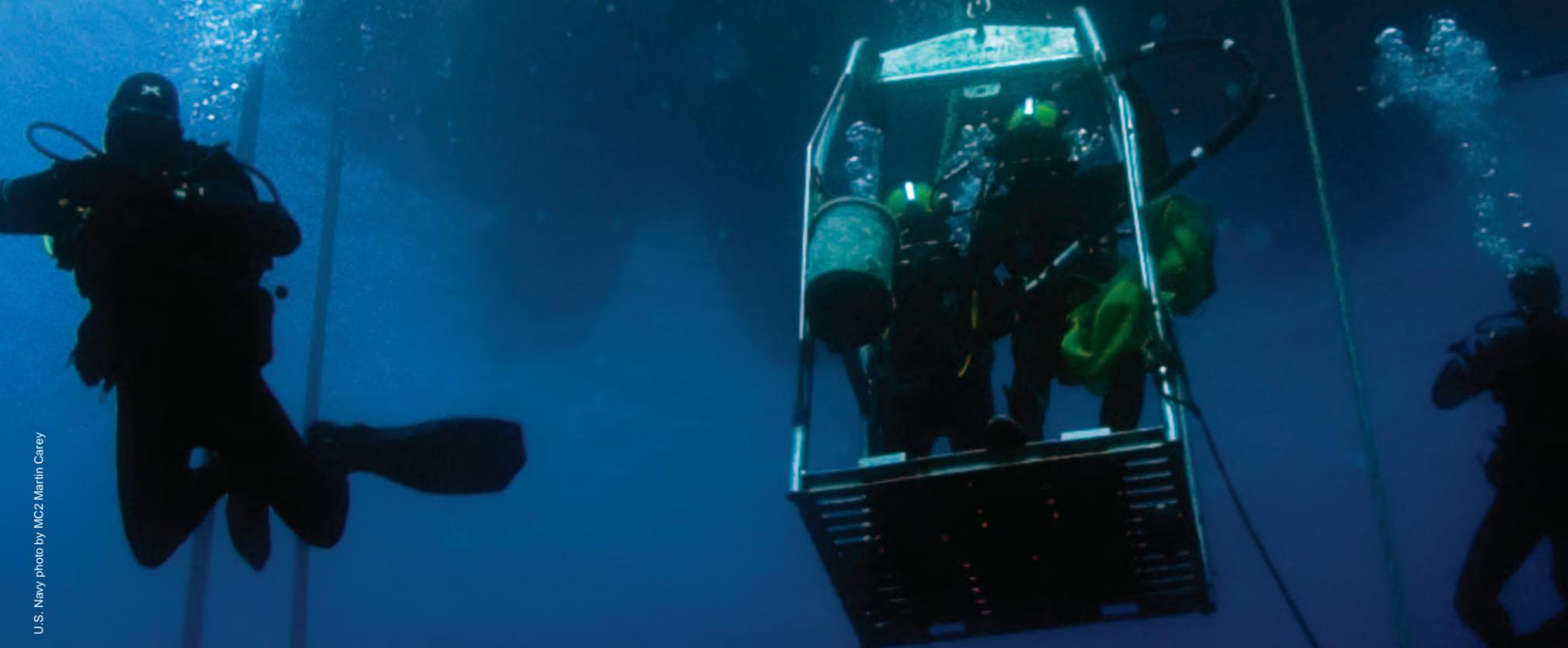


February 2013

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

THE U.S. NAVY'S MILITARY SEALIFT COMMAND

# Grappling in the deep



U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Martin Carey



MSC, Navy divers work  
“hand in hand”  
with partner nations



U.S. Navy photo

Rescue and salvage ship USNS Grapple (T-ARS 53)

INSIDE — Faces of MSC: David Rowley • Keel laid for second Mobile Landing Platform

# What's on the horizon for 2013? Plenty!

*Editor's note: At press time, the continuing budget resolution and sequestration issues had not been resolved. Some subjects below may be subject to rapid change.*

As big Navy's trust in MSC grows, so does our involvement in missions around the world. We play a critical role in Africa Partnership Station and Southern Partnership Station, building cooperative relationships with allies and neighbors. We also carry a message of hope and good will to people in need of medical and civic assistance in both hemispheres during Continuing Promise and Pacific Partnership missions.

We continue to provide the Navy with 100 percent of the Fleet's combat logistics services, as well as undersea surveillance data; hydrographic surveys; rescue, salvage and towing services; afloat forward staging base capabilities and a command platform.

Sealift, prepositioning and special missions will continue to be part of our MSC story throughout 2013, too. The good news is that we've been given some new hardware to help us.

## New ships

USNS Spearhead, JHSV 1, is operating out of Little Creek, Va., conducting trials and will become operational this year, replacing MSC-chartered HSV Swift on future Africa and Southern Partnership Station missions and providing a high-speed, shallow-draft capability that will no doubt generate new ideas about using this amazing class of ships.

Interim afloat forward staging base USS Ponce will remain deployed and hard at work in the Middle East supporting missions in and around U.S. Central Command. That will continue throughout 2013. When I think that just 12 months ago Ponce was almost a ghost before we began to resurrect this valuable asset, I am once again reminded of the incredible work that my MSC shipmates are capable of performing.

The fourteenth dry cargo/ammunition ship, USNS Cesar Chavez, will become operational this spring, completing the MSC family of multi-product ships that are the mainstay of our Combat Logistics Force and also support the Prepositioning Program.

Meanwhile, high-speed transport USNS Guam, a former Hawaiian supertanker, will complete its modifications and upgrades and replace MSC-chartered Westpac Express as the primary transport for U.S. Marines and their equipment in the Western Pacific Ocean.

Finally, MSC is scheduled to accept delivery of Mobile Landing Platform 1, USNS Montford Point, in June. This is another new-mission/new-ship opportunity for MSC as we provide this "floating pier" capability for Navy, Marine Corps and other U.S. forces. Shortly after Montford Point joins MSC, the second MLP, USNS John Glenn, will be christened and launched in San Diego.

In addition to new hardware, we will continue to push ahead in the people department, too.

## New uniforms

I've authorized a pilot program to test new flame resistant CIVMAR uniforms

aboard two of our ships, USS Ponce and USNS Pecos. We'll gather data from shipmates aboard these two ships, one East Coast and one West Coast, one operating in a predominantly warm climate and the other in colder temperatures, for about 60 days to see if the new uniforms will achieve the results we intended. We want to know if the uniforms communicate professionalism to our customers, foster teamwork and pride among our shipmates and help identify MSC crew members quickly in emergency situations.

Each CIVMAR aboard the two ships will be provided clothing items to be worn during the pilot program at no cost to the individual. At the end of the 60 days, surveys will be distributed to those of you participating in the program to gather your feedback. I need your honest answers to the survey so we can see the way ahead.

The pilot program kicks off this month. When we've got the results, I'll let you know what they are.

## Reduced overdue reliefs

As you read this, your purser and master have begun using a new process to handle relief requests. The CIVMAR Placement Division at MSC Norfolk worked hard to develop this new set of procedures that should make for timely reliefs and vastly reduce overdue reliefs.

Despite the average number of relief requests increasing from 295 per month to 374 per month, the placement team was able to relieve more than 700 shipmates in the six weeks leading up to the Christmas holiday. For all of 2012, we sustained a 98 percent fill rate, crewed USS Ponce, sent out weekly community reports with relief information, posted "available for assignment" data in the pools and achieved an all-time low of 51 overdue reliefs for 51 ships in March.

We're getting better at serving your need for timely relief. The new process will help even more. Give it a while to take effect, then let me know how it's working. Your feedback will help us make it better.

## Rescue swimmer program

Right now we have 56 qualified rescue swimmers in the fleet. We need closer to 100, so we are actively canvassing the fleet for new candidates and volunteers. Shipmates who are interested will be interviewed in person or by phone to determine whether they can meet the visual, mental, physical training and swim test requirements for entry into the program. If you are accepted, your application is submitted and coordinated with CIVMAR Placement to begin medical screening and capability testing. If you're recommended for continuation, you will begin training daily and will be tested once a week to monitor your progress. Once you're ready, you'll be set up for a four-week Surface Rescue Swimmer School class in either San Diego or Jacksonville, Fla.

If you're interested in the program, let your supervisor know or contact CIVMAR training at michael.carlson@navy.mil.

## Leadership program

I'm happy to announce the return of the highly acclaimed Three-Day Leadership Program for our 2nd Officers, 3rd Officers, 2nd Assistant Engineers, 3rd Assistant Engineers, Supply Officers, Junior Supply Officers, Senior Communications Officers, Chief Radio Technicians, Pursers, Medical Service Officers, Bosuns, Chief Electricians, Unlicensed Junior Engineers, Chief Stewards, Steward Cooks and Yeoman Storekeepers.

The program will address the unique challenges faced by our middle managers and includes general leadership and supervisory principles, building effective communication, critical thinking and team skills, innovation and strategy, career and performance coaching, communication in all media (face-to-face, telephone, email), conflict resolution and managing team-based customer service.

The courses will be run on both the East and West coasts. If you're interested, contact nedra.johnson@navy.mil for information on requirements and available class dates.

## MILDEPT drawdown

We began the process to draw down our seagoing military departments in October 2012. Right now, four of our fleet ocean tugs, all four rescue and salvage ships, 11 dry cargo/ammunition ships and 14 fleet replenishment oilers have military departments. The drawdown means Navy officer and enlisted personnel will no longer embark as crew in MSC ships.

The drawdown assists the Navy in achieving its manpower reduction goals and has the additional positive effect of providing our CIVMAR shipmates with additional Navy operations experience.

## Ops officer/Ops chief

As part of the military department draw-down, MSC is expanding the CIVMAR Operations Officer/Operations Chief program aboard dry cargo/ammunition ships and fleet replenishment oilers. The three active-duty Navy operations specialists aboard each of the ships have been the link between MSC crews and their active duty counterparts aboard Navy combatant ships, making sure requirements, meeting locations and timing were understood by all parties.

We are replacing the operations specialists by adding a 3rd Mate watch stander, which will allow the 2nd Mate Navigator to move to day work and assume duties as Operations Officer/Navigator. At the same time, an unlicensed deck department position of Operations Chief will be established. This is a new position aboard MSC ships and will be filled with CIVMARs knowledgeable and skilled in Navy operations.

Training procedures are in place aboard all ships. The Operations Officers have been selected, and placement and shipboard training are underway. The changeover will take place aboard each ship during scheduled maintenance periods to reduce the impact of the changes.

## Communication on ARS/ATF

At the same time, we're replacing our active duty communicators aboard the rescue and salvage ships and ocean-going tugs with CIVMARs. The move will return three to four active-duty billets per ship to the Fleet, while adding two CIVMAR billets – a Chief Radio/Electronics Technician and a Radio/Electronics Technician – to each ship. The moves are scheduled to happen during maintenance periods between now and September.

## Bright future

Despite the current turmoil with budgets and funding, the need for a strong defense capability remains. As long as there is a fleet, there will be an MSC, and I'm positive MSC will remain a critical part of our nation's defense team because we've proven, over and over, that when the call goes out, MSC delivers!

Until next month, sail safe and yours aye,

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

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



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# Faces of MSC: David Rowley

David Rowley, a Downingtown, Pa. native, worked with electronics systems for 30 years in a variety of DOD and private sector defense-related positions. He joined Military Sealift Command in 2002, serving as an electronics technician aboard five different ships, including USNS Mercy (T-AH 19).

In August 2009, Rowley became the first person accepted into MSC's Unlicensed to Licensed Mariner Degree Program.\* Through this program, MSC supported Rowley during three years of study at Texas Maritime Academy, Texas A&M University.

Rowley graduated cum laude Dec. 15, with a bachelor's degree in marine transportation. He also passed the U.S. Coast Guard's examination to receive a merchant marine license. The following article – originally posted on MSC's Sealift blog – is an excerpt from an interview with Rowley about his experiences with MSC and Texas A&M.

## As an electronics technician at sea, what did a typical day look like?

I was assigned to the engine room, so that's where my day started. I interfaced with the first engineer and the watch engineer, and they let me know if they had any problems with the systems overnight. After that, I'd make my way up to the bridge and check in with the mate on watch, who verified that all their systems worked to their satisfaction. Then I'd make my rounds and make sure that all the equipment I'm responsible for is up and running properly. I had a list of priorities that I kept, and

I just worked down that list fixing equipment and doing preventive maintenance.

## Why did you decide to pursue a career as a deck officer?

Well, when I used to do my rounds and go up to the bridge, I was intrigued by the 3rd mate's job. And, I wanted to upgrade and give myself new challenges in life. I could have just tested to become a 3rd engineer, but I really wanted to be topside where I could see what was going on, and put myself on the path to becoming a ship captain. The program was great timing; this was a great opportunity that enabled me to pursue a career advancement.

## What stood out to you about Texas A&M?

When I was on my last ship, USNS Mercy, my chief mate at the time was a graduate of Texas A&M. He's the one who introduced me to the Unlicensed to Licensed Mariner Degree Program, which was something I hadn't heard of. We were talking one day and he said, "Is there anything else I can do for you?" Joking around, I said "Yes, you can make me captain of the ship." He said "Oh, well I might be able to help you with that, come up to my office." We got up there and he printed out this program. So with a little bit of encouragement on a daily basis, I went ahead and made the plunge and applied to Texas A&M, was accepted, and here I am.

## What were some of the highlights and challenges at school?

The highlights were acquiring the

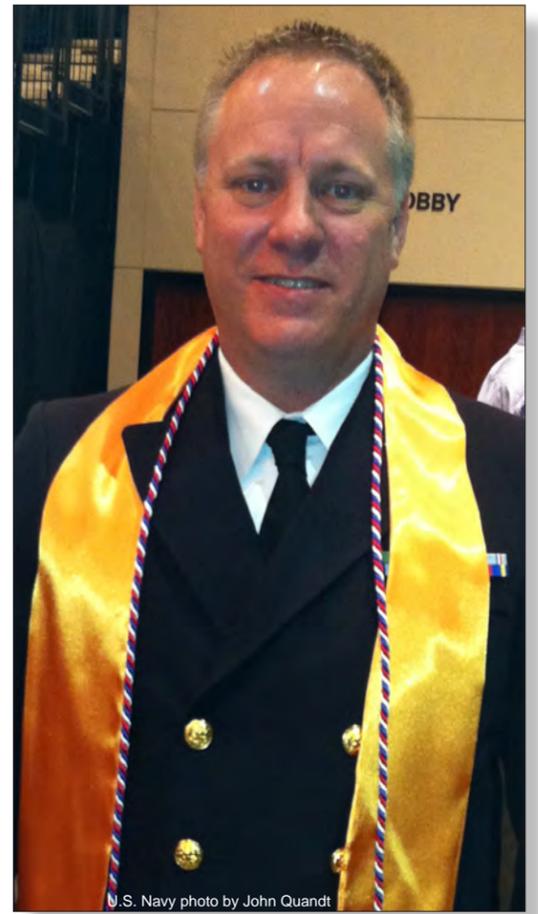
skills necessary to handle the demands of being in charge of a navigation watch, and all the other responsibilities that are expected of you as an officer aboard a vessel. Although I know there is still much to learn when I return to the fleet, I look forward to the opportunity.

As far as challenges, I put a lot of pressure on myself to maintain good grades, and to be an excellent representative of MSC. I believe I accomplished this, and having a degree now gives me a great sense of satisfaction, and the security that I have a degree I can utilize.

## Any parting thoughts?

I'd like to thank Rear Adm. Reilly [MSC's former commander], who initiated the Unlicensed to Licensed Mariner Degree Program and gave me the opportunity to fulfill this goal. I'd also like to thank Rear Adm. Buzby for continuing to support those of us who were selected for the program, Jack Taylor and his staff, Kyrm Hickman and his staff, and my mentor at MSC, John Quandt. Last but not least, I'd like to thank Capt. Matthew Bush, who three years ago was my chief mate aboard USNS Mercy.

\*MSC froze the Unlicensed to Licensed Mariner Degree Program, accepting no additional enrollees after April 7, 2010. Under the pro-



David Rowley graduates on Dec. 15, 2012, from Texas A&M.

gram, an unlicensed (non-officer) MSC civil service mariner could earn an undergraduate degree from one of the six state maritime academies and a merchant marine deck or engineering officer's license. Four CIVMARs remain enrolled in the program. Additional information on active merchant marine credential upgrade programs is at <http://www.msc.navy.mil/civmar/training/upgrade.htm>.

# On Mount Whitney, good meals go a long way

By Kim E. Dixon  
MSCEURAF Public Affairs

The smell of barbecue ribs wafts throughout the passageways all afternoon, making those embarked in USS Mount Whitney (LCC 20) eagerly await the dinner meal service. As the line of hungry U.S. 6th Fleet staffers pass in front of them, the civil service cooks and stewards greet them with a smile, a pleasant word and obvious pride in the meal they are plating up for the men and women who are spending two weeks aboard in support of an exercise. Meals often present a high point in the day of an otherwise hectic schedule, courtesy of Military Sealift Command's seasoned civil service mariners.

Mount Whitney transferred to MSC in 2004, when it was subsequently deployed to its new homeport in Gaeta, Italy, for assignment as the U.S. 6th Fleet command ship. It was one of the first MSC ships to implement a hybrid crew of civil service mariners and military personnel, both commanded by a U.S. Navy captain. The approximately 150 civil service mariners perform navigation, deck, engineering, laundry and galley service operations while a similar number of military officer and enlisted

personnel support communications, weapons systems and security.

While each of those CIVMAR responsibilities is equally important to ensuring the mission accomplishment of the U.S. Sixth Fleet and NATO staff and senior leadership when embarked, some of the most visible CIVMAR faces are on the other end of a serving ladle.

It is often said that an army travels on its stomach; the same applies to the Navy. Embarked for sometimes months on end in a U.S. Navy ship, a good meal can go a long way in contributing to the morale and well-being of all those aboard. MSC CIVMARs work diligently to ensure that is the case.

"I'm in charge of two wardrooms, one chief petty officer mess, one main mess, and one flag mess," said Chief Cook Roberto Ferrer. "For almost everyone here, it's not their first ship. They are making comparisons to other ships. It's a point of pride to give them their best experience."

Although operating with a combined operating crew of more than 300, the number of personnel aboard can more than double when U.S. 6th Fleet staff embarks, like during a September 2012 underway period during which there were 571 mouths to feed. As Ferrer explained, the ship receives no ad-

ditional CIVMARs or staff to assist with meal preparation or service. That doesn't change the quality of service provided, though.

"I think it's real important to give it your best shot when cooking food," said Second Cook Baker Goran Lovric, who works in the Flag Mess. "When you sit down to have a meal, and it's good, it gives you a boost. I cook for you, my co-workers, the junior enlisted person, and the three-

star admiral all the same – they're people to me. If I set my standards high, no matter the task, I'm giving the best to everyone."

"We let them know we're here for them and show good customer service," said Second Cook Darrell Covington, who works as a steward responsible for room assignments and keys. "In the end, I do feel like the military thinks I'm helping them to get their job done."



Tony Arquisola, right, and Roberto Ferrer, MSC civil service mariners, prepare ribs for dinner in the galley aboard USS Mount Whitney (LCC 20).

# Rescue and salvage

By Kim Dixon  
MSCEURAF Public Affairs

Military Sealift Command's rescue and salvage ships are a bit like insurance – operating quietly in the background until they, along with their embarked Mobile Diving and Salvage Unit companies, are needed quickly on the scene for a mission, such as towing or debeaching a stranded ship or salvaging a vessel.

While these types of missions often make headlines, some of the most influential work by these ships is done during that background time, conducting theater security cooperation engagements with the U.S. Navy's allied and partner nations throughout the world.

In the U.S. Africa Command area of responsibility, USNS Grapple (T-ARS 53) worked with three different countries from November through January, hosting bilateral diving exchanges that helped train for any future combined missions.

“A bilateral diving exchange allows us to work hand in hand with our host nations, such as Spain, Algeria and Morocco on this deployment,” said Capt. Curtis Smith, Grapple's civil service master. “In the grand scheme of things, if an amphibious or subsurface event occurs that would require the use of multi-national support, we will have an understanding of each nation's techniques, assets and limitations with regard to a specific means of diving.”

Grapple's crew and MDSU Company 2-4 worked closely with the host nations' divers on various types of diving techniques, such as ship,

surface supplied, scuba and re-breather diving. Grapple's civil service mariner crew provided support to the training by operating the shipboard crane that lowers the dive stage, and assisting in developing and providing materials for mock training scenarios; one such contribution was creating a four-bolt flange that served as either something to fix or something to find.

The bilateral diving exchanges always begin with an initial assessment of each country's diving and salvage capabilities to provide a productive starting point. In Cartagena, Spain, Nov. 24 to 30, in Jijel, Algeria, Dec. 10-14, and in Al Hoceima, Morocco, Dec. 17-22, Navy divers hosted classroom training aboard Grapple. The training covered operational and emergency procedures for surface supplied diving using the Kirby Morgan 37 diving helmet, a bright yellow device that looks like a cross between an old-fashioned dive helmet and something worn by intergalactic explorers. Participants also discussed several scuba-related procedures including anti-terrorism force protection diving techniques and low visibility searching techniques.

After the classroom training in Spain, both countries' divers conducted familiarization dive training off Grapple using the surface supplied dive helmet and the diver's stage, lowering divers to a 35-foot depth. Successfully completing the familiarization dives, Grapple's CIVMAR crew members moored the ship in 160 feet of water where the 18 U.S. Navy dive team members and eight Spanish divers performed deep diving operations using surface supplied surface decompression dives. In a final scuba diving operation, divers teamed up to inspect a new wreck site 75 feet under water that the Spanish navy diver school intends to use for future training purposes.

Similarly, in Algeria – where a total of 20 Algerian military divers participated – one group of U.S. Navy divers conducted 35-foot depth surface supplied dives off Grapple with some of their Algerian diver counterparts while at the same time, pier-side, another combined group performed search and ATPF dives using scuba equipment. This was the first bilateral diving operation from an American vessel in Algeria in 12 years.

## Morocco

Grapple and the MDSU team returned to Morocco from Jan. 9-24 for more extensive training with Moroccan divers, including advanced surface and underwater cutting and welding, light salvage operations training, hydraulic power unit and tools familiarization and emergency diving casualty response procedures.

Completing additional classroom instruction, Navy divers presented Moroccan divers with materials to build a work bench for the underwater hydraulic tools diving operations. Utilizing several cutting and welding techniques, the Moroccans made precision cuts on scrap steel and assembled the workbench.

During the underwater phase of the exchange, divers lowered the workbench into the water to a depth of 35 feet using the Interspiro DP1 Dive System, which can support up to two divers. Air for the system is supplied to the divers from the surface while the emergency air supply is worn on the divers' backs. Divers simulated preparing a ship's hull for the installation of a flange using hydraulic drills and grinders.

Next, dive teams conducted salvage training, working to raise two 55-gallon drums sunk in 35 feet of water. Moroccan divers raised the drums in two ways, removing water via pumps in the first, and by introducing air, which pushed the water out and refloated the second drum. Both dive teams again used the DP1 dive system to install non-collapsible vent hoses and suction hoses to one project for dewatering and installing air fittings and hoses for introducing air to the other.

Throughout diving engagements, Navy divers simulated emergency scenarios throughout the day to incorporate how diving casualties are handled. Emergency procedures included trauma scenarios for controlling bleeding while diving and treatment of divers suffering from decompression sickness. The scenarios particularly focused on integrating both dive teams into a cohesive unit that could provide care and reaction time for a stricken diver.

## Gauging success

Success in these exchanges is measured by a slightly more intangible yardstick than traditional rescue or salvage operations.

“Success of a bilateral diving exchange is directly determined by what each military can take away from their interaction with each other,” said Smith. “The exchange of diving knowledge between militaries ideally ends with each country taking away new or better ideas for better ways to perform safe diving operations, to include salvage operations, search operations and ATPF security operations. Additionally, each engagement between the Spanish, Algerian and American military forces during the AFRICOM deployment has provided a positive effect on foreign relations between each of the governments involved.”



U.S. Navy photo by Capt. Curtis Smith



U.S. Navy photo

# ...there wh

# Salvage ships



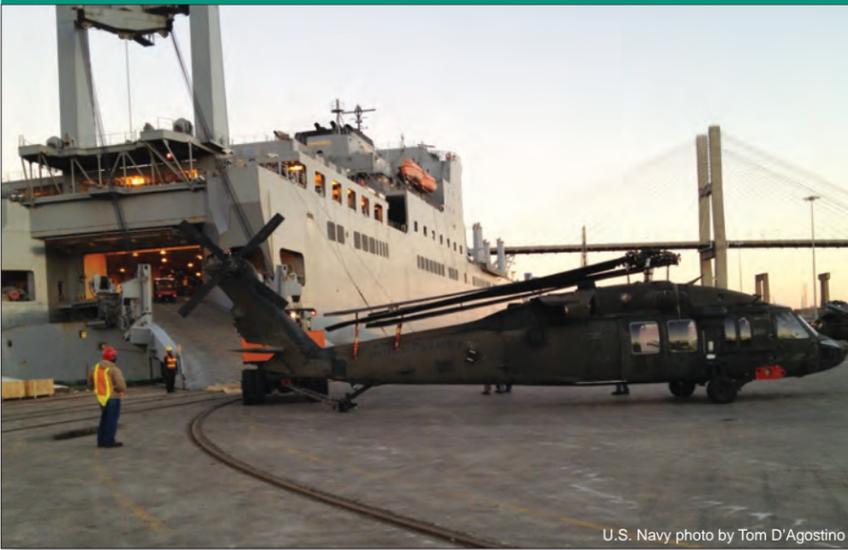
Cover: Navy divers descend from Grapple on a stage into the Mediterranean Sea.

Opposite page, top: Deck Machinist Abraham Kritz, one of Grapple's civil service mariners, uses a homemade sheet metal brake to make a new podium for Grapple's gangway Jan. 10.

Opposite page, bottom: Mobile Diving and Salvage Unit Two Diver 1st Class Dale Park conducts remote-operated vehicle equipment training with Algerian officers and divers Dec. 11.

# When you need them

## PACIFIC • BRIEFS



U.S. Navy photo by Tom D'Agostino

MSC large, medium-speed, roll-on/roll-off ship USNS Benavidez (T-AKR 306) loads U.S. Army helicopters and equipment Dec. 21 in Savannah, Ga.



U.S. Navy photo by Bill Cook

Capt. Rollin Belfi, left, civil service master of MSC dry cargo/ammunition ship USNS Sacagawea (T-AKE 2), exchanges tokens of appreciation with the Honorable Paul Oostburg Sanz, the U.S. Navy's general counsel. Belfi gave Oostburg Sanz a tour of the ship as part of a December visit to MSC in Norfolk.

## ATLANTIC • LINES

**Tom D'Agostino**, director of ship operations at Military Sealift Command Atlantic's port office in Charleston, S.C., assisted USNS Zeus (T-ARC 7), which arrived in Charleston Dec. 3 for repairs. **Marine Transportation Specialist Mary Ann Liberto**, also of the Charleston office, coordinated the port services arrangements to include a two-tug escort from the jetties to the pier. At MSC's direction, the command's tug and pilotage contracts were used rather than modifying the shipyard contract. USNS Lawrence H. Gianella (T-AOT 1125) pulled into Charleston Dec. 15-16 to discharge 170,000 barrels of fuel, with D'Agostino's coordination. D'Agostino also coordinated the cargo loading and opportune lift on-board USNS Benavidez (T-AKR 306) in Savannah, Ga., Dec. 20-23. Nearly 70 helicopters were loaded, as well as two side ramps for large, medium speed roll-on/roll-off vessels.

At MSCLANT's Jacksonville, Fla., office, **Marine Transportation Specialist Dean Doolittle** reports that, along with marine transportation specialists **Bill O'Neal** and **Scott Demney**, three vessels were tended in December. More than eight million gallons of fuel were loaded or transferred from Gianella and USNS Big Horn (T-AO 198) in support of Navy exercises and coastal resupplies. USNS Sacagawea (T-AKE 2) was added to the Prepositioning Program to support the U.S. Marine Corps.

The Honorable Paul Oostburg Sanz, U.S. Navy general counsel, visited MSCLANT Dec. 11 for a courtesy visit. He met with Navy **Capt. Samuel Norton**, MSCLANT commander, and **Phyllis Stewart-Ruffin**, MSCLANT legal advisor. Sacagawea's civil service master, **Capt. Rollin Belfi**, escorted Oostburg Sanz and provided insight into the inner workings of the ship. After the ship tour, the two men exchanged tokens; a ship's cap from Belfi and a U.S. Navy general counsel coin from Oostburg Sanz.

USNS Laramie (T-AO 203) returned to Norfolk, Va., Dec. 17 after completing a seven-month deployment to the U.S. Navy's 5th and 6th fleet areas of responsibility. Laramie provided underway replenishment to allied vessels from Turkey, the Netherlands, Italy, France, Pakistan, the United Kingdom, Australia, Germany, Greece, Spain, Portugal and Singapore. Laramie also supported the USS Enterprise (CVN 65) and USS Eisenhower (CVN 69) carrier strike groups and the USS Iwo Jima (LHD 7) and Peleliu (LHA 5) amphibious ready groups. The ship performed 84 underway replenishments, transferring 18.3 million gallons of fuel and 3,500 pallets of supplies.

MSCLANT wishes fair winds and following seas to Navy **Lt. j.g. Jennifer Holland**, who left the command Dec. 18.

The Military Sealift Command Pacific force protection team continued to work with U.S. Coast Guard Sector San Diego to seek Naval Vessel Protection Zone enforcement opportunities for MSCPAC and Commander Task Force 33 non-high value units transiting into San Diego. The presence of a USCG patrol craft reduced Naval Vessel Protection Zone violations and helped reinforce the established relationship between MSCPAC and the USCG.

The MSCPAC Logistics Office team conducted a post-exercise evaluation for the USS Nimitz (CVN 68) Carrier Strike Group Composite Unit Exercise and Joint Task Force Exercise with the supply department representatives of USS Princeton (CG 59) and USS Higgins (DDG 76).

The MSCPAC Combat Logistics Force Officer coordinated and

executed a top-off loading and excess off-load for USNS Rainier (T-AOE 7). While in port in San Diego, Rainier received 208 pallets of provisions and supplies in preparation for an upcoming deployment. The events established new working relationships with MSCPAC and Naval Facilities Command San Diego.

A new task group designation for Middle Pacific Ocean logistics services has been established through MSCPAC and Commander, U.S. 3rd Fleet. The new designation of Commander Task Group 33.3 will now align all Combat Logistics Force and service support ship scheduling under Commander Task Force 33 throughout the U.S. 3rd Fleet area of operations. CTF 33 in San Diego will assign CTG 33.3 to the MSC representative in Pearl Harbor, who will execute the CLF scheduling mission under the oversight of CTF 33.

## EUROPE/AFRICA • NEWS

As the holidays approached, MSC Europe and Africa and USS Mount Whitney (LCC 20) welcomed Navy **Rear Adm. Mark Buzby**, commander, Military Sealift Command, to Italy, Dec. 11-13. Buzby held all-hands calls with the hybrid Sailor and civil service mariner crew of Mount Whitney and the staff of MSCEURAF, passing along his thanks for jobs well done and discussing the federal budget crisis.

HSV Swift (HSV 2) spent Dec. 2-19 in Dakar, Senegal, participating in Africa Partnership Station. The ship's contracted mariner crew and military detachment, along with the embarked international staff, facilitated training in boarding team operations, maritime domain awareness/intelligence fusion, armed sentry, marksmanship, small unit infantry tactics, communications and maritime interdiction operations planning. They also performed a community relations project at the Vivre Ensemble Orphanage, painting interior spaces and enjoying a performance for the children by the Commander, Naval Forces Europe, Band. Swift hosted a Dec. 10 reception, attended by the heads of the Senegalese navy and the National Gendarmerie, ambassadors from the United States, Liberia, as well

as the French admiral in charge of the French forces in West Africa. Swift spent the holidays in Las Palmas, Spain.

Underway replenishments to U.S. Navy ships on station in the Mediterranean Sea continued throughout the month. USNS John Lenthall (T-AO 189) conducted underway replenishments with USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN 69), USS Hue City (CG 66), USS Cole (DDG 67), USS Laboon (DDG 58), USS Robert G. Bradley (FFG 49) and USS Forrest Sherman (DDG 98). En route the United States, USNS Laramie (T-AO 203) pitched in and conducted replenishments with USS Iwo Jima (LHD 7), USS Gunston Hall (LSD 44) and USS New York (LPD 21).

In sealift operations, MSCEURAF staff worked with several MSC-chartered ships to move cargo and transfer Department of Defense fuel within the Mediterranean Sea. Tankers Yukon Star and Meriom Topaz were brought on voyage charters to load and discharge fuel. MV Vasaland carried Exercise Austere Challenge 12 retrograde cargo to Bremerhaven, Germany, for discharge Dec. 13-14. MV Noble Star loaded 632 containers of DOD cargo in Durban, South Africa, Dec. 20-22.



Navy Senior Chief Hospital Corpsman Jennifer Caldwell, left, instructs Ship's Serviceman 1st Class Rodvick Campbell how to perform CPR during a medical response drill Jan. 10 aboard USS Mount Whitney (LCC 20).

## CENTRAL • CURRENTS

The cooler weather in the Middle East in December did not slow down Military Sealift Command operations in the U.S. 5th Fleet area of responsibility. MSC Combat Logistics Force ships operating there conducted 87 underway replenishments, including 40 with coalition, European Union and NATO ships. This support provided by the ships of Commander Task Force 53 enabled U.S. 5th Fleet combatants to stay at sea for extended periods.

USNS Supply (T-AOE 6) departed U.S. 5th Fleet via the Suez Canal Dec.

8. Supply conducted more than 50 underway replenishments in support of U.S. Navy operations and international counter-piracy efforts in this area of responsibility.

MSC Central and CTF 53 bid fair winds and following seas to Navy **Capt. Robert Gonzales** upon the completion of a successful 12-month-long command tour as the commodore of MSCCENT and CTF 53. Capt. Gonzales was relieved by Navy **Capt. Glen Leverette** during a change of command ceremony in Bahrain Dec. 19.



Helicopters deliver supplies from MSC dry cargo/ammunition ship USNS Washington Chambers (T-AKE 11) to USS Peleliu (LHA 5) and USS Green Bay (LPD 20) during a December vertical replenishment in the U.S. 5th Fleet area of responsibility.

## FAR EAST • HAILS

Military Sealift Command Office Korea hosted a holiday party for 55 children from Busan's Miewon orphanage Dec. 13. The event was co-sponsored by Busan's United Seamen's Service Center and crew members from USNS Wally Schirra (T-AKE 8), MV Bernard F. Fisher (T-AK 4396), USNS Red Cloud (T-AKR 313) and USNS VADM K.R. Wheeler (T-AG 5001). The party treated the children to gifts and a holiday meal.

MSCO Korea and ships' crews privately donated funds to the orphanage, which, according to Navy **Cmdr. Ed Plott**, MSCO Korea commanding officer, is sufficient to heat the orphanage for the rest of the winter season. MSCO Korea has sponsored the orphanage for more than 50 years.

**Yeoman 1st Class Stacy Olivas**, administrative officer, reenlisted in the U.S. Navy during a ceremony held Dec. 20 at MSC Far East headquarters in Singapore. Navy **Capt. Jim Hruska**, commander, MSC Far East, administered the oath of office.

The command bids fair winds and following seas to **Mechanical Engineer Theodore "Ted" Cook**, who retired after 40 years of federal service, all of it with MSC. Cook, a graduate of California Maritime Academy, began his service as an engineer with MSC Pacific, then located in Oakland, Calif., in 1972.

Cook served aboard numerous Pacific-based MSC ships and with MSC Central in Bahrain, where he assisted in repair and support of MSC ships supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. Cook has served with SSU Guam since 2007.

The command welcomes Navy **Lt. Cmdr. Kendra Deppe**, engineering officer and **Logistics Specialist 1st Class Phillip Allen**, staff logistics support officer.

Maritime Prepositioning Ship Squadron Two welcomes Navy **Ensign Joshua Craig**, operations officer, who relieved Navy **Lt. Aaron Womack**.

The command bids fair winds and following seas to **Operations Specialist Chief Rodney Alexander**.

## COMPASS • HEADING

According to CIVMAR Manpower and Personnel Deputy Director **Frank Cunningham**, the CIVMAR placement team, along with the travel office and shipboard management, successfully relieved more than 700 mariners in the six weeks leading up to the December holiday season.

The substitution of Navy personnel by civil service mariners is on schedule in the operations departments on combat logistics force ships and in the communication departments on the rescue and salvage ships and fleet ocean tugs. The first training course for new operations chiefs was conducted Dec. 10-12, with eight in attendance. These eight individuals will be part of the conversion to civil service crewing commencing in early 2013, with the expected completion of all conversions by October.

Military Sealift Command personnel in Norfolk gathered for a holiday party at the Breezy Point Officers' Club Dec. 14. After opening remarks by **Jack Taylor**, MSC director of government operations, the floor was turned over to the master-of-ceremonies **Marvin Mullins**. This year's event, which offered a sit-down lunch and a disk jockey, took months of planning by MSC Norfolk's morale, welfare and recreation committee. Many thanks to Navy **Lt. Noel Smith**, **Information Systems Technology Chief Petty Officer Sean Lewis**, **Petty Officers Chandra Wyatt, Micheal Bryant, Fredrick Bartlett, Andrella**

**Thomas, Tangelia Thurman, Ebony Jones, Albert Givens, Brandon Wall, Justin Goldstine, Alexia Williams, Cecilia Segovia, Ashley Carson, Shannon Jones and Helen Conwell**, as well as **Wanda McSwain and Maria Hunger**.

Fair winds and following seas to **Purser Charles Tompkins**, who retires after 57 years of service; **Able Seaman Alfred Aquino**; **Purser Donna Bennett**; **Deck Engineer Machinist Jose Brillo**; **3rd Assistant Engineer Bernard Dumas, Jr.**; **Unlicensed Junior Engineer Paul Garrett**; **Supply Officer Albert Gibbs**; **Boatswain Renato Gonzalez**; **Able Seaman Robert Greene**; **2nd Officer William Gunter**; **Damage Control Leader Jose Hernandez**; **Engine Utilityman Iain Klimsza**; **2nd Assistant Engineer Theodore Lesaca**; **3rd Assistant Engineer Mario Lim**; **Engine Utilityman Lino Mores**; **Electronics Technician Douglas Peters, Sr.**; **Engine Utilityman Ernesto Soriano**; **Electronics Technician Fidel Torres**; **Engine Utilityman James Watson**; **Supervisory Logistics Management Specialist Robert Golsby**; **Supervisory Accountant John Kuczinski**; **Supervisory Physician Assistant John Peck**; **Financial Management Analyst Phil Purpura**; **Marine Surveyor John Reddy** and **Contract Specialist Theodore Williams** as they retire. Thank you for your service.

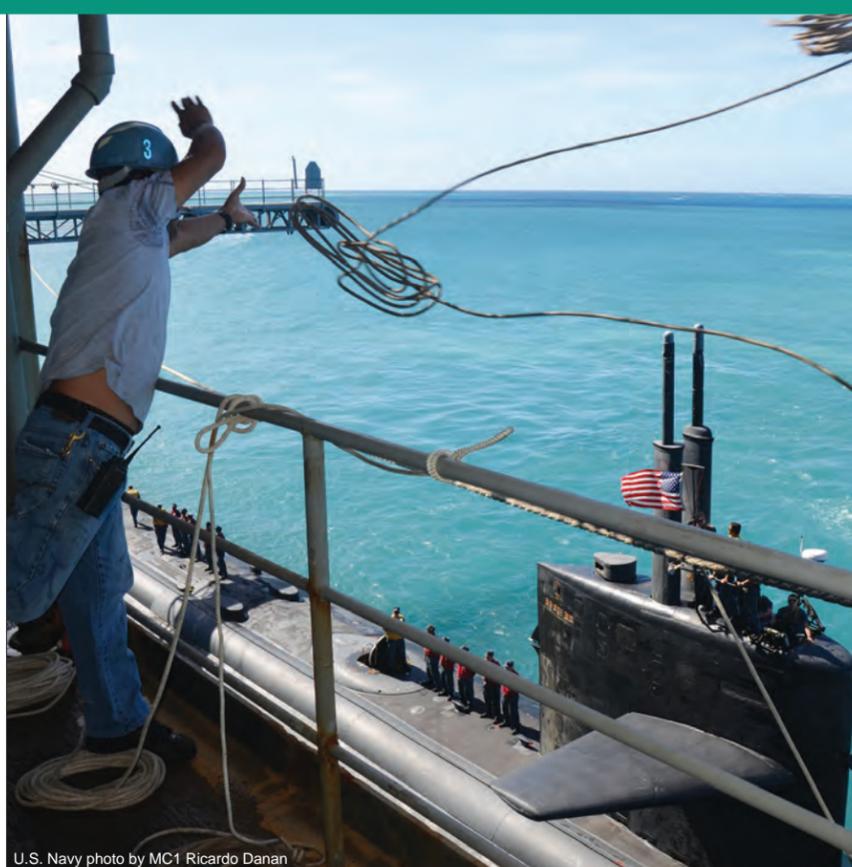
For more civil service mariner news, visit [www.msc.navy.mil/msfsc/newsletter](http://www.msc.navy.mil/msfsc/newsletter).

## HQ • HIGHLIGHTS

The command welcomes Navy **Lt. j.g. Brian Arroyo**, maritime forces, manpower and management; **Operations Specialist 2nd Class Robert Levar**, operations; **Francis Lirio**, and **Chris Ruiz**, both of maritime forces, manpower and management; and **Lynn Schug**, command, control, communication and computer systems.

The command bids fair winds and fol-

lowing seas to **Prince Boateng**, Sealift Program; **Operations Specialist 2nd Class Ryan Jones**, operations; **Jean Muse**, Sealift Program; **Steven Pigman**, Service Support Program; **Nora Spalding**, logistics; **Penni-Sue Vera**, command, control, communication and computer systems; **Sherri Whittingham**, strategic planning; and Navy **Cmdr. Delbert Yordy**, operations.



**Able Seaman Wilfredo Magno**, a civil service mariner aboard MSC submarine tender USS Frank Cable (AS 40) casts a mooring line to USS La Jolla (SSN 701) as it moors alongside Jan. 11 in Saipan.

# Perspectives from the “Desert Cat”

Fleet ocean tug *USNS Catawba* (T-ATF 68) has been forward-deployed to the U.S. 5th Fleet for the past 14 years, participating in missions as diverse as training Iraqi security forces, conducting towing, salvage and rescue operations, and serving as a platform for Navy divers and transporting cargo.

*Catawba's* story is as varied as the civil service mariners and Navy personnel who crew the ship. This story was originally posted as a two-part blog series where CIVMARS gave their perspectives from the “Desert Cat.”



U.S. Navy photos by Kim Dixon

**Solomon Tadesie**

**Able Seaman, Watch Solomon Tadesie:** I love the tug and the experience of being on the tug. I maintain the tow gear locker – towing chains, shackles, it's all in there. I have to do this every day because sometimes we have four hours to be ready for any towing mission. In four hours, we have to decide what type of towing line to use – such as a 10-inch or 14-inch – and then get it out and thread it on towing line. It depends on how heavy the ship is. The last time we had a four-hour-notice tow, it was 4:00 p.m. One job I remember was pre-planned, but we had two days time to get there. Most of the time, we don't know when we'll be needed, but whenever they need us, the master calls and says, “We have mission; everyone do this and do that.” The chief mate gets the orders to us, tells us what line to put up, and we get the line set up, hooked

up, and ready, along with the messenger line. When we get to the ship we're towing, we just hook up and go.

**Chief Steward Robert Prades:** I reported here Aug. 10, 2009, and have been here since. I love my job and have won the David Cook award twice. I'm going up for the award again. It's a hard job being chief steward, but I love pleasing people and I treat everyone the same – like an admiral. Underway with no riders, I serve 29. Depending on our tasking, we can have up to 40. For me, it's all about time management. Everything I do, I have to time myself; otherwise I fall behind on my duties. I start at four in the morning – prep breakfast, bake, clean the passageway, wash the linens – and end at 6:30 p.m. in port or 9:30 p.m. underway because there are more people on board. Number one rule is NEVER run out of food; that's number one. Number two, when getting underway, never think of when we're coming back. When I hear we're deploying for one week, I load for 45 days or more. I feel rewarded that I'm doing my job when I get compliments – if I hear “good food, place looks clean,” then I'm happy.

**Information Systems Technician 1st Class (SW/AW) Wang Xiong:** I'm in charge of the radio frequency communications as well as the computer and local area network system. It's not my first MSC ship; I was on *USNS Mercy* for Pacific Partnership 2010. I've been here since September 2012. The difference between this and a U.S. Navy ship? The job is pretty much the same, but there's a lot less equipment. I work with a lot of the CIVMARS – they're professionals at what they do and they carry their job really well. I look at it as we all have a common goal, and we all help each other out. There's no weak link – one of us fails, and we all fail.

**Health Systems Specialist/Medical Service Officer Lenard Leavell:** My billet is actually at Ship Support Unit Bahrain, but for the small ships that don't have MSOs, I help them with technical visits.



**Lenard Leavell**

Right now, I'm helping *Catawba* get prepared for an upcoming SMART [ship material assessment and readiness testing]. On a regular basis, I got their NAVOSH [Navy Occupational Safety and Health] medical program going. I do medical training as requested, such as basic first aid, required safety training, stuff like that. Like a majority of the MSOs, I just enjoy helping people. The greatest accomplishment during my MSC career was being named MSC of the Year.

**Yeoman Storekeeper “SUPPO” Efren Apostol:** I manage the logistics requirements for the ship, and also serve as the personnel officer on board. For that, I arrange flights, cut orders; meet people – incoming crew or ship riders – assist the ship's captain with the purser job, do all the orders, control the budget, do MWR, work as ship's store officer, get the gym equipment, issue bedding. Pretty much, I like keeping busy. Everyone is so busy, so I assist. When I left the Navy, I went to college in the Philippines and earned a degree in psychology. Now, a lot of people come to me with problems and I help them a lot. I want to retire, but all the captains come and ask me to stay. My son keeps telling me to retire, but even at 61 years old, I'm still capable and strong. I do a lot of exercise and walking. I joined MSC because in my heart, I felt like the Navy still needed my service. I enjoy sea life, being at sea, and

being overseas, forward-deployed. The highlight was being named the 2011 Oscar Chappell [The Navy League of the United States' Able Seaman Oscar Chappell Award for Outstanding Maritime Stewardship] award winner.

**Able Seaman, Watch/Maintenance Thomas Hobbs:** Cat is a good boat. I like the tug class because we're doing different things all the time. We rotate day work and watch. We are always doing maintenance on the tow – pulling wires out, maintaining the equipment, pulling nasty dirty grease off, putting brand new fresh grease on. There's plenty of stuff to do on a tug; especially an old one like this. You do everything you can to make the ship look as good as you can. Of course, everything you do on a tug is heavy. There's nothing light for some reason. We're not just doing maintenance all the time – we get to go out and retrieve stuff off the bottom of the ocean; drop REMUS off the side. We were the ones who retrieved the Harrier from the USS Boxer from the ocean floor. What is way different on this ship than most is the four-hour call back. You can't go too far away in case something happens and you gotta be back. About three years ago, we had decided to have a social event off the ship. But, we got a call, got back in within four hours, loaded divers, then went to Somalia where we stayed for four months.



**Thomas Hobbs**

## Keel laid for second Mobile Landing Platform

**By Sarah E. Burford  
MSCPAC Public Affairs**

The following article was originally posted as a blog after the keel laying for MLP-2 at the General Dynamics NASSCO shipyard in San Diego, Dec. 4.

The Navy will name MLP-2 in honor of Sen. John Glenn, a former U.S. Marine Corps pilot, astronaut and U.S. senator. He was the first American to orbit the Earth and the third American in space. MLP-2 is the second of three MLP ships being built by NASSCO for Military Sealift Command. In a time-honored Navy tradition, the ship's sponsors, Lynn Glenn, daughter of the ship's namesake, and Helen Tollan, wife of Lt. Gen. John Tollan, commanding general, I Marine Expeditionary Force, welded their initials into the keel plate. Following the cer-

emony, the steel plate with their initials was permanently affixed to the ship's keel, remaining with the vessel through its time in service.

*USNS John Glenn* is a seagoing pier for friendly forces in case accessibility to onshore bases are denied. Such flexibility would be useful following natural disasters and for supporting Marines once they are ashore.

*John Glenn* will be a sea base, designed primarily to support three military hovercraft (such as the Landing Craft Air Cushion), vehicle staging with a sideport ramp and large mooring fenders.

The MLP ship uses float-on/float-off technology with a reconfigurable mission deck amidships. The 784-foot-long MLP is designed to flood down to a semi-submerged profile to float vehicles and craft on and off its 164-foot-wide cargo deck.

The MLP is a new class of auxiliary support ship, scheduled to join MSC's Maritime Prepositioning Force. These ships will be the cen-

terpiece of the Navy's “Sea Base” concept, and will serve as a transfer point for Marine Corps amphibious landing forces between large ships and small landing craft.

Potential future platform upgrades

could enable the MLPs to have more mission flexibility, including a vehicle transfer system, connected replenishment capability, a container handling crane and an aviation operating spot.



U.S. Navy photo by Sarah Burford

Lynn Glenn, right, and Helen Tollan, left, weld their initials into the keel plate of the future *USNS John Glenn*, the second of MSC's Mobile Landing Platforms.