, Norfolk, Va.
Trish Larson, Washington
Laura Seal, Washington
Anna Hancock, Washington
Gillian Brigham, Naples
Sarah Burford, San Diego
Art Director Dale Allen, Washington
Graphics Susan Thomas, Washington

Military Sealift Command reports to the Commander, U.S. Transportation Command for defense transportation matters, to the Commander, U.S. Fleet Forces Command for Navy-unique matters and to the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition for procurement policy and oversight matters.



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Mercy makes memories

By Edward Baxter
SEALOGFE Public Affairs

Caught between rival factions, Romeo Bintoy's legs were severely burned from an explosion. The 7-year-old could no longer walk.

Eight years later, Romeo's father carried the boy, now 15, into the Pacific Partnership health-screening center in Cotabato, Philippines, and the boy underwent surgery aboard Military Sealift Command hospital ship USNS Mercy there. After Mercy's surgeons removed scar tissue and after civil service Able Seaman Ivan Washburn helped physical therapists modify Romeo's leg braces, the boy, who days earlier couldn't use his legs, peddled an exercise bike.

"We all watched as he climbed onto the bike like he was competing in the Tour de France," said Mercy's civil service master Capt. Robert Wiley.

Romeo is just one of thousands of lives that were changed over the course of a 148-day deployment, which included humanitarian missions in the Philippines, Vietnam, Timor Leste, Papua New Guinea and the Federated States of Micronesia.

The mission brought together civil service mariners, U.S. military medical professionals, nongovernment organizations, the U.S. Public Health Service and 10 partner nations.

Embarked U.S. Navy Seabees teamed up with civil service mariners and engineers from partner nations to renovate schools, clinics and hospitals. Veterinarians helped local farmers with their livestock, while the U.S. Pacific Fleet band brought smiles to hundreds ashore.

"With a thousand people on board, it's humbling to think that only 67 civilian mariners drive the ship," Wiley said. "While Mercy's focus is primarily medical, I take pride in knowing that this mission would not be possible were it not for the civil service mariners bringing the ship where it's needed."

Civil service mariners navigate the ship; keep the engines, lights and air conditioning running; and operate small boats, which ferried thousands of patients and passengers from ship to shore.

"These mariners do this challenging job well each and every day," said Wiley, as he watched civil service mariners carry an elderly Vietnamese patient onto a small boat as it pitched in windy conditions.

"The mariners are the first that patients see and the last when they depart," said Mercy's embarked Military



A civil service mariner on one of the small-boat crews from Military Sealift Command hospital ship USNS Mercy carefully hands a passenger to awaiting medical personnel aboard Mercy.

Treatment Facility commander Navy Capt. Jim Rice. "They leave a lasting impression."

Mercy's humanitarian mission kicked off May 29, in Cotabato, Philippines. By the time the ship departed June 12, Mercy's medical team had treated 26,300 patients – and conducted 312 surgeries – and the engineering teams had renovated two local health clinics.

The next stop was Nha Trang, Vietnam, June 19.

"Each place we visited during the mission was unique, but our visit to Nha Trang was very special since it was the first visit by a U.S. naval ship in over 30 years," said Mercy's engine utilityman Bobby Waters.

While there, the medical teams treated more than 11,500 patients and conducted 234 surgical procedures.

Civil service mariners teamed up with U.S. Navy Seabees, Royal Australian engineers, Canadian service members, U.S. Public Health Service and Project Hope volunteers to make improvements to a local school and health clinics – updating plumbing, welding playground equipment, installing light fixtures, painting interior and exterior walls, and constructing a water tower.

"This was a joint effort to make a difference in the lives of Vietnam's children," said Mercy's 2nd Assistant Engineer Nick Washington.

In total, 18 mariners worked for a total of 400 hours at sites in and around Nha Trang.

"We had an amazing engineering team aboard Mercy," said U.S. Navy Lt. Lars Herman, the Seabee liaison officer for Pacific Partnership 2008. "The

civil service mariners brought a lot of experience and knowledge to the table."

Timor Leste was Mercy's next stop July 12. Mercy, which had made previous visits to the island nation in both 2005 and 2006, treated 9,846 patients and completed 270 surgical procedures and two major engineering projects.

Mercy's next mission stop was off Papua New Guinea's rugged coast Aug. 4. Mercy treated more than 25,000 patients, performing 346 surgical procedures. While there, the ship's medical staff saved a woman's life.

Debra Paver, a lawyer from Melbourne, Australia, had been hiking in a remote mountain range in Papua New Guinea when she fell ill far from land-based medical capabilities. Mercy responded to a request from the Australian government for medical support Aug. 8.

The woman who was in critical condition after having several seizures and going in and out of consciousness, was flown onto Mercy where medical professionals stabilized her and saved her life.

After getting over the shock of finding out she was in a hospital aboard a ship, she expressed her gratitude. "I have been blessed," Pave said. "Mercy was here for two weeks – how lucky am I. Long live the U.S. Navy."

U.S. Navy Seabees and soldiers from Papua New Guinea's army completed five construction projects in the remote Oro Province of the island – building two health clinics, constructing a school classroom and upgrading two water systems. Civil service mariners pitched in by helping out at a local hospital – fixing exhaust fans and air conditioning units. The ship departed Papua New Guinea Aug. 17.

The next and final mission stop was Chuuk, Federated States of Micronesia, where the ship arrived Aug. 22. More than 17,000 patients were treated and 204 surgical procedures were performed on 15 islands. Seabees, who made improvements to a local hospital and two schools, remained through mid-September to complete ongoing projects.

The humanitarian portion of Mercy's mission ended Sept. 1, when the ship pulled out of Chuuk heading back to San Diego for a well-deserved rest.

"Throughout Pacific Partnership, the professionalism of Mercy's civilian mariners and the support of the Military Sealift Command have been vital to the success of our mission," said Navy Capt. William Kearns, Mercy's Pacific Partnership mission commander.

"Their seagoing excellence combined with commitment to the humanitarian mission enabled Mercy to deliver medical services to more than 90,000 people in Southeast Asia and Oceania. The mariners delivered every time."

...in their own words

During the Mercy mission, civil service master Capt. Robert Wiley kept a Web log that captured events through his eyes. More than 20,000 people visited Wiley's blog, and people from all around the world posted messages. Below are some unedited comments. To read Wiley's blog and see all the comments, go to <http://mercycaptain.blogspot.com>.

Nengin in Chuuk said...

Even after your departure today, we are still amazed when we think back to what you and everyone on the PP08 team did for the people of Chuuk. All of you must have heard so many 'thank you's' and 'kinisou chapur,' but I do not think we can ever thank you ENOUGH. We are truly blessed to have been visited by angels on their big white angel boat :) The sight of the beautiful Mercy in the Chuuk Lagoon will forever live in our hearts.

September 1, 2008 9:15 AM

(On rescuing a stranded hiker in Australia) Wendy said...

Captain and crew of the Mercy, I will be forever grateful for the assistance you have given my sister. Without your collective expertise, skill, and willingness to assist, I am sure we would not have had such a wonderful outcome. I am fully aware of how lucky we are for your intervention in this situation. Please pass on my heartfelt thanks to all involved. Thank you.

August 12, 2008 5:11 AM

Jenny9 said...

G'Day Captain Wiley, Just watched your magnificent ship sail into Port Moresby harbour, how exciting. We've been living in PNG for 8 years now, and I've never seen anything so heart warming than to see you guys arrive to help the local people. So, thank you Captain & of course all the Crew. Kindest Regards: Jenny Sadler/POM/ PNG

August 3, 2008 5:36 PM

A small boat from Military Sealift Command hospital ship USNS Mercy transports a group of Vietnamese military distinguished visitors for a tour aboard the ship while at anchor in Nha Trang June 20.



U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Mark Logico

USNS GRASP

'The Navy's Swiss army knife'

By Laura Seal
MSC Public Affairs

Military Sealift Command rescue and salvage ship USNS Grasp departed St. Georges, Grenada, Sept. 10, completing a three-month international outreach and maritime security mission to the Caribbean that began when the ship arrived in Antigua and Barbuda July 4. At seven ports in as many nations, Grasp's crew of 26 civil service mariners and 14 embarked Navy divers coordinated to conduct dive operations with partner-nation defense forces, safely dispose of underwater World War II-era unexploded ordnance, assist host nations with goodwill projects ashore, deliver donated goods and mentor two groups of young sea cadets from the Barbados and St. Vincent Coast Guards.

Many of these activities fall outside of Grasp's traditional missions – recovering large objects from the sea, towing, firefighting and de-beaching – but for a ship nicknamed "the Navy's Swiss army knife," it was little challenge for both crew and platform to adapt to this new set of circumstances.

"This is a great opportunity to demonstrate the range of missions that this ship is fully capable of doing, from recovering gear to assisting a ship in distress to towing vessels and, now, hosting dive operations in coordination with our international partners," said Capt. Jose Delfaus, Grasp's civil service master for the first leg of the de-

ployment. In a routine crew rotation, Capt. Doug Casavant took the helm as master aboard Grasp in late July.

Typically, Grasp and MSC's three other rescue and salvage ships deploy on specific salvage or towing missions. Before this deployment, Grasp's most recent missions included recovering two downed U.S. Air Force F-15C fighter jets from the Gulf of Mexico earlier this year and recovering more than 90,000 pounds of debris from the harbor in La Maddalena, Italy, in 2007.

This mission, however, had a different set of goals. The deployment, called Navy Diver – Southern Partnership Station, was a U.S. Southern Command initiative designed to enhance maritime security in the Caribbean. To do this, Grasp and a complement of U.S. Navy divers deployed to conduct dive operations and joint training evolutions with their colleagues from the defense forces, police departments and coast guards of each nation visited – Antigua and Barbuda, St. Kitts and Nevis, Dominica, St. Lucia, Barbados, St. Vincent and The Grenadines, and Grenada.

Grasp is operated and navigated by civil service mariners, while specially trained rescue and salvage divers conduct diving operations.

The divers were from the Navy Expeditionary Combat Command's Mobile Diving and Salvage Unit Two, based out of Norfolk; Explosive Ordnance Disposal Expeditionary Support Unit Two, based out of Norfolk; and Underwater Construction Teams One and Two, respectively based out of Norfolk and Port Hueneme, Calif.

Grasp also has four Navy Sailors who operate the communications suite.

Because of the unique nature of this deployment, a mission commander, Navy Lt. Cmdr. Bobby Greene from Explosive Ordnance Disposal Operational Support Unit Seven, based out of San Diego, was also embarked to coordinate the overall effort.

Partnerships with host nations

At the core of Grasp's mission were the joint maritime security dive operations, which included two main components: trading diving procedures with host nation divers and completing maritime security projects in each nation. All operations were requested by and coordinated with the partner nations so that the projects could be specifically tailored to meet regional needs.

"As I was developing our joint training schedule, I went on an advance team visit to each country to find out what their particular needs were," said Navy Senior Chief Billy Gilbert, a master diver from Mobile Diving and Salvage Unit Two, who was one of the primary developers of the dive schedules for each country. "From there, I was able to develop a schedule that addressed the specific needs of the groups we were working with."

Gilbert and the other planners determined that two levels of joint training were needed: basic and advanced joint training. Each had elements of classroom indoctrination and dive operations. The two, two-week basic training evolutions covered emergency diving procedures, dive planning, hull and pier inspection techniques, and search methods.

The first basic course was held in Antigua and Barbuda with 13 divers from Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica and St. Lucia. The second basic course was held in Barbados with 22 divers from Barbados, St. Vincent and The Grenadines, and Grenada.

During the follow-on, two-week advanced course held in Barbados, U.S. and local divers shared information and techniques on more in-depth topics including self-contained underwater breathing apparatus, commonly known as SCUBA, maintenance, operational planning and advanced medicine. They coordinated on dive planning and also gained hands-on experience with the recompression chamber to treat dive-related illnesses.

This advanced course included a total of 27 divers from Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and The Grenadines, and Barbados.

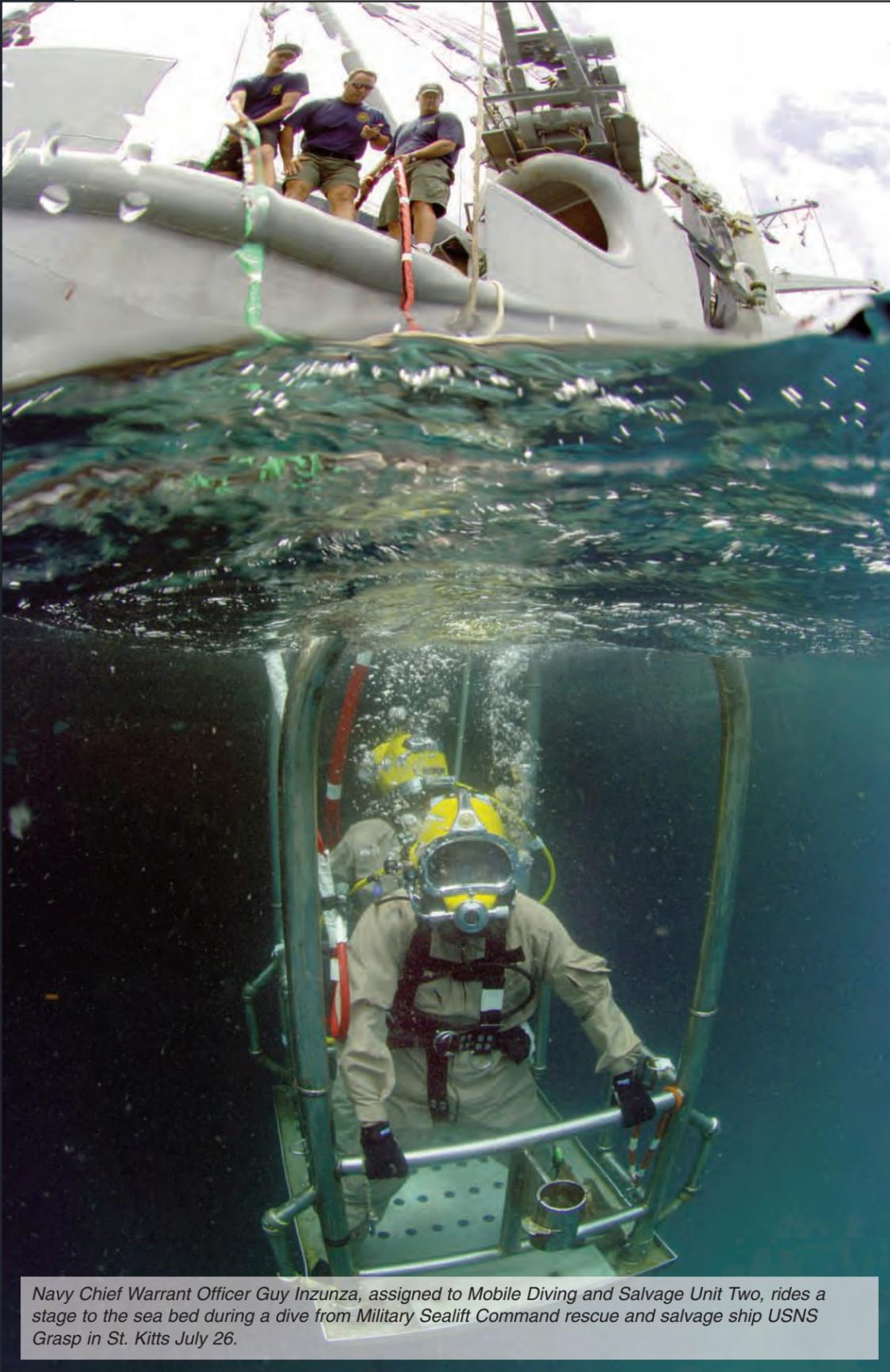
"I have learned an exceptional amount about diving over the last month," said Jihan Lampkin, a Regional Security Service diver from St. Vincent. "This has been a very pleasant experience, and I look forward to working with the U.S. again in the future."

Gilbert noted that there were tangible results to the joint training. In Antigua and Barbuda, two days after Grasp's departure, local divers used procedures they had practiced with Grasp's dive team to locate some small arms that had been lost in Antigua's coastal waters. "This makes me feel like we really gave them something they can use," said Gilbert.

In addition to the joint training, in each nation, Grasp's divers conducted requested maritime security operations. In most nations, the Navy divers worked with local divers to conduct and videotape antiterrorism/force protection pier surveys. In St. Vincent and The Grenadines, two specially trained U.S. Navy divers from Explosive Ordnance Disposal Mobile Unit Two joined Grasp to detonate unexploded World War II-era ordnance that had been located by a recreational diver.

Reaching out to the community

With the Navy divers conducting continuous, joint dive operations, Grasp's CIVMARs and Sailors led the effort to conduct community relations projects ashore. The ship's masters and chief mate Sean Tortora coordinated with the U.S. Embassy in Barbados to identify and organize shore-



Navy Chief Warrant Officer Guy Inzunza, assigned to Mobile Diving and Salvage Unit Two, rides a stage to the sea bed during a dive from Military Sealift Command rescue and salvage ship USNS Grasp in St. Kitts July 26.

U.S. Navy photo by Senior Chief Mass Communication Specialist Andrew McKaskle

builds partnerships with Caribbean island nations

side infrastructure repair projects in Antigua and Barbuda, St. Lucia and Grenada; the delivery of donated goods in Barbados and Grenada; and an interactive tour of Grasp for sea cadets in Barbados and St. Vincent. The embarked divers – occupied most days with dive operations – also assisted with all of these projects as available.

“CIVMARs have been front and center in community relations, which is outstanding,” said Tortora.

In Antigua and Barbuda, Grasp’s crew spent three days and more than 445 man-hours doing improvement projects at a 60-year-old school for the blind and deaf. The ship’s crew pressure washed the building’s exterior, painted all interior and exterior walls – a surface area of more than 11,000 square feet – removed almost two dozen 55-gallon lawn bags of trash and landscaped the school’s courtyard.

“This project is important to me because I am happy when I see my students happy, and they appreciate these things,” said Natasha Frances, one of the school’s teachers.

About three weeks later, Grasp’s crew spent two days in St. Lucia partnering with Peace Corps volunteers, local residents and St. Lucian Forestry Service representatives to clear a nature trail on a mountain that had been littered with industrial debris by a cell phone company when it constructed towers in the area.

“It took us about an hour or so just to hike up there and it was really hot, humid and rainy,” said Deck Machinist Joel Tano. “It was worth it, though.”

In Barbados, Grasp delivered two pallets – about 1,500 pounds – of donated Project Handclasp toys, skateboards, rollerblades, knee pads and safety helmets, as well as toiletries and personal care items, to Auntie Olga’s Needy Children Fund. The fund was founded in 1953 by “Auntie Olga” Lopes-Seale, who has been accepting donations and distributing them to local needy children for more than 55 years.

“These things will not only bring joy and happiness to the children’s lives but a sense of relief for the parents,” stated Lopes-Seale. “I can’t tell you enough how



Able Seaman Marlon Andries and U.S. Ambassador to Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean Mary Ourisman present donated toys and personal care items to “Auntie Olga” Lopes-Seale, the founder of a charity for needy children in Barbados. Lopes-Seale lit up when she was introduced to Andries and learned that, like her, he is from Guyana. Andries had never met Lopes-Seale but knew her by reputation from her charitable work in his home country.

grateful I am for all the donations the USNS Grasp has made here.”

Also in Barbados, Grasp hosted 13 sea cadets and two officers from the Barbados Coast Guard for an interactive tour of the ship. The cadets, ranging in age from 11 to 20, got a comprehensive, hands-on look at the deck department, engine department and dive locker.

With the ship’s master, chief mate and first engineer providing direction, cadets on the bridge and in the engine room started up the main engines, shifted power from one generator to another and com-

municated with each other throughout the process.

“Our goal was to not just take the cadets around the ship like a museum tour, but also to get them some hands-on experience with what it’s like to work aboard a T-ARS,” said Casavant.

On deck, several cadets got to don full firefighting gear and immersion suits as well as the 25-pound deep-sea dive helmet.

“It was so cool to have the cadets on the ship,” said Engine Utilityman Vincent Ransom. “We’re away from home all the time so we miss our families, and being around those kids was a plus.”

In fact, the day was such a success, that Grasp’s crew organized a similar event with 19 sea cadets from the St. Vincent Coast Guard.

In Grenada, the ship’s crew conducted repairs to a battered women’s shelter. They also donated 750 pounds of remaining Project Handclasp goods to the shelter and to local government officials for further distribution.

“We want these people to look at the United States as friends, so for the CIVMARs to lead the charge in organizing and completing these projects has added greatly to the success of the mission,” said Greene.



Second Electrician Nassar Alkaifi, Navy Electronics Technician 1st Class Darin Hoyt, Engine Utilityman Robert Alvarado and Navy divers from rescue and salvage ship USNS Grasp clear debris from a mountain in St. Lucia Aug. 1. Grasp’s crew spent two days working with local forestry officials, community members and Peace Corps volunteers to clean up industrial debris left behind by a cell phone company.

U.S. Navy photo by Senior Chief Mass Communication Specialist Andrew McKaskle

HQ • HIGHLIGHTS

Air Force Gen. Duncan McNabb, new commander of U.S. Transportation Command as of Sept. 5., visited Military Sealift Command headquarters Sept. 10 to meet the leadership. McNabb, a 34-year Air Force veteran, has served as the Air Force vice chief of staff and commander of Air Mobility Command, the Air Force component of US-TRANSCOM. He is the ninth US-TRANSCOM commander.

Eighteen people from MSC headquarters attended the 9/11

Pentagon Memorial dedication in Washington, D.C., Sept. 11. The event paid tribute to the more than 120 Pentagon employees whose lives were lost during the terrorist attack in 2001.

MSC welcomes Army **Col. Joel Weeks**, joint plans, strategic studies and wargaming office; **Ronald Costain**, engineering; and **Robert Moore**, maritime forces and manpower management.

MSC bids farewell to **Patrick Waddington**, Sealift Program.

New contract to provide MSC more shipping capacity

By **Trish Larson**
MSC Public Affairs

On Aug. 20, Military Sealift Command awarded a history-making contract to a private, Washington state-based company for the fabrication and maintenance of a portable roll-on/roll-off ramp.

What was unique about the contract is the fact that the ramp will be available for use on either of the company's two U.S.-built, U.S.-flagged roll-on/roll-off ships, making them suitable and available for transporting U.S. military cargo in a national crisis.

When modifications are complete, MV *Midnight Sun* and MV *North Star* will be able to be adapted for military cargo missions – allowing for easy loading, off-loading and transporting of massive amounts of out-sized rolling stock, including the U.S. Army's M1A1 tanks, to U.S. warfighters. In exchange, MSC will have access to each ship's 300,000 square-foot capacity under the contract's pre-negotiated chartering terms and conditions.

The contract award recipient operates the two roll-on/roll-off ships between the ports of Tacoma, Wash., and Anchorage, Alaska.

Ordinarily, the ships carry cargo, such as heavy equipment like bulldozers, trailer loads of household goods, retail merchandise, groceries, oil-field equipment and/or construction materials.

Under the provisions of a U.S.-government statute called the National Defense Sealift Fund, MSC awarded a \$960,492 contract for the ramp as a National Defense Feature, marking only the second time that MSC has awarded such a contract.

The ramp and associated handling equipment will expand sealift capacity for the Department of Defense, increasing the number of U.S.-flagged, militarily useful roll-on/roll-off ships presently available from private industry.

The new contract will allow the two commercial ships to continue operating in the private sector. However, in a national crisis, the ships will become available for charter by MSC.

“Adding National Defense Features to privately owned and operated U.S.-flagged ships adds critically needed surge sealift capabilities to the U.S. military,” said MSC's Director of Strategic Sealift and Prepositioning Chris Thayer. “With the continuing priority on containerization in today's maritime industry, there are not many militarily useful, commercially operated, U.S.-flagged roll-on/roll-off ships capable of carrying the full range of inventory of huge military vehicles and other oversized weapons systems in today's armed forces. We must continue to work to overcome that challenge by identifying and implementing new cost-effective solutions that benefit both government and industry as partners in national defense.”

Under the terms of the contract, MSC could gain immediate access to chartering either of the two ships upon the activation of a U.S.-government program called the Voluntary Intermodal Sealift Agreement, or VISA, which was established in 1997 to support the emergency deployment and sustainment of U.S. military forces.

VISA provides the Department of Defense with assured access to commercial sealift and intermodal capacity, including dry cargo ships, related equipment, terminal facilities and intermodal management services. VISA permits the time-phased activation of state-of-the-art commercial intermodal equipment to coincide with DOD requirements, while minimizing disruption to U.S. commercial operations.

The Navy's Director for Strategic Mobility and Combat Logistics, Jonathan Kaskin said, “The new contract represents an innovative maritime solution – maximizing DOD access to U.S.-flagged shipping capacity while minimizing capital investments in government-owned, inactive, reserve shipping. At the same time, the contract award supports our commitment to invest in U.S. ship operating companies – something that is absolutely essential in order to maintain a strong, viable U.S. maritime industrial base necessary to support national defense.”

COMPASS • HEADING

Civil service mariner **Capt. Curt Smith**, master of Military Sealift Command rescue and salvage ship USNS *Grapple*, took the ship through a rigorous inspection by American Bureau of Shipping auditors in August. *Grapple's* successful completion certifies the ship is in compliance with the International Safety Management Code that ensures safe operation of ships and pollution prevention. The inspection was the first of its kind for a Naval Fleet Auxiliary Force ship. Smith passed the credit for the success to his crew. “The real thanks goes to the guys on the deck plates. They have to want to do it and have to be excited about it, which they are,” he said.

MSC rescue and salvage ship USNS *Safeguard* delivered a pallet of community-relations material to Pattaya, Thailand, in late August. Ship Support Unit Singapore Port Engineer **Berle Goins**,

along with other SSU staffers **Frank Ridge**, Navy **Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Shannon Taylor** and Navy **Yeoman 1st Class Seaene Danyus**; chaplain for the region, Navy **Lt. Kenny Lee**; and crew members from *Safeguard* delivered the toys and hygiene supplies to a nearby orphanage.

Military Sealift Fleet Support Command welcomes Navy **Capt. Scott Phillpott** as director of operations. Phillpott, a 25-year Navy veteran and U.S. Naval Academy graduate, relieves **Don Babcock**, who was temporarily filling the billet.

Fair winds and following seas to **Deck Engineer Machinist Ronald Cokes** and **1st Assistant Engineer Jerry Rutschman** as they retire.

For more MSFSC or civil service mariner news, visit the Web site and online newsletter at www.msc.navy.mil/msfsc.

FAR • EAST • HAILS

Personnel from Sealift Logistics Command Far East and Military Sealift Command offices in Korea, Okinawa and Diego Garcia joined personnel from ship support units Japan, Guam and Singapore for Exercise Ulchi Freedom Guardian Aug. 17-23. The annual Korean peninsula defense exercise tested the command's ability to deploy personnel to seaports throughout Korea – managing the massive influx of cargo should there be a real crisis in Korea. SEALOGFE and Logistics Group Western Pacific personnel toured dry cargo/ammunition ship USNS *Richard E. Byrd* while the ship was in port at Sembawang Wharves, Singapore, Sept. 3. The ship, which reported to the U.S. 7th Fleet area of responsibility in July, is the first Lewis and Clark-class ship to serve the area.

Military Sealift Command Office Korea hosted a luncheon for tenant commands assigned to Pier Eight Aug. 28. Members of the Busan Force Protection Executive Council attended. The council is made up of leaders from the South Korean National Intelligence Service and South Korea's coast guard, army, national police and fire departments, as

well as the U.S. Army's 837th Transportation and 524th Military Intelligence battalions. MSCO Korea's commanding officer Navy **Cmdr. Christopher Cruz** serves as the council's chairman. “This lunch brought people together for great food, camaraderie and team building, which provides an avenue to discuss safety and force protection for Pier Eight and all of Busan,” Cruz said.

Sept. 9, Cruz and MSCO Korea staff hosted the Minister-Counselor for Public Affairs from the U.S. Embassy in Seoul, Patrick Linehan, and provided him with an overview of MSC operations on the Korean peninsula and a tour of Pier Eight.

In Okinawa, Japan, civilian **Capt. George Baker**, master of MSC-chartered high-speed vessel *Westpac Express*, hosted the director of the United Seamen's Service Center Okinawa, Michael Someck, along with Japanese community leaders and residents for a tour of the ship Sept. 5.

Military Sealift Command Office Diego Garcia welcomes Navy **Yeoman 1st Class Silvia Vance**, who replaces Navy **Yeoman 1st Class William Davis** as the command's administrative officer.

EUROPE • NEWS

U.S. 6th Fleet command ship USS *Mount Whitney*, with a hybrid crew of civil service mariners and Sailors, deployed from Gaeta, Italy, Aug. 26 to the Black Sea in response to the recent humanitarian crisis in Georgia. After Russia invaded the small, former Soviet-Bloc nation in early August, U.S. Navy ships and aircraft delivered supplies, including food, water, hygiene kits and beds, to thousands of Georgian residents who are displaced and in need of humanitarian aid.

Military Sealift Command-chartered ship *MV Ascension* arrived in Sao Tome and Principe Aug. 24 and off-loaded more than 2,700 square feet of Naval Mobile Construction Battalion Four cargo. The cargo – loaded in

Rota, Spain, Aug. 13 – includes construction equipment, forklifts, pick-up trucks, generators, camping gear, food and water. This equipment will be used by the Seabees for a number of construction projects for the West African island nation. These projects include building a security fence for the Sao Tome and Principe coast guard, renovating a soccer stadium and building restroom facilities for a local school.

Sealift Logistics Command Europe bids farewell to MSC fleet replenishment oiler USNS *Big Horn*. The ship departed the U.S. 6th Fleet area of operations Sept. 3 after a month of resupplying ships in theater. Fleet replenishment oiler USNS *Laramie* arrived in theater to replace *Big Horn* Aug. 24.

Lewis and Clark receives Navy safety award

**By Anna Hancock
MSC Public Affairs**

Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Gary Roughead awarded the crew and embarked military detachment of Military Sealift Command dry cargo/ammunition ship USNS Lewis and Clark with a 2008 Navy Safety Excellence Award during a ceremony at the U.S. Navy Memorial and Naval Heritage Center Theater in Washington, D.C., Sept. 3.

The award honored Lewis and Clark's civil service master Capt. Randall Rockwood, Chief Engineer Bob McManus, relief Chief Engineer Tim Nesbitt and the crew of 124 civil service mariners and 11 Navy Sailors from the military detachment for their efforts aboard the new dry/cargo ammunition ship, or T-AKE.

The award lauded the crew for overcoming the unfamiliarity, and therefore potential danger, inherent in a new class of ships by standardizing procedures regarding high-risk operations, enforcing the shipboard Safety Management System that engages the crew in overall shipboard safety, and developing the T-AKE Engineering Casualty Control Manual. The manual provides protocols and sce-

narios for engineering casualty and safety response.

"Safety is about leadership," Roughead explained. "We honor our award recipients for integrating 'mission first, safety always' into daily shipboard operations, while recognizing that the most important aspect about today's award is for the winners to share best practices so the attitude, practice and leadership is given to others ensuring everyone's safety."

Lewis and Clark's daily shipboard operations have not only been adopted across the entire class of dry cargo/ammunition ships but have become a prototype for the maritime industry.

Several crew members were featured in the new Safety Management System training video used throughout MSC to highlight shipboard safety practices, and McManus was featured in Seapower Magazine in recognition of the engine department's leadership role in the maritime industry.

"This award reflects a collaborative effort from the crew, who made sure to implement realistic safety standards as a social norm," said



USNS Lewis and Clark civil service master Capt. Randall Rockwood received the plaque for the 2008 Navy Safety Excellence Award on behalf of his crew from CNO Adm. Gary Roughead. Also pictured are (from the left) BJ Penn, assistant secretary of the Navy for installations and environment; Frank Cunningham, Military Sealift Fleet Support Command dry cargo/ammunition ship class manager; Navy Cmdr. Robert Oakeley, officer in charge of the military detachment aboard Lewis and Clark; Lt. Gen. Richard Kramlich, director, Marine Corps staff and deputy commandant, installations and logistics; Robert McManus, Lewis and Clark chief engineer.

Rockwood. "My goal was to set up a positive environment for my crew to develop safe operational procedures and in it, we made sure that each crew member understood the inherent dangers aboard the ship."

The Department of the Navy Safety Excellence Award was established to personally recognize Navy and

Marine Corps commands that demonstrate extraordinary excellence by sustained mission success with outstanding safety performance.

In addition to receiving a citation and plaque, Lewis and Clark has the privilege of flying the Secretary of the Navy's safety flag for one year.

ATLANTIC • LINES

George Pearson, Sealift Logistics Command Atlantic representative at Sunny Point, N.C., assisted in a simulated antiterrorism/hostage rescue exercise Aug. 20 aboard Military Sealift Command-chartered ship MV American Tern at Sunny Point. The exercise, part of a five-year maritime area security plan, was a joint venture between the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department, the U.S. Coast Guard, the FBI, Brunswick County Hospital, local law enforcement and MSC. The security plan, which calls for a live exercise every three years, includes all of the commercial terminals in the Sunny Point area. American Tern, under the operational control of SEALOGLANT, was

the staging platform for the rescue operations during the mock hostile event.

Richard Bolduc and **Allen Dickerson**, marine transportation specialists at the SEALOGLANT Jacksonville, Fla., office, assisted with the off-load of cargo from Marine Corps Prepositioning Ship SS SGT Matej Kocak Aug. 7-13 at Blount Island Command. More than 250 wheeled and tracked vehicles, more than 550 containers and more than 10 small watercraft were off-loaded during the operation.

Bolduc and Dickerson also assisted with the loading of more than 540 wheeled and tracked vehicles, nearly 550 containers and 10 small watercraft onto Marine Corps Prepositioning Ship

MV SGT William R. Button, at Blount Island Aug. 18-27. The loading operation was temporarily disrupted when Button left the port to evade a tropical storm but was completed upon the ship's return to port Aug. 24.

Jimmy Boy Dial, marine transportation specialist at SEALOGLANT headquarters in Norfolk, Va., coordinated with Naval Beach Group Two and assisted with the off-load of about 400 pieces of equipment from heavy-lift crane ship SS Flickertail State Aug. 22-27 at Naval Station Norfolk.

SEALOGLANT's representative in Charleston, S.C., **Tom D'Agostino**, assisted with the loading of SS Westward Venture Aug. 19-21. The 75,000 square feet of cargo destined for service in Operation Iraqi Freedom included more than 230 mine-resistant, ambush-

protected vehicles. The ship's second deck was modified to allow additional MRAP stowage, making it more militarily useful and cost effective in shipping these units.

D'Agostino also assisted with the discharge of 100,000 barrels of petroleum, oil and lubricants from MSC tanker USNS Richard G. Matthiesen Aug. 13-14.

MSC dry cargo/ammunition ship USNS Robert E. Peary arrived at Naval Station Norfolk Aug. 22. Peary, the fifth in the new ship class, is the third assigned to SEALOGLANT.

Marine transportation specialist **Brian Hill** was named SEALOGLANT employee of the quarter for his excellent work in support of Operation Pacer Goose and the superb quality of his work in general.

PACIFIC • BRIEFS

Military Sealift Command fleet replenishment oiler USNS Henry J. Kaiser supported the deployment of aircraft carrier USS George Washington with underway and vertical replenishments in the Southern California operating area. Kaiser supplied George Washington with 133 pallets of stores and 674,000 gallons of fuel Aug. 28. Kaiser then supplied George Washington with 194 pallets of stores and 1 million gallons of fuel Sept. 3. George Washington departed San Diego Aug. 21, in route to Yokosuka, Japan, where it replaced aircraft carrier USS Kitty Hawk as the U.S. Navy's only permanently forward-deployed aircraft carrier.

Civil service master **Capt. Nate Smith**, Kaiser's master, is seeing silver following the U.S. Men's Olympic Water Polo team's silver-medal win at the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Smith's son

Jessie, a defender for the team, scored two of the team's 10 goals during the gold-medal match against Hungary. The team took the silver medal after losing the match 14 to 10. This was the younger Smith's second Olympics. He was part of the team that placed 7th at the 2004 Athens Olympics.

Navy **Capt. David Kiehl**, Sealift Logistics Command Pacific commander, presented the Navy Achievement Medal to Navy **Operations Specialist 2nd Class Aristeo T. Orodio**, SEALOGPAC operations department, for professional achievement and superior performance of duties while serving as the SEALOGPAC Task Force 33 assistant scheduler from January to April 2008.

The command bids fair winds and following seas to Navy **Lt. Cmdr. Hillary Bush**.

CENTRAL • CURRENTS

Military Sealift Command fleet replenishment oiler USNS Pecos departed the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations following a successful four-month deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, maritime interdiction operations and maritime support operations. Pecos supported the USS Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group, USS Nassau and USS Peleliu Expeditionary Strike groups and other coalition naval forces. During the deployment, Pecos conducted 52 underway replenishments and transferred more than 9 million gallons of fuel.

In August, Sealift Logistics Command Central coordinated

three dry cargo operations, delivering more than 220,000 square feet of combat equipment and moved more than 37 million gallons of fuel.

Navy **Capt. Stephen Kelley**, SEALOGCENT commander, welcomes fast combat support ship USNS Bridge to 5th Fleet.

The command also welcomes Navy **Lt. Cmdr. Jay Young**, who relieves Navy **Lt. Cmdr. Neil Sexton** as the assistant officer in charge of Mid-Atlantic Regional Maintenance Center detachment Bahrain; and Navy **Lt. Michael Sylvestri**, who relieves Navy **Lt. Harold Moller** as air cargo operations officer.

MSC green to keep oceans blue

By MSC Public Affairs

“Ten years ago, I could stand on the fantail of a ship looking out at the ocean and see oil slicks and garbage floating on the surface,” said Military Sealift Command hospital ship USNS Mercy’s Chief Engineer Joseph M. Watts. “Now the water is so much cleaner.”

The water is cleaner now in part because maritime organizations like MSC have made huge strides in operating in environmentally friendly ways. From enhancing ship designs to preventing pollution to resource conservation, MSC has become a leader in conducting best practices for the environment both at sea and ashore.

“MSC delicately balances environmental compliance and mission readiness,” said Dr. John Austin, MSC manager of environmental programs and policy. “The idea is for MSC’s ships to minimize or eliminate potentially harmful emissions.”

For example, some of MSC’s ships have had their air conditioning plants replaced with equipment that removes thousands of pounds of ozone-depleting substances.

In addition, dry cargo/ammunition ships, or T-AKEs, were designed to be some of the most environmentally sound Navy ships of the 21st century, said Austin.

According to Capt. Robert Jaeger, civil service master of dry cargo/ammunition ship USNS Richard E. Byrd, T-AKEs have a smaller carbon footprint than older ships. The T-AKEs’ electric diesel power plants improve fuel efficiency and reduce emissions compared to existing ship classes.

In addition, as with all MSC ships, T-AKEs contain most, if not all, waste from daily living and operation on board the ship in voluntary compliance with U.S. and international environmental laws and regulations, according to Austin.

Protecting the environment from harmful exposure to materials transferred at sea is another area where MSC excels. In more than 20 years of service to MSC, T-5 tankers have never caused an oil spill. This record is particularly significant since T-5s, with the help of

chartered commercial tankers, annually transport more than 1.6 billion gallons of fuel worldwide and make trips to environmentally sensitive areas such as Antarctica and Greenland.

“Our crews are especially well trained and cognizant of all environmental and safety regulations,” said Sealift Program Tanker Project Officer John Joerger. “Both MSC and its contract operators take the rules very seriously.”

MSC has been ahead of international environmental protection efforts since the mid 1980s when T-5 tankers were delivered to the government. The ships were built with double hulls, a precaution against oil spills that wasn’t federally mandated until five years later with the Oil Pollution Act of 1990.

In addition to MSC’s track record of carrying fuel, the command has also won awards for another fuel-related mission – at-sea refueling.

The Navy has twice recognized MSC for excellence in preventing pollution, ensuring readiness in responding to environmental issues, conserving resources and complying with environmental regulations. MSC fleet replenishment oiler USNS John Ericsson earned the Environmental Quality Small Ship award from both the chief of naval operations and the secretary of the Navy in 2007.

Ericsson exceeded the environmental standards set by the Navy, and it ensured that each mariner received special training in environmental management, used environmentally friendly chemicals and conducted monthly spill drills. As a result, Ericsson transferred almost 82 million gallons of fuel in 353 separate underway replenishments without a significant mishap in two years.

Above and beyond

“Program managers are always looking at ways to improve environmental practices,” said Austin.

For example, the Prepositioning Program has been experimenting with a relatively new underwater hull-coating system that is now being used in a



A technologically advanced hull coating is applied to prepositioning ship USNS Soderman. The environmentally friendly coating contains no poisonous biocides – used in other coating systems to deter marine-life growth – and is designed to increase ship fuel efficiency.

growing number of commercial fleets worldwide. In 2007, prepositioning ships USNS Sisler and USNS Soderman were painted with the coating, which contains no poisonous biocides – chemicals typically used in other coating systems that can be harmful to marine environments.

The new coating uses patented chemistry to maintain a smooth finish that is designed to make it easy for marine organisms to wash off of a ship’s hull while it sails, much like nonstick cookware makes it simple to wash food off of pots and pans. The marine-life-free hulls have less drag, which according to the manufacturer, can translate into a 4 to 6 percent reduction in fuel consumption – another environmental benefit.

“For MSC’s Prepositioning Program, that could mean a savings of about 4,500 barrels of fuel per year for the typical operational tempo of the Watson-class large, medium-speed, roll-on/roll-off ship,” said Rob Wolf, Army prepositioning ship project officer.

“We’re still collecting initial data on the performance of this coating, but so far, what we’ve seen looks promising.”

Sometimes, regardless of the technological updates or financial incentives, the driving force behind environmental preservation is the people who are com-

mitted to it. MSC crews work hard to protect the environment.

“We are very mindful not to dump anything over the side except ash, which is biodegradable,” said the incinerator operator aboard Mercy, Engine Utilityman Bobby Waters, who plays a leading role in the ship’s environmental consciousness.

Mercy’s crew has made efforts to either dispose of waste appropriately or recycle it. Waters explains that the special incinerators aboard the ship burn plastic without creating environmentally harmful fumes – a capability that amazes many ship visitors – and how he collects and stores aluminum in any safe space he can find and then takes it to recycling centers when the ship pulls into port.

“Our ultimate goal is to engineer systems to comply with environmental regulations and efficiently operate or, better yet, to eliminate the potentially hazardous threat to the environment,” said Austin. “MSC is working toward the prevention of pollution and resource conservation, and we hope to continue being one of the environmentally friendly leaders at sea.”

MSC Public Affairs intern Natalie Smith contributed to this article.

MSC ships complete Asian maritime security exercise

By Edward Baxter
SEALOGFE Public Affairs

Three Military Sealift Command ships participated in a multinational, antiterrorism exercise in the Strait of Malacca and South China Sea Aug. 18-21.

Maritime Prepositioning ships MV CPL Louis J. Hauge Jr. and USNS 1st LT Baldomero Lopez, along with rescue/salvage ship USNS Safeguard, played the roles of suspicious merchant ships during the at-sea Southeast Asia Cooperation Against Terrorism exercise.

Held annually since 2002, SEACAT is designed to highlight the value of information sharing and multinational coordination within situations that give participating navies practical maritime interception training opportunities.

Three combatant Navy ships and a U.S. Coast Guard cutter also participated in the exercise, which formally ended when dock landing ship USS Tortuga hosted a wrap-up conference between participating countries in Singapore.

Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, the Philippines and the United States, along with observers from Indonesia, trained together to track, board and search

ships suspected of being involved in terrorism, piracy, human trafficking or the transportation of illicit cargo.

The simulated illicit activity began when Hauge, playing the role of a pirate-hijacked vessel, took on a Thai navy boarding team. After receiving intelligence that Hauge had been compromised, a Thai frigate intercepted the vessel some 24 miles off the country’s coast. Thai navy SEALs stormed Hauge by fast-roping onto the ship’s flight deck by helicopter. The SEALs seized control of the ship’s bridge and engine room and simulated the arrest of two mariners playing the role of pirates they found hiding in staterooms.

During Hauge’s next evolution, a Singaporean high-speed coastal patrol boat intercepted the role-playing prepositioning ship and located a mock-explosive device. The exercise with the Singaporean forces wrapped up Hauge’s participation in the exercise.

Singaporean forces boarded Lopez Aug. 18. While the ship was at anchor just off the country’s coast, a Singaporean boarding team found two stow-away role players on board who were suspected of terrorism.

In a separate scenario the next day, a Malaysian navy boarding team responded to a Lopez-issued distress call saying pirates were attacking the vessel.

The Philippine navy boarded Safeguard twice during the exercise. Mock intelligence reports indicated the ship was smuggling weapons, drugs and illegal migrants. A U.S. Navy P-3 maritime patrol aircraft reported seeing Safeguard and destroyer USS Howard conduct suspicious operations by small boat. A U.S. Coast Guard cutter located and shadowed Safeguard and tasked the Philippine navy with intercepting the ship as it approached the Philippine island of Mindanao. A rigid hull-inflatable boat delivered a boarding team to Safeguard.

In another scenario the following day, the U.S. Navy P-3 aircraft observed a simulated group of illegal immigrants on Safeguard’s deck. This led to another boarding team discovering that the ship had simulated involvement in human trafficking.

Navy Rear Adm. Nora W. Tyson, Task Force 73 commander, and exercise executive agent, said all the SEACAT participants impressed her throughout the exercise. “The civilian mariners aboard Hauge, Lopez and Safeguard all did a tremendous job in getting the ships where they needed to be, safely and on time, which led to a highly successful exercise overall,” Tyson said.