

October 2010

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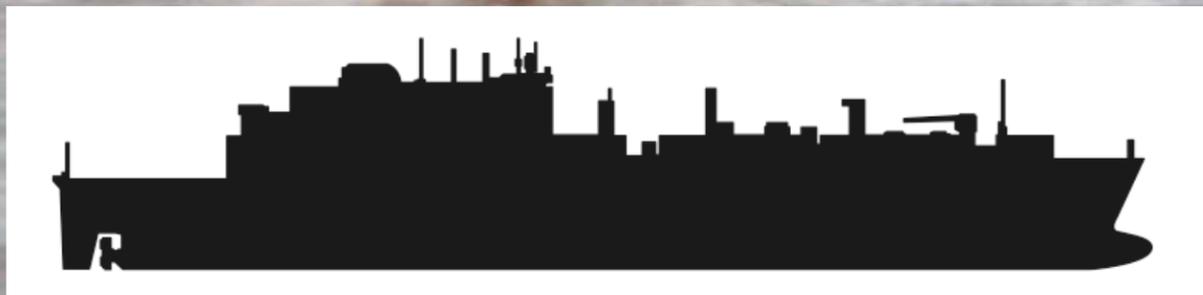
THE U.S. NAVY'S MILITARY SEALIFT COMMAND

Relief floods Pakistan

Summer monsoon rains in Pakistan cause the worst flooding in the country's history — leaving 1,700 dead, 6 million homeless and 1 million displaced. Residents carry their belongings through a flooded road in Risalpur, Pakistan.



T-AKES DELIVER



INSIDE — Grapple clears seven wrecks in Albanian pier • Mercy completes Pacific Partnership 2010

Reuters photo by Adrees Latif

Commander's perspective

One year on watch – log it!

Hard to believe, but it's already been a year since I took command of MSC. I've had the opportunity to meet many of you – both afloat and ashore – and in the coming year I look forward to meeting many more of you. You've taught me a lot about our organization, the 'goods' and the 'others.' I am working hard to get after the 'others' and I appreciate your cooperation and willingness to offer constructive criticism as we get moving forward on the 50 Initiatives. Most importantly, I appreciate your support. It will take time, but we are making progress!

Operation Unified Response recognition

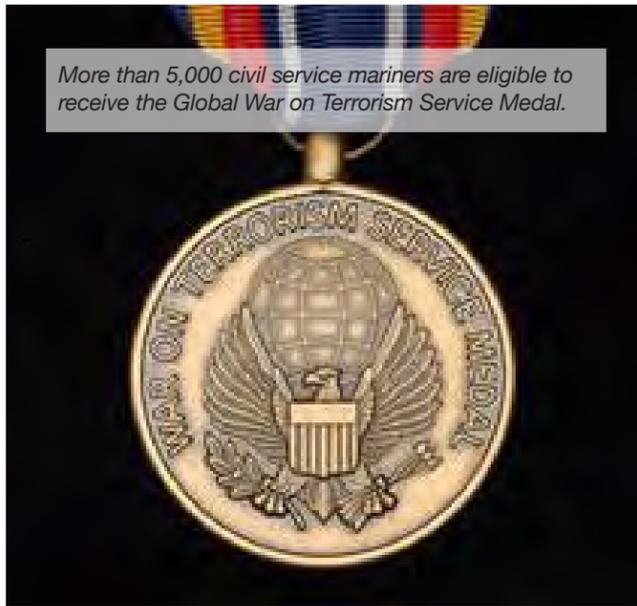
When the earthquake devastated Port-au-Prince, Haiti, in January, MSC CIVMARs and CONMARs quickly and professionally responded. The 15 MSC ships and their crews that directly supported Operation Unified Response met the DOD criteria for the Humanitarian Service Medal, which stipulated a period of service between Jan. 13 and Feb. 4 within a 41-mile radius of Port-au-Prince. I'm always glad when our people are recognized for their seagoing expertise. I'm doubly glad when the recognition also acknowledges our people's compassion and commitment. Well done to all involved, including the ships that served outside the 41-mile limit, but contributed, nonetheless.

Global War on Terrorism Service Medal

While only 15 ships and a limited number of mariners were eligible for the Humanitarian Service Medal, far more of you will be recognized by the award of the Global War on Terrorism Service medal which was recently approved for issue to CIVMARs. On Sept. 13, RDML Wray and I made the first presentations of the medals to the crews aboard USNS Leroy Grumman, USNS Apache and USNS Grasp in Norfolk. MSC senior leadership will fan out in the coming weeks to personally award this well-deserved recognition to those of you who have deployed in support of the GWOT. My congratulations and thanks in advance!

Keeping official files updated

Shipmates take care of shipmates, but it's a lot easier when shipmates also take care of themselves, especially by keeping their official files up to date with next of kin, medical powers of



attorney, emergency notification contacts and so on. Recently we had a civilian mariner fall ill and go into a coma while deployed far from home. When taken to a local hospital, we discovered the mariner's official files were severely lacking in recent documentation. There were legal questions concerning designation of the mariner's next-of-kin, and therefore, who could make medical life-support decisions in the absence of a medical power of attorney. Since this all happened overseas, a lot of extra players got into the game, including the U.S. Embassy, the U.S. Department of State and other agencies.

In this particular case, the mariner's family had to go through a lot of added stress and agony while the situation was straightened out. Most of it could have been avoided if the mariner had just kept up his official files.

I encourage all of you to take a moment to review your files and bring them up to date. Ask your supervisor how to go about this, and make arrangements to take care of it as soon as possible. Your family will thank you.

Shipmates taking care of shipmates

In the last several weeks we have had at least three of our fellow CIVMARs fall victim to serious illness or injury which has required ex-

tensive surgery, hospitalization and, in the case of one mariner – tragically resulting in his death. While it is never pleasant to deal with, serious injury is an ever-present factor in the nature of our business and it sometimes rears its ugly head despite our best efforts to mitigate the inherent risk.

The positive aspect in these three cases has been the remarkable outpouring of support and "closing ranks" by the ships' crews involved and MSC support personnel ashore. I would like to publically commend the crews of USNS Walter S. Diehl, USNS Kiska, USNS Rainer, SSU Singapore, SEALOGFE, SEALOGPAC and MSFSC for the exceptional manner in which they supported their fellow stricken shipmates. In the case of Rainier, the crew raised over \$10,000 dollars in donations (with major contributions from sister ship USNS Bridge) to fly the family of their injured mariner in from overseas. In each case, the MSC family absolutely exemplified the true meaning of "shipmate." My thanks and admiration to each one of you who cared the extra mile. Thanks, shipmates. Until next month –

Sail safe, and yours aye.

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

Safeguard participates in submarine search and rescue exercise

By Ed Baxter
SEALOGFE Public Affairs

Civil service mariners assigned to Military Sealift Command rescue and salvage ship USNS Safeguard joined U.S. Navy divers, personnel from the U.S. Navy's Deep Submergence Unit and 18 navies in an international submarine search and rescue exercise held in the South China Sea, Aug. 17-25.

The fifth annual Pacific Reach exercise allowed five participants to practice submarine rescue operations with multinational naval forces. Hosted by the Republic of Singapore, naval forces from Australia, the Republic of Korea, Japan and the United States participated in the at-sea portion of the exercise, while observers from 13 other navies including China, Pakistan and Vietnam were based at Singapore's Changi naval base, the command and control center for the exercise.

Safeguard served as the U.S. Navy's primary surface support ship for the exercise, which was conducted about 180 miles off Malaysia's eastern coast.

Singapore's submarine RSS Chieftain and Japan's submarine JDS Arashio positioned themselves onto the seabed to play the role of distressed submarines.

Safeguard's embarked Deep Submergence Unit of Navy divers based out of San Diego worked with the distressed submarines in a real-world training mission, using a Submarine Rescue Chamber, or SRC, a pear-shaped steel chamber about seven feet in diameter and 10-foot high. Members of Safeguard's crew of 26

civil service mariners used the ship's crane to lower the chamber used to carry DSU divers to the submarines.

During one event, naval officers from the United States, China and Singapore were sealed together inside the SRC for more than three hours as they were lowered via tether to Arashio. At a depth of nearly 200 feet, the SRC connected with the submarine, and a U.S. Navy diver inside the SRC opened Arashio's hatch to shake hands with Japanese crew members from the bottomed submarine, signaling the success of the exercise.

Safeguard's civil service mariners were instrumental in positioning the 255-foot ship directly above the bottomed submarines so that the SRC and divers could safely deploy.

"We had to position the ship precisely within a few feet over the submarines' escape hatches," said Safeguard's Second Officer Pete Lenardson.

First, Safeguard connected to pre-staged mooring lines marked by bright orange buoys on the surface. Next, a commercial ship that provided berthing for personnel participating in the exercise connected to two other pre-staged moors close by.

After the submarines positioned themselves between the two ships and bottomed on the seabed, the commercial ship passed its lines to Safeguard, completing a highly-stable, four-point-moor procedure. While weather conditions were favorable for the majority of the exercise, Safeguard faced two days with six-foot swells and winds exceed-

ing 20 knots. "But, Safeguard is an all weather, all mission platform," Lenardson said. The mission continued.

Next, the bottomed submarines fired smoke candles to the surface to provide surface contacts with their position. Civil service mariners then placed the ship's rigid-hull inflatable boat into the water, and MDSU divers used side-scan sonar to pinpoint the exact position of the distressed submarines.

A diver in an atmospheric diving suit also conducted a close-up sonar scan and visual survey of the downed submarines. With precise coordinates on hand, Safeguard used its thrusters and capstans to inch directly over the submarines' escape hatches.

Safeguard hosted a number of observers and distinguished visitors during the week-long exercise, including Singapore's chief of navy, Rear Adm. Chew Men Leong and Japan's chief of staff, Fleet Submarine Force Rear Adm. Kazuki Yamashita.

"We had up to 60 passengers move to and from Safeguard on a daily basis throughout the exercise," said Safeguard's Boatswain J.D. Gage. "We also kept a close eye on the deck and ensured safety procedures were being followed."

"Pacific Reach may best be described as the Olympics of submarine rescue operations," said Safeguard civil service master Capt. Ed Dickerson. "The exercise allows naval forces from multiple countries to come together with one goal: to help a distressed submarine and do what needs to be done to save those on board."

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COMSC Rear Adm. Mark H. Buzby, USN

Director, Public Affairs Timothy Boulay

Editor Meghan Patrick

Writers Edward Baxter, Singapore
Bill Cook, Norfolk, Va.
Susan Melow, Norfolk, Va.
Laura Seal, Washington
Adrian Schulte, Washington
Sarah Burford, San Diego
Kim Dixon, Naples
James Marconi, Washington

Art Director Dale Allen, Washington

Graphics Susan Thomas, Washington

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Mercy CIVMARs complete Pacific Partnership 2010

By Edward Baxter
SEALOGFE Public Affairs

Sixty-four civil service mariners assigned to Military Sealift Command hospital ship USNS Mercy left the port of Dili, Timor-Leste, Aug. 24, wrapping up a marathon, four-month humanitarian and civic assistance mission to Southeast Asia. The deployment supported U.S. Pacific Command's fifth annual Pacific Partnership mission, which provided medical, dental, veterinary and civil engineering services to the people of Vietnam, Cambodia, Indonesia and Timor-Leste.

Mercy's master Capt. David Bradshaw and his embarked crew worked around the clock to operate and navigate the ship and provide a comfortable 'home away from home' for the nearly 1,000 personnel on board, including members from all branches of the U.S. military, international military forces, host nation personnel and non-governmental organizations.

"We had a dream team assembled for this mission, from senior Navy leadership, to the medical group, to partner nations, to the civilian mariners," said Bradshaw.

Throughout the course of the mission, which began at Quy Nhon, Vietnam, on May 31, the embarked medical task group treated more than 100,000 patients both ashore and aboard the ship. The ship's surgical team performed 807 life-changing surgeries in Mercy's 12 operating rooms.

Navy Seabees from Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 11 completed 18 engineering projects renovating schools and orphanages, and drilling three fresh-water wells in Cambodia to provide thousands of people with access to safe drinking water. More than 58,000 pairs of eyeglasses were distributed at medical civil action projects. The ship's biomedical equipment repair team repaired 124 pieces of equipment with an estimated repair value of \$5.8 million. Embarked veterinarians treated more than 2,800 domestic animals ashore.

Mercy's crew also spread goodwill throughout the local communities and engaged with senior host nation government and business leaders.

"I cannot think of another platform which furthers our national interests overseas more than Mercy," said Mercy's Chief Mate Matthew Bush.

Mercy's deck and engineering teams overcame challenges with skill and flexibility, which contributed to the overall



Second officer and navigator Michael Fiorenza, one of 64 civil service mariners serving on Military Sealift Command hospital ship USNS Mercy, escorts a patient and his mother off the ship in Cambodia in June.

U.S. Navy photo by Meghan Patrick

success of Pacific Partnership 2010, said Bradshaw.

While in Tobelo, Indonesia, July 13, Bradshaw kept Mercy's engines running, operating in small circles in the sea to ensure the ship maintained a safe distance from a nearby coral reef, because the waters were too deep to try to anchor. During a July 26 port call at Ambon Island, Indonesia, the deck department positioned Mercy, a converted supertanker, close to shore without the assistance of a tug, and deployed almost every inch of the ship's anchor chain in seas about 275 feet deep.

Mercy's mariners also ensured the safety of all crew members on board; a challenge considering most personnel had never set foot on a ship before. The CIVMARs held drills for lifeboats, which hold up to 16 stretchers, training hospital staff to safely load patients on stretchers on board the lifeboats.

"Every time we leave a port we hold a lifeboat drill to ensure the safety of the crew," said Second Officer Grant Begley. Mercy's CIVMARs also joined U.S. Navy active-duty members in firefight-

ing drills on board.

CIVMARs also assisted with underway replenishment missions throughout the voyage, completing a total of seven unrels with MSC fleet replenishment oilers USNS Guadalupe and USNS Pecos, and dry cargo/ammunition ships USNS Alan Shepard, USNS Amelia Earhart and USNS Richard E. Byrd.

Two of Mercy's embarked, 33-foot small boats – nicknamed 'Band Aids' One and Two – moved thousands of passengers and patients from ship to shore.

"In Cambodia, I saw a child with a cleft lip come aboard," said Third Officer Michael Fiorenza. "Later, I saw him go back on board the Band Aid boat with a smile on his face. This is what makes our jobs so worthwhile."

"The mission changes depending on requirements and the location," said Boatswain's Mate Cory Clark, one of four civil service mariners who operate the Band Aid boats each day while in port. "When we were in Sihanoukville [Cambodia], we operated the boats until 3 a.m.; so, we were flexible and could do whatever it took to complete the mission."

Perhaps most important, the mariners ensured that patients, many of whom were recuperating from surgical procedures, were safely transported off the ship. This meant the placing of a wheelchair, carrying an infant or ensuring the safe embark of an elderly patient on a pitching boat in choppy seas.

"It takes a cool nerve and focus to ensure the patients are safely brought on board," Chief Mate Matt Bush said.

Mercy's mariners also responded to two emergency situations while in Vietnam and Indonesia.

While off the coast of Vietnam, June 8, Clark noticed three fishermen in a small boat waving frantically at Band Aid One. Clark immediately approached the vessel and saw that one of the fishermen was badly injured. Clark brought his boat alongside and carefully helped the man, who was bleeding from his arm, onto the boat. Clark then took the fisherman to Mercy right away for treatment.

While in Ambon, July 29, Mercy sent a four-person team consisting of Chief Mate Matthew Bush, Begley, Able Seaman Anthony Jones and Boatswain's Mate Cromwell Rafol to extinguish an Indonesian passenger ferry suffering from an engine room fire.

Mercy's 33-person engineering team also ensured the ship's four water distillers and six generators operated at peak capacity throughout the voyage by fueling the steam plant and providing electricity for operating theaters, drinking water for the crew and water for the ship's galley, laundry facilities and air conditioning.

Mercy's supply department processed more than 550 requisitions over the course of the voyage and safely disposed of the ship's garbage and hazardous materials.

As Mercy returned to San Diego Sept. 21, after sailing more than 24,000 miles, its mariners reflected on what they had accomplished.

"Mercy's civil service mariners have a level of dedication to service, and belief in the mission, that is every bit as great as any other member embarked on board the ship," said Bush. "The crew performed superbly throughout every facet of the mission."

"The expression of care and concern for another human being inevitably shows and reminds me why I'm out here and serving in the capacity that I do," said Third Mate Jennifer Dago. "To see my shipmates wear their hearts on their sleeves is something I will never forget."

Grasp renews international partnerships during diving deployment

By James Marconi, MSC Public Affairs

Flexibility is the key to success. That time-tested adage was confirmed again Aug. 26 as Military Sealift Command rescue and salvage ship USNS Grasp finished Navy Diver-Southern Partnership Station 2010, a U.S. Southern Command-sponsored deployment in the Caribbean designed to improve relationships with partner nations through diving.

About seven months earlier, Grasp had pulled into the Central American port of Belize City for just one day to begin its deployment, when – with virtually no notice – the ship was directed to change missions and sail to Port-au-Prince, Haiti, to assist in Operation Unified Response, the U.S. military's humanitarian assistance response to the massive earthquake there on Jan. 12.

Grasp's crew and embarked Army divers from the 544th Engineers had already started dive training with Belize's military, but they were flexible. After picking up additional supplies at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, Grasp sailed to Haiti, making Grasp one of the first U.S. ships to arrive on the scene. Among other duties, Grasp's crew operated the ship's work boats in confined waters to assist divers.

"None of us were expecting to get that call," said 2nd Officer Ian Hokanson, who is also the ship's



Military Sealift Command rescue and salvage ship USNS Grasp supports divers from the U.S. and Barbados navies locate and tag a mock explosive on Grasp's hull in the Eastern Caribbean during Navy Diver-Southern Partnership Station 2010.

U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Chris Lussier

navigator. "We found out about Haiti, and we were one of the first ships to get there. The other deck officers and I were working extra hours every day driving the Army divers to conduct their work. It was rewarding, getting to see all of the different countries that showed up there. When we left, we felt really good about it."

Barbados

After providing three months of support to the Haiti operations, Grasp

departed the area in late March for Florida, where the crew received some time to recuperate and the ship underwent a month-long maintenance cycle.

New plans for Navy Diver-Southern Partnership Station 2010 were developed, and on May 13, Grasp sailed to Barbados, where Grasp's civil service mariners and Navy Mobile Diving and Salvage Unit Two divers – based out of Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek-Fort Story in Virginia Beach, Va. – worked with Regional Security System nations, a multinational partnership for security in the Eastern Caribbean. Members include Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Grenada, the Commonwealth of Dominica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia and St. Vincent and Grenadines.

While in Barbados, Grasp and the regional partners trained in advanced salvage procedures, including side-scan sonar operations, developing underwater grids, using specialized hydraulic tools

Grasp story continued on Pg. 8

Easing the pain in

By Kim Dixon, SEALOGEUR Public Affairs

Pictures of devastation in Pakistan began pouring into news stations in July and August like the rainwaters they were depicting. Pakistan suffered the worst flooding in its history as a result of an extreme monsoon season, and the photos showed the grim truth: families struggling in waist-deep water; entire towns swept away by raging rivers; crops destroyed and water sources polluted. More than a month after the rains began July 29, Pakistan reported 1,700 people dead, 1 million displaced and 6 million homeless. In total, more than 17 million men, women and children were affected.

International assistance began immediately. Responding to pleas for help from the government of Pakistan, organizations in the United States, including the military, promised humanitarian assistance and disaster relief to the distressed nation. At the forefront was Military Sealift Command dry cargo and ammunition ship USNS Lewis and Clark, with a promise of support in the long days ahead.

Lewis and Clark was replenishing U.S. and coalition navy ships conducting counter-piracy operations in the Red Sea when news reports plastered the airwaves with details of Pakistan's increasing devastation. Lewis and Clark's 130-person crew and nine-person military department knew their cargo load-out capacity and replenishment capabilities made them a top candidate for supporting relief in the Gulf of Oman. They got ready just in case they were called.

The call comes

When the USS Peleliu Amphibious Readiness Group was directed Aug. 9 to sail nearly 1,000 miles to the coast of Pakistan to provide additional heavy-lift capability with its embarked helicopters to the Pakistani government, Lewis and Clark started moving in the same direction.

"We were called to conduct our first replenishment at sea with Peleliu on Aug. 5, en route to the coast of Pakistan," said Navy Lt. Frankie Romero, assistant officer-in-charge of Lewis and Clark's military department. "We were on station by Aug. 11, assuming a pivotal role as the resupply bridge for the U.S. and coalition ships providing disaster relief."

Each MSC dry cargo and ammunition ship carries a standard cargo allotment of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief supplies. Upon arriving in Pakistan, Lewis and Clark offloaded its entire stock of humanitarian and disaster relief kits, which are

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS:

USNS Lewis and Clark Chief Mate Frank Wareham asked nearly 40 of the ship's crew members for their reactions to providing support for the humanitarian crisis in Pakistan. Wareham said, "I liked how each mariner would pause and think about what he or she said, because they felt that it mattered. They have pride in their jobs. They have pride in their ships, and they are proud of themselves. And though they possess their own individuality, they are passionate about teamwork and succeeding. Today, it is Pakistan; in January, it was Haiti. We have been there in the aftermath of our own Katrina. We provided support for the stricken nations of the epic tsunami. We stood proud and ready during our own tragedy of 9/11. We have Pacific Partnership; we have multinational salvage operations of downed airliners. We are transparently on the front page of most major events."

Able Seaman Jo-Jo Vicente:

"For me it is helping human life. Even though we may not be friends, we still help. My wife said to me that we are like the Red Cross. January in Haiti for the earthquake. August in Pakistan for the monsoons."

Second Officer Justin Griffith:

"I am usually very proud of what we do on a regular basis. When I explain it to my family, they are proud of me. That's when I realize the significance of what we do."

Third Officer Terry Anderson:

"At the time, it is just another mission. But when I watch CNN, that's when it hits me – to know that I do something that affects the world."

Deck Engineer Machinist Jon Woodward:

"I like the team effort feel, I like sacrificing to get a job done."

Pakistan

designed to support up to 2,500 survivors – assuming 500 casualties – for three days and have items such as water containers, tarps, latex gloves, blankets, insect repellent, surgical masks, water purification tablets and basic personal hygiene items. The kit is designed to bridge the gap between the immediate aftermath of a disaster and the initiation of large-scale relief operations.

With 1.2 million homes and personal belongings destroyed by the flooding, basics took on an increased importance, and water purification tablets and insect repellent became necessities for survival in a land where water- and insect-borne diseases are a daily threat.

After transferring Lewis and Clark's on-board relief supplies, the crew began a sustained logistics cycle with the Peleliu amphibious readiness group, which continued through mid-September, reported Navy Cmdr. Daniel Noll, Lewis and Clark military detachment officer-in-charge.

As Lewis and Clark quickly settled into the cycle, the civil service mariners on board steamed ahead, carrying out their main mission of providing replenishment at sea.

"I feel we make a difference," said civil service mariner Able Seaman Paul Chaffin. "I think that every time we supply a Navy ship, we are supporting those who directly support the crisis."

Maintaining the providers

As of Sept. 1, U.S. military aircraft had rescued more than 10,000 people stranded by flood waters and transported nearly 3 million pounds of relief supplies. The United States provided 13 mobile water treatment units, with each unit capable of producing more than 1.3 million liters of clean water per day. The World Food Programme gave more than 25,500 tons of life-saving food, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees brought in tents, tarps, blankets, sleeping mats, kitchen sets, soap and mosquito nets.

These essential items would have remained out of the hands of those in distress without a distribution system. USS Peleliu and other ships brought heavy-lift helicopters capable of lifting 16 tons of food and equipment and with the capacity to evacuate stranded people on short notice. But Peleliu needed to remain on station near the coast in order to react quickly deep within the heart of Pakistan. That's where Lewis and Clark stepped in.

Lewis and Clark became a force multiplier by operating in a continuous cycle. The ship transited to and from port, loaded food, parts and fuel, and then replenished ships of the amphibious readiness group at sea.

"We transited to and from the port of Fujairah in seven- to 10-day cycles, loading up on food, fuel, cargo and mail to deliver to Peleliu," said Lewis and Clark Chief Mate Frank Wareham. "Our efforts ensured Peleliu could remain at sea to provide rescues of stranded people and deliver critical supplies to sustain a nation."

In less than one month, Lewis and Clark delivered more than 1,000 pallets of stores and provisions during eight underway replenishments, pumped more than 1 million gallons of fuel to help afloat units maintain high endurance levels; ensured the safe and expeditious transfer of 89 personnel to and from shore; and delivered more than 200 triwalls of mail to recipients among the crews of Peleliu's ARG, said Navy Logistics Specialist 3rd Class Roberto Martinez-Romero.

Lewis and Clark's embarked contract helicopter detachment maintained two SA-330J Puma aircraft. Five pilots and three maintenance engineers delivered more than 800 pallets of critical cargo, parts and humanitarian and disaster relief supplies, and transferred more than 50 personnel to units directly supporting the relief efforts via vertical replenishment in one month.

"The seamless integration of the commercial aviation detachment with the USNS ships provides a vital logistics link to deployed U.S. and allied warships," said Scott Wheeler, air detachment operations. "This allows them to extend their on-station time while simultaneously freeing military aviation resources to focus on their primary mission areas."

We've been here before and we'll do it again

Supporting Pakistan relief efforts is not the first time that Lewis and Clark has provided much-needed relief to another nation. Following the Jan. 12 earthquake in Haiti, Lewis and Clark – which was delivered to MSC in 2006 as the first ship in the command's T-AKE class – was called in to support Operation Unified Response efforts.

"That [Haiti] experience gave crew members a visceral feeling of what it's like to encounter the aftermath of a natural disaster affecting millions of people," said Romero, who was aboard the ship during its multi-week support. "That feeling of wanting to help those less fortunate is what motivates the Lewis and Clark crew to work twice as hard to do its part to alleviate the widespread loss and anguish being endured in Pakistan right now."

"Helping [in disasters such as those in Haiti and Pakistan] is our chance to help those who don't have what we have," said Able Seaman Justin Anderson. "It gives us a glimpse at what hardship is."

MSC dry cargo/ammunition ship USNS Sacagawea and fleet replenishment oilers USNS Big Horn and USNS Rappahannock also provided critical logistical support to the flood responders, including the Peleliu ARG, USS Kearsage and the USS Harry S. Truman Battle Group.

Lewis and Clark CIVMARs off Pakistan

Boatswain's Mate Steven Robinson:

"I think about my job all the time. I think it's good helping those who don't have a lot."

Supply Officer Kurtis Irby:

"We are making an effort, not just giving money. It reminds me of when we went to Haiti. It makes me feel good."

Deck Engineer Machinist Jon Woodward:

"I like the team-effort feel. I like sacrificing to get a job done."

3rd Assistant Engineer Vernon Smith:

"No matter how bad I think I have it, there is always someone out there that has it worse than me. We are blessed to live the lives that we do, along with our family and friends."

Boatswain's Mate Robert Bergland:

"It's a good thing we were over here and able to support the U.S. Navy in supporting the Pakistanis."

Able Seaman John Mejia:

"It reminds me of Haiti. It is good to have a part in helping people."

RELIEF BY AIR



Above and background: A Military Sealift Command-chartered helicopter off MSC dry cargo/ammunition ship USNS Lewis and Clark transfers supplies to the USS Peleliu amphibious readiness group in the North Arabian Sea Aug. 14.

Sealift Logistics Command Europe welcomed several visitors to ships in the U.S. 6th Fleet area of responsibility in August. Commander, U.S. 6th Fleet; Navy Vice Adm. Harry B. Harris, Jr.; and commander, SEALOGEUR/Task Force 63, Navy **Capt. James E. Tranoris**, visited Military Sealift Command fleet replenishment oiler USNS Joshua Humphreys and MSC rescue and salvage ship USNS Grapple while in port Augusta Bay, Italy.

Harris toured each ship and conducted all-hands calls with the civil service mariners and embarked military detachments. Humphreys, recently reactivated to duty within a relatively short period of time, had suffered an engineering casualty that took its crew long hours to repair. Within the first week underway after the repair, Humphreys conducted replenishments at sea with guided-missile destroyer USS The Sullivans and guided missile cruiser USS Vella Gulf.

Senior staff member of the House Appropriations Subcommittee for Defense, B.G. Wright, visited MSC Maritime Prepositioning Force ship USNS Sisler. During the visit, Wright met with staff members of Maritime Prepositioning Ship Squadron One and discussed loadout plans, force protection, self-defense, and manpower issues. On Sept. 1, Sisler departed Palma de Mallorca to transit to Jacksonville, Fla., for its scheduled Marine Corps maintenance cycle.

Tranoris and SEALOGEUR maritime transportation specialist **Kathleen Pavarini** participated in MSC Sealift 2010, held at the Naval War College in Newport, R.I. The exercise focused on the processes and procedures required to mobilize and deploy forces, equipment and sustainment to support disaster relief efforts in Africa.

MSC Maritime Prepositioning Force ship USNS 2ND LT John P. Bobo returned to the U.S. 6th Fleet area of responsibility from a shipyard visit to Charleston, S.C., for cargo refurbishment and replacement, and vessel maintenance. Upon Bobo's return, the MPS Squadron One staff conducted a flagship change, shifting its colors from MSC Maritime Prepositioning Force ship USNS Eugene A. Obregon to Bobo while in port Rota, Spain.

SEALOGEUR coordinated the return of Marine Corps equipment, previously delivered to Maputo, Mozambique, for participation in Exercise Shared Accord. The equipment was backloaded onto MV Advantage in August for movement to Trondheim, Norway. Shared Accord, which is coordinated by U.S. Africa Command's Marine component, brings together more than 1,000 U.S. service members and Mozambican soldiers to increase Mozambique's capacity to conduct peace and stability operations.

Navy **Cmdr. Mark Hegarty** has changed positions at SEALOGEUR from chief staff officer to operations officer.

ATLANTIC • LINES

Military Sealift Command tanker USNS Samuel L. Cobb completed its final cargo operations in Jacksonville Sept. 12 with the discharge of 60,000 barrels of JP5 fuel. Upon completion of contract turnover in Pensacola in late September, the ship is scheduled to transfer to the Maritime Administration's National Defense Reserve Fleet in October 2010. This marks the end of a 25-year career for the ship carrying fuel for MSC –first as a chartered ship and then as an MSC-owned asset. As one of the first double-hulled tankers in the MSC fleet, Cobb has safely and efficiently delivered fuel for DOD in every ocean in the world from Antarctica to Greenland, and every operating theater in between.

A two-day training and demonstration exercise aboard MSC hospital ship USNS Comfort at the ship's layberth in Baltimore concluded Aug. 26. The exercise successfully tested the capabilities of a new chemical decontamination system.

According to MSC's chemical, biological and radiological decontamination specialist, **John McIntyre**, and observers from the ship's medical treatment facility, the Chief of Naval Operations and others, the test of the Joint Chemical Agent Detector was successful. If approved for use on MSC's hospital ships, Comfort and her sister ship USNS Mercy will be the first two ships in the U.S. Navy on which the system can be used.

In a cost-containment measure that saved the Navy more than \$500,000, MSC fleet ocean tug USNS Apache towed a 300-foot barge loaded with hull pieces for the construction of the first of the new Zumwalt-class destroyer DDG 1000. Apache picked up the barge in Pascagoula, Miss., and towed it to Bath,

Maine, Aug. 13-18.

Richard Bolduc, senior marine transportation specialist at Sealift Logistics Command Atlantic's Jacksonville, Fla., office, assisted Maritime Prepositioning Force ship USNS 2ND LT John P. Bobo in loading more than 1,100 pieces of cargo and 35,400 barrels of fuel July 29 to Aug. 10.

Bolduc and **Dean Doolittle**, marine transportation specialist in the MSC Jacksonville office, assisted tug/barge Megan Beyel/MOBRO 1210 in Port Canaveral, Fla., with support to the U.S. Navy's Atlantic Undersea Test and Evaluation Center located on Andros Island, Bahamas, Aug. 9, 16 and 30.

Marine Transportation Specialist **Mary Ann Nobles** of SEALOGLANT's Charleston, S.C., office coordinated the arrival and logistics support for the yard period of MSC fleet replenishment oiler USNS Patuxent Aug. 16.

William Woodrum, SEALOGLANT antiterrorism/force protection training and assessment officer, focused on level two antiterrorism training at Military Sealift Fleet Support Command's Training Center East located in Freehold, N.J. During the course, Woodrum addressed the class on overall AT/FP program management, observations from previous AT/FP spot checks and how to prepare for the Naval Criminal Investigative Service Security Training Assessment and individual ship assessments.

In addition, Woodrum and two other AT/FP staff members, Navy **Lt. Brad Loftis**, antiterrorism officer, and **Jeffrey Batey**, assistant AT/FP officer, completed the three-day Naval Facilities Engineering Command antiterrorism/security engineering workshop in the fundamentals of protecting critical facilities.

Sixteen members of the Military Sealift Command headquarters community and two MSC family members volunteered their time to staff a carnival event held at the Armed Forces Retirement Home – formerly the Old Soldiers Home – in Washington, D.C., Sept. 3. The event was a send-off for veteran residents displaced from the retirement home in Kingsport, Miss., due to Hurricane Katrina five years ago.

MSC's community service volunteer coordinator **Johanna O'Neill** received an emergency volunteer plea from the Naval Installations Command for volunteers because the event was going to be cancelled. MSC rallied a strong force and ended up running the event.

"Because of the quick response by these volunteers, MSC is being recognized by CNIC for the outstanding and overwhelming support for this most worthy event," said MSC Commander **Rear Adm. Mark Buzby**. "But as I am sure every one of the volunteers will tell you, the real reward was the opportunity to talk with these remark-

able veterans of the 'Greatest Generation'."

On Sept. 14, the commandant of Naval District Washington notified O'Neill that the volunteers were being awarded the Plate Steppers Award – an award that CNDW gives to commands that rescue projects on very short notice from being canceled – for MSC's "rapid response to this urgent call."

MSC headquarters marked Women's Equality Day Aug. 26 with a celebration, featuring a skit, guest speakers and a trivia game hosted by the MSC Equal Opportunity Office.

MSC bids farewell to **Jeffrey Fugate**, contracts, business and management; and **Shaun Khalfan**, command, control, communication and computer systems.

MSC welcomes **Scarlett Abrell**, engineering; **Cynthia Gernert**, **Suzana Mladina**, and **Christopher Wlaschin**, command, control, communication and computer systems; **David Minich**, strategic planning; **Jack Orlando**, engineering; and **Paul Schubert**, Prepositioning Program.

Military Sealift Command oceanographic survey ship USNS John McDonnell was delivered to the Navy Inactive Ships Program in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, for deactivation Aug. 25. Since 1991, the 208-foot ship has traveled the world in support of the Naval Oceanographic Office, surveying the territorial waters of 10 countries and other large bodies of water. McDonnell has collected hundreds of thousands of nautical miles worth of data, and has charted and verified thousands of navigation hazards. MSC retains six Pathfinder-class oceanographic survey ships; construction of a new, more-capable survey ship, T-AGS 66, will start in October.



U.S. Navy photo

FAR • EAST • HAILS

Navy **Lt. Cmdr. Chris Cassano**, Sealift Logistics Command Far East Reserve support officer, was promoted to his current rank during a ceremony held on the bridge of Military Sealift Command rescue and salvage ship USNS Safeguard at Singapore's Sembawang Wharves Sept. 1. SEALOGFE's commander, Navy **Capt. Chip Denman**, administered the oath of office. Immediately following the ceremony, Safeguard's civil service master **Capt. Ed Dickerson** held a shipboard reception in honor of Cassano.

SEALOGFE hosted the prospective master of MSC ocean surveillance ship USNS Effective, **Capt. J.D. Barnett**, at SEALOGFE headquarters at Sembawang Wharves Aug. 10. Barnett met with Denman and command staff members during a one-day orientation visit to the command.

Denman and special mission support officer Navy **Lt. John Genzler** visited Navy **Capt. Ed Seal**, commanding officer, MSC submarine tender USS Emory S. Land, and civil service **Chief Mate Mike Price** at Sembawang Wharves Aug. 5. Denman toured the ship and spoke to numerous crew members along the way. Land was making a routine port call in Singapore Aug. 4-8

before sailing on to its new homeport of Diego Garcia.

Land arrived at Diego Garcia Aug. 14 and was greeted by MSC Office Diego Garcia Commanding Officer Navy **Lt. Cmdr. Robert Rosales**, Naval Support Facility Diego Garcia personnel, the British representative to Diego Garcia and representatives from the United Seamen's Service Center and Chief's Association. A welcome tent with booths and refreshments was set up to welcome Seal and the hybrid crew of active duty Navy sailors and civil service mariners to their new home on the British Indian Ocean Territory.

Navy **Ensign Jacob Crabb** reported to Maritime Prepositioning Ship Squadron Two as the command's new supply officer relieving Navy Ensign Jeffrey Borromeo. Before he departed the command Aug. 31, MPS Squadron Two commander Navy **Capt. Fred Harr** presented Borromeo with the Navy Achievement Medal, marking the conclusion of his successful tour with the squadron.

Commanding officer Navy **Cmdr. David Bartell** and MSC Office Korea staff members visited the Miewon orphanage summer camp in Namae, South Korea, Aug. 5. The command provided lunch for the children and participated in a soccer game with them.

COMPASS • HEADING

Military Sealift Fleet Support Command held its first Small Business Forum Aug. 26 at the Breezy Point Officer Club at Naval Station Norfolk. Small business representatives from 17 companies were visited by 66 MSFSC port engineers, contracting personnel, class managers and other interested organization leaders during what is intended to become an annual event. The forum was coordinated by **Sandra Tyree**, head of the command's small and disadvantaged business utilization program.

Civil service mariner supply department training is moving to Newport, R.I., after being held at the Navy Supply Corps School in Athens, Ga., for more than 20 years due to base realignments and closure review processes. Further consolidating support to CIVMARs, MSFSC is shifting its training sessions to new classrooms adjacent to CIVMAR Support Center-East in Norfolk. The first class is scheduled for early October.

Ship Support Unit Naples Director **Mike Ragonese** spent most of August aboard MSC command ship USS Mount Whitney and fleet replenishment oiler USNS Joshua Humphreys in execution of his duties to support ships within his area of responsibility.

On returning to Naples, Ragonese praised SSU Naples staffer **Tiara Adams** for "holding down the fort expertly" and receiving numerous compliments for doing so.

University of Guam student **David Robbins** has been selected as the first student hire for MSFSC Ship Support Unit Guam under the command's shoreside student education employment program. The six-month program will provide Robbins experience in federal contracting and procurement procedures.

MSFSC held its second quality management system assessment Aug. 26-27 in preparation for an International Organization for Standardization audit scheduled in the fall. The command has been working throughout the fiscal year toward receiving an ISO 9001 certification.

Fair winds and following seas to **chief engineers Charles Kirchner and Charles Smith, able seamen Roland Santos and Edward Hart Jr., 2nd Assistant Engineer John Dance, Boatswain Rodney Kubiak and Carpenter Korla Lord** as they retire. Thank you for your service.

For more MSFSC and civil service mariner news, view the on-line newsletter at www.msc.navy.mil/msfsc/newsletter.

Pililaau welcomes unconventional guests

By Sarah E. Burford
SEALOGPAC Public Affairs

mature, but we also had to get the ship underway. Because of this, we worked closely with the Audubon Society so we would have a 'Plan B' in case we had to move the nest."

During the weeks leading up to the hatching of the eggs, Pililaau's crew accepted the two adult ospreys tending the nest as their own, watching over their charges to ensure their safety. About a month after the nest was discovered, the eggs hatched. Two of the chicks reached maturity.

"The birds never really caused us any problems," said Pililaau's contract master Capt. Tina Vanderploeg-Groom. "The adults are protective of their young, so occasionally one of them would swoop down on us when we did work on the deck near the crane where the nest was, but for the most

part, we all got along."

Five days before the ship set sail for San Diego, Wyman donned protective gear and climbed up the crane tower to inspect the nest. While the adult birds were still in the area, the chicks had abandoned the nest, likely having flown to West Hayden Island, a natural area across the Columbia River from where Pililaau was berthed.

On Aug. 1, Pililaau departed Vancouver for San Diego, where the ship provided a training platform for Commander Beach Group One to qualify 80 sailors and Marines on the Improved Navy Lighterage System and the loading and unloading of vehicles from the LMSR. Following the training, Pililaau sailed to Naval Station San Diego, where it will be layberthed until spring of 2011.

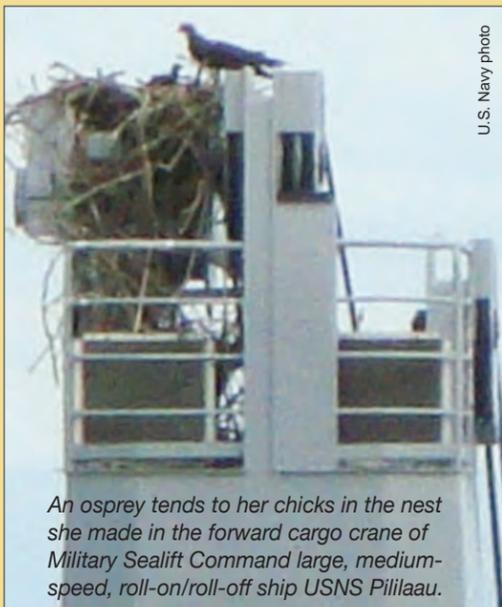
For centuries, birds have been a symbol of good luck for sailors at sea, their presence heralding the nearness of land just over the horizon. On board Military Sealift Command large, medium-speed, roll-on/roll-off ship USNS Pililaau, sea and air met in an unconventional way this summer when the nest of an osprey and her four eggs were discovered at the top of the ship's forward cargo crane while the ship was in reduced operating status in Vancouver, Wash.

Ospreys, also known as Seahawks, symbolize the Pacific Northwest, even inspiring an NFL team to carry their name. Finding the birds of prey – which spent years on the endangered species list and remain on the protected status

list – nesting on the ship was unique. In July, crew members spotted the large array of branches and twigs near MSC's blue and gold stack stripes.

"When I first saw the nest, I thought it was an eagle's nest because it was so big," said Port Engineer Dan Wyman. "By the time we figured out exactly what it was, there were already eggs in the nest."

Shortly after the nest was discovered, Pililaau received the news that they would be getting underway and sailing for San Diego for a berthing shift in August. Wyman, concerned that the chicks would not be mature enough to leave the nest when the ship sailed, called the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Portland Audubon Society for advice. "Nobody wanted to see those young chicks come to any harm," said Wyman. "We wanted to give them enough time to



An osprey tends to her chicks in the nest she made in the forward cargo crane of Military Sealift Command large, medium-speed, roll-on/roll-off ship USNS Pililaau.

U.S. Navy photo



USNS Washington Chambers

USNS Washington Chambers, the newest ship in the Navy's Lewis and Clark-class of dry cargo/ammunition ships, was christened and launched Sept. 11, during a ceremony at the General Dynamics NASSCO shipyard in San Diego. The 689-foot Chambers, designated T-AKE 11, slid into the water for the first time as the ship's sponsor broke the traditional bottle of champagne against the bow. Chambers is expected to be delivered to Military Sealift Command next year following a series of tests and sea trials. The ship and its crew of 129 civil service mariners and 11 U.S. Navy sailors will deliver ammunition, provisions, spare parts, potable water and petroleum products to U.S. Navy and other navy ships at sea, allowing them to stay underway and combat ready for extended periods of time.

U.S. Navy photo by Sarah Burford

PACIFIC • BRIEFS

Sealift Logistics Command Pacific welcomed Navy **Rear Adm. Mark Buzby**, commander, Military Sealift Command, and **Rear Adm. Robert Wray**, deputy commander, MSC, to San Diego Aug. 27. While in the area Buzby visited with civil service mariners at Customer Service Unit West and toured MSC's rescue and salvage ship USNS Salvor, dry cargo/ammunition ship USNS Matthew Perry and fleet replenishment oiler USNS Yukon. While aboard the ships, Buzby held an admiral's call with all three crews. Wray's visit included a town hall meeting with the staffs of SEALOGPAC and the Ship Support Unit San Diego, a tour of the Afloat Network Operations Center, and tours of fleet replenishment oiler USNS Henry J. Kaiser and large, medium-speed roll-on/roll-off ship USNS Pililaau. Both admirals attended a Surface Warfare Flag Officer Training Symposium held at Naval Base San Diego.

MSC Expeditionary Port Unit 116, based out of Everett, Wash., deployed to South Korea and Japan in support of Exercise Ulchi Freedom Guardian in August. EPU 116 split into two detachments for South Korea and Japan. During the exercise, they took possession of, set up and

operated an MSC Mobile Sealift Operations Center van for two weeks, conducted drills to test their ability to respond to various shipping situations and supported MSC Office Korea.

SEALOGPAC welcomes Navy **Cmdr. Joseph Whalen**, operational support officer for SEALOGPAC's Reserve component, and Navy **Lt. Robert Rieger**, Commander Task Force 33 scheduling officer.

Best wishes to Navy **Lt. Cmdr. Doug Patterson** as he completes his assignment CTF 33 scheduling officer and reports to the Naval War College as a student. Congratulations to **Steve Drexler**, as he becomes site manager of Customer Service Unit West. No stranger to MSC, Drexler has held the positions of operational support officer and as a marine transportation specialist with SEALOGPAC's operations department.

Special recognition goes out to Navy **Lt. Bok Beato**, SEALOPAC's logistics officer, who became the first member of the SEALOGPAC Health and Wellness Club to reach the 250-mile mark. Beato received a commemorative T-shirt and will be the first name on the 250-mile award plaque. His next goal: 500 miles.

CENTRAL • CURRENTS

Military Sealift Command ships operating for U.S. Central Command – including fleet replenishment oilers USNS Rappahannock, USNS Laramie, USNS Big Horn and USNS John Lenthall; dry cargo/ammunition ship USNS Sacagawea; and ammunition ship USNS Flint – flexed to

support 17 U.S. Navy ships and 25 coalition ships operating in U.S. 5th Fleet, as dry cargo/ammunition ship USNS Lewis and Clark, which usually replenishes ships in the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations, was diverted on a new mission to support flood relief efforts to Pakistan.

USNS Grapple and MDSU Two clear Albanian pier

By Kim Dixon
SEALOGEUR Public Affairs

The civil service crew of Military Sealift Command rescue and salvage ship USNS Grapple and 16 embarked Navy divers from Mobile Diving and Salvage Unit Two cleared 700 feet of Albanian coast guard pier space in August, removing seven sunken patrol boats that had been hazards to navigation for years.

The three-week salvage operation was a partnership between U.S. 6th Fleet's Commander, Task Force 68; Sealift Logistics Command Europe; the U.S. Embassy in Albania; and the government of Albania.

In September, Grapple completed its five-month deployment to the U.S. 6th Fleet area of responsibility, where on board personnel conducted theater security cooperation events in Georgia, Israel, Turkey, Spain and Albania.

The patrol craft had been grounded in the shallow water of the Bay of Sarande 13 years ago, creating a hazard to navigation.

The vessels prevented access to the pier by commercial interests. Now the freed-up pier space is expected to help improve the local economy.

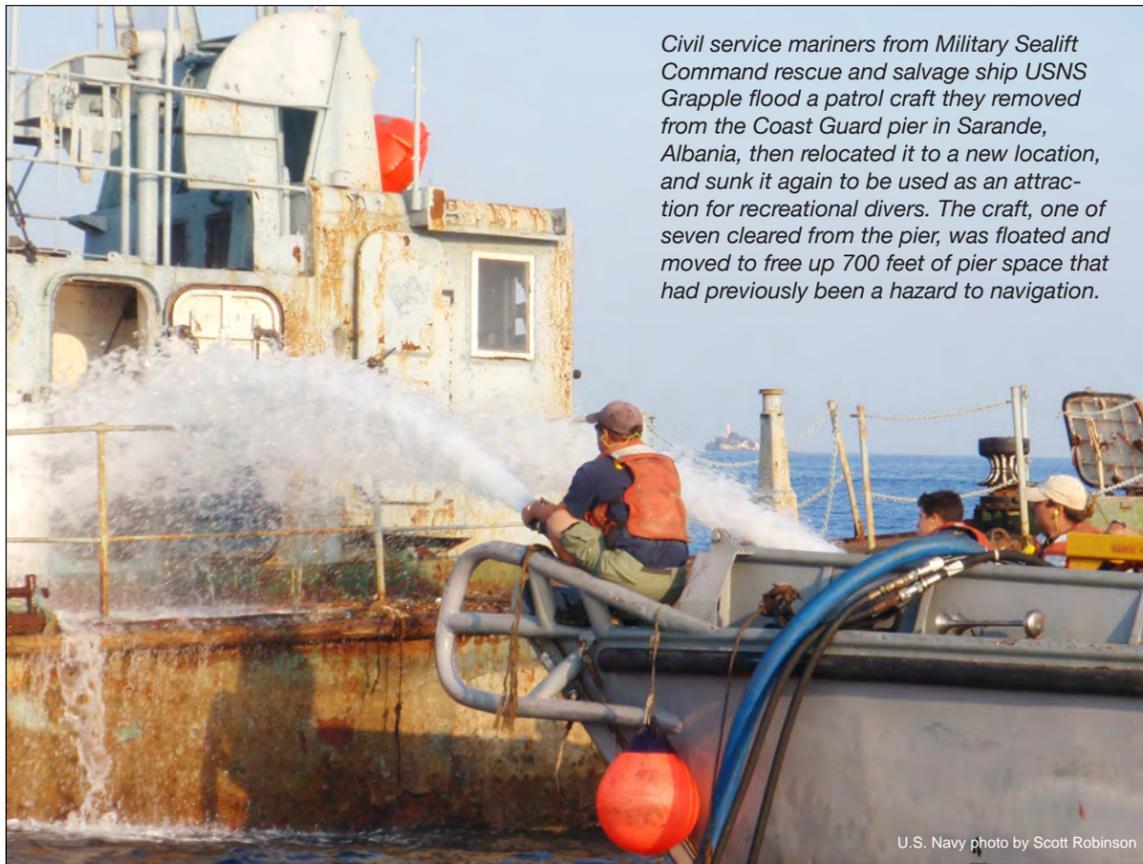
"There were three types of patrol craft. There were three torpedo boats, two gunboats, one Coast Guard patrol boat and one other small boat sunk in the harbor – all ranging from 75 to 137 feet long," said Navy Chief Warrant Officer Coy Everage, Commander of MDSU Two Five company. "Now, fishing vessels can use the piers. The salvage operation also created a deep water port for the [Albanian] coast guard."

Clearing the port area of the sunken vessels presented a welcome challenge.

"Our specialty is combat harbor clearance, and we usually only get to salvage one vessel every few years," said Everage. "For us to salvage seven vessels in one spot, giving us the opportunity to use multiple techniques – you couldn't pay the training dollars."

The first step in the salvage operation was an evaluation of the site, which had already been completed prior to Grapple's deployment, but still required fine-tuning.

"I contributed to patching and plugging holes on every one of the wrecks. Then, we did something we've never done before and used the ship's workboat to bring a hydraulic power unit to the salvage site," said Navy diver Ryan Kirby. "We used it to run the hydraulic hoses and to pump water out of



U.S. Navy photo by Scott Robinson

Civil service mariners from Military Sealift Command rescue and salvage ship USNS Grapple flooded a patrol craft they removed from the Coast Guard pier in Sarande, Albania, then relocated it to a new location, and sunk it again to be used as an attraction for recreational divers. The craft, one of seven cleared from the pier, was floated and moved to free up 700 feet of pier space that had previously been a hazard to navigation.

said Kritz. "If I have the stock, I can make anything. Because of this, I was able to keep the boats running in direct support of the mission."

"Our DEMACH is good at making the one-of-a-kind things needed to make the mission run smoothly," said Grapple's civil service mariner first engineer Scotty Robinson. "He helped the divers make special parts and tools."

The salvage mission was the first time at least one of the embarked divers had worked in such a unique environment.

"This has been my first time in dealing with hand-to-hand coordination between civil service mariners and the military side. It's been a great training and learning experience," said Chief Navy Diver Shade Holder. "They [the CIVMARs] provided great support, and they're up to date on what needs to go on out here and what we needed. They gave us a different look on how to approach things and how to attack the problems at hand."

The crew of Grapple presented a plaque to Albanian officials during a press conference held to announce the end of harbor-clearance operations. Grapple welcomed the U.S. Embassy Charge d'Affairs Deby Jones, the Albanian minister of culture, the chief of the Albanian navy, and the mayor of Sarande at the event. Grapple's Albanian salvage operation was the ship's last mission in the deployment.

Grapple's crew emphasized the importance of MSC ship participation in military-to-military theater security cooperation events.

"More and more noncombatant ships are being run by MSC," said Grapple's First Engineer Scotty Robinson. "So, we're right out there with all the militaries. It's a good idea to interact with them – to share ideas and to learn."

the boats to float them."

Floating wrecks may sound simple, but it is a dangerous evolution that requires experienced mariners.

"A lot of things could happen when raising boats from the bottom," said Grapple Able Seaman Henry Nguyen. "If the boat being lifted goes down and we don't cut the line right away, we could go down with the boat because our boat is smaller. Staying safe is our top priority. We have someone driving the boat. We have people looking around, and we have people standing by to cut the mooring lines."

Once the ships were floated, they had to be moved to another location. An Albanian coast guard ship towed four of them, and the Grapple/MDSU crew towed the remaining two boats that were able to be towed with their 35-foot workboat.

No matter who was towing the wrecks, it was still up to the Grapple/MDSU team to keep the vessels afloat during the tow.

"We used the ship's workboat and kept it next to the towed vessels, continuing to pump water out of the vessels during the tow," said Kirby. "We ran the boats hip-to-hip, which enabled everything to be done safely during the six-mile transit to the sink location." Six of the ships were sunk near each other in water depths ranging from 60 to 110 feet, creating an ideal attraction for recreational divers. The seventh wreck could not be made tow-worthy, so divers floated it and pushed it away from the pier into an unused area of the port.

The physical part of raising, towing and re-sinking the wrecks was only part of what was required to make this salvage operation work. The mission was a challenge from the start because the crew did not know how the vessels had been sunk. Crew members could not be certain what equipment would be needed to raise the vessels.

Fortunately, Grapple brought the right mix of crew members to meet those challenges, particularly with civil service mariner deck engineer machinist Abe Kritz, known around the ship as 'DEMACH'. In charge of everything engineering-wise on deck, Kritz also does all the fabrication and repair work for Grapple.

"We had no way of getting any supplies because of the remote location,"

Grasp story continued from Pg. 3

and operating Remote Environmental Monitoring Units, underwater unmanned autonomous vehicles capable of gathering imagery of the sea bottom. Divers also trained with lift bags, which are large industrial-strength bags with straps that can be rigged to submerged objects and then filled with air to create a buoyant force that lifts objects to the surface.

As divers conducted training and salvage exercises, Grasp's CIVMARs played an essential role above the surface to support the operations below. Many members of Grasp's CIVMAR crew, having spent considerable time working with Navy divers during their careers, are able to anticipate divers' needs, said Capt. Jose Delfaus, Grasp's civil service master in Haiti and Panama. In general, the crew operates at high-operating tempo managing the work boats, rigid-hull inflatable boats and the shipboard booms to ensure that divers have the support necessary to conduct operations.

"If it involves underwater work, the divers do it. When operating ship's equipment, [the crew] does it. Once it's rigged to be brought on deck, we work together," said Capt. Douglas Casavant, Grasp's civil service master while the ship was in Barbados, Antigua, Dominica and Mexico. "In order to better our work with the divers, we'll conduct training that helps us understand what they're doing, in order to improve the support we can provide. It's a team effort by both groups towards a common goal."

In port at St. Johns, Antigua, June 16-18, Navy and RSS divers performed preliminary salvage functions for a 100-foot tug boat that sank off the island's north end. Divers completed an initial site survey, did the salvage planning and gathered data to plug into the computers to calculate future recovery operations.

Mexico

Grasp remained in port at Veracruz, Mexico, for most of the month of July. Navy divers and the Mexican navy trained together in many of the same tasks performed in Barbados, with the addition of more advanced surface-supply diving using gear de-

signed for deeper waters. A U.S. dive medical officer also worked at the Mexican naval hospital in Veracruz during a subject matter expert exchange focusing on the medical uses of hyperbaric chambers.

Grasp's CIVMAR crew also had the opportunity in Antigua and several other ports of call – including Portsmouth, Dominica and Veracruz, Mexico – to deliver materials for Project Handclasp, a Navy program dedicated to distributing donated humanitarian, educational and goodwill supplies to those in need worldwide. Crew members also participated in several community outreach projects.

"I joined the ship right after it got back from Haiti, so between going to Antigua, Barbados, Panama and Mexico, [the deployment] was pretty memorable altogether," said 3rd Assistant Engineer Derek Robinson. "I have to say Veracruz was probably the best thing – I volunteered to help out at an orphanage. We went and donated stuff for Project Handclasp, and spent some time with the kids; it was a lot of fun."

Panama

In Panama for nearly three weeks during August, Grasp's crew and divers participated in PANAMAX 2010, a multinational training exercise with the goal of defending the Panama Canal co-sponsored by U.S. Southern Command and the Panamanian government. While divers were inspecting a tuna boat's hull for suspected evidence of illegal drugs, a Panamanian patrol craft was swamped by passing tug boats. Grasp's crew and divers responded quickly to recover the damaged boat. Successfully completing its deployment, Grasp departed Panamanian waters.

"Being a salvage ship, you have to like this [assignment], and we're fortunate to have people that like it here," Delfaus said. "The work is interesting and always different, and that unknown offers some excitement. It is hard work, but the crew looked forward to the Caribbean deployment, which was important to foster working relationships with these other countries. We were there to share experiences, learn from them, have them learn from us and develop a connection."