Henson & South American navies chart a new course for OCEANOGRAPHIC-SOUTHERN PARTNERSHIP STATION

INSIDE — Salvor helps recover sunken South Korean vessel • Swift wraps up nine-month APS mission
Thoughts on seeing MSC in action

First off, congratulations to all of the chief mates and first assistant engineers selected for permanent or temporary promotions to master and chief engineer! Competition for these coveted billets was exceptionally keen among a very highly qualified group of professional mariners. Well done!

Secondly, congratulations to the Sealift staff, led by Editor Meghan Patrick, for their second consecutive award – this time honorable mention - in the annual CHINFO Merit Awards – in the tabloid newspaper category. I think they turn out a terrific product every month, and I am happy to see that the Chief of Information thinks so, too. Nice job, gang!

Europe and the Middle East

As I write my comments for this month, I am underway in the Persian Gulf aboard dry cargo/ammunition ship USNS Robert E. Peary getting a first-hand view of some of your fellow mariners in action executing the business of MSC – supporting the fleet. You know, one of the distinct downsides of being “the admiral” is that it tends to anchor me to the beach and away from the “pointy end” of our business. I like to take the opportunity whenever I can break away from headquarters to get out and meet you - afloat or ashore - to hear how things are going and to pass on what I am thinking about in Washington to see if it makes sense to those of you who are going to have to actually make it happen. Thankfully, you all have been very open and candid in sharing your thoughts, concerns and comments. I appreciate that. By the way, I hear all of you loud and clear on the lack of bandwidth issue! I’m working some angles.

My time here in the Gulf, hosted by SEALOGCENT Commodore Don Hodge, is the first stop in a 10-day swing through CENTCOM and EU – afloat or ashore – to hear how things are going and to pass on what I am thinking about in Washington to see if it makes sense to those of you who are going to have to actually make it happen. Thankfully, you all have been very open and candid in sharing your thoughts, concerns and comments. I appreciate that. By the way, I hear all of you loud and clear on the lack of bandwidth issue! I’m working some angles.

The ship, as I write this, is underway en route to the Arabian Sea. We are scheduled to cross the Suez Canal tomorrow and visit the “grand dame” of the fleet – USNS Observation Island – which is still going strong after 57 years. While in Singapore, I was able to participate in the SEALOGFE change of command between Capt. Jim Romano and Capt. Chip Denman. By the time you read this, Capt. Romano will have reported to MSC headquarters to serve as my chief of staff.

I hope to do it again in the fall.

Hawaii and the Far East

In late March, I made a similar swing through the Far East making stops in Pearl Harbor, Guam, Singapore and Yokohama. Along the way I was able to visit crews aboard MSC ships USNS Sioux, USNS Navajo, USNS Yukon, MV C-Commando, USNS Amelia Earhart, USNK Frank Cable, MV VADM K.M. Wheeler, USNS Richard E. Byrd, USNS Imppecable and the “grand dame” of the fleet – USNS Observation Island – which is still going strong after 57 years. While in Singapore, I was able to participate in the SEALOGFE change of command between Capt. Jim Romano and Capt. Chip Denman. By the time you read this, Capt. Romano will have reported to MSC headquarters to serve as my chief of staff.

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MSC ships win CNO Afloat Safety Awards

Three Military Sealift Command ships were recognized April 2 with 2009 Chief of Naval Operations Afloat Safety Awards.

Ammunition ship USNS Kiska, submarine tender U.S.S. Frank Cable and tanker USNS Paul Buck were recognized for safety achievements, each earning the right to display the Navy’s green safety “S” on the ship’s bulwark until the next competitive year.

“This award recognizes outstanding contributions to fleet readiness, efficiency and economical use of resources through safety,” said Navy Rear Adm. Arthur Johnson, commander, Naval Safety Center. “In addition to having an outstanding safety record, this year’s winners also demonstrated an aggressive safety program that actively contributed to increased mishap prevention efforts through active reporting of hazards, near-misses and lessons learned.”

During the 2009 calendar year, the 38-year-old Kiska safely transferred more than 25,000 pieces of ordnance. Nearly 7,000 pieces were transferred by underway replenishment. “Kiska’s master, Captain Mark Cook, provides quality leadership that drives the crew to efficiently maintain the vessel’s material readiness and fosters hazard mitigation,” said Kevin Kohlmann, MSC safety manager. “Kiska’s flawless operations resulted in no injuries or accidents, which exemplifies the safety culture found on board.”

Cable, which won its second consecutive CNO award, aggressively tracks its own mishaps in order to identify trends on board. This resulted in a 27 percent reduction of mishaps in 2009, said Kohlmann. Cable’s crew credits much of its safety success to the ship’s training program. All reporting personnel are required to attend training that covers an introduction to Navy occupational, safety and health; operational risk management; safety warning signs and markings; emergency responses and other areas of safety.

Buck, which is crewed by commercial mariners working for a company under contract to MSC, has had no lost-time injuries on board since January 2006. In addition, no environmental incidents have occurred in more than six years. Buck submits monthly safety reports to its operating company, and those findings are shared with MSC’s other T-3 tankers to further promote safety, said Kohlmann.

The winners will receive a plaque and a CNO citation, and will compete in the Secretary of the Navy Safety Excellence Awards competition later this year.
Salvor supports recovery of South Korean navy ship

By Edward Baxter
SEALOGFE Public Affairs

A t the request of the Republic of Korea government, 16 civil ser-
vice mariners assigned to Military Sealift Command rescue and sal-
vage ship USNS Salvor joined U.S. divers in support of South Korea’s
search, recovery and salvage of a South Korean navy ship, that sank March 26 in the Yellow Sea, leaving nearly half of its 104 crew members unaccounted for. The cause of the incident remains under investiga-
tion.

The 1,200-ton South Korean patrol vessel Cheonan broke into two large pieces about one mile off South Korea’s Baengnyeong Island just south of the Northern Limit Line – a United Nations-mandated, de-facto maritime boundary divid-
ing South and North Korea. Fifty-
eight of Cheonan’s crew members were rescued by Republic of Korea rescue teams from the bow of the ship as it started sinking.

Sixteen sailors from Mobile Diving and Salvage Unit One, based out of Pearl Harbor, Hawaii; a six-per-
ton team from Explosive Ordnance Disposal Mobile Unit Five, based out of Sasebo, Japan; and nearly 20 divers from Republic of Korea’s Sea Salvage and Rescue Unit were em-
barked on Salvor to support Repub-
lic of Korea dive operations.

“Everyone aboard Salvor fully understood the significance and importance of this operation,” said Salvor’s civil service master, Capt. William Wiggins. Salvor, guided-
missile cruiser USS Shiloh and guided-missile destroyers USS Curtis Wilbur and USS Lassen ar-
rived on scene March 27, joining an armada of 15 South Korean navy ships. The U.S. ships were operat-
ing nearby, having just completed
Korean peninsula defense Exercise Key Resolve/FOal Eagle, a bilateral, at-sea exercise with the Republic of Korea navy. Amphibious dock-land-
ing ship USS Harpers Ferry, which served as the command and control ship for U.S. support of the search, recovery and salvage operation, ar-
rived on scene April 2.

Cheonan’s bow was located in about 66 feet of water, while the stern was located in 430 feet of
water. Smaller pieces of wreckage were moved by strong underwater currents and were scattered through-
out a four-mile debris field.

On April 7, U.S. and Republic of
Korea divers went to work conduct-
ing side-scan sonar operations from a rigid-hull inflatable boat and performed surface-supplied dives at nine design-
ated sites in the debris field. Salvor’s
civil service mariners were involved in launching, recov-
ering and operating the embarked RHIBs. Salvor remained on-site throughout the operation to assist wherever needed.

“We found out that the current was rougher than we expected, and we were well prepared,” said Navy Diver 1st Class Quentin Felder-
man, assistant lead petty officer for MDSU-1.

Republic of Korea navy Chief
Jong Suk Kang was grateful for the opportunity to work with MDSU-1.
“I have done many dives, but I have worked with U.S. divers only once before. I am glad to have them help with our diving operations.”

Salvor’s civil service mariners conducted ship-to-ship cargo opera-
tions with a landing craft unit de-
ployed from Harpers Ferry to ensure that Salvor had enough provisions to support the additional persons on board for the mission.

“Meal hours were extended so ev-
everyone on board had adequate time to get a hot meal.” Wiggins said. The South Korean navy brought in a commercial, heavy-lift 4,000-ton capacity crane to lift large pieces of the wreckage to the surface. Salvor is one of four rescue and salvage ships operated by MSC to render assistance to disabled ships and provide towing, salvage, diving, firefighting and heavy lift capabili-
ties to the fleet. As April drew to a close, the ship continued to act as U.S. 7th fleet’s rescue and salvage ship while permanently-assigned
MSC rescue and salvage ship USNS Safeguard underwent repairs in the Philippines. Salvor’s work is ex-
pected to be completed in early May.

MC2 Byron C. Linder, Navy Public Affairs
Support Element Detachment Japan, con-
tributed to this story.
An oceanographic focus for **Henson** & partner navies

**Partnering for safe navigation**

Above: Navy Aerographer’s Mate 3rd Class Tonja Boyle, Fleet Survey Team, demonstrates shallow water military survey techniques using a jet ski to Colombian navy PH3 Diego Nossa from the Colombian Center of Investigation of Oceanography and Hydrography. The jet skis, or expeditionary survey vehicles, are outfitted with a single-beam echo sounder and survey grade Global Positioning System equipment and specialize in very shallow water environments. ESVs provide direct support to naval operations by conducting rapid environmental assessments for beach landings, short-notice check surveys to ensure safe navigation, and other coastal and riverine uses.

Background: Henson participates in Oceanographic-Southern Partnership Station 2010 off the coast of Cartagena, Colombia.

Cover: Military Sealift Command oceanographic survey ship USNS Henson visited Columbia and Brazil in March as part of Oceanographic-Southern Partnership Station 2010, an exercise focused on the exchange of information and practices between hydrographic experts from U.S. Southern Command partner navies. Southern Partnership Station is an annual deployment conducted by U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command and U.S. 4th Fleet. The mission’s primary goal is information sharing with foreign navies, coast guards and civilian services throughout the Caribbean and Latin America.

This is the first year that U.S. Southern Command has selected oceanography as the theme for the mission. This new focus allowed for the partner nations to exchange ideas and observe new capabilities in physical oceanographic collection and hydrography. Hydrographic surveys determine water depth, map the sea floor, chart the coastline and identify wrecks and obstructions that are navigational hazards. These surveys also measure tides and currents – information routinely used to aid the navigation of navy ships.

The aim of O-SPS was to generate long-lasting, positive and strategic relationships between the U.S. Navy and the Colombian and Brazilian navies. The mission paved the way for future engagements and information sharing between the U.S. Naval Oceanographic Office and Fleet Survey Team, and both the Colombian Center of Investigation of Oceanography and Hydrography and Brazil’s Directorate of Hydrology and Navigation.

Henson is one of seven MSC oceanographic survey ships operated by MSC for the commander, Naval Meteorology and Oceanography Command. Scientific survey teams from NAVOCEANO conduct the collection and subsequent analysis of data. The 329-foot ship is equipped with two 34-foot hydrographic survey launches that are capable of surveying in water less than 33 feet deep. For O-SPS, Henson was also augmented temporarily with two FST expeditionary survey vehicles, which are specially fitted jet skis used to survey in very shallow water.

During O-SPS, the ship’s survey and data-sharing missions were executed by a combined team of civilian and military surveyors from NAVOCEANO and FST. This embarked rapid-response team can conduct quick-turnaround hydrographic surveys anywhere in the world, ensuring vital supplies or emergency equipment can get into a damaged port.

While scientists and sailors from the three participating countries were busy exchanging ideas and fostering a positive maritime relationship, the civilian mariners operating Henson worked behind the scenes to ensure the mission went off without a hitch.

Twenty-four U.S. civilian mariners under contract with MSC operate Henson. During O-SPS, they helped conduct the deck operations demonstrations and operated the hydrographic survey launches.

“The crew has greatly enjoyed having the Colombian and Brazilian nationals aboard for these two exercises,” said Henson’s master, Capt. Greg Gillotte. “Despite any preconceived notions the crew might have, they always discover that they share a lot in common with their seafaring counterparts from other nations.”

**Charting the ocean floor with Colombia**

On a gray Sunday morning March 7, Henson and Colombian naval hydrographic survey ship ARC Providencia slipped out of the Bay of Cartagena into a restless southern Caribbean Sea to conduct their first joint at-sea survey demonstration in waters selected by the Colombian navy.

The data collected by the Colombian and American surveyors was used in a variety of workshops. For the next week, hydrographers and Henson’s contract mariners continued to carry out surveys and workshops. A Colombian research buoy was located during a survey, and Colombian coast guard
authorities were notified so that divers could later recover the buoy.

FST members spent significant time on expeditionary survey vehicles throughout the week to demonstrate the capabilities of the vehicle to a group of Colombian hydrographers. The white skyline of Cartagena was the backdrop as Aerographer's Mate 2nd Class Nicholas Wissler and Aerographer's Mate 3rd Class Tonja Boyle conducted a survey in the bay's choppy waters, taking along Colombian hydrographers for a close-up look at how the system worked at operational speeds.

“Our Colombian counterparts jumped right in alongside us to wire the [survey vehicles], put them in the water and survey,” said Wissler. “When complications or challenges arose, the Colombians didn’t criticize or complain, but instead shared examples of challenges they had faced and how they overcame them.”

Henson, NAVOCEANO and FST personnel departed Cartagena March 13 for Brazil, where they would begin the second leg of the mission.

Working with the Brazilian navy

Henson arrived in Fortaleza, Brazil, to work with the Brazilian navy March 23. Henson stopped briefly at the Port of Fortaleza to pick up nine Brazilian sailors before setting sail to begin at-sea exercises.

While in Brazil, there were exchanges between subject matter experts from the Fleet Numerical Meteorology Oceanography Center, NAVOCEANO, FST and Brazil’s Directorate of Hydrography and Navigation. Topics ranged from remote sensing, fleet support and numerical modeling, ocean and coastal modeling, bathymetry, magnetometry, geodesy and tides.

Members of the expeditionary division of FST also demonstrated a pier-clearance survey near Fortaleza March 26-27, using two expeditionary survey vehicles. The four-member team constructed a natural disaster response scenario around a partially submerged wreck and shoal area. Their objective was to search for containers and sunken vessels within the vicinity of the port.

“The exchange was amazing,” said Aerographer’s Mate 3rd Class Tonja Boyle, assistant hydrographic technician for FST. “The language barrier wasn’t as difficult as I was expecting it to be. The Brazilians were very receptive to experience firsthand our expeditionary survey capabilities, and it was easy to demonstrate since they have similar software and equipment.”

Henson hosted a closing ceremony for O-SPS March 30 aboard the ship.

“The culmination of this week’s engagement with the Brazilian and U.S. Navy hydrographic offices proved to be a successful exchange of hydrographic science and ideas between our two nations,” said Navy Capt. Brian Brown, commanding officer, Naval Oceanographic Office.

Brazilian navy Capt. Marcos Almeida, director, Brazilian Navy’s Hydrographic and Meteorological Center added, “This engagement demonstrated the strength of our partnership, and I look forward to future cooperation between our navies.”

The information gathered and discussed was invaluable, said Navy Cmdr. Oscar Monterrosa, mission commander for O-SPS. New data can provide military commanders with detailed descriptions of the environmental conditions they could face while at sea and improve the safety and efficiency of seagoing operations.

“We value our strong relationship with Colombia and Brazil, and seek to continue to expand our partnership through navy-to-navy, face-to-face, hands-on oceanographic activities,” said Monterrosa.

On April 12 in Washington, D.C., Brazilian Minister of Defense Nelson Jobim and U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates signed an agreement on defense cooperation between the governments of Brazil and the United States that includes cooperation in the fields of research and development, and combined-military training and education.

Army Sgt. 1st Class Craig Collins, 70th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment and Navy MC2 Lily Daniels, U.S. 4th Fleet Public Affairs, contributed to this story.

Buzby visited three MSC ships while in Singapore. He and Taylor first visited dry cargo/ammo ship USNS Richard E. Byrd March 25 at nearbySEMBAWANG Wharves. The admiral received a tour of the ship by Byrd’s civil service master Capt. Robert Jaeger. Buzby then visited ocean surveillance ship USNS HSC-26 at Keppel Gal shipyard March 26, where ship’s master, Capt. Mark Paine and chief engineer Thomas Matella gave him a tour. The following day, Buzby visited missile range instrumentation ship USNS Observation Island atSem-bawang Wharves, where ship’s master, Capt. Gun Maiboutsakis led the admiral, and Taylor on a tour.

Denman hosted a leadership summit March 29-30, which was attended by commanders and commanding officers from SEALOGFE’s Maritime Prepositioning Ship squadrons and MSC offices. Navy Capt. Fred Harr, commander, MPS Squadron Two; Navy Capt. Geoffrey Pack, commander, MPS Squadron Three; Navy Cmdr. Chris Cruz, commanding officer, MSC Office Korea; Navy Cmdr. Bill Ellis, commanding officer, MSCO Okinawa; and Navy Lt. Cmdr. Paul Springer, commanding officer, MSCO Diego Garcia; participated in the conference and presented briefings on their respective squadron and office missions.

Harr presented two staff members with Navy Commendation Medals during a March 31 awards ceremony held at the central Indian Ocean base._assigned MPS USNS William R. Button. Navy Chief Warrant Officer Charles Briggs and Navy Op-erations Specialist Chief William Pride received medals marking the conclusion of their successful tours in the command. Harr commended the squadron’s operations officer, Navy Chief Warrant Officer John Rawls. Harr hosted British Royal navy Cmdr. Christopher Moore for a tour of MPS flagship USNS William R. Button March 9 at Diego Garcia’s lagoon. Moore reported to Diego Garcia as the senior British Representative on the British-owned island March 3.

On March 13, Button hosted 17 sailors from Naval Mobile Construction Bat-talion One’s Diego Garcia detachment for a tour of the ship. On March 24, Harr hosted Nita Desai, country director for India from the Office of the Secretary of Defense’s policy section for South and Southeast Asia, for a tour of Button and a briefing on Maritime Prepositioning Force capabilities in the Indian Ocean. Desai, who was accompanied by Naval Support Facility commanding officer navy Capt. Mike Flanagan, was conducting a familiarization tour of Diego Garcia. MSCO Korea joined the local Busan Foreign School to co-sponsor a fund-rais-ing dinner for the Busan Sun Ae Won orphanage and local chapter of Habitat for Humanity March 5. Habitat for Humanity is a nonprofit organization that helps to build affordable homes for low-income families.

“that the fundraiser was huge success with over 400 people in attendance, which raised nine million Korean won, or about $8,000 for these charities,” Cruz said.

The event was held at a Busan hotel grand ballroom and attended by the direct-or of Sung Ae Won, the principal of the Busan Foreign School and representa-tives from the U.S. Consulate, Busan International Women’s Association, Korean American Busan Association, People to People International and the Busan Veterans hospital.

During an awards ceremony held at SEALOGFE headquarters March 31, Denman presented Springer with a Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal. During his outstanding tenure here, Springer’s command was designated a Master Seaman of the Year by the Navy’s Seaman of the month program.

Springer, who began serving on the Indian Ocean atoll in December 2008, was credited for providing outstanding logistical support to assigned MPS Squadron Two ships and for overseeing the delivery of more than 50 million gallons of fuel and thousands of metric tons of provisions and supplies to the island. Navy Lt. Cmdr. Robert Rosales released Springer as the office’s commanding officer April 6.

MSC Diego Garcia welcomes new officer Navy Boatswain’s Mate Chief Robert Gibbs to the command. Navy Logistics Specialist 2nd Class Aisha Green earned a Navy Achievement Medal March 23, which marked the end of her outstanding tour with the command.

March was another busy month on the front lines of logistics support to the U.S. 5th Fleet. Sealogcent Logistics Command Central/Commander Task Force 53 said goodbye to one of its outstanding contributors. Rear Adm. Mike Paine, 5th Fleet’s current chief ofMSC fleet replenishment or USNS Pecos. While in theater, Pecos provided support for Navy strike groups centered on aircraft carriers USS Nimitz and USS Ronald Reagan, two amphibious readiness groups centered on amphibious assault ships USS Nassau and USS Bataan, and other joint forces operating in the Pacific. Pecos’ crew safely and efficiently conducted 52 underway replenishments; transferred 4.6 million gallons of fuel and 180,000 gallons of fuel; and delivered 2,224 pallets of cargo and provisions. The crew of USNS Pecos received a Bravo Zulu message from CTF-53 for their “demonstrating an unyielding effort in support of the mission.” Rear Adm. Randy Clewett welcomed MSCO fleet replenishment or USNS Rappahamock, whose crew continues MSC’s tradition of providing crucial services to U.S. and coalition forces in the Central Command area of responsibility.

Fair winds and following seas to CTF-53’s HSC-26 Detachment One “Desert Hawk” officer-in-charge Navy Lt. Cmdr. Kevin Zayac and Air Logistics Department Cargo Of-
While in Rota, Kanawha also received training for the U.S. Marine Corps Fleet Unit 8 Detachment Rota and for Visit, dive and anti-limpet mine training for the Mediterranean theater by replenishing NATO replenishment oiler USNS Kanawha.

March saw the start of renovation work on three Breery Point buildings destined to become offices for Military Sealift Command Fleet Support Command as the command phases out its presence at the Virginia State Military Reservation at Camp Peary. The buildings, numbers 16 and 30, which are immediately north of MSFSC’s headquarters complex, are currently included for demolition in the Virginia Marine Enterprise program.

Military Sealift Command hospital ship USNS Comfort arrived at her Baltimore berth March 19 after a successful humanitarian relief mission in Haiti. Comfort’s civil service mariners were busy in the days immediately following the ship’s return. They supported U.S. Court Guard and American Bureau of Shipping annual inspections, removed temporary package generators and secured the ship’s propulsion and auxiliary generators as Comfort prepared to return to reduced operating status March 28.

MSC hospital ship USNS Mercy arrived back at its berth in San Diego, Calif., in late March. As of April, the ship was undergoing preparations for deployment in support of U.S. Pacific Command’s Pacific Partnership 2010.

Congratulations to MSFSC employees who participated in the command’s annual “Crews into Shape” crew health and fitness challenge. The program, sponsored by the Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center in conjunction with National Nutrition Month, MSFSC’s public health educator Christine McGrath administered the voluntary program, which promoted workplace-focused, team-oriented physical activity and increased fruit and vegetable intake. McGrath was recognized for her leadership and commitment to encouraging command-wide good health in conjunction with the Navy Surgeon General’s “Blue H” health-promotion and wellness awareness.

MSC fleet replenishment oiler USNS Joshua Humphreys was transferred from the Naval Inactive Ship Maintenance Facility Philadelphia to MSC March 18. The ship’s primary mission is to provide fuel to U.S. Navy ships at sea and jet fuel to aircraft. The self-short-fused refueling support is in support of U.S. 6th Fleet operations.

The ship was deactivated in October 2006 after nearly 10 years of service to MSC. Humphreys reactivated one other time in 2005-2006.


Fair winds and following seas to several retirees, including Boatugwana’s Mate Chester Blue, who is retiring after 48 years of service; Purser Reynaldo Calderon; Chief Engineer Terrance Campbell; Able Seaman Stephen Phens; Boatugwana’s Mate Frank Gray Jr.; Engineer Utilityman Ramon Josue; Utilityman Edwin Norman Jr.; Second Electrician Alan Panciapi; Purser Homer Flowers; Assistant Boatswain Books Actips and Philip Williams; Logistics Management Specialist Ray- mond Hieber; and Comptroller Joyce Jurkowski. Thank you for your service.

MSFSC sends its condolences to the family of 3rd Assistant Engineer James Brodshad, who passed away March 7.

For more MSFSC and civil service mariner news, view the online newsletter at www.msc.navy.mil/msfscnewsletter.
Military Sealift Command-chartered high-speed vessel HSV 2 Swift was one of the primary platforms for Africa Partnership Station, an international initiative to improve maritime safety and security in West and Central Africa.

Swift completed a nine-month deployment to U.S. 6th Fleet

By Kim Dixon
SEALOGUE Public Affairs


In the nearly nine months Swift was deployed to U.S. 6th Fleet, the ship sailed from Mauritania to Mauritius, and just about everywhere in between. During Swift’s mission, the ship took on many roles, including training platform, mobile classroom and provider of humanitarian aid.

Swift’s mission was part of Africa Partnership Station, or APS, a multina- tional initiative started in 2007 by Com- mander, U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Com- mander, U.S. Naval Forces Africa. During a series of maritime conferences held in West and Central Africa in 2006, African leaders stated their desire to improve maritime safety and security. APS aims to work cooperatively with U.S. and international partners to help coastal na- tions in Africa achieve these goals.

Swift departed its port in Norfolk in June 2009 with a combination of U.S. military and civilian crew members. Nineteen civilian mariners who work for a private ship operating company under con- tract to MSC operate and navigate the ship. In ad- dition, 20 Navy sailors comprise Swift’s military department.

“The combination of military and contract mariners, [also called COMMARS], provides a unique synergy that is found nowhere else in the military world,” said Navy Lt. Cmdr. Christopher Simmons, one of the ship’s two rotating officers-in-charge. “The COMMARS focus on day-to-day operation of the vessel. These operations include maintaining the engineering and deck equip- ment, providing meals and conducting the safe operation of the vessel through navigation and deck-watch standing. The military is responsible for the communications suite and conducting the mission and planning operations.”

Swift arrived in theater in July 2009 and imme- diately went to work supporting APS West. The crew grew by 49 when Swift embarked partners from Ghana, Nigeria, Cameroon, Gabon, Togo and Benin for six weeks of training. Under the guidance of 10 embarked U.S. Navy training team members, the Naval Engineering Training Command in Little Creek, Va., the West African sailors trained daily in maritime safety and secu- rity operations tailored specifically to operations in their home waters in the Gulf of Guinea.

“There were many highlights for me on both deployments, but especially the West Coast deployment because I spent time with two Nigerian officers who were fascinating to me,” said Navy Logistics Specialist Second Class Dale Holbrook. “The highlights for me were getting to know their culture and their perspective on Africa as a whole … It was amazing just how much we are all so alike.”

After weeks of teaching the embarked sailors about small-boat operations; Visit, Board, Search and Seizure; seamanship; and navigation training, Swift switched gears to conduct a series of the- ater security cooperation engagements in Ghana, Cameroon, Gabon, Togo, Liberia and Gambia. A commercial ferry by design, Swift was well- suited to meet its mission in theater.

“Swift can carry a mix of people and cargo,” said Navy Capt. James Tranoris, commander, Sealift Logistics Command Europe and Combined Task Force 63, Swift’s operational commander in theater. “Swift can carry 400 passengers, and she is relatively fast. The vessel can support a heli- copter landing and taking off from its deck.”

Upon completing APS West in September 2009, Swift continued supporting U.S. theater security cooperation goals within U.S. Africa Command by providing intra-theater sealift services for a Navy mobile construction battalion in West Af- rica. In addition, Swift frequently hosted U.S. and foreign dignitaries on board.

Swift started the second half of its APS deploy- ment Dec. 29, this time a three-month mission to seven Eastern African nations including Djibouti, Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, Mauritius, Sey- chelles and Comoros. During these visits, Swift embarked African navy personnel in order to con- duct professional exchanges on damage control engineering, medical procedures, navigation and watch standing.

Swift’s involvement in back-to-back APS mis- sions reflects the ship’s history of contributions to U.S. Navy theater security cooperation goals. “We have been doing these types of deploy- "width="500" height="500" src="https://services.wikimedia.org/api/files/images/fd/fe/168.jpg" alt="Swift is seen in her role as a part of the Africa Partnership Station."

ments for a while now, and they just keep getting better,” said Swift’s civilian master Capt. Joseph Sohlberg. “Prepara- tion, coordination and execution between the military and civilian personnel has been better than ever. As merchant mariners, we bring a flexibility to bear that is built on a wealth of practical and operational experience. All of this is reflected in the ship’s operations. This ‘can do’ – will do attitude pays dividends in day-to-day operations.”

The military also felt the combined crew brought unique capabilities to bear. “The combination of various individ- uals with diverse backgrounds leads to a better overall result with better efficien- cy,” said Simmons. “In addition, it helps to build partnerships and strengthen rela- tionships when you can present a civilian and military side to operations. It enables the vessel to interact with more than one subset of the host population.”

The military members also found that being embarked on an MSC ship brought as many similarities as it did differences from life on a U.S. Navy ship.

“Cleaning space and preparing for dignitary visits was the same,” said crew member Navy Chief Warrant Officer 3 William Alexander. “What was different was having the ship crewed by civilians, getting to know and hav- ing chow that was sometimes better.”

Swift’s civilian crew offered a unique perspec- tive on the international maritime environment to APS East participants. Sohlberg shared his civilian mariner experiences with students at the School of Nautica, a training institution for both navy and civilian mariners in Mozambique.

“In reaching out to the students at the School of Nautica, we were engaging the next genera- tion of maritime professionals in Mozambique,” said Sohlberg. “I find that very exciting. It is the most basic aspects of APS – setting the spark that will grow into relationships that may facilitate a safer and more secure maritime environment off the coasts of Africa. The majority of the students at the school were entering the merchant marine. As a member of this international fraternity, it was a pleasure to discuss the industry as a whole and the opportunities that exist in the international maritime fleets.”

“Maritime problems are global concerns that no one nation can tackle alone,” said Tranoris. “Af- rica Partnership Station East 2010 demonstrated both the capability and the promise of lasting cooperative maritime efforts.”

Swift concluded APS March 12. As the ship returned home to prepare for its next tasking, the crew and military detachment were confident in the value of their contributions.

“Our continued contribution to MSC’s mission is evident daily as we support our assigned task and our customer’s objective,” Sohlberg said.