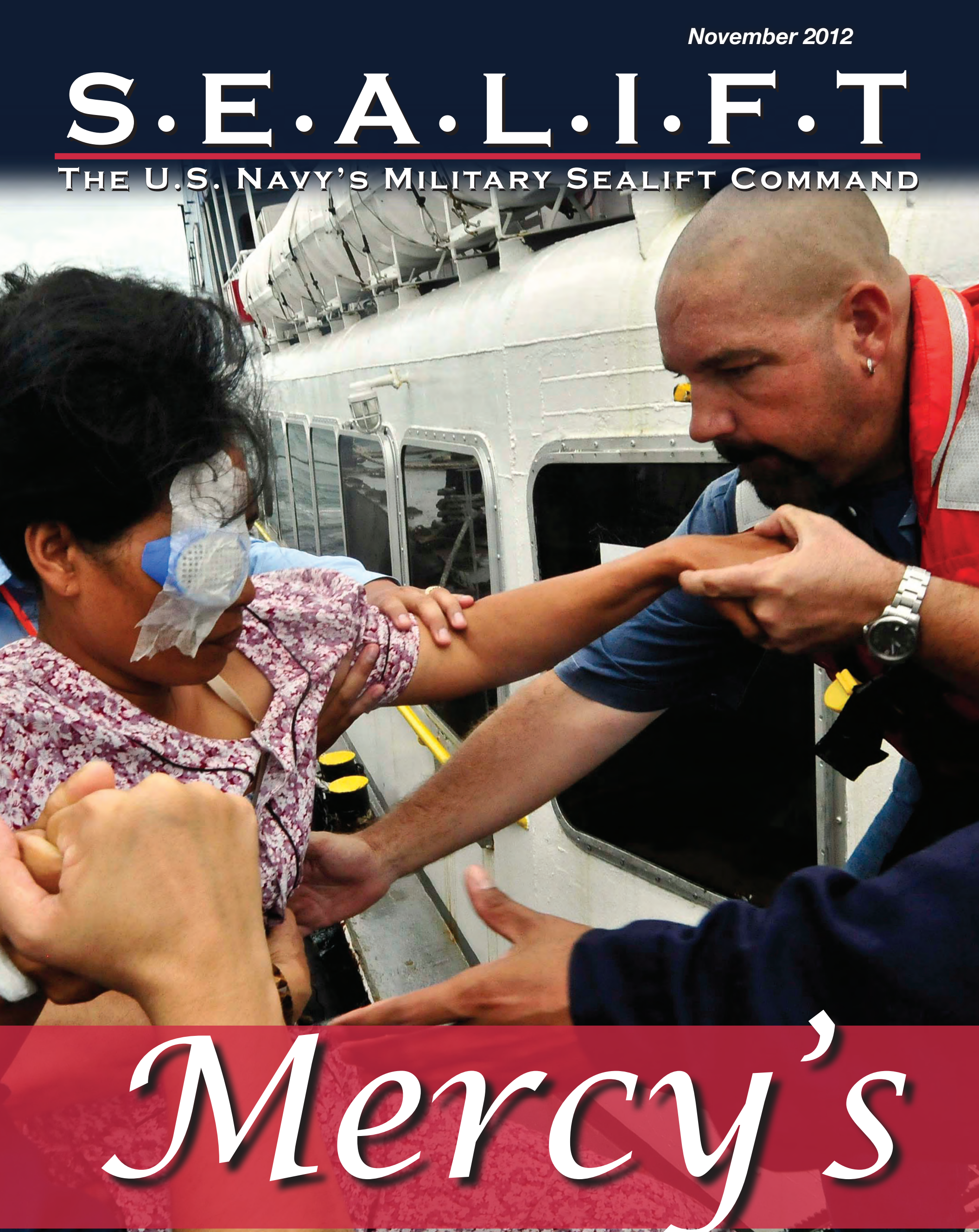
November 2012

S·E·A·L·I·F·T

The U.S. Navy's Military Sealift Command



Mercy's life-changing mission

U.S. Navy photo by Kristopher Radder

INSIDE — Ponce crew members honored for service • Henson commemorates WWII battle

Commander's perspective

When the customer is everyone

When I go out to speak in front of groups ranging from the Propeller Club to the maritime unions, the word "customer" is part of almost every brief. MSC's four strategic priorities are customer-focused. The ONE MSC realignment was aimed directly at providing more effective, more efficient service to our customers.

It's pretty apparent that we strive to be on top of what our customers want, where they want it and when they want it.

Multiple missions

When Fleet Forces Command wants CLF ships to keep a carrier strike group forward-deployed and ready in the Arabian Gulf, it's easy to focus on, plan for and execute that mission. But we hardly ever get to focus on a single mission.

Almost simultaneously, U.S. Transportation Command needs to move Army unit equipment from California to Europe. And the Marine Corps needs to restructure its afloat prepositioning program, which means reconfiguring the loads on the 15 Maritime Prepositioning Force ships. That means they need to come back to Jacksonville, Fla., and off-load.

The Oceanographer of the Navy needs an updated sea-bottom hydrographic survey of a harbor entrance the Navy uses all the time that was hit by a typhoon.

Meanwhile, new sea-bottom cables need laying, and there are some repairs to be made. And four decommissioned Navy ships have to be towed to sink exercises, while the Coast Guard has requested assistance locating and salvaging a wrecked aircraft off the coast of Maine.

The list goes on. The requests are constant. The services needed are wide-ranging. And the customers are, well, pretty much everyone in DOD and the federal government, and beyond.

MSC focal point

The good news is that the focal point of all these requests is MSC, and we've been delivering for ALL our customers since 1949.

Everything we do has a joint or combined flavor to it. Our customers come in all sizes, from all the armed services in the DOD plus the Coast Guard, from elsewhere in the federal government and, with DOD and Department of State coordination, from other governments around the world. Fortunately, MSC operates more than 110 ships around the world every day and can access another 60 government-owned ships, plus as many commercial ships as needed to execute the mission. That makes our customers happy and keeps our planners as busy as our operators and maintainers.

U.S. Navy photo by Kim E. Dixon

Rear Adm. Mark Buzby, commander, Military Sealift Command, observes an underway replenishment with USNS Laramie (T-AO 203) aboard USS Ponce (AFSB(I) 15) during an early October visit to the ship in the Arabian Gulf.

Worldwide execution

Last October, MSC-chartered cargo ship ITB Strong Mariner delivered more than 18,000 square feet of U.S. Marine Corps equipment and supplies to Subic Bay, Philippines for the Philippine Amphibious Landing Exercise. Cargo included Humvees, trucks, fire trucks, ambulances, trailers and 90 shipping containers of supplies.

In October and November, oceanographic survey ship USNS Henson hosted members of the Indonesian navy in the Java Sea and Sunda Straits, surveying oceanographic and hydrographic information. This was one of the largest joint surveys done between our two countries' naval forces. Indonesian surveyors were included in all parts of the mission, including data collection and processing.

In late December, U.S. Fleet Forces Command asked us if we could reconfigure an amphibious landing dock ship that was about to be decommissioned and make it ready to deploy as an afloat forward staging base (interim) in six months. Because of your expertise, we could. Today, CIVMARs and uniformed Navy personnel are crewing USS Ponce, which is deployed to the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility. They're supporting mine countermeasures and coastal patrol ships, and aircraft operations.

Building on a relationship first forged in 2005, U.S. Navy divers from Mobile Diving and Salvage Unit One, Indian navy divers and the civil service mariner crew of MSC fleet ocean tug USNS Sioux (T-ATF 171) teamed up Feb. 8-17, 2012, for a bilateral, cross-cultural training exercise off the coast of Hawaii.

HSV 2 Swift, an MSC-chartered high-speed vessel, provided critical support to the U.S. Navy's partnership mission in Africa this year in an ongoing international effort to improve regional maritime safety and security. The mission was Africa Partnership 2012.

In June, four U.S. Navy mine countermeasures ships arrived in Manama, Bahrain, aboard MSC-chartered float-on/float-off vessel MV Tern. The MCMs were transported from Los Angeles to support a U.S. Central Command request.

Each summer, MSC resupplies Thule Air Base, Greenland, 750 miles north of the Arctic Circle. When the ice thins to less than four feet on Baffin Bay, icebreakers can clear a path for an MSC-chartered dry cargo ship and a tanker to deliver the supplies needed by the base for a year. Thule is the northernmost of eight worldwide satellite tracking stations in the Air Force Satellite Control Network. This resupply mission began in 1952.

On July 17-18, the world's eyes were on fleet replenishment oiler USNS Henry J. Kaiser (T-AO 187) as it delivered 900,000 gallons of a 50-50 blend of advanced biofuels and traditional petroleum-based fuel to the USS Nimitz carrier strike group. MSC plays a role in the Navy's environmental and energy programs.

Also in July, a recovery team comprised of civilian mariners aboard rescue and salvage ship USNS Grapple (T-ARS 53), along with divers from Mobile Diving and Salvage Unit Two and specialists from Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command, conducted a joint recovery operation at an underwater site in Canada. During the month-long operation, team members searched the coast for five Americans lost when a PBY-5A aircraft crashed in November 1942 off the coast of Quebec.

Seventy CIVMARs and approximately 1,100 Navy, Army and non-governmental organization personnel aboard hospital ship USNS Mercy (T-AH 20) just finished Pacific Partnership 2012 in mid-September. Returning to San Diego after steaming more than 20,000 miles to Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam and Cambodia, the nearly five-month humanitarian and civic assistance mission resulted in medical treatment for nearly 50,000 people.

MSC pride

It's pretty apparent that we are involved with the maritime fabric of America and the world. Because we focus on our customers and constantly strive to improve our service, the Navy and DOD place more and more trust in our expertise and capabilities.

You and MSC are vital to America. Be proud. MSC delivers!

Yours aye,

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

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Safeguard sails to Bangladesh for CARAT

By Edward Baxter
MSCFE Public Affairs

Civil service mariners and U.S. Navy divers embarked on board Military Sealift Command rescue and salvage ship USNS Safeguard (T-ARS 50) completed a weeklong, bilateral training exercise with the Bangladesh navy Sept. 25.

U.S. Navy photo by MC3 Sean Furey

Capt. Ed Dickerson, left, civilian master of USNS Safeguard (T-ARS 50), speaks with Dan Mozena, U.S. ambassador to Bangladesh, while the ship participates in Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training 2012.

Safeguard pulled pierside at the bustling commercial port of Chittagong Sept. 17 as part of the Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training, or CARAT, which included guided missile destroyer USS Decatur (DDG 73), U.S. Marines from Fleet Anti-Terrorism Security Team Pacific and Sailors from Riverine Squadron Two. Two ships from the Bangladesh navy participated this year along with members of its Special Warfare diving and salvage unit.

CARAT is a five-month-long series of bilateral military exercises between the U.S. Navy and the armed forces of Bangladesh, Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Timor Leste. Bangladesh became a member of CARAT in 2011.

"There were many anchored vessels and fishing boats as we approached Chittagong's harbor which made navigation challenging," said Safeguard's civilian master Capt. Ed Dickerson.

The dive exercise was designed to share knowledge of each other's diving and salvage program, and, equally important, build relationships and partnerships with the South Asian nation, which borders India and Burma.

U.S. Ambassador to Bangladesh Dan Mozena visited Dickerson and Safeguard crew members during an evening reception held aboard the ship Sept. 18. U.S. 7th Fleet commander Navy Vice Adm. Scott Swift and commander, Logistics Group Western Pacific Navy Rear Adm. Tom Carney also attended along with senior officers from the Bangladeshi navy.

"The U.S. Navy is here as further evidence of the ever-deepening military-to-military relationship between America and Bangladesh," Mozena said.

Divers from Pearl Harbor, Hawaii-based Mobile Diving and Salvage Unit One, Company 1-6, trained with counterparts from the Bangladeshi navy in dive and salvage techniques, dive medicine, equipment maintenance, as well as the use of side-scan sonar and remotely-operated vehicles.

MDSU divers visited the Bangladeshi dive and salvage facility at its naval base at Issa Khan in Chittagong to tour its hyperbaric chamber; inspect dive equipment and observe their training procedures and practices.

Strong currents, muddy waters and limited visibility prevented at-sea dives from Safeguard. Instead, U.S. and Bangladeshi divers trained in a swimming pool at Issa Khan using the surface supplied diving system via a KM-37 diving helmet, which supplies air to submerged divers through an umbilical cord from the surface in depths up to 300 feet.

Aboard Safeguard, MDSU divers conducted classroom training on the use of hyperbaric chambers used to treat decompression sickness when necessary after deep-water dives. Medical issues discussed included learning how to conduct post dive neurological exams to identify signs of nitrogen narcosis due to rapid ascent from deep dives.

In a hands-on demonstration, an MDSU diver played the role of an injured diver who was placed into the hyperbaric chamber for treatment.

"The reason our divers are so good at responding to emergencies is because they train extensively and treat a practice situation like a real emergency," said Navy Senior Chief and Master Diver Jeremy Duplissey who was embarked on board Safeguard for the exercise.

MDSU divers also conducted demonstrations of its remotely-operated vehicle. The ROV was not deployed, however, due to sea conditions. Next, MDSU divers conducted classroom training in salvage techniques.

U.S. and Bangladeshi divers, embarked aboard Safeguard's rigid-hull, inflatable boat, conducted a hands-on demonstration of side-scan sonar technology used to create three-dimensional maps of underwater targets.

Throughout the exercise, Safeguard's 26 civil service mariners worked around the clock to support divers, making sure all the equipment was in good working order before any evolutions commenced.

"The relationship we have built with the Bangladeshi navy has made it easy for the crew to work with them," said Safeguard Able Seaman Michele Stevens. "The Bangladeshis are very professional, cooperative, and display an eagerness to learn and train."

Stewards from Safeguard's supply department worked long hours to support the evening reception by providing food and staff to support the event.

Safeguard's engineering team ensured that generators kept running in order to make and supply power for the recompression chamber, as well as lighting and communications involved in the dive exercises.

Safeguard also hosted a group of midshipmen from Bangladesh's naval academy, as well as a group of children from a nearby middle school, who toured the ship and observed the dive equipment up close.

The exercise concluded Sept. 24 with a "hotwash," which involved both sides discussing lessons-learned, and a closing ceremony. The following day, Safeguard set sail for its next mission as U.S. 7th Fleet's primary rescue and salvage vessel.

Henson marks WWII battle in Indonesia

The following article was written by Capt. Greg Gillotte, a civilian contract mariner and master of USNS Henson (T-AGS 63), the Military Sealift Command oceanographic survey ship recently invited to participate in Sail Morotai 2012, a formation exercise off Indonesia's island of Morotai, commemorating the 68th anniversary of the Battle of Morotai.

The sail from Sasebo, Japan, to the waters of Indonesia was supposed to be routine as we headed to our next scheduled survey mission with our embarked team of hydrographers and oceanographers from the Naval Oceanographic Office.

The voyage took an unexpected turn when U.S. 7th Fleet tasked USNS Henson (T-AGS 63) to divert to the island of Morotai to participate in a formation exercise with the Indonesian, Australian and Singapore navies.

Morotai is one of Indonesia's northernmost islands, located between the large island of Sulawesi and the southernmost islands of the Philippines.

Henson was invited to attend a ceremony commemorating the 68th anniversary of the Battle of Morotai, Sept. 15. Our role would be to participate in a column of 25 naval ships and render a salute to Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and scores of other dignitaries.

On Sept. 15, 1944, Gen. Douglas MacArthur ordered U.S. and Australian forces to invade the island. Allied forces overpowered Japanese troops and built airfields, established an operational harbor and fuel storage facilities which would later play a key role in the liberation of the Philippines from Japanese occupation.

Henson was the perfect choice to represent the U.S. Navy because our oceanographic survey ships have a long-standing relationship with the Indonesian navy. Along with our partners from NAVOCEANO, we have completed more than 200 surveys to aid in the safe navigation of Indonesia's vast territorial waters.

To prepare for this event, the ship arrived near Morotai Sept. 13. Here, we embarked Lt. j.g. Yosua Sabar Panjaitan of the Indonesian navy as a liaison officer. I also worked closely with Cmdr. Brian Delamont, commanding officer of HMAS Sirius, an oiler representing the Australian navy at the event.

Henson made three practice runs, training in following a carefully choreographed course at a distance of 450 yards behind the ship in front.

The day of the event, we were the fourth ship in the column.

MSC's contract mariners joined civilian staff members from NAVOCEANO on the rails of the ship. Thirteen NAVOCEANO personnel wore bright orange work vests while eight mariners from Henson wore black force protection vests and kevlar helmets. While none of us are uniformed personnel, we wanted to give the impression of uniformity to the dignitaries.

Henson passed within a hundred yards from shore in direct view of the reviewing stand. Our crew on deck paid tribute to the Indonesian president by rendering a salute.

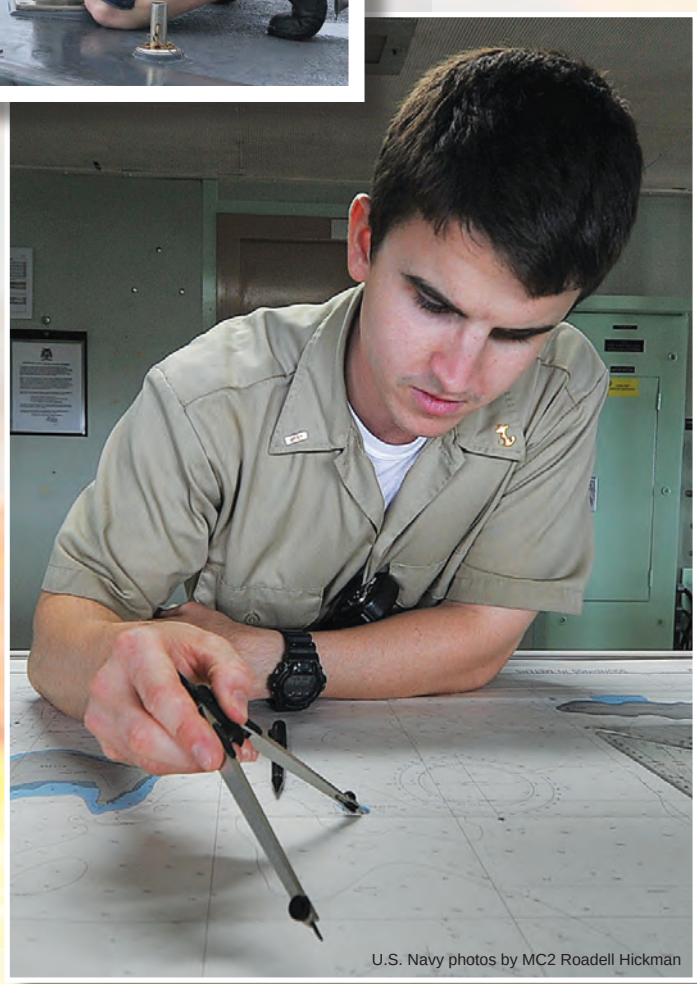
The constant course changes and speed changes proved to be challenging even for the most experienced helmsman. I decided to use the vessel's state-of-the-art dynamic positioning system, a computer-controlled steering system operated by a joystick on the ship's bridge, maneuvering the ship via its rotating propellers instead of a traditional rudder.

In its entirety the PASSEX lasted only an hour, but it was an exhilarating experience for all aboard. As we embark on our next survey mission, I think I can speak for the entire crew in saying we were honored to participate.

U.S. Navy photo

MSC oceanographic survey ship USNS Henson (T-AGS 63) sails off Morotai, where the ship joined a formation exercise.

Mercy



U.S. Navy photos by MC2 Roadell Hickman

Top: Ordinary Seaman Colin Myers repairs one of Mercy's two 35-foot utility boats that transport patients and personnel from ship to shore.

Above: Third officer Patrick Delargy navigates aboard Mercy.

Below: Ensign Alex Tonsberg weighs a Filipino child at a medical civic action project held at the Carayman Elementary School in Samar, Philippines.

By Meghan Patrick, MSC Public Affairs

Seventy civil service mariners and approximately 400 Navy, Army and non-governmental organization (NGO) personnel aboard Military Sealift Command hospital ship USNS Mercy (T-AH 20) returned to San Diego Sept. 14.

Mercy steamed 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 (PP12), a nearly five-month humanitarian and civic assistance mission that resulted in medical treatment for nearly 50,000 people. Many of the ship's mission personnel, which number about 1,200 service members and civilians, have already returned home.

The 894-foot Mercy, one of two U.S. Navy hospital ships, is operated by the U.S. Navy's Military Sealift Command. 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.

Doctors and nurses from the ship's medical treatment facility worked with medical professionals from numerous governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations and the host nations to provide medical care, including immunizations, general and specialty surgeries, dental care and vision services. At the invitation of the host nations, PP12 brought the expertise of U.S. service members and personnel from 13 partner nation militaries and 28 NGOs to build and strengthen relationships and work together to learn how to better collectively respond to natural disasters and crises.

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 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.

In addition, the Mercy team conducted more than 60,000 hours of subject-matter expert exchanges in the four countries visited on topics including first aid, nursing, cardiology, orthopedics, nutrition, disaster response, water and food safety, and public health promotion.

U.S., Australian and host-nation engineers built or refurbished 13 buildings, and the crew collectively participated in more than 100 community service projects to include the delivery of 244 pallets, containing more than 144,000 pounds of donated supplies requested by host nations.

Pacific Partnership 2012 is a U.S. Pacific Fleet mission led by three different element commanders: civilian Capt. Jonathan Olmsted, Mercy's civil service master; Navy Capt. James Morgan, commander for the overall Pacific Partnership mission; and Navy Capt. Timothy Hinman, commander of the medical treatment facility responsible for providing care aboard Mercy and ashore.

"My most profound memory was watching six surgeries, all of which were performed in a 30-minute timeframe while we were anchored off the Philippines," said Olmsted, who has overall responsibility for Mercy's movement and the safety of its nearly 1,000 passengers. "We saw four children and two adults receive life-changing procedures including cataract transplants, tumor removals, and other corrective surgery. That's when it really hit me why PP12 is so important."

Supply utilityman Carmelita Kawasaki said that the mission's success is evident from the facial expressions of those receiving help. Kawasaki noticed this especially while volunteering her sleep hours to work at a public elementary school in Indonesia. "You can feel the gratitude and happiness in their hearts, and sense that we are very welcome in their place," she said.

Engine utilityman Darlene Mertz, who works in Mercy's vast engineering spaces, cited a memory from Vietnam as her favorite from the trip.

"I was walking down a ship's passageway after a long and hot eight-hour watch in the engine room when I ran into a group of patients," said Mertz. "An elderly woman stopped me and asked, via her translator, what I do on the ship. I told her I work in the engine room keeping the boilers on so we have steam for the ship's propulsion and power for the hospital. She looked at me and said, 'thank you for being here'."

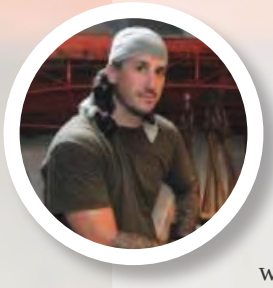
U.S. Navy photo by MC3 Michael Feddersen

U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Roadell Hickman

y crew:

Several CIVMARs captured their experiences and observations by writing entries for the PP12 blog. Read some excerpts here – full posts are available online:

Second Officer Casey Bell, cargo mate: As the cargo mate, I am in charge of 10 deck department personnel. We are tasked with running the Band-Aid boats at the mission ports, mooring and anchoring the ship, and handling cargo both coming and going from the vessel. The guys I work with are highly-motivated. I couldn't ask for a better group of mariners. I always feel confident that no matter what is tasked, both planned and unplanned, we will get the job done safely and efficiently.



***Boatswain Cory Clark*:** Being one of the two ship's boatswains, I have to make sure a lot of stuff gets done to make sure the crew and patients are safe. Mother Ocean can be very dangerous and preventative measures must be taken; that is where I come in. I not only work with the damage control officers to make sure the crew is trained in damage control, but I also ensure the maintenance of all the small boats on the ship. On top of that, it is my job to make sure spaces on the ship are secured for sea, and to be responsible for the general safety of the crew. My favorite part of the job is being one of the boat drivers that carries crew, supplies and patients to and from the countries. Between these boats, we carry 80 to 90 percent of patients and supplies to and from shore. As a small boat captain, I am usually one of the first and last people that some of the patients see. The gratitude these people show is one of the most rewarding things in my life. On one occasion, I was transporting a group from Cambodia back to shore from the ship, and one of the men I was taking wouldn't stop shaking my hand. He wasn't even one of the people we treated, yet he showed an incredible amount of appreciation for what we were doing for his countrymen. It is moments like that that make me believe we are truly making a difference.

Third Assistant Engineer Spencer Pierce: My name is Spencer Pierce and I am one of approximately 15 MSC mariners who stay attached to ship while she is tied up to Pier 1 in San Diego. In the civilian mariner world, we are not obligated to stay with any one ship for more than four months, but I do. As fate may have it, opportunity presented itself to become part of the Mercy crew, of which has been nothing less than a great time over the past 4 years … While my job may keep me out of the spotlight and rarely seen onboard, I know the feeling of 'done good.' Mercy is seven days a week, a lot of coffee, and loads of coordination that bring it all together to make a most memorable impression to patients, partners, and crew alike. The list of how Mercy has aided can go on and on, but in its simplest form, it brings smiles. Just by walking ashore, locals of villages and small province cities are overjoyed to see faces from Military Sealift Command's centerfold ship USNS Mercy … To them it matters not who we are, but our good intentions on being there and everyone aboard is part of that.

Cover: Civil service mariner Tom Simonson helps a Cambodian woman board a ferryboat back to Sihanoukville during Pacific Partnership 2012.

Background: MSC hospital ship USNS Mercy (T-AH 20) sails from a mission stop in Indonesia.

Below: CIVMAR Second Electrician Aparito Jimenez pepares a static voltage regulator to be installed in Mercy's engine room.

Agents of care

U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Roadell Hickman

HQ • HIGHLIGHTS

Military Sealift Command headquarters welcomes Navy **Capt. Willard Stubbs**, Combat Logistics Force deputy; Navy **Lt. Kelis Lacour**, command, control, communication and computer systems; and **Petty Officer 1st Class Lakesha Craig**, maritime forces, manpower and management.

The command also welcomes **Dereck Franklin**, **Dung Nguyen**, **David Milstead** and **Vera Penni-Sue**, command, control, communication and computer systems; **Andrew Barela**, **Matthew Winne** and **Nicholas Garant**, engineering; **Bridget Joyner**, operations; and **Kendra Dunnington**, office of the inspector general.

The command bids fair winds and following seas to Navy **Rear Adm. Brian L. LaRoche**, deputy commander, MSC. LaRoche received the Legion of Merit – Gold Star in lieu of the Second Award – for his outstanding service from **Rear Adm. Mark H. Buzby**, commander, MSC, on behalf of the president of the United States Sept. 20.

Also departing the command are Navy **Cmdr. Daniel Redmond**, operations; **Operations Specialist 2nd Class Winston Virden**, operations; Navy **Capt. Joann Fitzell**, medical programs; **Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Leopold Brandenburg**, medical programs; **Personnel Specialist Senior Chief Jennifer Bamba**, Navy **Lt. Laura Chan**, **Patricia Paige**, **Kayla Britford** and **Linda Beinsu**, maritime forces, manpower and management; **Cynthia Gernert**, command, control, communication and computer systems; **Lequan Ponder**, logistics; and **Chinenye Okolo**, logistics.

U.S. Navy photo by MC3 Chelsea Mandell

Gunner's Mate Seaman Joseph Gillies prepares to shoot an M14 rifle with throwing line modifications in preparation for an underway replenishment with MSC fleet replenishment oiler USNS Walter Diehl (T-AO 193) in the East China Sea.

FAR EAST • HAILS

Navy **Capt. Jim Hruska**, commander, Military Sealift Command Far East, and Navy **Lt. Cmdr. Victor Cirilo**, Ship Support Unit Singapore commanding officer, cut a ceremonial ribbon Sept. 21 to officially open SSU Singapore's newly constructed office space at Singapore's Sembawang Wharves.

More than 40 guests from the Sembawang military community attended the ceremony, which included the presentation of a Special Act award to SSU Singapore logistics officer **Epifanio Edora**.

Hruska recognized Edora for his work in planning the construction of the 6,000 square foot facility and the smooth transition of equipment and supplies to the new office. SSU Singapore's relocation to an adjacent building at the Wharves consolidates all 12 full-time staff into a single office and provides additional office space to accommodate Navy Reserve personnel.

U.S. Navy Sailors from Guam-based Maritime Expeditionary Security Group Detachment joined Sailors from the Australian and Singaporean navies in a visit, board, search and seizure training exercise held aboard Maritime Prepositioning Ship Squadron Three flagship USNS 1ST LT Jack Lummus (T-AK 3011) off the coast of Guam Aug. 29. In an exercise designed to train in combating piracy, terrorism and the transport of dangerous and illicit cargo, Sailors fast-roped from two Andersen Air Force Based SH-60 Seahawk helicopters onto Lummus's flight deck.

During an award ceremony held at MSCFE headquarters Sept. 19, Hruska presented Assistant Combat Logistics Force Officer **Andrew Armacost** with a Navy Meritorious Civilian Service Medal, for exceptional service to the command.

MSCFE congratulates **Boatswain's Mate Chief Todd Welsh**, service support officer, who was promoted to his current rank Sept. 14.

The command welcomes Strategic Sealift Readiness Group Coordinator Navy **Cmdr. Eric Liu** and his assistant Navy **Lt. Mickey Hand**.

MSCFE's logistics directorate welcomes **Senior Chief Logistics Specialist Cesar Narvarte** and bids farewell to Logistics Management Specialist **David Spilholtz**.

Maritime Prepositioning Ship Squadron Two bid fair winds and following seas to Chief Staff Officer Navy **Lt. Cmdr. Jason Schwarzkopf** and welcomes his relief Navy **Lt. Cmdr. Blaine Bitterman**. The command bids farewell to Supply Officer Navy **Ensign Amy Hutchins** and welcomes her relief, Navy **Ensign John Harmony**.

PACIFIC • BRIEFS

Military Sealift Command Pacific's fleet replenishment oiler USNS Yukon (T-AO 202) provided logistics services to the U.S. Coast Guard cutter USCGC Stratton Aug. 28 off the coast of Southern California. The underway replenishment was Stratton's first since the ship's commissioning in March.

USNS Bridge (T-AOE 10) departed the Southern California area of operations Aug. 29, traveling to Pearl Harbor and joining USS John C. Stennis's Western Pacific deployment. Bridge is scheduled to remain forward deployed for an extended period as part of the area of responsibility reduced operation status initiative.

MSCPAC welcomes Navy **Lt. Christopher Allen**, MSCPAC deputy logistics officer, who joins the command following duty as the logistics officer for the Satellite Operations Center, Point Mugu, Calif.; **Andrew Armacost**, MSCPAC assistant Combat Logistics Force logistics officer, arriving in San Diego from MSC Far East, where he served as the command's assistant combat logistics force officer; and **David Spilholtz**, MSCPAC logistics management specialist. Spilholtz returns to MSCPAC following two years in MSCFE, where he served as a logistics management specialist.

CENTRAL • CURRENTS

Military Sealift Command ships operating in the U.S. 5th Fleet area of responsibility conducted 97 underway replenishments in September, including 50 with coalition, European Union and NATO ships. The support provided by the ships of Commander Task Force 53 enabled combatants to stay at sea for considerable lengths of time.

USNS Catawba (T-ATF 168) played a key role in the International Mine Countermeasures Exercise that took place across the Arabian Gulf, Gulf of Oman and Arabian Sea Sept. 16-31. Catawba placed and recovered inert training aids and acted as a diving support platform during the exercise.

USNS Carl Brashear (T-AKE 7) departed for the U.S. 7th Fleet area of operations Sept. 29, concluding five months of successful operations in the Middle East. During its time in the U.S. 5th Fleet area of responsibility, the professionals aboard Brashear completed more than 50 underway replenishments with U.S. and coalition ships. Brashear was replaced by USNS Washington Chambers (T-AKE 11). is conducting its maiden deployment, with crew already proving they are ready for any and all tasking that comes their way.

The command bids fair winds and following seas to its liaison officer from the U.K. Royal Navy **Lt. Cmdr. Anthony Richards**, as well as to U.S. Navy **Lt. Cmdr. Daniel Kidd**, **Lt. Allen Hamby**, **Ensign Kerrie Coleman** and **Petty Officers 1st Class Mark Lentz** and **Samuel Kenyenso**. The command welcomes its newest arrival from the U.K. Royal navy, **Lt. Cmdr. David Noon**.

U.S. Navy photo by Chief Mate Grant Begley

MSC dry cargo/ammunition ship USNS Robert E. Peary (T-AKE 5) resupplies USS Hue City (CG 66) underway in the Arabian Gulf.

U.S. Navy photo by MCSN Darien Kenney

USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN 69) sails alongside fast combat support ship USNS Bridge (T-AOE 6) during an underway replenishment in the Arabian Sea.

U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Deven King

A Seahawk helicopter picks up a pallet from USS Jason Dunham (DDG 109) during a vertical replenishment with fleet replenishment oiler USNS John Lenthall (T-AO 189).

EUROPE/AFRICA • NEWS

As world events unfolded with violence against U.S. Embassy personnel and buildings in North Africa on Sept. 11, 2012, Military Sealift Command Europe and Africa operations department demonstrated its flexibility and adaptability by immediately adjusting its logistics support plan to support U.S. 6th Fleet Navy forces. USNS John Lenthall (T-AO 189) provided vital cargo, fuel and food to U.S. Navy ships in the central and eastern Mediterranean Sea, including USS Cole (DDG 67), USS Jason Dunham (DDG 109), USS Forrest Sherman (DDG 98), USS Laboon (DDG 58), USS McFaul (DDG 74), USS Farragut (DDG 99) and USS Fort McHenry (LSD 43).

USNS Bruce C. Heezen (T-AGS 64) completed five months of survey operations in the European area of responsibility and reported to MSC Central Sept. 22. After a final port visit Sept. 4-14 in Rota, Spain, Heezen provided an opportune lift of a harbor security boat from Rota to Augusta Bay, Italy.

Africa Partnership Station 2012 wrapped up Sept. 19 for high-speed vessel Swift (HSV 2) after final port visits to Pointe Noire, Congo, and Lome, Togo. While APS training teams were ashore conducting non-commissioned officer leadership training, U.S. Marine Corps martial arts training and a Medical Civic Action Program health fair in Togo, Swift's crew remained at sea participating in maritime interdiction operations exercises with the Togolese navy.

Swift's Blue crew supply officer Navy **Lt. Eric Gardner** received the 2012 Project Handclasp Humanitarian Service Award for Outstanding Achievements for his work supporting Project Handclasp during APS 2012. Between Sept. 30, 2011 and April 29, 2012, Swift distributed more than 180 tons of Project Handclasp humanitarian, educational and goodwill materials to more than 20 non-governmental organizations in 12 partner nations.

USNS Grapple (T-ARS 53) reported to commander, Task Force 68, Sept. 16 for a regularly scheduled deployment to the European and Africa Command areas of responsibility. The ship's first mission began Sept. 26 in support of the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command, with an onboard JPAC team conducting humanitarian recovery operations aboard Grapple at a World War II-era B-17 crash site located in the Mediterranean Sea off Calvi, Corsica, France.

ATLANTIC • LINES

At Military Sealift Command Atlantic's port office in Charleston, S.C., **Tom D'Agostino**, director of ship operations, coordinated the loading of prepositioned cargo aboard USNS Watson (T-AKR 310) and provided agency support to the vessel Sept. 10-18. The load consisted of 1,125 pieces of equipment, equal to nearly 262,000 square feet, and included 96 heavy equipment transporters used to transport tanks. Once deployed, Watson will deliver some of its cargo to other MSC prepositioned ships.

Marine Transportation Specialist **Mary Ann Liberto**, also of the Charleston office, coordinated the departure of USNS Arctic (T-AOE 8) from Detyen's Shipyard Sept. 18, after the ship had completed repairs.

USNS Leroy Grumman (T-AO 195) was the 2012 recipient of MSC's Griff Hume Anti-terrorism Award. **Rear Adm. Mark H. Buzby**, commander, MSC, presented the plaque to the civil service master **Capt. Richard Gray** aboard the ship Sept. 7 in Norfolk, Va. The vessel, which took top honors for having the best anti-terrorism program in MSC's fleet, also received a note of congratulations from Buzby. Later that month, Leroy Grumman deployed to the United Kingdom to support Navy combatants and NATO allies taking part in the Joint Warrior exercise.

Deploying to the Navy's Southern Command area of responsibility, USNS Patuxent (T-AO 201) participated in the Unitas Lant exercise, providing logistics support to Latin American and other participating foreign navies.

The command bids fair winds and following seas to Navy **Lt. Cmdr. Bryan Hudson** as he retires from the Navy after serving 23 years. Hudson had been with the command since January 2009 and served as the diving and salvage operations officer.

MSCLANT welcomes Navy **Lt. Cmdr. Phil Karg** who will relieve Navy **Lt. Cmdr. Tracy Hegglund** as the reserve program officer. In addition to his regular duties, he will also be responsible for aspects of the diving and salvage operations officer position vacated by Hudson. Also joining the command is **Joe Hennessy**, who will serve as the assistant combat logistics officer.

U.S. Navy photo by Meghan Patrick

A Navy diver prepares a line for MSC fleet ocean tug USNS Apache (T-ATF 172), anchored in the Patuxent River off Solomons Island, Md., for Navy diver training.

COMPASS • HEADING

The CMPI 610 rollout team visited nearly all civil service mariner-crewed ships by the end of September and provided an introductory overview of the new pay instruction. The CMPI 610 video and overview are available at http://www.msc.navy.mil/civmar/policy/CMPI610.htm.

Purser Joe Schaefer completed his tenure as part of Military Sealift Command's N00H code in Washington, D.C. and is returning to the fleet. His relief, **Purser Donald Goodall**, reported aboard early October. CIVMAR positions on the N00H team are rotational and temporary. They aim to assist MSC's senior leadership in implementing policies intended to improve the way MSC cares for its community in three core areas: leadership and professional development; diversity and women's issues; and quality of life.

CIVMAR promotion opportunities are now scheduled annually, on a consistent and recurring basis, allowing mariners to prepare and submit their promotion packages for consideration. A recent query to the promotion board administrators provided tips to remember when preparing a promotion package. First, digitally signed mariner advancement program, or MAP, evaluations need to be submitted. Second, administrative points can be lost in the evaluation process for not being in compliance with the minimum eligibility requirements and the 'how to apply' sections of the promotion announcement. Finally, mariners should be sure to provide detailed information of experience relative to the knowledge, skills and abilities required of the position to which the mariner seeks to advance.

Fair winds and following seas to **Able Seaman Felix Acebedo Jr.**, **Chief Radio Electronics Technician Emmanuel Besarra**, **3rd Officer Ronald Brodie**, **Assistant Damage Control Officer Donald Childs**, **Deck Engineer Machinist Robert Glenn**, **Able Seaman Romulo Pugeda**, **Able Seaman Thomas Reddington**, **3rd Assistant Engineer Walter Van Court III**, **Financial Tech Frances Amason**, **Deputy Equal Employment Opportunity Officer** and **Contract Specialist Douglas Ernest**, as they enter into retirement.

MSC regrets to report the passing of **3rd Assistant Engineer Darius Chavous** and **Supply Utilityman Wilbur Wright III**. We send condolences to their families.

For more MSC Norfolk and civil service mariner news, visit www.msc.navy.mil/msfsc/newsletter.

MPSRON ONE is disestablished

Maritime Prepositioning Ship Squadron One is part of MSC's Maritime Prepositioning Force, a group of ships specially configured to strategically position supplies for the U.S. Marine Corps at sea. These ships 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. Each squadron carries sufficient equipment and supplies to sustain more than 15,650 Marine Expeditionary Force personnel for up to 30 days. MPS Squadron One has been home to a number of prepositioning ships in the Mediterranean throughout the years and was disestablished at the end of September, leaving two MPS Squadrons still operating forward to support the Marine Corps.

The following article was written September 1, 2012, by Navy Capt. Ricks Polk, MPS Squadron One Commodore, in anticipation of the late September squadron disestablishment.

It's another Saturday at Hurd Bank, a deep water anchorage 12 to 14 miles off the coast of Malta, in the Central Mediterranean. Winds are blowing about 15 to 20 knots, blue skies and white caps building on the water. Navy plays Notre Dame in football at 3 p.m. today in Dublin, Ireland.

I had hoped we might swing a port visit to Ireland and watch the game in person, but today we'll watch on the Armed Forces Network aboard Maritime Prepositioning Force ship USNS 2ND LT John P. Bobo (T-AK 3008) at anchor, just like our Sailors, Soldiers, and Airman deployed at sea and in a variety of countries around the world.

It's just another day of the 450 days I've been stationed aboard Bobo. It is life at sea, and there is an attraction to it that I really can't explain with words. Every once in awhile, I see it out the porthole of my cabin when the seas are flat, like a mirror, or when I'm standing on the fantail and look down at a color of aqua blue that they don't even have in the 128 Crayola crayon pack. Then, there is the other extreme that is equally impressive: standing on the bridge wing of the ship with 50-knot winds and seas crashing over the bow with white water spraying across all the containers and cargo on deck.

This is my 35th year in the Navy, and when I saw the opportunity to come back to sea, I had to take it. Fortunately, my wife understands the lure of the sea and has been very supportive of my quest to see the world.

I'm in the last month of that opportunity. MPS Squadron One, which currently includes Bobo, the flagship; USNS PFC Eugene A. Obregon (T-AK 3006), the alternate flag-ship; USNS LCPL Roy M. Wheat (T-AK 3016); and USNS SGT Matej Kocak (T-AK 3005) is going to be disestablished at the end of September.

U.S. Navy photo by MC3 John Martinez

USNS 2ND LT John P. Bobo, seen here at anchor in Souda Bay, Greece, in 2010, was the flagship of Maritime Prepositioning Ship Squadron One.

MPS Squadron One has sailed the Mediterranean, Eastern Atlantic and Baltic for nearly 28 years. With no permanent homeport, this is the BEST job in the Navy. And my time with MSC has been an experience of a lifetime.

Our old Navy slogan ("See the World!") is still true, and this squadron and I have seen a good bit of it. During the squadron's history, the ships AND crew of MPS Squadron One have supported the whole range of operations, ranging from humanitarian assistance, and overseas contingency operations in support of Desert Shield and Operation Enduring Freedom. Those same ships and crew have occasionally been based ashore to coordinate strategic lift as well.

I see boxes beginning to fill my stateroom; I can't help but be reminded that our time is quickly coming to a close. The Navy has given me another tour of great memories with great people doing great things. I'm going to miss the sea and these big ships plowing the waves. I might see the Navy football game next year without the "No Signal" on the screen, but I will miss the feel of the ocean under my feet and the sounds that are only found on a ship at sea.

We're coming home to family and friends as we say fair winds to the squadron, its ships and its following seas…

Ponce crew members honored for service

By Kim E. Dixon
MSCEURAF Public Affairs

Rear Adm. Mark H. Buzby, commander, Military Sealift Command, honored 89 members of USS Ponce's (AFSB(I) 15) crew during an Oct. 7 ceremony highlighting accomplishments associated with bringing Ponce into service and on station.

Navy Capt. Jon P. Rodgers, Ponce's commanding officer, also presided over the ceremony held aboard Ponce, underway in the Arabian Gulf. Current and past members of Ponce's combined crew of MSC civil service mariners and U.S. Navy Sailors were recognized with a variety of awards and commendations recognizing their efforts to make the Navy's first Afloat Forward Staging Base (Interim) an operational reality.

Capt. Timothy Lockwood, Ponce's civil service master, and CIVMAR Chief Engineer Blaine Darling and First Assistant Engineer Christian Teague were presented DOD Meritorious Civilian Service Awards for their roles in Ponce's shakedown after the ship's refit.

Uniformed Navy personnel awards included one Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal, seven Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medals and seven flag letters of commendation, awarded on behalf of Rear Adm. David M. Thomas, commander, Naval Surface Force Atlantic. Additionally, 10 CIVMARs were awarded flag letters of commendation, and 61 CIVMARs were awarded letters of appreciation.

"The capabilities you brought – folks on the other side of the street are taking note of the capability you brought in," said Buzby. "We read it in Washington all the time. You've done things that have never been done before. You're also setting the pace for the follow-on version of this ship, still being built. This old girl's got a ways to steam and a lot of love for you to put into her."

During the ceremony, Buzby also unveiled a new MSC civil service mariner command-at-sea and chief engineer-at-sea pin during the ceremony. He presented the pins – designed to mirror the U.S. Navy's active duty command-at-sea pins worn by those who command Navy ships and aircraft squadrons – to Lockwood and Darling.

"One of the things I've been trying to do in my time at MSC is to provide a means to recognize folks for the hard work and prestige that go with being the master and chief engineer," said Buzby. "In the Navy, commanding officers wear a command at sea pin, the star image establishing their authority as commander. I've instituted such a device at MSC for masters and chief engineers."

Buzby said the devices are slated for distribution throughout the MSC fleet in the next few months, recognizing a proud tradition of service and seagoing expertise. The prototype gold-colored pins feature an anchor surrounded by stars for the master and a ship's propeller surrounded by stars for the chief engineer, with an identifying "MSC" across both.

"It's a nice recognition," said Darling. "It's nice to have as a symbol of achievement."

Ponce recently showcased its capabilities in the U.S. 5th Fleet area of responsibility during International Mine Countermeasures Exercise 2012, Sept. 16-27.

During the exercise, Ponce acted as the command ship while demonstrating its ability to stage people and equipment and to provide support to surface ship and mine countermeasures operations. Additionally, Ponce embarked, launched and recovered helicopters, unmanned aerial vehicles and small craft, some of these assets belonging to the military forces of several of the 30 participating nations.

"Ponce's been an amazing and outstanding experience," said Lockwood. "When I took Ponce, I was looking at it as an opportunity to excel and this command shows I accomplished what I set out to do. This command will benefit masters by making them more versatile for future platforms."

U.S. Navy photo by MC1 Lewis Hunsaker

Crew members of USS Ponce, seen here in preparation for the underway phase of International Mine Countermeasures Exercise 2012, were recognized for their accomplishments getting the ship into service and on station in the U.S. 5th Fleet area of responsibility. Rear Admiral Mark Buzby, commander, Military Sealift Command, also unveiled MSC's new command-at-sea and chief engineer-at-sea pins, right.