

October 2012

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

THE U.S. NAVY'S MILITARY SEALIFT COMMAND

Ship to shore,
no pier needed!

MSC delivers in
JLOTS12

INSIDE — USNS Choctaw County is christened • Lenthall fuels ships during Reliant Mermaid

U.S. Navy photo by Jessica F. Alexander

Ten months and counting: ONE MSC is working

With many months of run time behind us, our ONE MSC ashore staff realignment has become a reality. The realignment paperwork is virtually complete. Our ship support units around the globe are now reporting to their respective area commands in a much cleaner alignment of MSC responsibility. Our commodores have clearer lines of authority and are supported by experts in all codes who have the resources they need to support the MSC mission, improve the command and better their own careers. All in all, it's gone very well, indeed.

The improvements are observable in the success of projects such as getting USS Ponce, our afloat forward staging base (interim) renovated, crewed, mission ready and deployed in just six months. It also shows in the continued refinement of MSC's cargo load management system that improves the effectiveness and efficiency of our Combat Logistics Force ships. We've also seen great success by our newly formed Total Force Management division in improving all aspects of mariner placement, training and promotion.

The hard work done by the ashore staffs – headquarters, Norfolk and area commands – to make this happen speaks volumes about MSC teamwork and spirit. Thanks, shipmates, for another job well done.

HQ consolidation

As you all know, we also spent most of the first half of this year looking at the feasibility of consolidating our Washington, D.C., and Norfolk, Va., headquarters to save space, real estate, utilities and rent and gain efficiencies in our operations. While the study showed that it was feasible to consolidate (i.e. there were physical places for us to go), and it would save us money in the long run, the initial costs of implementing such a move were still too high to be considered in this time of potentially reduced budgets and sequestration. So, the consolidation is being tabled until a better time to take a re-look. I still think it's a good idea that would further reduce some redundancies and improve our service to our customers, but the timing is off, so the project is on hold for now.

Strategic planning

Competency alignment is rapidly becoming an important part of our strategic planning, too. The increased effectiveness of MSC, coupled with the efficiencies we've gained through ONE MSC give us new capabilities to offer to our customers throughout the Navy and DOD. Through a strategic plan, we set our goals and objectives, open the way for new processes and guide our internal "sailing orders" for the future.

I have just signed out a new strategic plan 2012-2017, and copies will soon be reaching your hands. It contains four strategic priorities, each of which has associated objectives. The strategic plan contains our strategies to reach those objectives. I've summarized them here.

Strategic priority 1

"Provide ships ready for tasking." Our most basic mission. The supporting objectives are to realize fully ready ships that are crewed with trained and equipped mariners who are capable of executing the mission, and to operate a complete inventory of



Rear Adm. Mark Buzby congratulates Chief Engineer Samuel Battles, winner of the 2011 Distinguished Career Achievement Award.

capable ships that are successfully maintained and managed over their lifecycles within two percent of their class budgets.

Tall orders, but here's our strategy to get there, beginning with validating our customers' requirements to ensure the most efficient use of our ships. We'll also strive for 90 percent fit (the right people in the right jobs) and 95 percent fill (the right number of people to do the required jobs) for CIVMAR crews on our government-owned/government-operated ships.

Detailed life-cycle maintenance plans for our ships will keep us on budget. Improved surge sealift management planning will ensure effective capability at the most efficient cost.

Strategic priority 2

"Develop, enhance and enable our workforce." The objectives are to achieve optimum talent among our people, who will have the knowledge, skills and abilities to meet any challenges that come our way. We'll also have the right number of people who will have the support they need to meet the mission needs of our customers. With stiff competition in the job market, this won't be easy, but we aim to be the preferred employer in the maritime industry.

Leadership, supervisory and financial training will be key to meeting these objectives. That will help managers better define new job requirements, identify more qualified candidates for employment, maintain and upgrade employee skills through training and education, and provide the reliable, secure and cost-effective communication and IT infrastructure our people need to not only complete the mission, but do it better every time.

Strategic priority 3

"Focus on the customer." Our objective here is to continue to strive to meet customer requirements in a timely manner, with cost-effectiveness and security, by talented people who have the right tools and resources. In other words, to mean it when we say, "MSC delivers!"

Developing world-class customer service is just the beginning. We're going to capture our customers' expectations, preferences and aversions through a formal "Voice of the Customer" initia-

tive. More to come on that.

We'll also continue our leadership in supporting Navy's Task Force Energy initiative, and improving our own acquisition planning and oversight.

Developing and continuously improving our Maritime Positioning Force restructuring plan in conjunction with sea-basing is next. We'll develop new operational models for our Prepositioning T-AKES, as well as for the new Mobile Landing Platforms.

All of these efforts to increase customer satisfaction will be wrapped in real-time total asset visibility and financial transparency. We and our customers will always know exactly what's happening, and have a secure cyber environment to protect ourselves and our customers.

Strategic priority 4

"Manage organizational change and growth." Despite economic and operational challenges, we've got to keep MSC primed to meet warfighter needs. There's every reason to expect Navy and DOD to continue to place increased trust and more responsibility with MSC. Our objective is to be an organization that is relevant and responsive – a geographically dispersed, but unified team with a single point of focus on customer needs.

We're going to do this by continuing to refine our shoreside "competency communities," developing strategies to take advantage of and leverage a mobile workforce and continuing implementation of an ISO-certified Quality Management System to assess and document risk, record our processes and make continual improvements. We'll reduce our overall shoreside operating costs, including the eight percent reduction in Navy-wide IT costs, through DOD cost reduction initiatives, but we will not jeopardize the mission just to find efficiencies. Effectiveness over efficiency.

MSC's future is bright

Every time the sun rises it gives us along our course. I need your help in maintaining MSC as the go-to command in the Navy and DOD for innovation, effectiveness and efficiency. Make no mistake – cutting costs does not mean cutting corners – the

mission is always first.

Hail and farewell

Over the past two years, Rear Adm. Brian LaRoche has been my Deputy Commander for MSC. I've valued his perspective, his professionalism and his business savvy. Sadly, his two-year tour here is at an end and he will return to his civilian job with Northrop Grumman, with reserve duty as Deputy Commander of Naval Surface Force Atlantic. I know we all wish him fair weather as he charts a new course.

That means that MSC has a new deputy commander, and he is Rear Adm. (select) Larry Jackson. No stranger to MSC, Rear Adm. Jackson has been the commander of Naval Reserve MSC Norfolk since December 2010. In addition to engineering savvy, he brings force protection, security and extensive management expertise to MSC. He's a welcome addition to our MSC family, and on behalf of all MSC shipmates, I say, "welcome aboard!"

Sail safe, and Yours aye,

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

Sealift is an authorized publication for members and employees of the Navy's Military Sealift Command. Contents of this publication are not necessarily the official views of or endorsed by the U.S. government, the Department of Defense or the Department of the Navy. *Sealift* is published monthly by the Military Sealift Command Office of Public Affairs as authorized under NAVPUBINST 5600.42A. Submission of articles and letters should be addressed to Editor, *Sealift*, Military Sealift Command, 914 Charles Morris Court, S.E., Washington Navy Yard, D.C. 20398-5540; phone (202) 685-5055 or DSN 325-5055; fax (202) 685-5067; or via e-mail to sealift.editor@navy.mil. All photographic submissions must be sent via e-mail, express mail or parcel service.

COMSC Rear Adm. Mark H. Buzby, USN

Director, Public Affairs Tom Van Leunen

Editor James Marconi

Writers Edward Baxter, Singapore
Bill Cook, Norfolk, Va.
Susan Melow, Norfolk, Va.
Meghan Patrick, Washington, D.C.
Jessica Alexander, Washington, D.C.
Sarah Burford, San Diego
Kim Dixon, Naples
Masha Rumer, Washington, D.C.

Art Director Dale Allen, Washington, D.C.

Graphics Susan Thomas, Washington, D.C.

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.



Printed on recycled paper



Lenthall refuels astern for Reliant Mermaid

By Kim Dixon
MSCEURAF Public Affairs

Refueling other Navy ships at sea is one of Military Sealift Command's primary missions, and the underway replenishment presents the iconic image of one or two customer ships sailing alongside an MSC Combat Logistics Force ship.

Sometimes, though, an alongside underway replenishment is not efficient, safe or even possible. Another means of delivering mission-essential fuel from ship to ship is astern refueling, where the customer ship remains behind the MSC replenishment ship.

USNS John Lenthall (T-AO 189), currently deployed as the

U.S. 6th Fleet oiler, got to practice this evolution during exercise Reliant Mermaid. The annual exercise is regularly scheduled, not associated with or in reaction to real-world events. Currently in its 11th iteration, U.S. and Israeli ships participated in the search and rescue exercise, held Aug. 13-16 this year. Lenthall helped meet Reliant Mermaid's goal of developing the individual and collective maritime proficiencies of the participating countries, conducting astern refueling training Aug. 15 with Israeli vessels INS Herev and INS Hanit.

"Astern refueling is used if the customer ship is significantly smaller and slower than the replenishment ship or if it has a fueling station on its bow," said Navy Lt. Cmdr. Juan Gutierrez, operations officer at MSC Europe and Africa. "We don't conduct this procedure often; mostly with the U.S. Navy's mine countermeasures ships. As with any evolution that is infrequently performed, it is necessary to train on the procedure as often as possible."

With one- to two-foot seas present in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea and a light wind blowing in from the west, the ships conducted a dry hook-up, passing no fuel, but testing the equipment and each ship's procedures. The event was designed to ensure the crews maintain a level of proficiency with this infrequent operation so it can be safely executed when required, fulfilling another exercise goal of enhancing interoperability between the two nations.

Capt. Walter P. Nullet, Lenthall's civil service master, reflected on astern refueling, participating in Reliant Mermaid and the opportunities this provided for his civil service mariner crew and military detachment.

"There were no challenges to speak of when conducting astern refueling. The only thing is that it takes a little bit of physical labor to set up the stern rig, as it's normally broken down and stowed out of sight. It's seldom ever used. Oilers, such as Lenthall, use these rigs maybe once or twice a year – for exercises, for mine sweepers and for patrol coastal ships. I'm not sure when Lenthall used it last."

Participating in Reliant Mermaid provided professional as well as personal opportunities. The Navy military detachment side gained some experience in working with a foreign navy; both in planning exercises and in munitions. The crew gained a glimpse of Israel. We got to sightsee a bit in Haifa and were able to go on tours of Jerusalem and Massada."

U.S. Navy photo by OS2 Ramon Mercedes



Above: Civil service mariner crew members aboard MSC fleet replenishment oiler John Lenthall (T-AO 189) conduct astern refueling at sea training with Israeli ship INS Hanit during exercise Reliant Mermaid 2012.

Right: Lenthall, center, sails with two U.S. Navy guided-missile destroyers and two Israeli ships in formation during the exercise.



U.S. Navy photo by MC2 William Jamieson

MSC logistics officers meet in Singapore

By Cmdr. Glenn Dietrick
CLF Logistics Officer
Commander Task Force 63

Combat Logistics Force Officers – or CLOs – and their staffs have been critical to the implementation of the CLF Load Management System, or CLMS, launched in August 2011. The system aims to optimize human resources for MSC's CLF ships and ultimately improve their service to Navy customer ships.

This is achieved in part because supply-laden CLF ship inventories worldwide can now be monitored from six global, centralized locations ashore. From these locations, CLOs use state-of-the-art computer technology to make sure the right supplies are delivered from CLF ships to other Navy vessels at sea, keeping them on station.

CLOs from the U.S. 3rd, 5th, 6th and 7th fleet areas of responsibility, the program manager for MSC and reserve MSC CLF Logistics Support Unit One met in Singapore August 6-9. During their conference and training, they shared current theater-specific operational procedures and observed first-hand logistics operations taking place in the U.S. 7th Fleet area of responsibility.

This enterprise-wide training event included ship visits to USNS Richard E. Byrd (T-AKE 4) and USNS Walter S. Diehl (T-AO 193). Aboard these ships,

CLOs received candid feedback from supply personnel responsible for the ships' inventories regarding the CLMS implementation and the CLO concept.

Assistant Storekeeper Anzhelika Balash, a civil service mariner who works in Byrd's supply office, said, "We have better visibility of our stock now, and better control. It helps us better track lot numbers and expiration dates, so we can more efficiently issue materials, and reduce waste and surveys."

Byrd's CLF support Yeoman Storekeeper Brandon McMillan also had positive comments about the efficiency of the new system.

"The opportunity for CLO personnel to visit Byrd has helped us to have a better understanding of issuing material to customer ships, and an understanding

of how we can work together to better support the fleet. We spent some time working through our business continuity plans, which give us confidence that we can continue to process orders and deliver to our customers during a range of communications challenges."

The ultimate goal of the CLO is to improve customer service in several areas. First, having CLO teams worldwide provides a single point of contact for customer Navy ships that need supplies in a given region. With the aid of the technology and processes behind the CLMS, CLO teams worldwide provide comprehensive global visibility of stock on hand. This visibility is particularly useful in allowing a seamless transition when one CLF ship moves to a different area of responsibility. Getting the

goods to these CLF ships is also a more streamlined process, thanks to a Global Supply Center in Norfolk, Va.

CLO conference topics of discussion included lessons learned about the challenges and idiosyncrasies of the system in each area of responsibility. Conference attendees also assessed the capabilities of CLF ships and their CIVMAR workforces, discussed how Navy reserve teams might be used for contingency situations and mapped out business continuity plans in the event of communications and data transfer interruptions in the system.

The CLO team also participated in an all hands call with Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus, who met with Logistics Group Western Pacific and Navy Region Center Singapore.



Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus, center, meets with the Military Sealift Command CLO team as part of an all hands call with Logistics Group Western Pacific and Navy Region Center Singapore in early August.

U.S. Navy photo by MCC Sam Shavers

OBREGON...flexible, formid

By Meghan Patrick and Jessica F. Alexander
MSC Public Affairs

When a 7.0-magnitude earthquake struck Haiti in early 2010, killing and injuring hundreds of thousands of people, U.S. leaders and their partners knew they had to send help quickly. But as the Department of Defense began directing mass movements of personnel, equipment and relief supplies to the Caribbean nation, Port-au-Prince's devastated piers challenged how quickly this aid could be brought ashore. Wreckage below the water's surface posed a threat to ships, forcing them to anchor at sea rather than discharge cargo and personnel pierside.

Fortunately, leaders called upon a U.S. capability that enables the movement of cargo and personnel from ship to shore where port facilities are nonexistent, damaged or inadequate. Two dry cargo ships operated by Military Sealift Command then delivered nearly 200 military vehicles and more than 1,000 20-foot containers of vital cargo ashore using this capability, called Joint-Logistics-Over-the-Shore.

Joint-Logistics-Over-the-Shore – more commonly known as JLOTS – is one of the U.S. military's most unique capabilities to provide offshore options in support of national defense and to provide humanitarian assistance/disaster relief.

Through the joint efforts of U.S. Navy, Army, and contracted MSC personnel, JLOTS is practiced for real-time situations like Haiti in an annual exercise sponsored by U.S. Transportation Command. This year, the exercise was hosted by the U.S. Army's 7th Sustainment Brigade. MSC-operated ships heavy-lift ship SS Cape May (T-AKR 5063) and crane ship SS Gopher State (T-ACS 4), joined JLOTS flagship USNS PFC Eugene A. Obregon (T-AK 3006) in the exercise held off the coast of Fort Story, Va., in July and August.

Operated by civilian contract mariners from Keystone Shipping Company, Obregon served as the prepositioned ship that allowed troops from the Army's 7th Sustainment Brigade and Navy Beach Group Two to test their capability to move cargo from ship to shore in the event of a natural disaster or combat situation.

"Haiti heightened the awareness of the JLOTS capabil-

ity," said Army Col. Joel Weeks, of the 377th Theater Sustainment Command, who previously worked as an Army liaison to MSC and has been involved with JLOTS for the better part of a decade. "JLOTS had been in existence for a while but was in dormancy until people saw what it could do. It's important. Who knows to what and where [the United States] will be responding in the future. We will continue to need access where there aren't facilities."

Initial planning for this U.S. Transportation Command-sponsored exercise began in fall 2011. The actual demonstration involved more than 1,000 personnel, including MSC employees from Norfolk and Washington, D.C.

JLOTS capabilities

During this year's JLOTS exercise, five unique ship capabilities were demonstrated simultaneously from the decks and cargo holds of Obregon.

One of these unique capabilities included the Obregon's "morgan crane." The only crane of its kind in today's Navy, Obregon's "morgan crane" is capable of lifting and moving up to 500 tons quickly and efficiently.

Other capabilities included the port and starboard ramps utilized for vehicle offload; a stern ramp used for launch craft and other cargo movement; and the Amphibious Bulk Liquid Transfer System, or ABLTS, a system of hoses which enables fuel and water transfers of

10,000 feet from ship to shore.

All together, nearly 380 pieces of rolling stock and containers were discharged from Obregon to the beach at Fort Story via large, motorized

"This is a 30-year-old vessel in great condition with various capabilities and versatility of application."

Martin Weidt

Third officer, USNS PFC Eugene A. Obregon



able, from the sea

barges called lighterage. Obregon's two-week participation in the exercise culminated with a demonstration for military leadership aboard the ship, Aug. 23.

"I have lots of personal pride in these roll-on/roll-off ships, knowing what they are capable of in a hurry and what we could do if someone needed us right now," said Obregon's ship's master, Capt. Rick Jordan.

Perspectives from the crew

Jordan's sentiment was shared among his crew members.

Second Officer Jay Wedman likes to demonstrate the capabilities of the Maritime Prepositioning Force, a group of 16 ships that, like Obregon, are forward-deployed around the world, equipped and ready to quickly bring personnel and equipment when a natural disaster or contingency calls for the need.

"I've seen firsthand what humanitarian assistance and disaster relief can accomplish," said Wedman, who spent six-and-a-half months aboard a ship anchored off New Orleans conducting relief efforts after Hurricane Katrina ravaged the area in 2005. Wedman also worked as a port captain in Haiti after the 2010 earthquake.

"Work like this is what continues to draw me to work aboard these ships," said Wedman.

"This work is about as rewarding as you can get," said Third Officer Martin Weidt. "These evolutions are also fascinating from a cargo-handling standpoint," continued Weidt, a licensed first officer who has primarily worked aboard tankers during his several-decade sailing career. "This is a 30-year-old vessel in great condition with various capabilities and versatility of application. I'm amazed it can do what it does and still house 150 aboard comfortably."

Jim Lafon, equipment specialist at MSC Atlantic and a JLOTS expert, has seen JLOTS evolve the past several years, and considers this year's exercise one of the best.

"Seeing JLOTS transition from conception to execution with new people and new military is the most gratifying part of the process, and we did this one right," said Lafon, who



Obregon serves as the primary cargo platform during this year's JLOTS exercise.

helps train a new military and civilian group every 18 months when new military personnel rotate in.

The biggest obstacle each year is achieving interoperability between services, said Bill Fish, another MSC JLOTS expert and Navy civilian.

"Every year this is our biggest obstacle, but every year it's the most important to overcome," said Fish. "Now we're teammates, and ready to handle whatever comes our way."

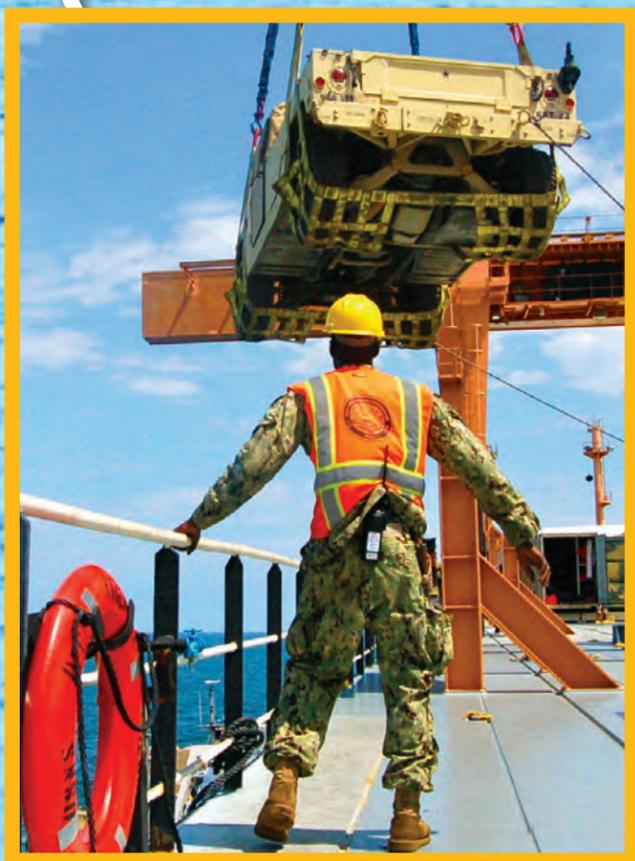


Cover: Military personnel, including some assigned to the U.S. Army's 7th Sustainment Brigade, stand by as a DOD vehicle is transported by crane from the deck of USNS PFC Eugene A. Obregon (T-AK 3006) during Joint-Logistics-Over-the-Shore 2012.

Opposite page: Obregon's stern ramp, when deployed, provides easy access for vehicles to drive on or off. Obregon tested its capabilities to help transport equipment and supplies from sea to shore without useable port facilities during JLOTS, which took place at Fort Story, Va.

Below, left: A Sailor assigned to Cargo Handling Battalion One watches as a DOD vehicle is transported by crane to lighterage.

Below, right: Obregon is the only ship in the U.S. Navy with a "morgan crane" designed to quickly lift and transport up to 500 tons of cargo.



MSC welcomes new deputy commander

Military Sealift Command welcomed its new deputy commander Sept. 21 at MSC headquarters in Washington, D.C.

Navy Rear Adm. (select) Larry Jackson was serving as the commanding officer of MSC Norfolk's reserve unit when he was nominated for flag rank. One of his primary duties there was to oversee manning, training and equipping for 300 reserve sailors on the Cargo Afloat Rig Teams.

"I love MSC and am very honored to have been selected for this assignment," Jackson said. "I've had the privilege of working closely with our civilian mariners, particularly afloat on the USNS Comfort after the earthquake in Haiti, and I'm

delighted to have the opportunity to continue that relationship."

In January 2010, Jackson was mobilized on a day's notice for duty aboard USNS Comfort (T-AH 20) as the Destroy Squadron 40 deputy commodore, deploying to Haiti as part of Operation Unified Response.

Jackson also served overseas in Iraq, where he was assigned to the Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq in 2008 as the Chief of Staff for the team advising the Iraqi Defense Department. Command assignments include the Navy Expeditionary Combat Command's Expeditionary Training Group, as well as the Navy Installations Command headquarters unit. From 2004 to 2007, he commanded Force Pro-

tection Detachment 2 for Submarine Group 10, which provides anti-terrorism and force protection for submarines when not in their home ports.

Jackson's other reserve assignments include Area Air Defense Command, Atlantic, aboard USS Mount Whitney (LCC 20), Naval Amphibious Group 2 and the Navy Command Center.

At sea, Jackson also served in a variety of engineering billets aboard USS Conyngham (DDG 17), culminating as main propulsion assistant, and as Combat Information Center officer aboard USS Ticonderoga (CG-47). He is a 1984 graduate of the University of Virginia and in his civilian career has specialized in crisis communications and management.



**Rear Adm. (select)
Larry Jackson**

HQ • HIGHLIGHTS

The National Science Foundation met at Military Sealift Command headquarters Aug. 23 as part of its annual family day celebrations. Navy **Cmdr. Mark Hegarty, Catalina Prieto, Richard Carmack, Elizabeth Garcia, Iben Gantt, Tyrone Graves** and Navy **Cmdr. Richard Preston** welcomed acting director of NSF/Office of Polar Programs Dr. Kelly Falkner, Director Brian Stone, Director Simon Stephenson, Director Scott Borg and Director Polly Penhale. The NSF and their family members toured MSC headquarters and listened to an MSC brief.

Chris Thayer, director, Contractor Operated Ships; **Eileen Roberson**, director, Total Force Management; and **Jack Taylor**, director, Government Operations, hosted the second presentation of their Marine Transportation Specialist Professional Speaker Series Aug. 30. **William Storz**,

office of counsel, spoke about marine insurance and sovereign immunities issues to MSC headquarters personnel at the Washington Navy Yard and MSC employees worldwide who joined via conference call.

MSC welcomes Navy **Cmdr. Peter Sorensen** and Navy **Capt. Matthew Berta**, maritime forces, manpower and management; **Kendra Dunnington**, office of inspector general; **Daniel Redmond**, operations; **Gianna Price**, command, control, communication and computer systems; **Jim Romano**, logistics; and **Daniel Wick, Abraham Timler, Nathan Carlos, David Woody** and **Joseph Covington**, engineering.

The command bids fair winds and following seas to Navy **Lt. Karen Tung**, operations; U.K. navy **Cmdr. Gary Shatlock**, Combat Logistics Force program; and **Lauren Baetsen**, Sealift Program.

COMPASS • HEADING

Since October 2011, 47 civil service mariners have been promoted from the unlicensed ranks into 3rd officer and 3rd assistant engineer positions. A total of 370 mariners received promotions in less than 10 months, which equals nearly seven percent of the CIVMAR workforce. Deputy Director **Frank Cunningham**, head of the CIVMAR manpower and personnel department, said, "We'll continue to aggressively work to promote our most qualified CIVMARs into positions of greater responsibility and higher pay in FY13." The promotion schedule has been tentatively set, and mariners are encouraged to look for announcements for these billets, tentatively scheduled for April 2013.

Navy **Capt. Alan Philippi** was presented with the meritorious service medal (gold star in lieu of third award) by **Rear Adm. Mark Buzby**, commander, Military Sealift Command, on Naval Station Norfolk, Va., Aug. 24. His tour of duty as the force medical officer and deputy force

surgeon lasted more than three years.

Also departing the medical office was **Chief Petty Officer Martin Howard**, honored with a retirement luncheon Aug. 22.

More than 70 MSC personnel attended the mariner/MSC appreciation night at Norfolk's Harbor Park Aug. 15. The event included an MSC color guard and first pitch throw by Jack Taylor, director of Government Operations.

Fair winds and following seas to **2nd Officer Robert Andrews, Able Seaman Oliver Jones, Able Seaman Larry Melvin, 2nd Electrician Joseph Crute** and **Boatswain's Mate Samuel Johnson** as they retire.

MSC offers condolences to the families of **Steward Utilityman Nomer Benitez, Cook/Baker Alvin Castro, Boatswain's Mate Gregory Johnson** and **Pumpman Ian Pattie** on their passing.

For more MSC Norfolk and civil service mariner news, view the online newsletter at www.msc.navy.mil/msfsc/newsletter.

CENTRAL • CURRENTS

U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Toni Burton



A contractor aboard USS Ponce (AFSB(I) 15) prepares a Scan Eagle unmanned aerial vehicle launch. Ponce is in the U.S. 5th Fleet area of responsibility.

Military Sealift Command ships operating in the U.S. 5th Fleet area of responsibility maintained a high operational tempo in August. Combat Logistics Force ships in this region conducted 93 underway replenishments, including 51 with coalition, European Union and NATO ships. The support provided by the ships of Commander Task Force 53 enabled U.S. 5th Fleet combatants to stay at sea and pursue their missions.

USNS Carl Brashear (T-AKE 7) completed 19 underway replenishments with ships from nine different nations in August, with the majority conducted

in the Gulf of Aden and Horn of Africa regions. The fuel and supplies Brashear provided to the multinational forces were crucial to warships keeping the sea lanes safe from piracy at this strategic maritime choke point.

MSCCENT and CTF-53 bid fair winds and following seas to Navy **Lt. Cmdr. Daniel Kidd**, Navy **Lt. Wesley Young**, Navy **Lt.j.g. Drew Smith** and **Petty Officers 2nd Class Gontowon Wehye** and **Juan Gonzalez**. The command welcomes Navy **Lt. Cmdr. Paul Stence**, **Petty Officer 1st Class Kenneth Powell** and **Petty Officer 2nd Class Renee Gorham**.

PACIFIC • BRIEFS

USNS Guadalupe (T-AO 200) arrived in Norfolk, Va., Aug. 6, after an eight-month-long, twice-extended deployment supporting the USS Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group. While on the East Coast, Guadalupe will conduct a regular overhaul/drydock period. The ship is scheduled to return to San Diego in November, completing an around-the-world cruise.

Military Sealift Command-chartered tanker MT Empire State (T-AOT 5193) departed Naval Base Ventura County's Port Hueneme Harbor for the Pacific Northwest Aug. 2, following a two-day assessment period. During the assessment, the ship's current underway replenishment station configuration was studied for operational and safety conformance with Navy requirements.

Navy **Cmdr. Louis Costa**, Military Sealift Command Pacific's logistics officer, and Navy **Lt. Cmdr. Ricardo Legaspi**, MSCPAC deputy logistics officer, traveled to Singapore Aug. 6-9 to attend the Combat Logistics Officers Enterprise-Wide Operational Conference. Costa was joined by the CLOs from MSC Far East, MSC Central Command and MSC Europe and Africa. The training event provided an opportunity for the officers to discuss issues related to MSC logistics operations and reinforce integration, cooperation and coordination

within the CLO worldwide network.

USNS Salvor (T-ARS 52) departed Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, Aug. 17 with the former U.S. 3rd Fleet command ship ex-Coronado in tow to support a sinking exercise associated with Exercise Valiant Shield 2012 near Guam in September.

Navy **Capt. Sylvester Moore**, commander, MSCPAC, conducted an awards ceremony July 25. Moore presented **Kimmie Leung** with the Military Sealift Command Civilian of the Quarter Award for exceptional performance as a Customer Support Unit West financial technician April through June 2012. The award was presented on behalf of **Rear Adm. Mark Buzby**, commander, MSC. Moore also presented length of service awards to **Bill Twyman**, director, MSC Afloat Network Operations Center, for his 55 years of federal service, and to **Michael R. Sullivan**, director, MSC Ship Support Unit San Diego, for 35 years of service. Several other MSCPAC and MSC SSUSD employees were recognized for their outstanding service to MSC with letters of commendation.

The command welcomes Navy **Lt. Cmdr. Dan Kuriger**, MSCPAC's new Combat Logistics Force scheduling officer. Kuriger joins the MSCPAC team following duty as Expeditionary Strike Group 5's Deputy Future Operations officer.

ATLANTIC • LINES

At Military Sealift Command Atlantic's port office in Charleston, S.C., **Tom D'Agostino**, director of ship operations, coordinated the Aug. 19-29 loading of USNS Lewis and Clark (T-AKE 1) with U.S. Marine Corps prepositioned cargo, consisting of more than 1,700 pallets of ordnance. This was the first such loadout at the base in more than 15 years and the first Marine Corps prepositioning vessel to be loaded in Charleston. D'Agostino also assisted with the articulated tug/barge Coastal Reliance discharge of nearly 150,000 barrels of fuel.

Marine Transportation Specialist **Mary Ann Liberto**, also of the

Charleston office, coordinated the port calls and provided agency support for the transfer of fuel cargo by USNS William McLean (T-AKE 12) to USNS Arctic (T-AOE 8), USNS Guadalupe (T-AO 200) and USNS Lawrence H. Gianella (T-AOT 1125) at Detyen's Shipyard.

MSCLANT marine transportation specialists located at the command's Jacksonville, Fla., office supported refueling operations of USNS Lawrence H. Gianella Aug. 15 for its transit to Charleston for maintenance and repairs. The team also coordinated the loading of more than 1,800 break-bulk items and 18 roll-on/roll-off items

aboard USNS Lewis and Clark in preparation for its voyage to Charleston, where it received its final cargo loadout. This was the first T-AKE assigned to the prepositioning program to load at Blount Island.

After an extensive hull refurbishment at Norfolk Naval Shipyard, Portsmouth, Va., Moored Training Ship 626, the ex-USS Daniel Webster submarine, was successfully towed by USNS Apache (T-ATF 172) from Norfolk, Va., to Charleston Aug. 21-24.

MSCLANT sorted USNS Yano (T-AKR 297) and USNS Shughart (T-AKR 295) from their layberths at Violet, La., for Hurricane Isaac storm avoidance Aug. 26. Shughart had already received activation orders to get underway for a U.S. Transportation Command-directed turbo activation,

but the ship had to be vectored to a new location to avoid Isaac's danger cone.

USNS Sacagawea (T-AKE 2) and USNS Grasp (T-ARS 51) returned to Norfolk from deployments in August. For three months Sacagawea supported Navy combatants and U.S. Coast Guard vessels operating in the U.S. 4th Fleet area of responsibility. During 18 underway replenishments, the vessel delivered nearly 1.3 million gallons of fuel and 735 pallets of supplies and humanitarian assistance items. Grasp completed a five-month, 17,600-mile deployment supporting exercises Eurasian Partnership and Sea Breeze 2012.

MSCLANT bids farewell to Navy Reserve **Lt. Fionna Boyle**, assigned to the anti-terrorism/force protection directorate.



U.S. Navy photo by Bill Cook

Military Sealift Command fleet ocean tug USNS Apache (T-ATF 172) tows a submarine Aug. 21 near Norfolk, Va.

FAR EAST • HAILS

Ship Support Unit Singapore command chaplain Navy **Lt. Cmdr. Dwayne Jackson** and USNS Richard E. Byrd (T-AKE 4) civil service mariner **Able Seaman Jason Merry** delivered toys to the Hua Yai district school near Pattaya, Thailand Aug. 19, as part of the Project Handclasp program. The

delivery included skateboards, stuffed animals, roller blades and soccer balls for more than 50 children at the child development and protection center. Byrd was visiting Sriracha, Thailand, for routine repairs.

Navy **Lt. Cmdr. Kevin Logan** relieved Navy **Cmdr. Stefan Wusstig**

as commanding officer of Military Sealift Command Office Diego Garcia during an Aug. 16 ceremony at MSC Far East headquarters in Singapore. Wusstig, a Reservist assigned to Kansas City-based MSCFE Reserve Unit 102, filled in as acting commanding officer since May. He earned the Navy Commendation Medal, presented by MSCFE commander Navy **Capt. Jim Hruska**. Logan reports to the central Indian Ocean island from USS Peleliu (LHA-5), where he served as command training officer.

During the Aug. 7 promotion ceremony held at MSCFE headquarters, Hruska and deputy operations officer **Leonard Bell** pinned the gold oak leaves onto Navy **Lt. Cmdr. Rick McVoy**.

McVoy was deployed to Singapore while participating in annual exercise Ulchi Freedom Guardian 2012.

During an Aug. 31 ceremony at Singapore Sembawang Wharves' "Terror Club" facility, MSCFE deputy commander Navy **Capt. Jesus Cantu** promoted Navy **Cmdr. Shane Strohl**, deputy chief of staff for logistics, N41, Task Force 73, to his current rank.

MSCFE bids fair winds and following seas to operations officer

Navy **Cmdr. Mike Snoderly**, combat logistics officer **Andrew Armacost**, strategic sealift officer coordinator Navy **Cmdr. John Woods** and assistant strategic sealift officer Navy **Lt. Mike Huzyak**.

From Guam and Saipan, Maritime Prepositioning Ship Squadron Three welcomes force protection officer **Lt. j.g. Matt Patterson** who relieved Navy **Lt. Mersha Dodds**. Navy **Lt. Emmitt Dempsey** relieved Navy **Chief Warrant Officer Art Dent** as operations officer.

MSC Office Korea welcomes executive officer Navy **Lt. Cmdr. Cedric Edwards** to the command. Reserve Navy **Lt. Louis Vitale** completed a six-month assignment as assistant operations officer, returning to his position with the New York Port Authority. MSCO Korea commanding officer **Cmdr. Ed Plott** presented Vitale with a Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal for outstanding service.

Ship Support Unit Guam welcomes supervisory mechanical engineer **Michael Jensen**; the contracting department welcomes **Christian Almonte**; while the command, control, communication and computer systems department welcomes **John Palm**.

U.S. Navy photo by MCSN Jasmine Sheard



MSC fleet replenishment oiler USNS Henry J. Kaiser (T-AO 187) conducts an underway replenishment Aug. 23 with USS Peleliu (LHA 5) in the Pacific Ocean.

EUROPE/AFRICA • NEWS

The U.S. 6th Fleet flagship USS Mount Whitney (LCC 20) spent Aug. 14-19 in Theoule-sur-Mer, France, commemorating the 68th anniversary of the Liberation of Provence by allied troops landing during World War II. Mount Whitney Sailors hosted ship tours and participated in a wreath-laying ceremony, parade and a reception at city hall. Mount Whitney's presence in Theoule-sur-Mer marks the second consecutive year the ship has taken part in the festivities organized by the city.

"I felt truly blessed to have had the opportunity to have taken part in the ceremony," said Personnel

Specialist 2nd Class Lynette Smith. "It gave me goose bumps knowing that I was there honoring the sacrifices made by service members during World War II."

HSV Swift (HSV 2) continued its participation in Africa Partnership Station, visiting Liberia, Ghana, Nigeria and Cameroon. Highlights included Medical Civic Action Program, health fairs, U.S. Marine Corps and Navy Criminal Investigative Service training, public affairs officer workshops, media events and visits by U.S. military and government officials. Navy **Capt. Richard N. Soucie**, commander, Task Force 63 and Military Sealift Command

Europe and Africa, embarked Swift in Secondi, Ghana, Aug. 20-24, participating in a media day and welcoming the U.S. ambassador to Nigeria, Terence McCulley, to the ship. Soucie remained aboard Swift for the Aug. 29 reception of Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus in Douala, Cameroon.

In sealift operations, MSCEURAF marine transportation specialists **Matt Sweeney** and **Mark Bigelow** supervised the loading of U.S. military cargo onto MSC-chartered ships MV BBC Houston and MV Sophie in Durban, South Africa, Aug. 11-14. The vessels got underway from South Africa, reporting to MSC Atlantic Aug. 26 and Aug. 29, respectively.

In Aug. 3 and Aug. 7 ceremonies, Soucie awarded a Navy and

Marine Corps Achievement Medal to Navy **Lt. Pete King**, assigned to Naval Reserve MSCEURAF headquarters unit, Baltimore, Md., for his service as MSCEURAF operations officer in July during a gapped billet. Soucie presented a Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal to Navy **Lt. Cmdr. Juan Gutierrez**, MSCEURAF operations officer, awarded from his previous command at MSC office in Korea. Soucie also presented the following civilian service awards: 25 years of service to **Paul Augustine** and **Bob Bunnell**, 15 years of service to **Kim Dixon** and five years of service to **Hal Lane** and **Pete Lewis**.

MSCEURAF bids farewell to **Robert Foster**, the command representative to Rota, Spain.

Newest JHSV christened in Mobile

By Meghan Patrick
MSC Public Affairs

USNS Choctaw County (JHSV 2), the second of the Navy's new joint high-speed vessels designed for rapid intra-theater transport of troops and military equipment, was christened Sept. 15 during a ceremony at Austal USA in Mobile, Ala.

Military Sealift Command will own and operate Choctaw County and the other joint high-speed vessels, or JHSVs, that are under contract to be built for the Navy. Choctaw County will have a crew of 21 civil service mariners working for MSC who will operate, navigate and maintain the ship.

"The ship's performance will be matched by the unique qualities of her crew – 21 civil service mariners committed to freedom, democracy and compassion," said Rear Adm. Brian LaRoche, deputy commander, MSC, during his address to an audience of more than 600 people including leaders from the military services, Congress and the maritime industry. "The impressive ship awaiting the crack of the champagne bottle will help safeguard those ideals," LaRoche continued. "Choctaw County will carry the Military Sealift Command funnel stripes and the strength of the U.S. military anywhere America needs it."

Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus was the ceremony's principal speaker. The ship is named for three counties in America, located in Mississippi, Alabama and Oklahoma, which share the name Choctaw County.

Twenty-nine women from the 1966 graduating class of Ackerman High School in Ackerman, Miss., served as the ship's sponsors. Lead sponsor, Theresa Gilliam Pitts, a retired teacher, broke the traditional bottle of champagne across the bow to formally christen the ship while she and the

other sponsors present said in unison, "For the United States of America, we christen thee USNS Choctaw County. May God bless this ship and all who sail in her."

The 338-foot-long aluminum catamarans are designed to be fast, flexible and maneuverable, even in shallow waters, making them ideal for transporting troops and equipment quickly within a theater of operations. The 20,000-square-foot mission bay area aboard JHSVs can be reconfigured to quickly adapt to whatever mission the ship is tasked with, such as carrying containerized portable hospitals to support disaster relief or transporting tanks and troops.

"This ship class fits perfectly with the new concept of forward-basing," said civilian Capt. Jose Delfaus, Choctaw County's civil service master who has been sailing for MSC for 31 years. The goal of forward-basing is to cut back on the number of overseas bases by equipping more forward-deployed ships with troops and gear. "JHSVs can join up with these ships and help them essentially by being their delivery truck, delivering anything they need from troops and gear; to provisions or cargo."

JHSVs are capable of transporting 600 tons of military troops, vehicles, supplies and equipment 1,200 nautical miles at a high average speed of 35 knots and can operate in shallow-draft, austere ports and waterways, providing U.S. forces added mobility and flexibility. The JHSVs' aviation flight decks can support day and night flight operations. Each JHSV also has sleeping accommodations for up to 146 personnel and airline-style seating



Photo courtesy of Austal USA

Theresa Gilliam Pitts, one of 29 sponsors of MSC joint high-speed vessel USNS Choctaw County (JHSV 2), christens the ship with a ceremonial bottle of champagne Sept. 15, in Mobile, Ala.

Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus – the ceremony's principal speaker – named Choctaw County after three U.S. counties in Mississippi, Alabama and Oklahoma.



U.S. Navy photo by MCC Sam Shavers

for up to 312.

One of the things Delfaus is most looking forward to in his role as master of the second JHSV is the new technology.

"The JHSV bridge functions more like a 747-cockpit than a traditional ship's bridge. The design is for the officer to operate the entire ship from a chair. Everything you need to move the ship is available through an elaborate control panel. The navigation team also sits in the bridge, as does the engineering consul. It's a very unique set-up – the rows of people make it look a bit like Star Trek."

Following acceptance trials, delivery to the Navy and operational testing, Choctaw County will

operate out of Little Creek, Va., and is expected to begin conducting missions for the Navy in the first quarter of fiscal year 2014.

The Navy's current contract with Austal is for the construction of 10 JHSVs, one of which is yet-to-be awarded construction options.

As MSC assets, all of the JHSVs will be civilian-crewed. The first four of the 10 currently under contract – including Choctaw County and USNS Spearhead (JHSV 1) – will be crewed by federally employed civil service mariners, while the next six are slated to be crewed by civilian mariners working for private companies under contract to MSC. Military mission personnel will embark as required by the mission sponsors.

MSCFE trains in Ulchi Freedom Guardian

By Edward Baxter
MSCFE Public Affairs

More than 90 Military Sealift Command personnel located in Korea, Singapore and Japan participated Aug. 20-31 in Ulchi Freedom Guardian, a major computer-simulated exercise involving more than 500,000 people.

The exercise, one of two annually scheduled between the United States and Republic of Korea forces, tests the ability to respond to a contingency on the Korean peninsula. Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Norway also participated this year.

For MSC, the scope of the training was both diverse and complex, managing hundreds of simulated U.S. government and commercially contracted dry cargo ships and fuel tankers to and from the Korean area of operations. Scenarios included adverse weather, unscheduled maintenance, fueling of vessels, bunkering and working with host nation port authorities.

Singapore

While the bulk of the exercise took place in South Korea, MSC Far East headquarters in Singapore played a key role.

Seven Reservists from St. Louis, Mo.-based MSCFE Reserve Unit 101 augmented permanent command staff in manning an around-the-clock command and control center, working with counterparts from the staff of Commander, Task Force 73. During UFG, they monitored and directed all simulated MSC shipping traffic throughout the western Pacific.

MSC headquarters in Washington, D.C., also deployed three staff members from its operations directorate. Navy Cmdr. Chris Barnes, Navy Lt. Jim Master-son and Dan Lynch worked with permanent MSCFE and CTF-73 staff members for the first week of the exercise.

"Observing firsthand how things flow and how different organizations work together was impressive," said Lt. Cmdr. Eric Miller of MSCFE Reserve Unit 101.

Korea

In South Korea, 16 Navy personnel from MSCFE Reserve Unit 102

augmented permanent MSC Office Korea staff. They manned a 24-7 crisis action team, and the Combined Seaport Command Center, a centralized command and control center that can manage cargo ships at ports throughout South Korea. Here, MSCFE Sailors worked closely with the Army's Surface Deployment and Distribution Command, and ROK army and navy personnel.

Additionally, two Reservists from Oklahoma City, Okla.-based EPU 111 and a Reserve Strategic Sealift Officer deployed to Gwangyang, South Korea, manned Mobile Sealift Operations Center Seven, or MSOC-7, a modified shipping container which set up to provide critical communication equipment while managing ship operations.

"This training gave me the ability and confidence to be fully mission-ready if called upon," said Information Systems Technician 2nd Class Jessica Roja of EPU 111.

Japan

In Japan, eight Reservists from MSCFE Reserve Unit 101 and

three from Little Rock, Ark.-based Expeditionary Port Unit 112 joined counterparts from SDDC in manning the Japan Seaport Coordination Center, which became fully operational March 2012. During exercises and contingency operations, the JSCC serves as the single point of contact for sealift activities and cargo destined for Japan.

Personnel staffing both the JSCC and CSCC in Singapore communicated regularly in managing simulated shipping traffic between Japan and South Korea.

"The JSCC allows us to see the big picture of shipping operations and provides a standard of expectation that is required of our unit," said Boatwain's Mate 1st Class Kennis Ellis of EPU 112.

Five Sailors from EPU 112, a highly mobile unit which can deploy quickly and establish port operations even under the most adverse conditions, also deployed to the ports of Hiro and Sasebo to assess the capabilities of the ports.