

December 2012

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

THE U.S. NAVY'S MILITARY SEALIFT COMMAND

## MSC delivers

to the

# WARFIGHTER

*INSIDE — USNS VADM K.R. Wheeler added to MSC fleet • Mercy, Lopez honored at AOTOS*

# Plans: Strategic, emergency and personal

Our mission is to operate the ships that sustain our warfighting forces and deliver specialized maritime services in support of national security objectives in peace and war. We do this because we are, and intend to remain, the preeminent provider of cutting edge maritime solutions to our nation's security challenges.

For the more than 63 years that MSC/MSTS has been around, we have focused on performing that mission more effectively and efficiently, providing the same high level of expert service we always have at a lower cost to our customers without affecting the quality of our service. In that respect, we are uniquely positioned to move ahead smartly under our own power, instead of being driven off course by events and situations beyond our control.

## Strategic plan

But, as we sail on our mission, remember that no Sailor worth his or her salt sails without a plan. If you lack a charted course, you're at the mercy of the wind, the waves and other unforeseen events and obstacles. That's why MSC has a plan – the 2013-2018 MSC Strategic Plan – which I briefly introduced in the October issue of Sealift. The plan looks out five years and charts a course for MSC by focusing on providing ships ready for tasking; developing, enhancing and enabling our workforce; focusing on the customer; and managing organizational change and growth.

Everything we do should lead back to those priorities. As our senior leadership tells the MSC story around the nation and the world, I want you to know that you are a critical part of that story. I want you to be an informed part of the story. If you have not yet seen a copy of the 2013-2018 MSC Strategic Plan, one should be coming your way soon. I urge you to read and understand it so you, too, know where we're headed and why. You can also access it online at [http://www.msc.navy.mil/publications/MS\\_C\\_StrategicPlan.pdf](http://www.msc.navy.mil/publications/MS_C_StrategicPlan.pdf).

## Emergency plans

It's better to have emergency plans and not need them than the other way around. Hurricane Sandy here on the East Coast in October reinforced the necessity for having well-developed emergency plans that have been practiced and perfected, just like the drills we do at sea. The immensity of Sandy affected MSC operations up and down



Rear Adm. Mark Buzby, commander, Military Sealift Command, pauses for a moment of remembrance at the Royal Fleet Auxiliary memorial, in the United Kingdom's National Memorial Arboretum during a trip in October.

the East Coast, both ashore and afloat. Four USNS ships – Kanawha, Patuxent, Medgar Evers and William McLean – sortied on short notice from Norfolk, while several others remained in-port in Hampton Roads, Baltimore and Philadelphia in heavy weather moors. USNS Arctic, in reduced operating status at Earle, N.J., experienced the most severe conditions with 80-90 knots of wind, 10-foot seas, and a 14-foot tidal surge at the pier! Owing to the fine seamanship of Capt. Tom Hartley and his crew, the ship came through fine with only some missing paint, a few dents and some new sea stories for the crew.

Ashore, a few of our buildings lost power or suffered some minor water intrusion, and several MSC employees suffered damage to their homes on the Jersey shore and in New York. The good news is that no one was seriously injured, and we were able to carry on executing our mission thanks to well-practiced contingency plans. Our capable workforce and ships were standing by, ready for tasking, in case the need arose for us to be part of any rescue, recovery and reconstitution efforts during and after the storm.

## Personal plans

I urge all of you to extend that level of planning and preparation to the upcoming holidays and the winter season, not only for you, but for your families, too.

Fire safety is paramount, especially since the weather forecasters all seem to indicate

that this winter is going to be colder and potentially snowier than last year, at least for the East Coast. Space heaters, fireplaces and candles should all be treated with the utmost caution and respect.

Extreme cold weather and wind raise the issues of hypothermia and frostbite. They're not to be treated lightly. Those aboard ship know what cold water can do to the human body if you're washed overboard, and how fast it can do it. Extreme cold air and wind chill can do the same. And kids may not truly understand the dangers of frostbite.

Winter driving is always a challenge, especially if you live in a place like Washington, D.C., where many of the drivers are from other nations that do not usually experience winter. Watching out for the other guy is the only way to live in traffic like that.

Keeping your vehicle in top condition is as important as having good insurance. Make sure your tires have good tread and are properly inflated. Check your windshield wipers and carry windshield scrapers to get rid of ALL the ice and snow blocking your vision.

If you live in a winter rain place, remember the dangers of road flooding. Don't drive through a flooded area. It's just not worth your life if you miscalculate.

Finally, take care of your shipmates and your families. The holiday season can be a time of depression or despair for some. We all need to ACT – ask a shipmate or family member what's going on, care

enough to listen to them, and follow through by urging them to take advantage of available treatment. Don't let anyone slip through the cracks. We are all family.

I've always said that you, shipmates, and your families are our most important assets. Not only are you the power behind our success as maritime innovators, but also you are the spirit that makes MSC one of the best places to work in DOD.

Gina joins me in wishing you all a safe and joyous holiday season and a healthy 2013, whether you are spending it with your family at home or your MSC family at sea. I will be thinking of you.

Sail safe, and yours aye,

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

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



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# Ponce rescues Bahraini fishermen

**From Commander,  
Expeditionary Strike Group 5  
Public Affairs**

Seven Bahraini fishermen foundering in their boats amid a hailstorm were rescued by Afloat Forward Staging Base (Interim) USS Ponce (AFSB(I) 15) off the coast of Bahrain Oct. 29.



A Bahraini fisherman, left, shakes hands with a Sailor aboard Afloat Forward Staging Base (Interim) USS Ponce (AFSB(I) 15) after being rescued from heavy weather Oct. 29.

At 6:37 a.m. local time, 30 nautical miles northeast of Bahrain, the crews of two small skiffs, waving their arms in distress, were spotted by Ponce. The fishermen showed signs of cold and exhaustion and were quickly assisted aboard by Ponce's crew. The fish-

ermen were in good condition after receiving medical care, dry clothes and food.

"Every Sailor understands the dangers of going to sea, especially in bad weather," said Capt. Jon Rodgers, commanding officer of Ponce. "Today, I could not be more proud of this crew of civilian mariners and military members working together, shoulder-

to-shoulder in this rescue. This crew did exceptionally well as evidenced by the appreciation expressed by our new Bahraini shipmates."

Ponce crew members woke up early to conduct a fresh water wash-down when the storm arrived.

"Everything happened so fast,"

said Information Systems Technician 1st Class Charles Linton. "I was on security detail when we received word of the vessels needing assistance. The boats came close enough to the ship so that we could throw them a line and pull them alongside, and eventually we used the accommodation ladder to bring the fishermen aboard. They were all friendly and very appreciative, and no one was severely injured."

One of the seven fishermen, Sayed Saleh, a Bahraini sales executive, went on the early morning fishing trip with a group of friends and family for leisure when the storm unexpectedly hit in the vicinity of their fishing vessels.

"The wind became so strong, and then ice and rain started to come down hard," said Saleh. "We saw the Navy ship and we knew we only had one choice, since the weather was so bad. All of us waved our hands, white cloths and started yelling for help, and did our best to get closer to the ship."

Navy meteorologists stationed in Bahrain monitored thunderstorm conditions in the Gulf Oct. 29, showing 30-35 knot winds with hail measuring more than one-third of an inch in size.

Although rendering assistance to vessels in distress is not a new mission for the U.S. Navy, it was a very unique experience for civilian and military crew members on Ponce.

"I am glad we were there for the Bahraini fishermen," said Allison Rogers, a deck hand aboard Ponce.

"They were really getting beat up on those small boats, and the wind was close to 50 knots. As soon as they came aboard we made sure they had food, water, warm clothes and blankets."

"The crew took care of us and even our boats. I could not be more grateful," said Saleh.

Ponce returned to port in Bahrain at 2:10 p.m. local time with the two fishing boats being towed. The seven fishermen and their fishing boats were transferred to the Royal Bahraini Coast Guard once Ponce moored in Bahrain.

"The U.S. Navy 5th Fleet contributes to security and stability in the Gulf on an enduring basis. When our presence puts us in a position to render aid to mariners in distress, it validates the importance of our 60-year partnership with the Kingdom of Bahrain," said Vice Adm. John Miller, commander of U.S. Naval Forces Central Command/5th Fleet/Combined Maritime Forces.

Ponce is the U.S. Navy's versatile mine countermeasures platform that was recently employed in International Mine Countermeasures Exercise 2012. Ponce is also capable of a full range of operations including humanitarian assistance.

Formerly designated as an amphibious transport dock, Ponce was recently converted and reclassified to fulfill a longstanding U.S. Central Command request for an Afloat Forward Staging Base to be forward deployed there.

# Marines work with T-AKE 1 in exercise

**By Edward Baxter  
MSCFE Public Affairs**

One hundred U.S. Marines boarded Military Sealift Command ship USNS Lewis and Clark (T-AKE 1) Oct. 17, completing an 11-day, bilateral training exercise with forces from the Republic of Maldives.

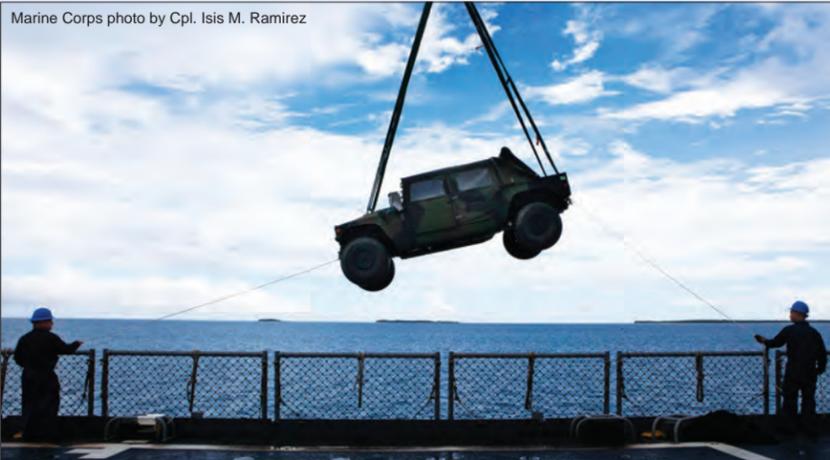
During a ceremony held to mark the end of exercise Coconut Grove on the Maldives' island of Gan, Marines from both countries paused to exchange tributes, salutes and even a few pats on the back for a job well done.

U.S. Marines from the "Alpha Raiders" of 1st Battalion, 4th Marine

Regiment, 1st Marine Division trained with counterparts from the Maldivian Marine Corps in basic combat training and focused on building military-to-military relations.

An amphibious raid conducted by both nations brought the exercise to a dramatic conclusion. The exercise is held every two years in the Maldives, a vast archipelago stretching thousands of miles across the central Indian Ocean.

The exercise also provided a unique opportunity for Marines and Lewis and Clark's complement of 53 civil service mariners to train together in deploying and redeploy-



Civil service mariners aboard Lewis and Clark load a Marine Corps High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle onto a ferry boat Oct. 1.

ing cargo from the vessel, testing the ship's logistical capabilities – a key mission for any MPF ship.

"The exercise is designed to foster relationships and increase military-to-military cooperation between the two nations," said Navy Capt. Calvin Slocumb, commander of MPS Squadron Two, who embarked Lewis and Clark for the duration of the exercise. "Equally important, we are testing the capabilities of our newest MPF ship."

To prepare for the exercise, U.S. Marines boarded Lewis and Clark at Diego Garcia's lagoon Sept. 30. The following day, Marines and civil service mariners trained together in off-loading wheeled vehicles from the ship onto a landing craft using the ship's 10-ton capacity cranes.

Marines and CIVMARs trained together in back-loading Marine

Corps High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicles and other supplies from a barge adjacent to the ship using the ship's 10-ton capacity cranes. All cargo was loaded by Oct. 17.

The 689-foot Lewis and Clark transferred from its traditional role as a Combat Logistics Force ship to MSC's Maritime Prepositioning Ship Squadron Two earlier in 2012. The ship is designed to be flexible and has the ability to serve in a wide-range of roles to support U.S. forces around the globe.

MPS Squadron Two – comprising up to 12 non-combatant, government-owned and chartered cargo ships – provides the capability for rapid delivery of military equipment and supplies to U.S. forces ashore in the event of a contingency or humanitarian mission.



Marines board MSC dry cargo/ammunition ship USNS Lewis and Clark (T-AKE 1) Sept. 30 while in transit to the Maldives for exercise Coconut Grove 2012.

# 24/7, MSC provided

October marked warfighting month! Military Sealift Command works 24/7 to operate the ships that sustain our warfighting forces worldwide. The following stories were originally published as a five-part series on MSC's SEALIFT blog - <http://mcssealift.dodlive.mil> - highlighting each of MSC's five ship programs and their vital missions.

## Combat Logistics Force

Much of MSC's business means a constant focus on operating forward on the world's oceans. A case in point is MSC's Combat Logistics Force; 31 ships that are the logistics backbone of the Navy's global fleet. These CLF ships supply gas, guns and groceries to U.S. Navy combatant ships at sea, allowing them to remain on station for extended periods of time. Last year alone, CLF ships delivered more than 1.3 million square feet of cargo and more than 583 million gallons of fuel.

A CLF ship's vital mission couldn't be accomplished without its crew of civil service mariners. These dedicated maritime professionals are government employees who work directly for MSC – operating, navigating and maintaining every ship in the CLF. CIVMARs typically bring years, sometimes decades, of seagoing experience to the job in the finest tradition of America's merchant mariners. Come calm or heavy seas, every day MSC delivers!



U.S. Navy photo by MC3 Adam Thomas

A quartermaster aboard USS George Washington (CVN 73) carries a signal flag to mark the stern position of USNS John Ericsson (T-AO 194) during an underway replenishment in the Pacific Ocean.

## Sealift Program

Below: USNS Benavidez (T-AKR 306) visits Souda Bay, Greece.



U.S. Navy photo by Paul Farley

Ninety percent of combat gear is delivered by sea. During the past decade of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, MSC has played a large role in delivering this equipment, as well as vital wartime cargo and fuel, to troops and ships overseas.

MSC's Sealift Program provides high-quality, efficient and cost-effective ocean transportation for the Department of Defense and other federal agencies during peacetime and war. The program manages a mix of government-owned and long-term-chartered dry cargo ships and tankers. By DOD policy, MSC must first look to the U.S.-flagged market to meet sealift requirements.

### Tankers

Tankers transport refined petroleum products for DOD between commercial refineries and DOD storage and distribution facilities worldwide. These tankers are specially constructed refueling-at-sea platforms. Their missions are unique, such as refueling McMurdo Station in Antarctica and Thule Air Base, Greenland.

### Dry Cargo

Nearly all peacetime DOD cargo is carried by U.S.-flagged commercial ships. But during wartime or other contingencies, MSC has the flexibility to charter ships to move dry cargo as needed.

MSC's dry cargo ships often carry items that are too large to fit in containers, such as engineering and construction equipment, military vehicles, aircraft and ammunition.

### LMSRs

Each large, medium-speed, roll-on/roll-off ship is capable of lifting more than 300,000 square feet of cargo and can travel at up to 24 knots. Each ship is ca-



Background: USNS Bridge (T-AOE 10) prepares to come alongside USS John C. Stennis (CVN 74) for an underway replenishment in the Arabian Sea.

Cover: A Sailor assigned to Riverine Squadron 2 conducts patrol operations in the Arabian Gulf.

pable of carrying the equipment requirements of an Army air assault or armored battalion of 1,000 soldiers.

### Ready Reserve Force

MSC can expand its sealift capability by activating ships from its government-owned surge fleet, which includes more than 40 Ready Reserve Force ships owned and maintained by the U.S. Department of Transportation's Maritime Administration.

These ships are maintained in a five-day readiness status, each with a nine-person crew aboard. They are located in ports around the U.S. East, Gulf and West coasts in close proximity to potential military loading sites.

# es offshore options

U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Toni Burton



Above: A contractor aboard USS Ponce (AFSB(I) 15) prepares a Scan Eagle unmanned aerial vehicle launch, designed for surveillance, reconnaissance data and battlefield damage assesment.

## Service Support Program

MSC's 15 Service Support Program ships provide the Navy with a broad range of capabilities that support warfighters. These ships do jobs that others just can't: towing a decommissioned aircraft carrier, serving as a stable platform for Navy divers and even providing U.S. 6th Fleet an effective command and control flagship, which comes in handy for operations like Odyssey Dawn in Libya. MSC's two hospital ships have been beacons of hope for tens of thousands of people around the globe.

Four ships – two submarine tenders, the U.S. 6th Fleet flagship USS Mount Whitney and the Navy's first Afloat Forward Staging Base (Interim) – have unique combined crews of civil service mariners and uniformed Navy personnel, each working under the leadership of a U.S. Navy captain. CIVMARs perform navigation, deck, engineering, laundry and galley service operations while military personnel aboard support communications, weapons systems and security.

Together, the CIVMAR- and combined-crewed ships of the Service Support Program tackle tough missions that enhance military warfighting capabilities worldwide.

## Special Mission Program

U.S. Navy photo



USNS Pathfinder (T-AGS 60)

Most people aren't aware of the types of special missions MSC supports behind-the-scenes, mainly because most of that work includes classified, sensitive military operations involving some of the Navy's most elite warfighters and weapons systems.

MSC's Special Mission Program has about 24 ships that provide operating platforms and services for a wide variety of warfighting missions; some examples of this support include:

- Submarine and Special Warfare Support ships provide submarine escort services for the Navy's submarine force and additional support to Naval Special Warfare requirements.
- Oceanographic Survey ships use unique hydrographic sonar systems to collect data used to produce charts and other products for Navy warfighters or provide down-range missile tracking for the Navy's Strategic Program Office.
- Ocean Surveillance ships listen to undersea threats.
- Missile Range Instrumentation ships serve as seaborne platforms for radar systems that collect data on theater ballistic missiles launched by other countries
- A Navigation Test Support ship supports weapons and navigation systems testing.

The vital missions performed by these special mission ships couldn't be accomplished without the crews who operate them – civilian mariners employed by companies under contract to MSC. While Americans sleep tight, MSC delivers support to Navy warfighters around the world – together, we have the watch.

Below: MSC-chartered high-speed vessel Swift (HSV 2) arrives at Souda Bay, Greece, to provide support for Africa Partnership Station 2012.

U.S. Navy photo by MCSN Chelsy Alamina



## Prepositioning Program

MSC's Prepositioning Program is an essential element to the U.S. Navy and DOD warfighting strategy. These ships strategically position military equipment and supplies aboard ships located at sea, around the world, to ensure rapid availability during a major war, humanitarian operation or other contingency. Prepositioning support includes:

### Maritime Prepositioning Force

These ships strategically position supplies for the U.S. Marine Corps at sea. They are laden with a variety of Marine Corps equipment and supplies, including tanks, ammunition, food, hospital equipment, petroleum products

and spare parts – ready for rapid delivery ashore when needed.

### Army prepositioned stocks

These ships strategically place U.S. Army combat equipment at sea to supply and sustain deployed U.S. troops during national crises.

### Navy, Defense Logistics Agency and Air Force

These ships are the most diverse subset of MSC's Prepositioning Program and operate around the world to support various warfighting needs, including Africa Partnership Station 2012 aboard HSV Swift.

The missions performed by MSC's prepositioning ships give warfighters the assurance that they will have what they need to be ready – anytime, anywhere.

## EUROPE/AFRICA • NEWS

USNS Leroy Grumman (T-AO 195) took part in Exercise Joint Warrior 12-2 Oct. 1-11. Grumman joined Destroyer Squadron 26, USS Gettysburg (CG 64), USS Mitscher (DDG 57), Helicopter Maritime Strike 46 Detachment 2 and U.S. maritime support reconnaissance patrol aircraft from Experimental Evaluation Test Squadron 1, Patrol Squadron 9 and Patrol Squadron 10 for the two-week exercise off the coast of Scotland. The Joint Tactical Exercise Planning Staff in the United Kingdom uses this biannual exercise as its advanced naval certification, which certifies ships for deployment.

Africa Partnership Station 2013, which takes place in western African countries, kicked off Oct. 15 for MSC-chartered high-speed vessel HSV Swift (HSV 2) when the international support staff embarked the ship. The staff consists of military members from European allied countries and African partner nations. APS 13 is scheduled to run until January 2013.

USNS John Lenthall (T-AO 189) continued to provide underway replenishment to U.S. Navy ships in the region, including USS McFaul (DDG 74), USS Fort McHenry (LSD 43), and USS Cole (DDG 67). Lenthall's civil service master, **Capt. Aleana Lytle**, relieved **Capt. Walter Nullet** Oct. 10.

Lenthall was joined by two other MSC Combat Logistics Force ships

during a port visit to Souda Bay, Greece, Oct. 16-19. USNS Big Horn (T-AO 198) and USNS Robert E. Peary (T-AKE 5) were transiting the Mediterranean accompanying the USS Enterprise Strike Group on its final voyage. While in theater, Big Horn conducted underway replenishments with USS Nitze (DDG 94), USS Porter (DDG 78), USS Vicksburg (CG 69) and USS James E. Williams (DDG 95), while Peary replenished Fort McHenry. Big Horn also loaded opportune lift cargo during an Oct. 18-19 port visit to Augusta Bay, Italy. Civil service **Capt. John Little** relieved civil service **Capt. Robert Foor** aboard Peary Oct. 16.

A 25-person recovery team of specialists from the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command and divers from Mobile Diving and Salvage Unit Two joined USNS Grapple (T-ARS 53) to conduct underwater excavations searching for an American lost when the B-17 aircraft he was aboard crashed in February 1944. The diving commenced Oct. 2 off the coast of Calvi, Corsica, France, and is scheduled to conclude in mid-November.

MSCEURAF marine transportation specialists oversaw the transfer of more than 466,000 barrels of Department of Defense fuel within the region by MSC-chartered tankers MT Maersk Peary (T-AOT 5246) and MT Ranier.

U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Martin L. Carey



Navy Diver 2nd Class Jason Geissler, of Mobile Diving and Salvage Unit 2, Company 4, operates a suction dredge system during a recovery operation in the Mediterranean Sea for a WWII-era missing service member. MDSU 2-4 is working with USNS Grapple (T-ARS 53) and Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command.

## PACIFIC • BRIEFS

U.S. Maritime Service Rear Adm. Jerry Achenbach, U.S. Maritime Service, superintendent, Great Lakes Maritime Academy, visited Military Sealift Command Pacific Oct. 1 to gather feedback on cadets' performance during MSC cruises and for recommendations on improving the Academy's Merchant Marine programs. Achenbach was accompanied by Fred Laughlin, director, Great Lakes Culinary Institute, an affiliated culinary school that trains chefs to receive their Merchant Marine documents; and civil service **Capt. Tom Giudice**, West Coast port captain.

MT Evergreen State completed safety modifications to the port side, on-deck underway replenishment station configurations. In addition, a set of the operating company's crew members have completed the Naval Sea Systems Command UNREP training in Port Hueneme, Calif. Following the modifications and training, the ship completed a brief stop in Long Beach, Calif., before departing Oct. 3 for transit to the MSC Far East's area of operations where the ship will spend an extended period supporting Defense Logistics Agency operations in the western Pacific Ocean.

USNS Yukon (T-AO 202) provided logistics support to a five-ship surface action group of the U.S. and Canadian navies participating in a task group exercise

in the Pacific Northwest.

USNS Guadalupe (T-AO 200) transited to the U.S. 3rd Fleet area of operations Oct. 24, following extended deployment in support of the USS Lincoln Carrier Strike Group and an East Coast maintenance period. The ship circumnavigated the earth via the Panama Canal and is scheduled to arrive in the Hawaiian area of operations, where it will provide mid-Pacific Ocean duty oiler logistics services.

**Bruce Leach**, office of MSC Representative Seattle, conducted force protection spot checks onboard USNS Charles Drew (T-AKE 10). **Steve Busby**, office of MSC Representative Seattle, provided spot checks to USNS Mendonca (T-AKR 303). The spot checks are part of continued efforts to improve the force protection and anti-terrorism efforts within the MSCPAC area of operation at sea and in port.

MSC accepted delivery of its newest dry cargo/ammunition ship USNS Cesar Chavez (T-AKE 14) during a short ceremony at the General Dynamics NASSCO Ship Yard, San Diego, Oct. 24. Chavez is MSC's 14th and final dry cargo/ammunition ships and is slated for use by MSC's Combat Logistics Force, which delivers ammunition, food, fuel and other supplies to U.S. and allied ships at sea, enabling the Navy to maintain a worldwide forward presence.

## CENTRAL • CURRENTS

Military Sealift Command ships operating in the U.S. 5th Fleet area of responsibility conducted 103 underway replenishments in October, including 47 with coalition, European Union and NATO ships. MSC ships completed 10 underway replenishments Oct. 4 alone, six of which were executed by the civil service professionals aboard fast combat support ship USNS Supply (T-AOE 6). The support provided by the ships of Commander Task Force 53 enabled combatants to stay at sea for extended periods.

USNS Robert E. Peary (T-AKE 5) and USNS Big Horn (T-AO 198) checked out of the U.S. 5th Fleet area of responsibility via the Suez Canal Oct. 12. During their three months in theater, Peary and Big Horn took care of the logistical needs of the USS Enterprise Carrier Strike Group. These ships were replaced by USNS Bridge

(T-AOE 10) which chopped into theater with the USS John C. Stennis Carrier Strike Group Oct. 17.

USNS Rappahannock (T-AO 204) departed for the U.S. 7th Fleet area of responsibility Oct. 15, concluding six months of successful operations in the Middle East. During its time in the area, Rappahannock completed more than 60 underway replenishments with U.S. and coalition ships. USNS Walter S. Diehl (T-AO 193) replaced Rappahannock.

MSCCENT and CTF 53 bid fair winds and following seas to Navy **Senior Chief Nicholas Sibley**, **Chief Petty Officer Samuel Bernardo** and **Petty Officers 2nd Class Christopher Lighten** and **Wilson Dacasin**.

The command welcomes Navy **Chief Petty Officer Alvin Warner** and **Petty Officer 2nd Class Abram Herringshaw**.

U.S. Navy photo by MC1 Jon Rasmussen



USNS Walter S. Diehl (T-AO 193) conducts an underway replenishment with Afloat Forward Staging Base (Interim) USS Ponce (AFSB(I) 15) Nov. 11 in the U.S. 5th Fleet area of responsibility.

## HQ • HIGHLIGHTS

Military Sealift Command headquarters awarded several of its employees Oct. 25 for length of government service and exceptional performance.

**Frank Randall**, public affairs, was recognized for four decades of government service.

**Eileen Roberson**, director, Total Force Management; **Krishana Wright**, contracts and business management; and **Brad Parks**, engineering, were recognized for 30 years of government service.

**Boyd Hollingsworth**, strategic planning; **Richard Peck**, maritime forces, manpower and management; and **Nestor Velasquez**, logistics, received recognition for 15 years of government service.

**David Bassett**, Special Mission Program; **Kenneth Green**, protocol officer; **Binh Loi**, office of the comptroller; and **Stefani Nick**, contracts and business management, were recognized for 10 years of government service.

**Anthony Clark**, security manager, earned the new Department of Defense Security Asset Protection Professional Certification in accordance with the DOD Security Accreditation and Certification Manual, authorized by the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence. Clark was presented with the SAPPC certificate and lapel pin.

**James Sledge**, contracts and business management, received the MSC Civilian

of the Quarter recognition for the period of July 2012 to September 2012.

**Cristina Zarate-Byers**, Service Support Program, received commendation from **Rear Adm. Mark H. Buzby**, commander, MSC, for superior performance as a member of and major contributor to the command's USS Ponce transformation team December 2011 to April 2012.

**Willis Williams**, director, commander's action group, earned a Meritorious Civilian Service Award from Secretary of the Navy **Ray Mabus** for exemplary performance while serving as the required operating capability and projected operating environment development project manager for USS Ponce from January through June 2012.

The command welcomes Navy **Cmdr. Joshua McKay**, contracts and business management; **Senior Chief Information Systems Technician Diana Medel** and **Information Systems Technician 1st Class Brian Panelo**, command, control, communication and computer systems; and Navy **Capt. Christopher Strano**, Prepositioning Program. The command also welcomes **John McAninley**, **Earl Munrath**, **Scott Russell** and **Steven Lee Vandenburg**, command, control, communication and computer systems.

The command bids fair winds and following seas to **Crystal McCullough**, strategic planning.

U.S. Navy photo by MC1 Ricardo Danan



Sailors from MSC submarine tender USS Frank Cable (AS 40) prepare to lower a Mark 48 Advanced Capability torpedo to the deck of USS Oklahoma City (SSN 723) Nov. 15 in Guam.

## FAR EAST • HAILS

USNS Carl Brashear (T-AKE 7) participated in a rescue at sea operation with USS John C. Stennis (CVN-74) in the Singapore Strait Oct. 6.

A Stennis-based search and rescue helicopter pulled a Malaysian fisherman from the ocean after his small boat capsized in heavy seas. The helicopter delivered the survivor onto Brashear's flight deck. After a medical check-up, the survivor received dry clothes, food and water. He was handed over to Singapore customs and immigration officials when Brashear arrived at the pier for a scheduled port call at Singapore's Sembawang Wharves later that day.

While in Gan, Republic of the Maldives, Maritime Prepositioning Ship Squadron Two staff members visited children at the Maldivian Hithadhoo Island high school and Feydhoo middle school, providing training on first aid and teaching science and physical fitness.

MSC Office Korea executive officer Navy **Lt. Cmdr. Cedric**

**Edwards** escorted Army Maj. Gen. David Enyeart, chief of staff, U.S. Forces Korea; Air Force Maj. Gen. Brian Bishop, deputy chief of staff, U.S. Forces Korea; and Army Brig. Gen. Robin Akin, deputy assistant chief of staff, U.S. Forces Korea, on a tour of its Pier Eight facility during an orientation visit Nov. 2.

In Singapore, Navy **Capt. Paul Oosterling**, commanding officer, Naval Oceanographic Office visited Navy **Capt. Jim Hruska**, commander, Military Sealift Command Far East, and operational staff members Oct. 31.

MSC Far East headquarters welcomed **Combat Logistics Force Officer Rick Legaspi**. Ship Support Unit Japan welcomed **Electronics Technician William Revak**. Maritime Prepositioning Ship Squadron Three welcomed **Assistant Operations Officer Operations Specialist Chief Paul Lutton** and MPS Squadron Two welcomed **Medical Services Officer Paul McCormick**.

U.S. Navy photo by MC1 Rafael Martie



MSC dry cargo/ammunition ship USNS William McLean (T-AKE 12) departs Naval Station Norfolk, Va., Oct. 26 in advance of Hurricane Sandy.

## ATLANTIC • LINES

Military Sealift Command Atlantic was prepared to handle the onslaught of Hurricane Sandy in late October. USNS Patuxent (T-AO 201), USNS Medgar Evers (T-AKE 13), USNS William McClean (T-AKE 12) and USNS Kanawha (T-AO 196) were among the ships that sortied from Naval Station Norfolk, Va., to avoid hurricane damage, while other MSC vessels in the storm's path remained berthed at hardened piers. All MSC vessels weathered the hurricane in good order.

USNS Patuxent was the prime logistics asset participating in exercise Unitas Atlantic 2012 beginning in late September in the Caribbean Sea. The annual multinational exercise hosted by U.S. 4th Fleet involves naval forces from 13 partner nations to promote interoperability and cooperation. Patuxent successfully supported underway replenishments that delivered nearly 1.2 million gallons of fuel to 17 ships.

At MSCLANT's port office in Charleston, S.C., **Tom D'Agostino**, director of ship operations, coordinated the discharge of 148,000 barrels of fuel from articulated tug/barge Coastal Reliance Oct. 6 and Oct. 7. Additionally, he coordinated the offload

of 1,737 pieces of U.S. Army prepositioned equipment from USNS Soderman (T-AKR 317) Oct. 25 to Nov. 1 for a total of more than 225,000 square feet of cargo. D'Agostino also coordinated the loading of shore-based spare parts required for Soderman's upcoming yard period in Boston.

MSCLANT has selected **Dean Doolittle**, marine transportation specialist at the Jacksonville, Fla., office, and **Kirk Schiltz**, logistics management specialist/ordnance officer at its Norfolk, Va., office, as the command's civilians of the year.

Highlights of Doolittle's achievements include his support to the U.S. Marine Corps prepositioning program at Blount Island Command and implementing an ammunition weight certification program that enabled MSC to meet Naval Sea Systems Command weight test requirements for container handlers.

As ordnance officer, Schiltz schedules and oversees all ammunition loading for MSC ships at Naval Weapons Station Earle, N.J., plus provides ordnance accounting for numerous MSC ships without the ordnance logistics management system at their disposal.

## COMPASS • HEADING

Military Sealift Command Norfolk approved a new civil service mariner position of operations chief. Personnel hired into the new position will, starting in early 2013, be assigned to billets currently filled by Navy operations specialists aboard the command's dry cargo/ammunition and fleet oiler ships. More information is available on the CIVMAR promotion section of the MSC website. The application window is open until Dec. 10, 2012.

MSC Norfolk personnel participated in an earthquake exercise Oct. 18. The earthquake of 2011, with an epicenter just west of the Hampton Roads region, brought to the fore the need for such drills for personnel in Norfolk, Va.

Personnel in Hampton Roads as well as those working elsewhere along the coast dealt with executing real-world contingency plans for Hurricane Sandy Oct. 29. Hardest hit by the storm's impact was MSC's training center in Earle, N.J. Civil service mariners assigned to train at the facility were relocated to Norfolk and classes were suspended for the two

week period after the storm passed through the region. Damage control officers and other personnel assigned to the training facility weathered the storm, yet most were without power and many had home flooding issues. Civil service mariners on leave in the New Jersey/New York region have been accounted for and MSC is working to provide temporary or early shipboard reliefs, as requested, for those mariners with issues at home as a result of the storm.

Fair winds and following seas to **Able Seaman Felix Acebedo Jr.**, **Damage Control Officer Henry Bush**, **Ship's Communication Officer Peter Cartell**, **Supply Officer Primo Magpantay**, **Damage Controlman Paul Semczuk**, **Information Technology Specialist Cynthia Gernet** and **Financial Technician Ricardo Famisan** as they retire.

MSC regrets to report the passing of **Able Seaman Florante Dulay** and sends condolences to the Dulay family.

For more MSC Norfolk and civil service mariner news, view the online newsletter at [www.msc.navy.mil/msfsc/newsletter](http://www.msc.navy.mil/msfsc/newsletter).

# Wheeler refurbished after purchase

**By Edward Baxter  
MSCFE Public Affairs**

USNS VADM K.R. Wheeler (T-AG 5001) is a Military Sealift Command Offshore Petroleum Distribution System ship and is part of MSC's Prepositioning Program. MSC officially purchased Wheeler - capable of delivering fuel from up to eight miles offshore - in August 2012 in Busan, South Korea, making the ship a permanent member of the MSC fleet.

Wheeler and its support vessel, USNS Fast Tempo, pulled away from Singapore's Sembawang Wharves in early November after completing six weeks of repairs and upgrades. The 145-foot Fast Tempo sails with Wheeler as its primary support vessel.

Wheeler returned to prepositioning duties as the U.S. Navy's only vessel capable of pumping diesel or aviation fuel to shore from up to eight miles off the coast. With flexible pipe stored on 35-foot-tall spools on its weather deck, Wheeler delivers vital fuel to U.S. forces ashore during contingency operations where port facilities may be damaged, destroyed or non-existent.

The repairs and upgrades were the first to be conducted by MSC port

engineers after the ships' purchase. Port engineers from Ship Support Unit Singapore, MSC headquarters' Prepositioning Program and MSC Norfolk, Va.-based Ship Inspection Division were part of the engineering team overseeing repairs.

"This overhaul has been one of the most interesting I have worked on," said SSU Singapore port engineer Berle Goins, who has been overseeing repairs of MSC ships for 27 years. "You don't see a lot of ships like this and with this unique capability."

The only ship of its kind in the U.S. military or commercial industry, Wheeler has both tunnel and down-swing azimuth thrusters, part of a sophisticated dynamic positioning system designed to keep the ship in place during pumping missions.

The ship is crewed by 23 merchant mariners working for a private company under contract to MSC.

"The best way to learn about the intricacies of a new ship is to jump in with both feet, said Wheeler Chief Mate Glenn Macario, whose operating company reported on board the ship just two months ago.

The overhaul was conducted at Singapore's Sembawang commercial shipyard, part of a scheduled five-year



U.S. Navy photo by Edward Baxter  
USNS VADM K.R. Wheeler (T-AG 5001) prepares to sail out of dry dock in Singapore as the dock is flooded.

maintenance cycle required by the U.S. Coast Guard and the American Bureau of Shipping. ABS is the world's largest classification society ensuring U.S. maritime vessels meet the high standards of safety.

"I cannot emphasize enough just how superb the cooperation has been between all players - the embarked merchant mariners, MSC, and the shipyard. It's truly been a team effort," said Tim Tralango, a port engineer assigned to MSC headquarters.

The dry dock used a ballast system, much like a submarine, to submerge the ship with about 19 feet of water below its hull. Commercial tugs gently pushed Wheeler into the massive dry dock facility. Once commercial divers assessed the ship was in the exact position over stabilizing blocks, water was released from the dry dock's 24 ballast tanks. In just over 90 minutes, Wheeler's hull was clearly visible.

Repairs to Wheeler included removing and cleaning of grid coolers used to the cool the ship's engines;

overhauling forward and aft tunnel thrusters and swing-down azimuth thrusters; replacing the main propeller seal; polishing existing propellers; and painting the ship's hull below the waterline. Fast Tempo underwent minor repairs including painting and main engine diagnostics.

Work was completed Oct. 17 and the ballast tanks flooded again.

It took about two hours for the dry dock to flood and for Wheeler to be pulled out of the dock by commercial tugs. Tugs gently pulled at Wheeler's stern until the ship was safely out of dry dock. The ship then shifted to a nearby pier where it underwent additional certifications by the Coast Guard and ABS.

The ship conducted sea trials in the Singapore Strait Oct. 25, where engineers and ship's crew ensured the ship was operating at its peak capacity.

Satisfied that Wheeler met all requirement and specifications, the ship received its U.S. Coast Guard-issued Certificate of Inspection, good for another five years.



U.S. Navy photo by Edward Baxter  
Wheeler floats free of the dry dock, as it prepares to return to Prepositioning Program duties with its support vessel.

## MSC ships, crews honored at AOTOS banquet

**By MSC Public Affairs**

The United Seamen's Service honored the civil service crews of two Military Sealift Command ships Oct. 26 at this year's Admiral of the Ocean Seas Awards banquet in New York City.

Hundreds of U.S. maritime leaders from industry and government attended the event, regarded as the U.S. maritime industry's most prestigious awards event. Awards commend the heroism and outstanding seamanship of American seafarers who have risked their lives to save others.

This year, the United Seamen's Service awarded the officers and crew of USNS IST LT Baldomero Lopez (T-AK 3010), under the leadership of civilian master Capt. Peter Clark. The United Seamen's Service also presented a special recognition plaque to the crew of USNS Mercy (T-AH 19), under the leadership of civil service master Capt. Jonathan Olmsted.

Bob Kiefer, executive vice president of American Maritime Officers - of which Clark is a member - accepted the award on behalf of the Lopez crew. Olmsted received the award on behalf of his ship.

**Lopez**

Lopez, as part of MSC's Prepositioning Ship Squadron Two, was forward-deployed at the central Indian Ocean island of Diego Garcia when a civilian mariner became gravely ill with a heart-related medical problem. When the mariner collapsed in the ship's galley, Chief Mate Dave Schumacker alerted Clark. Clark directed 3rd Mate Jacob George to assist in establishing an airway, while he began administering CPR procedures and then the automated external defibrillator. After several jolts the patient began breathing, and crew members administered oxygen. The patient was quickly taken ashore, where he received further treatment.

**Mercy**

Seventy civil service mariners, and approximately 400 Navy, Army and non-governmental organization personnel aboard Mercy returned to San Diego Sept. 14 after steaming more than 20,000 miles - nearly the distance of circling the equator - to Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam and Cambodia as the lead vessel for Pacific Partnership 2012.

MSC's civil service mariners were responsible for Mercy's operation and navigation. In addition, since the ship

is too large for pierside visits, mariners operated small boats to transport patients and personnel between ship and shore.

As part of the medical outreach effort, which took place both ashore and aboard the ship, Mercy's team treated more than 49,000 people ashore, including providing dental care and services like the distribution of eyeglasses and sunglasses. The team performed more than 900 shipboard surgeries, and treated or evaluated more than 7,000 livestock and domestic animals.

Navy Rear Adm. Mark H. Buzby, commander, MSC, commended Mercy's crew members for their work during Pacific Partnership 2012 during remarks at the awards banquet.

"During that mission, the crew and medical staff aboard Mercy, including Navy and non-governmental personnel from many organizations and nations, touched the lives of nearly 50,000 people in need of medical and civic assistance. Many of those contacts were life-changing," said Buzby.



Capt. Jonathan Olmsted, USNS Mercy's (T-AH 19) civil service master, left, and Navy Rear Adm. Mark Buzby, commander, MSC, accept Mercy's award for its role in Pacific Partnership 2012.