

March 2010

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

THE U.S. NAVY'S MILITARY SEALIFT COMMAND

MSC delivers



to Haiti



INSIDE — MSC supports Operation Unified Response: Comfort, Big Horn, Grumman, Grasp, Lewis and Clark, Williams, Sacagawea, Henson, Lummus, Cornhusker State, Gopher State, Wright, Cape May, Huakai, Alakai, Victoria Hunt, Dublin Sea, Elsbeth II/BB-110, Caribe Pioneer/FOSS 343, McAllister Boys/Atlantic Trader and Allie B/Memphis Bridge.

Baltimore Sun photo by Kim Halfron

Haiti earthquake relief

As I write this, I am just hours back from Haiti where Command Master Chief Kenny Green and Navy Lt. Dan Sullivan accompanied me to witness firsthand the Military Sealift Command response and thank the mariners and sailors who answered the call.

This issue of Sealift offers in-depth coverage of MSC's response and the critical role we are playing in the Haiti earthquake relief effort, Operation Unified Response. I can tell you that the speed of our response and the range of capabilities that we brought to Haiti have been widely acknowledged and applauded by leadership throughout DOD, Department of State, Department of Homeland Security and Congress. As I told the mariners I met down there: I had accepted too many words of thanks on their behalf over the past two weeks, and simply had to pass them on to the people who actually earned them.

We've put 21 ships into motion as part of the response effort. Of MSC's total force of more than 8,900 people, more than 2,600 mariners, sailors, control element personnel and other support people have been directly involved in Operation Unified Response. That's 29 percent of our people committed to helping those in need!

The Response

When the full scope of the disaster became understood, MSC's response was swift. MSC hospital ship USNS Comfort was ready to sail in just three days. Normally the activation process takes five, but Comfort got underway just 77 hours after notification with a crew of 67 civil service mariners, 560 medical personnel and an approximately 110-person contingent of support personnel. At one point there were six chief engineers aboard helping to bring the plant on line and ready the ship for sea! Comfort sailed from Baltimore covered live by CNN; very much a symbol of our nation's response to this disaster. Comfort's master, Capt. Bob Holley, told me that they began accepting patients flown in by helicopter the night before they actually reached Port-au-Prince on Jan. 19. They haven't slowed down. During my visit, there was a constant flow of patients on and off the ship, 26 surgeries planned that day and a reunion between a father and an infant son he hadn't seen in three weeks. Comfort is an amazing place of healing and compassion. But MSC's response

goes far beyond Comfort's great work.

From the Naval Fleet Auxiliary Force, MSC fleet replenishment oiler USNS Big Horn sailed less than 24 hours after the earthquake and was later joined by MSC dry cargo/ammunition ships USNS Sacagawea and USNS Lewis and Clark to keep the USS Carl Vinson Carrier Strike Group and USS Bataan and USS Nassau Amphibious Ready Groups supplied on station. MSC rescue and salvage ship USNS Grasp and the embarked U.S. Army 544th Dive Engineer Team diverted from a SOUTHCOM mission and was among the very first ships on scene and immediately turned to clearing the Port-au-Prince harbor of damaged containers and debris from the earthquake, as well as helping evaluate the integrity of the heavily damaged piers and docks.

MSC oceanographic survey ship USNS Henson, representing the Special Mission Program, was involved in surveying the harbor floor and identifying potential hazards to ships bringing relief supplies. USNS Summer assisted by passing remote surveying systems and support equipment to Henson.

From the Prepositioning Program, Maritime Prepositioning Ship USNS 1ST LT Jack Lummus accelerated her planned offload at Blount Island and reloaded a tailored package of U.S. Marine Corps construction equipment and supplies, lighterage to carry material ashore and cargo for the U.S. Agency for International Development and other U.S. government agencies, in addition to a mobile sealift operations center van. Lummus' load was the first sizable influx of heavy equipment and over the beach delivery capability to reach Haiti. People I spoke with on the ground called her equipment "a lifesaver." Sister ship USNS PFC Dewayne T. Williams brought a large quantity of Army and Seabee equipment and rolling stock, and support capability for Navy cargo handlers and Amphibious Construction Battalion Two personnel.

The Sealift Program took operational

control of four ships from the Maritime Administration's Ready Reserve Force. Crane ship SS Cornhusker State sailed to Haiti to assist with Joint-Logistics-Over-the-Shore, or JLOTS, movement of relief supplies to shore from cargo ships unable to use the devastated port. SS Cape May delivered Seabee construction gear, three sets of lighterage and a roll-on/roll-off discharge facility – key enablers to

move equipment and supplies ashore. I visited with the contract mariners on both of these ships, and they were very proud to be playing a role in this operation. Their ships were clean, well-preserved, and they answered the call when the bell rang. SS Wright, normally used for Marine Corps rotary wing aviation

maintenance, was standing by, ready for tasking, in Norfolk, Va., capable of serving as a berthing facility near Port-au-Prince for personnel involved in Operation Unified Response. SS Gopher State was likewise standing by to transport additional lighterage if required.

MARAD also activated two high-speed ferries from the National Defense Reserve Fleet for MSC operation, MV Huakai and MV Alakai. Huakai – equipped with a stern ramp – is being used to ferry personnel, vehicles and supplies between Jacksonville and Haiti. They can each hold 450 tons of cargo and up to 500 passengers, and can travel at a sustained speed of up to 40 knots, depending on load and sea conditions. Huakai loaded a rapid port opening package, communications gear, forklifts, trucks, Humvees, supplies and other equipment at Fort Eustis, Va. She also carried personnel from the Army's 689th Rapid Port Opening Element, MSC's Expeditionary Port Unit Detachment and elements from the Army's 7th Sustainment Brigade. After a bumpy transit, some of those soldiers reconfirmed in their own minds why they chose the Army over the Navy! Alakai remained ready for tasking in Norfolk.

The Sealift Program also contracted five tug/barge combinations to help with car-

rying supplies to and from points around Haiti, in addition to contracting a regular tug boat to assist movement of ships in Port-au-Prince harbor during JLOTS operations.

Obviously, our work is not yet done, and the MSC presence in Haitian waters will be required for quite some time to sustain the flow of supplies that is keeping the Haitian people fed, clothed and able to rebuild their lives.

You may recall what I wrote in my first column in Sealift only four months ago, about my basic philosophy: put people first; be a professional; and be a good shipmate.

During my visit to MSC ships operating around Haiti, I saw evidence of mariners and sailors who shared my views about how we should run this outfit. I saw people taking care of each other, I saw absolute professionals executing their tasks safely and with precision and I saw leadership looking out for their people. I was so proud to see this organization – YOU – stand up so quickly and ably, to answer this latest call to serve – as you always have – "in peace and war."

Sail safe, Shipmates!

Yours, aye,

Mark H. "Buz" Buzby
Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy
Commander, Military Sealift Command



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USNS Grasp in Haiti

By Laura M. Seal, MSC Public Affairs

As the ground beneath Port-au-Prince, Haiti, shook violently, Military Sealift Command rescue and salvage ship USNS Grasp was en route to Belize City, Belize, where the ship was scheduled to begin a U.S. Southern Command international-outreach and maritime-security mission.

"We heard about the earthquake the morning of the 13th," said Grasp's civil service master Capt. Jose Delfaus. "Based on everything we heard, we expected that the devastation was so great that we would get called to Haiti to assist."

Delfaus was right. Grasp pulled into port in Belize City the morning of Jan. 13, and the ship's crew and embarked Army divers began their regularly scheduled activities. At 3 p.m., Jan. 14, they received the anticipated orders to divert to Haiti, and by 6 p.m., Grasp was underway for Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, where the ship stopped to refuel and load food and other humanitarian relief supplies. Grasp also embarked a team of specialized personnel, including Navy Capt. Dale Fleck, commodore, Explosive Ordnance Unit Group Two, which is dedicated to pier-assessment operations; some underwater construction-team divers; and a civilian structural engineer from Naval Facilities Command.

The personnel joined Grasp's 27 civil service mariners, four sailors, one engineering cadet and 17 members of the Army's 544th Engineer Dive Team who were already aboard.

Grasp arrived off the coast of Port-au-Prince Jan. 18, and dropped anchor just about 300 yards from the pier where the ship's embarked 544th Dive Team divers immediately began conducting surveys and assessments necessary to repair the port.

Grasp and its embarked divers are among several assets and personnel supporting Operation Unified Response activities in Haiti. Leading these operations was Navy Rear Adm. Samuel Perez, commander, Task Force 42. CTF 42 oversaw all port activities and coordination. Other dive units involved are the Navy's Explosive Ordnance Disposal Group Two, Mobile Diving Salvage Unit Two and Underwater Construction Teams One and Two.

Since Grasp's arrival, the Army and Navy divers have been working tirelessly to complete a wide range of tasks – from assessing infrastructure damage and repairing port facilities to mapping waterways in the harbor and identifying obstructions to navigation.

Grasp and its crew have provided invaluable support to the divers – housing and feeding many of them and using the ship's workboat to transport divers to their dive sites.

"Our manifest has been dynamic," said Delfaus. "I've been using the term 'reverse liberty.' The divers like to come out to the ship for a good meal, a shower and some rest before heading back to their work, which is very exhausting." Divers not staying aboard the ships are living in camps ashore.

When asked by the divers to construct a tool that they designed specifically to assist with their operations in Haiti, the engineering department set straight to the task. Grasp's engine cadet Devin Tetzlaff created the tool from scratch. Tetzlaff, a student at Massachusetts Maritime Academy, is serving aboard Grasp for about two months as part of his schooling.

The ship was also able to deliver donated goods from Project Handclasp and other organizations to hospital ship USNS Comfort. These items had been aboard Grasp to be distributed as part of its international outreach mission.

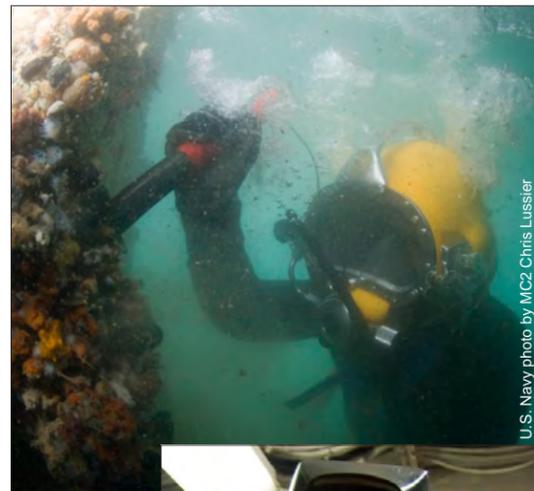
"We had some brown teddy bears aboard, and we gave them to the hospital ship Comfort," said Delfaus. "A couple of days later, we saw on the news that a little child aboard Comfort was holding one of the teddy bears, and we knew it was one of ours."

As of mid-February, Grasp's future plans are uncertain and its stay in Port-au-Prince indefinite.

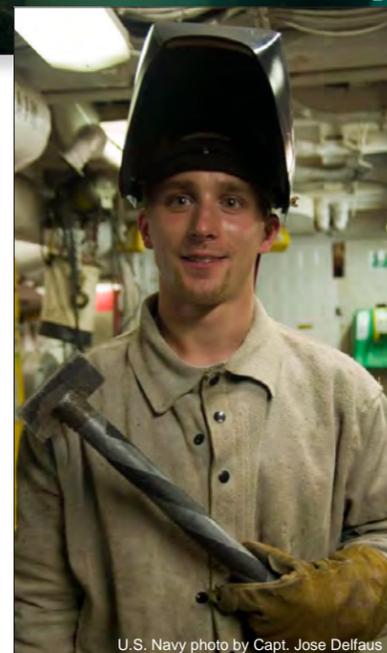
"My crew always volunteers to do even more than our primary mission to maintain the ship and support the divers," said Delfaus. "Right now we are here working hard and awaiting whatever future taskings we may receive."

Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Chris Lussier contributed to this story.

Massachusetts Maritime Engine Cadet Devin Tetzlaff, right, who was on a two-month assignment aboard Military Sealift Command rescue and salvage ship USNS Grasp, displays a tool he crafted for a U.S. Army diver, above, to repair a pier in Haiti following the earthquake.



U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Chris Lussier



U.S. Navy photo by Capt. Jose Delfaus

Unrep ships critical platforms for Haitian disaster relief

By Bill Cook
SEALOGLANT Public Affairs

Shortly after the Tuesday, Jan. 12 earthquake struck Haiti, the United States began to mobilize massive humanitarian relief efforts.

"At this moment, we are moving forward with one of the largest relief efforts in our history," said President Barack Obama in his address to the nation. "We stand united with the people of Haiti."

Two of the nation's first responders to the crisis were Military Sealift Command's fleet replenishment oiler USNS Big Horn and dry cargo/ammunition ship USNS Sacagawea. Big Horn, tasked to supply fuel to keep U.S. Naval ships on station in the Port-au-Prince harbor, was directed to get underway on Jan. 13. Sacagawea, tasked to provide food, supplies and humanitarian assistance cargo to the same ships, was directed to get underway on Jan. 19.

"Both ships were available for the Haiti mission, and when an oiler was requested, Big Horn received the nod to get underway," said Navy Capt. Michael Graham, commander, Sealift Logistics Command Atlantic. "But it was apparent that other Navy responders in theater would need food and other supplies in addition to fuel, so we also offered Sacagawea."

SEALOGLANT had initial operational control of 21 MSC vessels involved in the relief efforts, said Graham. "We offered everything we had available; it was all push and no pull."

Big Horn's civil service crew hurried to get the ship underway from Naval Station Norfolk the day after the earthquake struck.

"I received a call from SEALOGLANT at 3 a.m. the morning of the 13th telling me that they were considering Big Horn for tasking to Haiti. An hour later, another phone call confirmed it," said the ship's civil service master Capt. Thomas Finger. "We left the pier at Naval Station Norfolk for refueling at Craney Island Fuel Terminal as soon as we could, and we got underway for Haiti by five that afternoon."

Big Horn's crew, which consists of 73 civil service mariners and a military department of four sailors, did "yeoman's work in getting the ship loaded and ready to sail," said Chief Petty Officer Josiah Hunter, the ship's military department officer in charge.

First combat logistics ship in theater

When Big Horn arrived in theater Jan. 17, the ship was the only combat logistics force ship in Haiti during its first 10 days in theater.

During the mission, Big Horn transferred 618 pallets of cargo and humanitarian assistance/disaster relief supplies, and a remarkable 2.6 million gallons of fuel, said George Gelner, the ship's supply officer.

"In my 31 years at sea, this mission has provided me one of the greatest feelings of personal satisfaction I've ever had. I daresay the crew members of this ship feel the same way themselves," Finger said.

The ship did nothing but transfer fuel during its first 10 days on scene, then sailed north to take on cargo in Mayport, Fla., where the crew worked around the clock to get the ship loaded and back to Haiti as quickly as possible, said Finger.

When Big Horn pulled in to Naval Station Mayport on Jan. 24 to refuel and load food, water and other supplies, Navy Rear Adm. Victor Guillory, commander, U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command and U.S. 4th Fleet, visited with the ship's crew.

"[Your efforts are] going to help mitigate the suffering of [hundreds of thousands] of people. You represent the critical link to make it all possible. We don't have a sea base without you. On behalf of thousands of people who won't get the chance, I want to thank you and wish you the best with your mission."

After nearly a month of high-tempo operations in support of Haiti relief efforts, Big Horn was relieved by MSC fleet replenishment oiler USNS Leroy Grumman in mid-February.

Sacagawea heads to crisis area

Sacagawea got underway from Norfolk Jan. 19. Many of Sacagawea's 124 civil service mariners and 11 sailors comprising the military department loaded the ship to capacity with pallets of disaster relief supplies, including nearly 400,000 meals ready to eat and an additional 235,000 pounds of food, seven truckloads of bottled water, 10 water-purification plants and medical supplies.

"We had a sense we would be called to duty as soon as we heard about the earthquake," recalled Sacagawea's civil service master Capt. George McCarthy. "Each day, the ship's crew tirelessly loaded the ship from first light to late into the night. We were still taking on cargo an hour before we sailed from Norfolk."

In all, Sacagawea's crew loaded 1,700 pallets of cargo,

plus fuel, in Norfolk before getting underway.

"I was overwhelmed by the care and concern of the crew; they felt a sense of purpose and enthusiasm—their hearts were devoted to getting this job completed," said McCarthy. "MSC's motto is, 'We Deliver.' Now Sacagawea has added the line, 'We care, and we are coming.'"

Sacagawea arrived off the coast of Haiti Jan. 22, and its crew immediately commenced discharging relief cargo.

Sacagawea's versatile design provides a unique sea-based platform that can be tailored for a variety of missions, including disaster relief efforts, said McCarthy.

The ship's helicopter assets multiply the capability to transfer the relief cargo and supplies directly to their point of need. The ship's cargo capability in one shipload represents what would otherwise take 13 fully loaded C-17 aircraft to accomplish.

Sacagawea also played a role in the success of Big Horn's mission, according to the oiler's master.

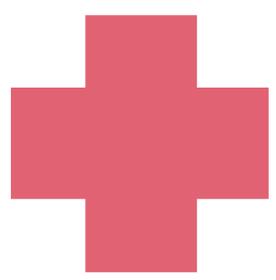
"Big Horn has no helicopter assets," said Finger. "When Sacagawea arrived on scene, its helicopters made it possible to rapidly get our disaster relief cargo to the amphibious ships and then on to the beach. We couldn't have done it without the helicopters."

Navy Cmdr. Mark Pimpo, Sacagawea's military department officer in charge, documented the extraordinary accomplishments of the ship's crew members in delivering much needed cargo into the Haiti operating area.

"In a very dynamic environment, all 1,700 pallets of provisions and cargo were transferred to 13 ships in six days, which allowed them to remain on station to continue their humanitarian efforts," wrote Pimpo. "Three of the transfers occurred 'skin to skin' with ships coming directly alongside Sacagawea while at anchor. We transferred critical medical supplies to Comfort upon arrival in Port-au-Prince harbor."

"We also transferred more than 40,000 gallons of water to amphibious assault ship USS Bataan when both of the ship's evaporators stopped functioning. Bataan was eventually able to get a tech rep onboard, but the water we provided made the difference," Pimpo said.

MSC dry cargo/ammunition ship USNS Lewis and Clark also extensively supported replenishment operations before transiting to Norfolk in mid-February, and Sacagawea continues to provide support.



Comfort an

Hospital ship brings aid to Haiti

By Meghan Patrick
MSC Public Affairs

A Haitian woman lays motionless in a street of Port-au-Prince, Haiti, her torso crushed by a fallen telephone pole. A few feet away from her still legs is a tiny head, visible from under a pile of cracked cinderblocks. Further down the road, a man raises his hands in despair as he takes in the horrific sights that surround him.

A pencil sketch of this scene by 41-year-old Haitian Hugues Laroses vividly captures events on Tuesday, Jan. 12, the day his clavicle was fractured and right leg injured, the same day hundreds of thousands of his fellow citizens became casualties during a natural disaster no one had seen coming. But Laroses' drawing also captures the force that has helped keep him and many others alive. The horizon of his sketch contains an unshaken beacon of hope – a big, white ship emblazoned by a large cross.

Back in Baltimore Harbor on the morning of Jan. 12, Military Sealift Command hospital ship USNS Comfort, with signature red crosses painted on its white hull, remained a quiet giant. The 894-foot ship – the length of nearly three football fields – was docked at the pier that serves as the ship's home most days of the year.

In the past, the massive ship, with its 1,000-bed onboard medical treatment facility and 12 operating rooms, had been a hub of activity while deployed to areas around the world in support of humanitarian and civic assistance missions, natural disasters or military operations.

But, on Jan. 12, the ship was in five-day reduced operating status, or ROS, with a small embarked crew of 18 civil service mariners and 58 Navy medical personnel – less than six percent of the ship's maximum complement at full-operating status. The ROS team of experts was on board to maintain the ship in a high state of readiness so that it could move into action and get underway in just five days.

On Jan. 12, Comfort was just exiting a several-month repair availability period at the pier, during which the ship was refurbished after Continuing Promise, the ship's four-month-long, bi-yearly humanitarian and civic assistance mission. During that mission to Latin America and the Caribbean in the summer of 2009, Comfort sailed to seven countries, including a 12-day stop in the island-nation of Haiti. Embarked doctors and dentists treated 100,000 patients and performed 1,657 life-changing surgeries.

With the ship's repair availability period complete, the ROS crew's focus was to prepare Comfort for its next scheduled deployment in 2011 and to continue to maintain the massive ship for emergency situations.

Dave Lieberman, Comfort's chief mate and the officer in charge when the ship is in ROS, was at his daughter's soccer game the evening of Jan. 12, just after Haiti experienced the catastrophic 7.0-magnitude earthquake. His phone began to ring incessantly as the horror in Haiti unfolded on television screens throughout the world. Callers wanted to know if Comfort was going to assist. While no official decisions were made that night, Lieberman and the rest of Comfort's ROS crew shifted into high gear.

"Whenever there is a natural disaster, we kind of go into that mode and start thinking of the 'what-ifs' to be ready just in case," said Lieberman.

The following morning, Military Sealift Command, which oversees the ship's operations, received official direction from U.S. Fleet Forces Command for the ship to activate in support of the U.S. military's Operation Unified Response in Haiti.

"The news of the activation was like an electrical charge through the ship," said John Burke, Comfort's port engineer. "Within an hour of the activation I arranged with a fabrication and boiler service to have eight to 12 men come up from Norfolk to assist the ship with anything needed in way of minor repairs to rigging services. While we had much to do to prepare, we knew every second counted. We had all seen the images of the devastation. We knew we had a mission and that we must overcome whatever challenges came before us to ensure that things happened."

Hospital Ship Class Manager Claudio Azzaro said the flurry of activity that occurred in the approximately 77 hours between the ship's verbal order for activation at 5 a.m., Jan. 13, and the moment the ship set sail at 9:30 a.m., Saturday, Jan. 16, can only be described by one word.

"Magic," said Azzaro. "It was pure magic. It typically takes five days to ensure crew members are on board and to conduct the necessary load-outs in Baltimore's small pier. Then the ship sails to Norfolk to board the rest of the crew members and to conduct the rest of the load-outs at the Naval Base because of the ample room for moving the massive cargo and supplies that are needed for Comfort's medical mission. This process usually takes another few days."

But Azzaro and his colleagues knew they didn't have a minute to spare. News stations announced the rising death toll every hour.

"Instead of having the ship stop in Norfolk, we moved everything and everyone up the highway to Baltimore. Even though facilitating the load-out on the narrow pier was a challenge, we still managed to complete all of the on-loads and to get every person on board one full day before we were supposed to. Many hands working together. That's what made the magic happen."

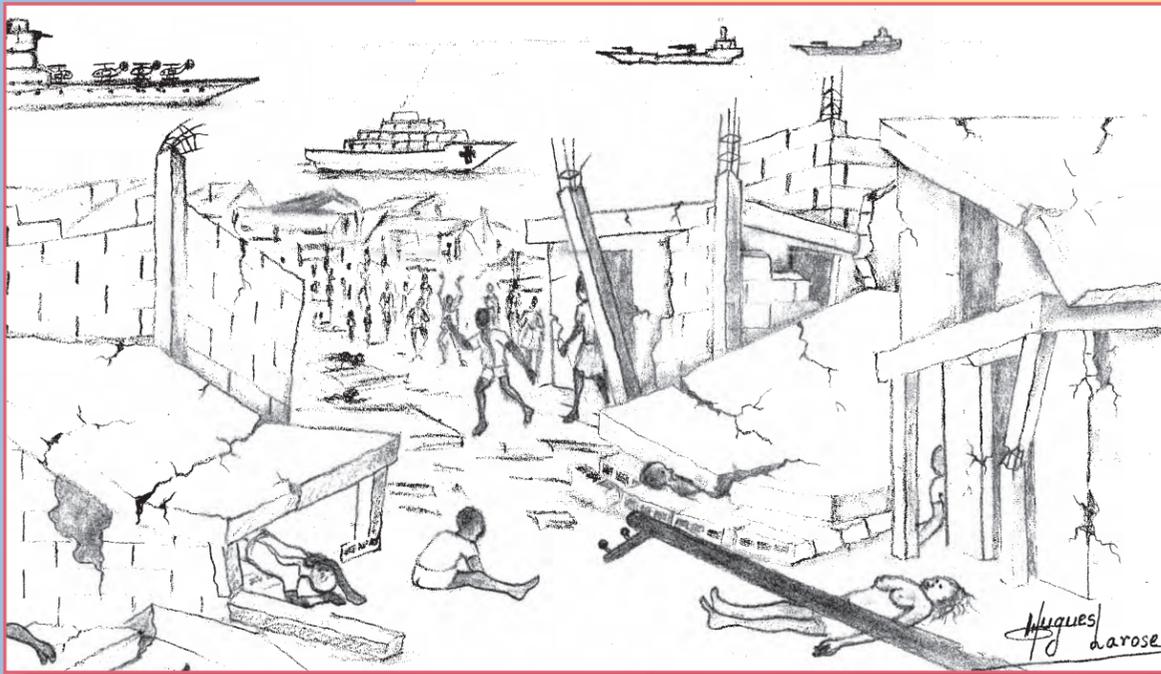
The process of ramping up the civil service crew from 18 to 67 civil service mariners moved at top speed, too. Usually, when Comfort is activated from reduced operating status, the manning process typically occurs throughout the five-day window, said Britt Skogstad, civilian mariner placement division director at Military Sealift Fleet Support Command, MSC's subordinate command, which was responsible for identifying the 42 civil service mariners plus seven augment personnel who were needed to bring the ship to its full operating status. "Usually we have a phased-in approach. But this time there was a great urgency to get the ship down to Haiti faster."

Skogstad and his team got right to work as soon as they received the activation orders the morning

of Jan. 13. At close of business on the same day, Skogstad had acquired a full staff of CIVMARs for Comfort.

"It was really quite amazing," said Skogstad. Other MSC ships were calling us asking, 'How many mariners do you need? We can provide some people.' When we went to the CIVMAR personnel pool, some of the CIVMARs who were waiting for assignments or routine reliefs canceled their plans and went to Comfort instead. This meant that some CIVMARs on other ships who were supposed to get relieved were delayed. But I didn't hear a single complaint. The show of support for Haiti was really heartwarming and a testament to the dedication of our CIVMARs."

Eighteen-wheel tractor-trailers filled to the brim with supplies and medical equipment lined the length of the Baltimore pier by the afternoon of Thursday, Jan. 14, transforming the quiet office space and repair locale it had been 48 hours before into "organized chaos," said Joe Kranz, Comfort's deck officer. "So much was going on." Cranes were swinging while crew members – including a detachment of volunteer CIVMARs from MSC dry cargo/ammunition ship USNS Lewis and Clark – loaded pallets of cargo. At the same time buses were pulling up with 600 medical and other personnel on board, many of whom had flown into area airports from around the country within 24-hours of their tasking notification.



A sketch by a Haitian earthquake victim features Military Sealift Command hospital ship USNS Comfort and other Navy ships that provided humanitarian aid.

Baby Esther, born to a mother who had been injured during the earthquake in Haiti, is the first child born aboard Comfort.



U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Matthew Jackson



A Haitian patient is discharged from Comfort en route to a medical facility in Port-au-Prince, Haiti.

U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Edwardo Proano

"The sight was just incredible. I've worked [in the Baltimore Harbor] for 20 years and I've never seen a load-out like this," said Steve Cartwright of Keystone Ship Berthing, the layberth operator for Comfort and six other MSC and Maritime Administration ships.

"It was like loading the Ark," said Comfort's master Capt. Robert Holley.

Holley, who is MSFSC's Port Captain West in Norfolk, was asked by MSFSC Director Jack Taylor to serve as the master of the ship for the mission. Holley agreed and reported to Comfort the morning of Friday, Jan. 15.

The 24 hours before the ship set sail was not without challenge, but the Comfort team managed to overcome every obstacle that presented itself.

"We basically had two administrative days [Jan. 13-14] where we assembled the crew, ordered supplies and started getting the boilers and propulsion machinery online. The 15th was spent load-ing supplies until about midnight."

Joe Watts, MSFSC's Port Chief Engineer West, normally works on the West Coast, but was in Norfolk in January for a series of meetings. On the morning of Jan. 15 – the day before the Comfort team hoped to get ship underway – Watts, who has worked many missions on Comfort's West Coast sister ship USNS Mercy, was called to participate in a phone conference on the activation and was briefed on some of the difficulties Comfort was facing. Because Comfort had been in the process of exiting a repair availability period Jan. 12, much of the on board work was coming to a close, but the crew hadn't had time to test everything in the day before the ship was activated.

amid the chaos



One of USNS Comfort's civil service mariners, Boatswain's Mate Samuel Thicklen, a native of Haiti, transports a Haitian patient from Comfort to a shore-based aftercare facility.

U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Edwardo Proano

Medical help begins as Comfort arrives in theater

Late at night Jan. 19 – less than seven days after Comfort's activation – the ship received the first patients from Haiti, delivered by an MH-60S "Knighthawk" helicopter from USS Carl Vinson. Just hours later – at 7:45 a.m., Jan. 20 – Comfort dropped anchor off the coast of Port-au-Prince.

The two patients, a six-year-old boy and a 20-year-old man injured in the earthquake, arrived aboard the ship shortly after 10 p.m. An initial examination confirmed that both of the patients suffered from serious injuries.

After the arrival of the first patients, the medical facility quickly filled to capacity. CIVMAR responsibilities included conducting ship-to-shore transports on Comfort's small boats; helping to crew the helicopter flight deck from at least 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily, while the aircraft conducted dozens of sorties a day to transport patients; completing the thousands of maintenance work orders that get submitted throughout the week; and completing a wide variety of other taskings at a moment's notice to support the ship's medical mission.

Lieberman praised Comfort's CIVMARs for remaining upbeat despite the many challenges and heart-wrenching sights of Haitian patients aboard ship. Despite the difficult circumstances, Lieberman added, "There have been absolutely no complaints. The CIVMARs run from one event to another to support anything that the Navy needs."

Lieberman noted one example where a team of CIVMARs went ashore at 1 a.m. to meet an airplane that would be delivering critical orthopedic equipment. He noted, "We went in with a bigger boat at 3 a.m. to grab that freight and get it back out to the ship so that when the doctors started their surgeries at 6 a.m., that freight was on the operating table for them to use."

Holley says the high morale is fueled by the Comfort team's full awareness of how great Haiti's need is.

"What the world is watching on television doesn't do the situation on shore justice," said Holley. "Any concrete that isn't cracked in Port-au-Prince is being lived on by families. They're putting up tents, tarps, anything they can assemble. Mass graves are everywhere and many bodies lay beneath the rubble. Every time I go ashore and see it, it strengthens my resolve to come back to Comfort to make sure we're doing everything we can to help the Navy medical folks execute their mission."

"They have so little left right now, but this country knows and loves this ship," said Kranz, referring to Laroses' powerful drawing. "Comfort has a huge impact. It's a symbol of hope amidst this catastrophe."

One of the ship's three giant diesel generators, used to power the hospital, failed, and the other two were overheating.

"My first recommendation was to locate and rent two portable generators to put on the ship so Comfort could have back-up power if it needed it," said Watts. Then Watts and a quickly assembled tiger team of four current and former chief engineers, a mechanical engineer from MSC headquarters, and an electrical engineer and crew members from MSC fast combat support ship USNS Arctic, flew immediately from Norfolk to Baltimore to try to assess the hospital power plant to see what was causing the overheating of the two remaining generators.

"The number three generator was out of the game, but we knew we could fix the other two."

Watts split his team in two groups. The engineers from Arctic, led by Chief Engineer Don Skurka, worked all through the night to assist Steve Starr, Comfort's assigned chief engineer who just reported aboard for this activation and is responsible for maintaining all of the ship's supporting systems, to redirect his focus to training his newly formed engineering crew on the systems of the ship.

At midnight, the other group, which was led by Andy Busk, field support division deputy director and ex-MSC chief engineer, and Jim Williams, MSC electrical engineer, focused its attention to the loading of the two 20-foot portable generators. MSC headquarters had been able to find and rent two generators and a floating crane to load the generators on to the ship.

"The MSC enterprise brought its full resources to bear," said Holley. "We were all very aware that our arrival in Haiti would bring a self-contained, self-sustaining medical asset that would really take the lead in medical relief efforts."

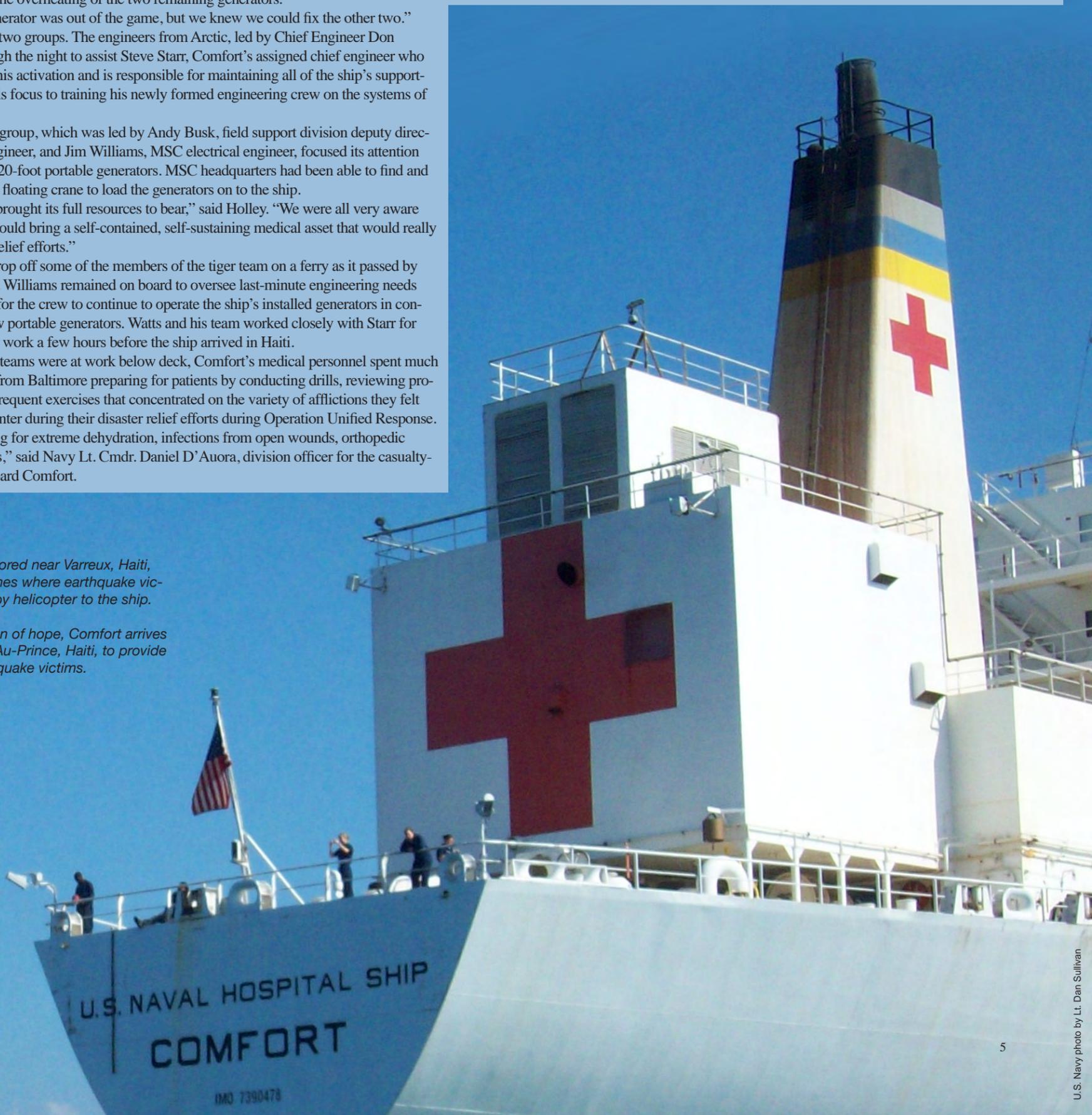
Comfort was able to drop off some of the members of the tiger team on a ferry as it passed by Norfolk. Watts, Busk and Williams remained on board to oversee last-minute engineering needs and to write a procedure for the crew to continue to operate the ship's installed generators in conjunction with the two new portable generators. Watts and his team worked closely with Starr for three days, finishing their work a few hours before the ship arrived in Haiti.

While the engineering teams were at work below deck, Comfort's medical personnel spent much of their three-day transit from Baltimore preparing for patients by conducting drills, reviewing procedures and conducting frequent exercises that concentrated on the variety of afflictions they felt they were likely to encounter during their disaster relief efforts during Operation Unified Response.

"We anticipated treating for extreme dehydration, infections from open wounds, orthopedic injuries and crush injuries," said Navy Lt. Cmdr. Daniel D'Auora, division officer for the casualty-receiving department aboard Comfort.

Cover: Comfort is moored near Varreux, Haiti, one of the landing zones where earthquake victims are transported by helicopter to the ship.

Background: A beacon of hope, Comfort arrives off the coast of Port-Au-Prince, Haiti, to provide medical care to earthquake victims.



ATLANTIC • LINES

Navy **Chief Warrant Officer Paul Prince**, SEALOGLANT representative at Naval Weapons Station Earle, N.J., assisted with the load coordination of 365 pallets of ammunition for aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson aboard Military Sealift Command dry cargo/ammunition ship USNS Lewis and Clark Jan. 5-8.

Tom D'Agostino, SEALOGLANT senior marine transportation specialist in its Charleston, S.C., office, assisted MSC tanker USNS Samuel L. Cobb's discharge of more than 150,000 barrels of fuel at Charleston Jan. 8-9 and acted as the ship's agent for MSC large, medium-speed, roll-on/roll-off ship USNS Dahl while at Detyens Shipyard in Charleston, S.C., from mid-July to mid-January.

MSC fleet replenishment oiler USNS John Lenthall returned to Norfolk Jan. 27 after an eight-month deployment providing underway

replenishment to U.S. 5th and 6th fleets.

Lenthall performed 223 underway replenishments and delivered nearly 20 million gallons of fuel and 1,767 pallets of cargo and supplies. Present for the vessel's arrival in Norfolk was Navy **Rear Adm. Mark Buzby**, MSC commander. He greeted **Capt. Philippe Julienne**, Lenthall's civil service master, and addressed the entire crew to welcome them home and thank them for a job well done.

SEALOGLANT welcomes back Navy **Lt. Maura Thompson**, logistics officer, after her extended absence. The command also welcomes Navy **Chief Petty Officer Matthew Carlo**, who will be assisting in Norfolk prior to assuming his position as an MSC representative at Naval Weapons Station Earle, N.J. Carlo's previous duty assignment was aboard USS Winston S. Churchill.

EUROPE • AFRICA • NEWS

Military Sealift Command rescue and salvage ship USNS Grapple completed East Africa Theater Security Cooperation dive and salvage engagements early January with a port visit to Port Victoria, Seychelles. After a brief stop in Souda Bay, Greece, the ship commenced theater security cooperation engagements with several North African countries. Grapple provided vital salvage dive services in response to the Jan. 25 crash of Ethiopian Airlines Flight 409 near Beirut, Lebanon.

MSC fleet replenishment oiler USNS Patuxent transited the Atlantic Ocean with the Truman Carrier Strike Group and remained in the Mediterranean Sea as the duty oiler. MSC fleet replenishment oiler USNS John Lenthall departed the U.S. Sixth Fleet area of responsibility after two months of oiler duties.

MSC fast combat support ship USNS Supply, dry cargo/ammunition ship USNS Robert E. Peary, MSC-chartered

ships MV Virginian and MV Liberty, together with the USS Harry S. Truman Carrier Strike Group, sailed from the Mediterranean to the U.S. Central Command operating area. Supply and Peary provided logistical support to the carrier strike group and also replenished independently deployed Navy ships and NATO vessels.

Maritime Prepositioning Ship Squadron One shifted its flag from USNS 2ND LT John P. Bobo to USNS PFC Eugene A. Obregon in preparation for Bobo's departure from the U.S. Sixth Fleet area of responsibility. Bobo will return to Florida to off-load its cargo and to begin a maintenance availability for upgrades and repairs.

MSC tanker USNS Samuel L. Cobb returned to its area of responsibility for its Defense Energy Support Center fuel-resupply mission following a brief trip back to the United States.

HQ • HIGHLIGHTS

Military Sealift Command honored 22 employees at an awards ceremony Jan. 26 in Washington, D.C. Receiving length of service awards for their years in the federal government were **Rick Haynes**, MSC executive director, and **Paula Plummer**, office of the comptroller, for 35 years; **James Gilmore**, command, control, communication and computer systems, and **Gordon Ivins**, office of counsel, for 30 years; **Dale Allen**, public affairs, and **Mark Coggins**, Sealift Program, for 25 years; **Michael Brown**, engineering, **Phyllis Gerald**, office of the comptroller, **Craig Miller**, contracting office, **Tim Pickering**, Sealift Program, **Jacqui Smith**, office of the comptroller, for 20 years; and **Laura Olesen Berge**, contracting office, for 10 years.

MSC recognized **Johanna O'Neill**, maritime forces, manpower and management, as Civilian of the Quarter for fourth quarter 2009.

Navy **Operations Specialist 2nd Class**

Kevin Bass, and Navy **Yeoman 1st Class Daronda Rochelle**, operations, were each awarded a Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal. Navy **Lt. Timothy Hannen**, maritime forces, manpower and management, was awarded a Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal.

MSC employees not in attendance at the ceremony, but honored for their federal government length of service were **Hal Elliott**, office of the comptroller, for 40 years; **Gary Frantz**, office of the comptroller, for 30 years; **Michael Alston**, Prepositioning Program, and **Laura Johnson** and **John Newman**, command, control, communication and computer systems, for 25 years; and **Richard Robinson**, office of the comptroller, for 20 years.

MSC bids farewell to **Richard Evans**, logistics, and **Patrick Gardner**, contracting office.

MSC welcomes **Kevin Cammie**, operations, **Earl Thomas**, logistics, and **William Smith**, office of the comptroller.

PACIFIC • BRIEFS

Fleet ocean tug USNS Sioux provided support to the Deep Submergence Unit Feb. 10 to March 5 off the coast of Southern California. Support included pierside loading of a pressure rescues module, underway training with the unit and recovery of a four-point moor system.

Thirteen SEALOPAC and San Diego area university employees served as MSC representatives at the annual Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association

Forum Feb. 2-4, at the San Diego Convention Center. The annual event features the latest in electronics and communications technology geared toward the military warfighter. This year's convention played host to nearly 8,000 attendees.

Welcome aboard new employees **Steve Drexler**, SEALOPAC operations department and **Damon Orth**, SEALOPAC facilities office.

SEALOGLANT: a seismic response to crisis

By **Bill Cook**,
SEALOGLANT Public Affairs

When news of the powerful earthquake in Haiti broke Tuesday, Jan. 12, Sealift Logistics Command Atlantic, Military Sealift Command's subordinate command headquartered in Norfolk, Va., immediately became the epicenter of MSC ship activation and deployment.

Since mid-January, SEALOGLANT has assisted, activated and/or taken operational control of 21 vessels in support of the U.S. military's Haitian relief effort, Operation Unified Response. These civilian-crewed ships, both government-owned and chartered, were crewed, loaded and underway for Haiti in record time – despite the many challenges posed by their no-notice missions. Shipboard and shoreside personnel alike joined forces in a race to help earthquake victims in Haiti.

MSC-operated ships activated and ready for tasking in January included: MSC hospital ship USNS Comfort; MSC fleet replenishment oilers USNS Big Horn and USNS Leroy Grumman; MSC dry cargo/ammunition ships USNS Sacagawea and USNS Lewis and Clark; Maritime Prepositioning Ships USNS 1st LT Jack Lummus and USNS PFC Dewayne T. Williams; MSC oceanographic survey ship USNS Henson (MSC oceanographic survey ship USNS Sumner provided equipment for Henson); MSC rescue and salvage ship USNS Grasp; ships activated from the Maritime Administration's Ready Reserve Force, including crane ships SS Cornhusker State and SS Gopher State, MSC aviation logistics support ship SS Wright, heavy-lift ship SS Cape May; and MSC-chartered vessels including MARAD high-speed ferries MV Huakai and MV Alakai, tug Victoria Hunt and the integrated tug barges Dublin Sea, Elsbeth II/BB-110, Caribe Pioneer, McAllister Boys/Atlantic Trader, and Allie B/Memphis Bridge.

Gopher State, Wright and Alakai were not required by U.S. Southern Command and were later deactivated.

The SEALOGLANT staff went into immediate action upon first reports of the earthquake. "From a logistics point of view, we knew what would soon be required," said Navy Capt. Michael Graham, SEALOGLANT Commander. "While many elements of the joint response team were still planning, we were already putting people downrange, readying for the onslaught of ships and cargo soon to arrive in Haiti's harbor."

Operating with U.S. 2nd Fleet, Big Horn was the first MSC ship sent to Haiti to refuel Naval ships arriving near the earthquake site. Sacagawea was also made available to sustain the other needs of the relief vessels such as food and other cargo.

In addition to its normal payload, Sacagawea was loaded with relief cargo from Project Handclasp, Operation Blessing, the American Red Cross and other organizations. To remind those on board of the importance of the mission at hand, crew members erected a large sign on the ship that read, "We care and we are coming."

John Gregov and Joe Guivas, SEALOGLANT marine transportation specialists in Port Canaveral, Fla., and Beaumont, Texas, respectively, flew to Port-au-Prince within days of the earthquake to spearhead port assessment and opening preparations, and to coordinate cargo movement from MSC ships to shore in the critical early stages of the assistance effort.

Rich Bolduc, SEALOGLANT supervisory marine transportation specialist at SEALOGLANT's office in Jacksonville,

Fla., was assisted by marine transportation specialists Al Dickerson and Dean Doolittle in preparing the Haiti relief cargo load-out of Lummus, which was loaded at Blount Island Command in Jacksonville Jan. 18-19. Bolduc was then dispatched to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, to coordinate cargo from the Guantanamo logistics hub to Haiti via integrated tug/barges and other cargo vessels, including the chartered high-speed super ferries.

Tom D'Agostino, senior marine transportation specialist at SEALOGLANT's Charleston, S.C., office, traveled to Port Everglades, Fla., to coordinate high-speed ferry operations.

In Haiti, Gregov and Guivas worked tirelessly, despite the most austere living conditions.

"Support elements were still in near chaos when we arrived in the country," said Guivas. "The first night we slept in a tent on the ground near the airport in Port-au-Prince." The next day, Gregov accompanied the port assessment team to the port and then relocated to the U.S. Embassy. Guivas remained at Haiti's airport for one more day, until he was also able to catch a helo lift to the embassy, where both men sustained themselves for about a week on the food items they brought to Haiti themselves, such as canned tuna, beef jerky and granola bars. Occasionally the men were given meals ready to eat by nearby military units.

"When we were both finally able to get to the port to see the earthquake damage firsthand, we realized that North Pier – Port-au-Prince's primary pier – was unusable," said Gregov. "The 1,500-foot pier and gantry crane were completely collapsed into the water. We then assessed South Pier and learned that it was temporarily not usable. South Pier sustained far less damage than the other pier, but it needed some work before running again." The two men then traveled along Haiti's coast to look for a replacement to use in tandem with Joint Logistics Over-the-Shore operations – offload operations that do not require a port.

As more military personnel arrived in Haiti, so did food for Gregov and Guivas, who were then given at least one ready-to-eat meal per day. The men slept on the floor of the embassy for a week until it was cleared of all non-embassy personnel. The men then slept on the ground under tarps in a makeshift encampment of personnel from the U.S. Army's Surface Deployment and Distribution Command. Neither of them had a real hot meal until the arrival of Lummus Jan. 22. Both men lost weight – 15 pounds in Gregov's case.

Gregov and Guivas were relieved Feb. 1 by nine members of SEALOGLANT's U.S. Naval Reserve Expeditionary Port Units 109 and 110, who assumed ship-coordination responsibilities and began assisting with the port-opening process at Port-au-Prince. Bolduc returned to Jacksonville Feb. 12. EPU team members included Navy Cmdr. Ezra Mead, Navy Lt. Cmdr. Stanley Herndon, and Navy Petty Officers 1st Class Raymond Sierra, Joung Hyun Koo, John Wojcik, Jon Michaels, Sara Cowles, David Silva and Craig Thompson. The team focused their efforts on movement control, husbandry, port-liaison efforts, communication lines and berthing requirements for the ships.

"I couldn't be more proud of this team," said Graham. "SEALOGLANT staff members stepped up without complaint – staffing the watch bill around the clock with military and civilians working side-by-side – many working 16- to 20-hour days, seven days-a-week. We got fantastic support from MSC headquarters and MSFSC to put all the necessary pieces in place to properly respond to the crisis."

FAR • EAST • HAILS

Navy Rear Adm. Nora Tyson, commander, Logistics Group Western Pacific and Commander, Task Force 73, visited dry cargo/ammunition ship USNS Amelia Earhart's civil service master, **Capt. John Pope**, and the ship's crew members during a tour of the ship, Jan. 29, at Singapore's Sembawang Wharves.

Tyson also paid a visit to rescue and salvage ship USNS Safeguard, Feb. 5, pierside at Sembawang Wharves. Tyson toured the ship and met with the ship's master **Capt. Ed Dickerson**, and the civil service mariner crew and embarked Mobile Diving and Salvage Unit One divers.

Capt. Richard Malloy, civilian master of oceanographic survey ship USNS Bruce C. Heezen, visited Sealift Logistics Command Far East headquarters Jan. 19 to meet with SEALOGFE's commander Navy **Capt. Jim Romano** and command staff members during a one-day orientation visit to the command.

Romano visited civilian ship master **Capt. Chris Begley** and his crew aboard surveillance ship USNS Victorious Jan. 13, at Sembawang Wharves. Romano visited missile range instrumentation ship USNS Observation Island on Jan. 19 while the ship was undergoing repairs at a nearby commercial shipyard. The ship's civilian master **Capt. Tom Pearse-Dranse** and the director of operations for the Air Force Technical Applications Center, the sponsor command for Observation Island, led a ship tour.

Navy **Capt. Fred Harr**, commander, Maritime Prepositioning Ship Squadron Two, visited SEALOGFE headquarters, Jan. 27-29, meeting with Romano and command staff members. Harr, who assumed command of the squadron in November, also took the opportunity to meet with Tyson.

From Diego Garcia, Navy **Chief Warrant Officer John Rawls** reported to the squadron replacing Navy **Chief Warrant Officer Charles Briggs** as the squadron's operations officer. Navy **Yeoman Chief Greg Smith** relieved Navy **Yeoman Chief Derrick Walls** as the squadron's administrative officer.

Navy Rear Adm. Barry L. Bruner, Commander, Submarine Group Ten, paid a visit to MPS Squadron Two's flagship USNS Sgt. William R. Button at Diego Garcia's lagoon, Feb. 4. The ship's master **Capt. Lloyd Dorricott** and MPS Squadron Two's chief staff officer Navy **Lt. Cmdr. Brent Holbeck** escorted the admiral on a tour of the ship.

A group of 20 sailors from Navy Cargo Handling Battalion One, based out of Cheatham Annex, Va., conducted training on board MPS Squadron Three flagship USNS Maj. Stephen W. Pless off the coast of Saipan, Jan. 11-15. Sailors trained in crane operations and cargo-handling techniques while preparing for their participation in exercise Freedom Banner held in Korea, mid-February.

During an awards ceremony held on board Pless Jan. 22, Pack presented Navy **Lt. j.g. David Blas**, Navy **Ensign Alex Cassady** and Navy **Gunners Mate Chief Brian McCorkell** with Navy Achievement Medals for their superb efforts in orchestrating the command's move to its alternate and current flagship. The squadron relocated from MPS USNS 1st Lt. Jack Lummus to Pless in December. Pack also presented Cassady with his Surface Warfare Supply Corps Officer pin.

In other news from MPS Squadron Three, a group of 35 high school seniors from Saipan area schools, many of whom had expressed an interest in joining the U.S. military, paid a visit to Pless Jan. 20. The tour, initiated by local U.S. Marine Corps recruiters, allowed the group to see some of the finest Marine Corps combat equipment and supplies up close. Pless' **Chief Mate Andrew Petruska** led the group on a tour of the ship. The group also stayed on board for lunch hosted by the MPS Squadron Three staff.

From the Korean peninsula on Jan. 12, Navy **Cmdr. Chris Cruz**, commanding officer, Military Sealift Command Office Korea hosted U.S. Coast Guard **Capt. Gerald Swanson**, commander, U.S. Coast Guard Activities Far East, at the command's Busan Pier Eight office. Swanson met command staff members and toured the office as well as the Pier Eight facility.

COMPASS • HEADING

Navy **Rear Adm. Mark Buzby**, commander, Military Sealift Command, expressed his personal thanks to the many Military Sealift Fleet Support Command shoreside civil servants, military personnel and civil service mariners assembled at Naval Station Norfolk's Ely Hall Jan. 29, for their long hours and "can do" support to Operation Unified Response and Haitian relief efforts.

MSC dry cargo/ammunition ship USNS Sacagawea carried to Haiti donated clothes, toiletries and canned goods – all quickly collected through the voluntary efforts of MSFSC staffers. Word about the collection drive circulated around the command's headquarters on Wednesday, Jan. 13, just over 12 hours after the earthquake devastated the island nation. By the time Sacagawea got underway from the Naval Station Norfolk Pier 22, pallets of goods had been collected.

Sembawang Shipyard executives, with Ship Support Unit Singapore's director, Navy **Lt. Cmdr. Mike Little**, paid an office call to MSFSC Director **Jack Taylor** and other MSFSC leaders in mid-January. During the visit the Sembawang executives discussed future ship repair relationships with the assembled MSFSC stakeholders.

MSFSC continues to recruit new employees. On Jan. 27, **Ed Kervin** and **Michael Latham** of the human resources and manpower directorate represented the organization at a job fair in

Franklin, Va., where more than 1,000 laid-off papermill workers were gathered in the hope of finding new jobs.

Cargo Mate Duane Case, **Boatswain's Mate Randolph Sanchez** and **Essex Kerr**, and **Cargo Boatswain's Mate Arden Brandenburg** of fast combat support ship USNS Bridge had a rare opportunity to stand at the receiving end of an underway replenishment hose when they were flown aboard aircraft carrier USS Nimitz to assist in troubleshooting a recurring fuel-probe receiver failure. After working with other Bridge crew members to transfer more than 700 pallets of supplies and 900,000 gallons of jet aircraft fuel, the team then went on to add their expertise to repairing one of Nimitz's replenishment stations.

Fair winds and following seas to afloat personnel **Yeoman Storekeeper Luis Heredia**, **Boatswain's Mate Felix Garcia** (with 44 years), **Junior Supply Officer Rudy Jacob**, **First Officer Stanford Morse**, **Able Seaman Edward Pinyon** (with 43 years), **Assistant Cook Teofilo Reyes**, and, ashore, occupational health nurse **Susan Depetris**, as they retire. Thank you for your service.

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

CENTRAL • CURRENTS

January saw the departure of MSC dry cargo/ammunition ship USNS Amelia Earhart and MSC fast combat support ship USNS Bridge after the ships successfully completed their taskings in U.S. 5th Fleet. While in theater, Earhart and Bridge provided invaluable resupply support and were instrumental in the mission accomplishment of the Nimitz Carrier Strike Group, the Bataan and Bonhomme Richard Amphibious Ready Groups and numerous coalition naval combatants while supporting Partnership Strength Presence, Maritime Security Operations, the Struggle Against Violent Extremists and Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom.

Bridge and her crew safely conducted 79 underway replenishments, transferred 22.2 million gallons of fuel and delivered 10,891 pallets. Earhart and her crew safely conducted 71 underway replenishments, transferred more

than 5 million gallons of fuel, 161 pallets of ordnance, and 2,704 pallets of cargo and provisions. Earhart and Bridge each received a "Bravo Zulu" message from Navy **Capt. Don Hodge**, Commodore, Carrier Task Force 53.

MSC fast combat support ship USNS Bridge, just prior to her outchop to U.S. 7th Fleet, delivered 38,857 gallons of fuel and 10,500 gallons of potable water to Pakistan navy ship Babur and Australian navy destroyer escort HMAS Stuart, in the Gulf of Oman Jan. 22. In addition, MSC fleet replenishment oiler USNS Kanawha refueled Pakistan navy ship Khaibar with 21,000 gallons of fuel Jan. 25 in the Gulf of Aden. The successful logistic operations enhanced theater security cooperation as the Pakistan navy supported CTF-150 and CTF-151 while conducting maritime security operations and counter-piracy operations.

Henson clears path for Haiti

By **Adrian Schulte**
MSC Public Affairs

Painting a picture of the ocean to help ensure safe maritime navigation is standard for the Naval Oceanographic Office personnel aboard Military Sealift Command oceanographic survey ship USNS Henson. Henson's routine mission changed and intensified Jan. 15 when the ship was tasked with survey operations that would allow much needed humanitarian supplies to reach the victims of the Jan. 12 earthquake in Haiti.

From Jan. 21 to Feb. 1, Henson and its embarked crew of 14 military and civilian surveyors, technicians and hydrographers from the Naval Oceanographic Office conducted hydrographic surveys off Port-au-Prince, Haiti, in support of Operation Unified Response. The surveys were conducted to ensure that ships and small crafts packed with gear and stores could safely enter, exit and anchor in Haiti's ports.

Hydrographic surveys determine water depth, map the seafloor, and chart the coastline, said Navy Lt. Cmdr. Melanie Sigafoose, Naval Oceanographic Office military deputy director of operations. Hydrographic surveys also identify wrecks and obstructions that are navigational

hazards, and measure tides and currents – information routinely used to aid the navigation of U.S. Navy ships.

Henson, which is crewed by 24 U.S. merchant mariners who work for a ship operating company under contract to MSC, was conducting surveys in the Eastern Pacific Ocean when the call came to quickly head to Haiti via the Panama Canal. MSC oceanographic survey ship USNS Sumner, which conducts missions similar to Henson's, was in Port Canaveral, Fla., and closer to the scene of the earthquake, but lacked the 34-foot hydrographic survey launches, or HSLs, that are capable of surveying in water less than 10 meters in depth, said Jim Beliveau, project officer for MSC oceanographic survey ships. Sumner is capable of carrying the HSLs but had none on board. Henson was carrying two of the HSLs, which made it more suitable for the Haiti mission.

Sumner's crew quickly loaded the equipment and personnel that Henson's crew would need to complete their mission in Haiti and headed to Naval Station Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Sumner unloaded the equipment and personnel for Henson to pick up Jan. 20.

While in Guantanamo Bay, Henson brought aboard additional civilian hydrographers, system engineers, fleet survey

team expeditionary military and civilian hydrographers, and expeditionary survey vehicles, which are specially fitted jet skis used to survey in very shallow water. In addition, Henson's mariners loaded food, water and a marine-portable tank filled with 1,000 gallons of gasoline to fuel the jet skis.

"After a hectic six-hour port visit, we departed Gitmo and began the short transit to Haiti," said Henson's master, Capt. Greg Gillotte.

Henson and its crew arrived off the coast of Haiti midday Jan. 21 and immediately got to work.

"The devastation was clearly evident from miles away, especially the collapsed cargo-handling cranes in the harbor and the main cathedral," said Gillotte. "Collapsed buildings and houses could easily be seen from our location."

The mission included surveying the piers, the harbor and the approaches to Port-au-Prince. The surveys were conducted by the hydrographers, oceanographers and system engineers using HSLs, multi-beam sonars, side-scan sonars and GPS systems. Fleet survey team hydrographers used the jet skis to survey in the shallow water next to the shore. The HSLs conducted surveys of the harbor and main channel while Henson

conducted surveys of the approaches to Port-au-Prince.

A typical day included Henson surveying offshore at night, entering the harbor to deploy the HSLs and jet skis at first light, then returning offshore to survey the approaches for the remainder of the day, said Gillotte. The ship would return to Port-au-Prince harbor to recover the HSLs and jet skis in the evening before proceeding back out to sea to survey throughout the night until the next morning. The ship entered and left port at least three times some days.

"Henson shifted quickly from deep-water surveying to port and harbor surveys," said Sigafoose. "The robust data-collection systems and satellite communications with the Naval Oceanographic Office allowed the survey data to be rapidly processed and provided to on-scene fleet commanders and the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency for updating nautical charts."

"Ours was a small contribution to the relief effort, but the entire crew is proud to have done their part," said Gillotte.

Henson left Haitian waters Feb. 1 for routine survey operations in the Caribbean. A port devastated by an earthquake lay off its stern, but so did a clear path for relief thanks to the efforts of the merchant mariners and Naval Oceanographic Office personnel aboard Henson.



Photo by General Dynamics American Overseas Marine

Lummus & JLOTS lift hearts in Haiti

By Mike Neuhardt, Prepositioning Program & Trish Larson, MSC Public Affairs

A powerful earthquake changed the lives of millions of Haitians Jan. 12, leaving an unimaginable wake of death, destruction and upheaval. As a desperate cry for help began to reverberate around the world, one of Military Sealift Command's nearly 700-foot Maritime Prepositioning Ships, USNS 1st LT Jack Lummus, happened to be offloading cargo at Marine Corps Support Facility Blount Island, in Jacksonville, Fla.

Although Lummus normally operates as part of a five-ship squadron in the Western Pacific, the ship arrived in Florida Jan. 13 to start a routine cycle of ship and cargo maintenance. Lummus' usual mission is to provide at-sea prepositioning for one-fifth of the equipment and supplies needed to sustain more than 15,000 Marine Expeditionary Brigade personnel for up to 30 days in the event of conflict.

As vivid scenes of Haiti's devastation and suffering began to hit news media, the U.S. Transportation Command quickly evaluated transportation resources to move massive amounts of humanitarian aid and disaster relief supplies into the affected area.

"Several of our prepositioning ships, including Lummus, were being considered," said Keith Bauer, technical director of MSC's Prepositioning Program.

Lummus was ideal since it was already in port; only three days from the crisis area; and mostly empty and ready to take on cargo.

Lummus was also suited for the Haiti mission because of its unique watercraft and floating hose-line systems, enabling the ship to carry cargo from up to two miles offshore for delivery straight to undeveloped beaches or degraded port facilities, like those in Port-au-Prince. The ship can also produce 36,000 gallons of potable water per day.

Packing up and getting ready to go

On Jan. 18, Pentagon officials ordered Lummus to get underway in support of Operation Unified Response within 24 hours, so the ship could arrive in theater Jan. 22.

With sail orders issued, the ship's maintenance cycle went on hold. Although the U.S. merchant mariner crew members had just completed a long trip from the Western Pacific Ocean, they began plans for the new mission and a departure the next day.

Overnight, the ship's operating company arranged to load additional provisions and lifesaving equipment after learning that several military and civilian riders would be embarked to conduct cargo operations upon arrival in Haiti.

Prior to Lummus' departure, a new Department of Defense agreement with the U.S. Agency for International Development, also called USAID, was established to detail the handling of relief cargoes. MSC and USAID worked closely throughout Lummus' entire mission — a level of interagency coordination that was unprecedented in the history of MSC's Prepositioning Program.

The Marines dramatically compressed the cargo load cycle by working 24-hour shifts, which enabled them to simultaneously off-load and back-load Lummus in a matter of days. Usually these cycles require months of complex coordination among Marine Corps systems commands; Fleet Marine Forces; and Marine Corps Support Facility Blount Island, which is responsible for load planning, fielding cargo and eventually stowing cargo on the MPS.

More than 120 pallets of relief supplies from USAID were loaded, in addition to approximately 5,000 16-ounce bottles of propane for temporary cook stoves in Haiti.

The Marine Corps loaded humanitarian assistance cargo to support the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit. The cargo included dump trucks, bulldozers and other heavy equipment needed to clear the devastated port and roads in and around Port-au-Prince. The Marines also loaded electrical generators, water purification units, building materials and medical supplies. Other government agencies also loaded relief supplies.

Lummus carried more than 230 military personnel total — approxi-

mately double the military complement the ship normally carries. Navy Support Element sailors, representatives of the Blount Island Command Second Marine Division and Marine Corps contractors embarked Lummus to ensure that the trucks and other heavy equipment could be fielded mission-ready as soon as the ship arrived in Haiti.

Preparations to send Lummus to Haiti attracted outside attention.

"When the local community around Blount Island discovered that Lummus was departing for Haiti, everyone wanted to help," said Rich Bolduc, MSC's senior representative in Jacksonville. "A church in Tampa donated a cinder block-making machine, and later, the Lummus master made sure it got ashore in Haiti."

Delivering the goods

As Lummus approached the area off Port-au-Prince Jan. 22, the U.S. Navy's multi-faceted off-shore presence was

highly visible.

"We anchored in the outer anchorage approximately three miles from the main port facilities due to our deep draft and the need to have clear water for water making, said Lummus master Capt. Richard Horne.

Unlike previous missions, the ship did not have access to ports with cranes, large storage facilities, capable material-handling and line-haul equipment, and other modern infrastructure.

The situation in Haiti reinforced the importance of Lummus' amphibious capabilities, including Navy lighterage loaded on the ship's weather decks, which consisted of powered and non-powered causeway sections that were placed alongside the ship when it arrived in theater, and then used to ferry equipment from ship to shore. This multi-vessel process of off-loading cargo at sea is called Joint Logistics Over-the-Shore, or JLOTS.

Amphibious operations depend on Navy Support Element professionals — personnel with specialized training and experience in deploying, operating and repairing watercraft in the most austere conditions. Thanks to the dedication of sailors from Beach Group Two, Amphibious Construction Battalion Two, Assault Craft Units Two and Four and Cargo Handling Battalion One, all of Lummus' cargo was successfully discharged at sea aboard the lighterage and transported ashore via JLOTS.

"It was impressive to see Lummus working around the clock to get supplies ashore," said Stephan Jean-Bart, part of MSC's assessment team on assignment in Port-au-Prince. Jean-Bart normally works in the strategic planning office at MSC headquarters and has a personal stake in the relief efforts since his wife's family lives in Port-au-Prince. He added, "I am personally grateful for what MSC, and Lummus in particular, have done to help."

Lt. Cmdr. Don Babcock, officer in charge, Navy Logistics Over-the-Shore, Navy Forward Command Element, wrote a note of thanks to the Lummus master and crew.

"Rarely have I seen such hospitality and flexibility as was demonstrated by you and your crew when you hosted the Navy Forward Command Element during Operation Unified Response in Haiti," Babcock said.

He added, "Given the hard and sometimes disturbing work the sailors and Marines had to do each day, returning to the ship was always a welcome respite, a bit of a temporary escape."

After a highly productive two weeks in theater, Lummus wrapped up its support to Operation Unified Response and departed Haiti Feb. 3, returning to Blount Island three days later. After off-loading cargo there, the ship sailed to Charleston, S.C., for an overhaul that began in mid-February.

The legacy of help continues

Lummus has been a major player in a number of humanitarian operations around the world during its 24-year association with MSC, originally as an MSC-chartered ship and later as an MSC-owned ship.

In June 1991, Lummus delivered food and water that were part of a support package for more than 20,000 evacuees after the eruption of Mount Pinatubo and a tropical storm combined to cause catastrophic damage in the Philippines.

In September 1992, Lummus responded quickly to Guam in the aftermath of Super Typhoon Omar, delivering water and heavy equipment.

In December 1992, Lummus was among the first ships to arrive at Mogadishu, Somalia, to support Operation Restore Hope. During the ship's extended visit in Somalia, crew members provided critical food and water to deployed Marines and a local population in crisis.

In January 2005, Lummus provided water and support craft in the Maldives for victims of a major tsunami.

"The Lummus crew made a positive difference in a part of the world that desperately needs help — a privilege and a continuing tradition for Lummus," said Horne. "I'm confident that our ship's heroic namesake, Marine Corps 1st LT Jack Lummus, would be justifiably proud."

Bridging the gap

By MSC Public Affairs

The port infrastructure in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, was devastated. Because most humanitarian aid bound for Haiti goes by ship, relief supplies required another way to get ashore.

The solution was joint logistics over-the-shore, or JLOTS — offloading cargo from ships at sea and then transporting that cargo ashore via landing craft and specially designed motorized and non-motorized barges called lighterage.

Ten MSC-operated vessels supported JLOTS, including two Maritime Prepositioning Ships, both owned by MSC; two ships that were activated from the Maritime Administration's Ready Reserve Force and under MSC operational control; one MARAD high-speed ferry; and five chartered vessels.

By mid-February, more than 1,000 20-foot containers of vital cargo and more than 170 military vehicles, all of which had arrived aboard ships, had been ferried ashore on lighterage delivered by MSC. Supplies included baby formula, medical supplies, USAID relief supplies, fuel trucks and dump trucks.

USNS 1st LT Jack Lummus arrived in theater Jan. 22. The ship carried three lighterage systems and one Army LCM-8 — an amphibious vessel used to transport people or cargo from a ship at sea to shore. Mission completed, Lummus departed Haiti Feb. 3.

USNS PFC Dewayne T. Williams, the second of two MPS, arrived Jan. 31. It carried equipment to help shoreside soldiers and sailors receive, organize and distribute cargo once it reached shore; supplies to build a Seabee base camp for up to 1,600 personnel; seven Army vehicles that can lift and transport cargo containers under adverse conditions; and nearly 200 soldiers and sailors who are now directly supporting JLOTS efforts. As of mid-February, Williams remained on site to provide tendering services and deliver fuel and water to the lighterage craft.

RRF heavy-lift ship SS Cape May was loaded with the Navy's most modern lighterage equipment — called the Improved Navy Lighterage System — in Norfolk and arrived Jan. 29, when the lighterage was offloaded and assembled.

While at anchor, Cape May provided berthing space and potable water for local personnel. The ship also had dock space available for maintenance on the lighterage systems, and remains on-station.

RRF crane ship SS Cornhusker State arrived Jan. 30, making its shipboard cranes available for lifting cargo from ships onto lighterage for transport to shore. The ship has been used primarily to lift palletized cargo from ships, placing the pallets aboard barges where the cargo is placed into containers for easier transport to shore. Cornhusker State remains in Port-au-Prince to continue its support.

High-speed ferry MV Huakai, for which MARAD assumed caretaker responsibilities in 2009, delivered about 160 additional military personnel Jan. 30, primarily to support the shoreside reception portion of the JLOTS operation. As of mid-February, Huakai was ferrying vehicles and humanitarian assistance cargo from Jacksonville to Port-au-Prince.

Five short-term chartered vessels proved valuable. Tug-barges Elsbeth II/BB-100, Allie B/Memphis Bridge, McAllister Boys/Atlantic Trader and Caribe Pioneer/Foss 343 assisted in the download of break-bulk, roll on/roll off and containerized cargo. Tug boat Victoria Hunt assisted in the movement of ships, lighterage and barges. As of mid-February, four of the five chartered vessels remained in Haiti to support relief operations.

"The crews provided outstanding support," said Tim Pickering, MSC cargo project officer. "As a result, lives are being saved, and pain is being eased. There's great satisfaction in knowing that."