

SEALIFT

Our U.S. Navy's Military Sealift Command

2014

Freedom Banner

INSIDE the May 2014 Issue — Spearhead continues maiden deployment • Chavez aids MH370 search

Better than BEST . . . Next Generation Wideband

The following blog was written by Rear Adm. T.K. Shannon, Commander, Military Sealift Command. The Bandwidth-Efficient Satellite Transport system, commonly known as BEST, aboard our government-owned/government-operated ships was retired March 31. Shannon talks about the replacement, Next Generation Wideband, and what it means to our mariners.

It may have slipped by so quietly that you didn't notice, but on March 31, 2014, the BEST system faded into MSC history.

For more than a decade, the BEST system was the mainstay of our CIVMARs afloat, providing connectivity to the worldwide Web through bandwidth-limited satellite channels. Now, a newer, better solution to the challenge of afloat connectivity has been deployed to our fleet: Next Generation Wideband.

We've been working since 2008 to replace BEST, which only provided an average of 48 Kbps upload and 128 Kbps shared download for each of our ships. Additionally, under the BEST system architecture, one ship in a region could have an adverse effect on the download capabilities of our other ships in the region. It just wasn't working with our increased operations tempo and our need for additional mission communications flexibility.

We began deploying our new system, Next Generation Wideband, in August 2012. By February 2014 our last ship to receive our new system, fast combat support ship USNS Supply (T-AOE 6), was up and running. We even retired the old system six months ahead of schedule.



Rear Adm. T.K. Shannon, commander, MSC, hosts Commodore Robert W. Dorey, Royal Fleet Auxiliary Head of Service, in Washington, D.C., April 7. (U.S. Navy photo by Barry Lake)

Now, all of our CIVMAR crewed ships can have dedicated 256 Kbps upload and download at the same budget level as the old system. And, NGW eliminates the risk of one ship affecting the communications of our other ships in the region. It even opens the door for future plans relating to distance support of our ship-board networks.

The dual-antenna solution from NGW provides both L band and Ku band connectivity, with automatic transfer between satellites. That lowers our costs of satellite shifts. And, because the satellite coverage overlaps, NGW is an inherently redundant system.

NGW provides greater flexibility to support our ever-changing missions, not to mention the new missions we seem to constantly receive. We can purchase bandwidth in increments of 64 Kbps, which allows our ship program managers flexibility to match satellite communications capability to individual ships and their individual missions. Our NGW contract even has provisions for short-term purchases of bandwidth to support our surge missions.

This is a giant leap for MSC, one that serves our mission reliability and flexibility, and provides a better life afloat for our CIVMARs. It's been a long time coming, but, "Happy birthday, NGW! We're glad you're finally here!"

Thanks for your service,
T.K. Shannon
Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy
Commander, Military Sealift Command

Mendonca teams up with Army for Alaskan JLOTS

The following blog is by Exercise Branch Chief Linda Shepard, MSC.

In recent years, we've seen the destruction natural disasters can wreak on coastal areas, from the 2011 tsunami that struck Japan to the massive typhoon that hit the Philippines last November.

Earlier this month, MSC completed practicing for just such an event with other military and civilian organizations in the cold Alaskan environment.

MSC provided several hundred personnel and USNS Mendonca (T-AKR 303) to join U.S. Transportation Command's Turbo Challenge 14 exercise March 27 to April 2.

The exercise played a part in a larger series of 14 linked disaster-response exercises, based on a major Alaskan earthquake in 1964. With the state of Alaska simulating the earthquake crisis, emergency response teams from

local authorities, the Alaska's National Guard, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency all worked to respond to the disaster scenario.

Through U.S. Transportation Command and its components, including MSC, a Joint Task Force – Port Opening Joint Assessment Team deployed to assess the severely damaged port of Anchorage. As part of this team, MSC Seattle port representative Bruce Leach helped conduct the "assessment" of the port.

Afterward, Mendonca performed a Joint Logistics Over-the-Shore exercise, which moved supplies for the simulated victims of the earthquake, and responders who needed equipment and tools to help the clean-up process. JLOTS exercises, sponsored annually by U.S. Transportation Command, are designed to demonstrate the real-world capabilities of our military to transport supplies to shore from ships at sea, even

when a port is damaged or nonexistent.

This particular JLOTS served as a proof-of-concept opportunity for the exercise, to assess the ability to conduct cargo operations in cold-weather conditions, including ice-laden waters. Mendonca is modified to withstand the icy conditions it encountered in Alaska; simply put, when it takes in surrounding water to help cool the ship, the cooling system won't freeze up.

"The extreme tides, strong currents and floating ice made a big challenge even bigger. The key players from all the services pulled together and made the near-impossible [seem] routine," said Capt. Michael Wachter, master, USNS Mendonca.

Leach helped to coordinate the JLOTS operations, along with Reserve personnel from MSC's Expeditionary Port Units 116 and 117. EPU's are highly mobile units that can quickly deploy to a contingency operation, establish port operations and manage the arrivals and departures of cargo ships in port. Coordinating with Army counterparts from the 7th Transportation Brigade (Expeditionary), personnel from the EPU's worked ashore to support the JLOTS commander, and aboard Mendonca to liaise for the ship's master during load and offload operations.

"Working closely with the Army in a joint environment was an invaluable experience for our team, and it was a great opportunity to illustrate MSC's capability to support an operation of that type and complexity," said Lt. Cmdr. Matthew Hobbs, EPU 117's executive officer.

"The [watercraft] drivers

got very proficient operating in an ice and strong current environment by the end of the exercise," said Bruce Leach, MSC Seattle port representative.



Sailors assigned to Navy Cargo Handling Battalion 1 lift the U.S. Army's small tug Scholarie (ST 905) from USNS Mendonca (T-AKR 303) during Alaska Shield 2014. (U.S. Navy photo by Seaman Mumbali G. Ngwa)

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. Thomas K. Shannon, USN
Director, Public Affairs Tom Van Leunen
Editor James Marconi
Writers Edward Baxter, Singapore
Sarah Burford, San Diego
Meghan Patrick Henderson, Naples
LaShawn Sykes, Norfolk
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



Chavez joins search for missing Malaysian plane

By Edward Baxter
MSC Far East Public Affairs

INDIAN OCEAN (NNS) -- The 7th Fleet supply ship USNS Cesar Chavez (T-AKE 14) joined an international task force led by Australian Defence Force searching for missing Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370 off the Western Coast of Australia April 10.

The U.S. 7th Fleet deployed Chavez in response to a formal Joint Operations Command request to the U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) for tanker support. Deployment of the dry cargo/ammunition ship speaks to the U.S. Navy's enduring commitment to allies and partners in the Asia-Pacific region, and the ability to respond rapidly where it

matters, when it matters.

"Although a crisis has brought us to these waters, the team aboard Chavez is standing by and proud to support such a vital mission," said Chavez's civil service master Capt. Rollin Bellfi.

Chavez is scheduled to conduct underway replenishment operations with Australian naval ships actively searching for MH370, including HMAS Success (OR 304), HMAS Perth (FFH 157) and HMAS Toowoomba (FFH 156).

Chavez is the U.S. Navy's newest Combat Logistics Force ship, which is operated by a crew of 125 civil service mariners. These ships also have a complement of 11 U.S. Navy Sailors who provide operational support and supply coordination.

"This is an unexpected assignment, but our logistics ships are used to responding quickly to emergent requirements," said COMLOG WESTPAC replenishment officer, Lt. Cmdr. Gentry Debord.

Prior to setting sail for the remote waters of the Southern Indian Ocean, Chavez loaded provisions and fuel in Singapore. Here, a U.S. Navy logistics team assigned to Logistics Group Western Pacific and MSC Far East worked with the Royal Australian Navy Liaison Office to load supplies and fuel destined for Australian ships.

Chavez, operated by the U.S. Navy's Military Sealift Command, provides underway replenishment of dry cargo, fuel, and ammunition to U.S.

and coalition navy ships operating at sea. The 689-foot Chavez is expected to take on additional provisions and freight in Fleet Base West at Stirling, Western Australia, to further support task forces ships.

COMLOGWESTPAC is Seventh Fleet's combat-ready logistics command in Southeast Asia, providing government-owned and contracted ships to keep units armed, fueled and fed throughout the U.S. Pacific Fleet area of responsibility. In addition to Cesar Chavez, U.S. Pacific Fleet is also supporting the search operation with two P-8 Poseidon patrol aircraft, a Towed Pinger Locator hydrophone and an autonomous underwater vehicle Bluefin-21 side-scan sonar.

Cable completes first unrep in 10 years

By MC3 Jon Erickson
USS Frank Cable Public Affairs

USNS Cesar Chavez (T-AKE 14) pulls alongside USS Frank Cable (AS 40) for an underway replenishment, marking the first time Cable has participated in an UNREP in 10 years. (U.S. Navy photo by MCCA Jason Morris)



PACIFIC OCEAN (April 3, 2014) – Military Sealift Command's USNS Cesar Chavez (T-AKE 14) pulled alongside the submarine tender USS Frank Cable (AS 40) April 3, allowing Frank Cable to complete an underway replenishment (UNREP).

Completing the UNREP is a milestone for Frank Cable Sailors and Military Sealift Command civilian mariners because it's been 10 years since the last UNREP and it proves the ship has the capability for sustained-at-sea operations.

"Not only did Frank Cable need fuel, but we also needed to regain proficiency in a critical core competency," said Capt. Mark Benjamin, the commanding officer of Frank Cable. "This capability allows Frank Cable to remain at sea longer between port visits; longer lengths at sea is an enabler to expanded mission sets, including warfighting support, theater security cooperation, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief."

Cesar Chavez transferred 280,000 gallons of F76 fuel to Frank Cable, which provided the opportunity for Sailors and civilian mariners to train together on this vital underway evolution.

"They worked together like a well oiled machine," said Benjamin regarding the coordination between Frank Cable Sailors and civilian mariners. "I couldn't be more proud."

For many Sailors and civilian mariners involved, this was the first UNREP evolution they had been a part of in their careers. After successfully completing the evolution, the ship, as well as the crew, are now ready to conduct sustained operations at sea if the mission calls for it.

"Proving this capability promotes our relevance to my operational commander, opening the door to a wider range of missions," added Benjamin.

Sailors and civilian mariners were proud to be part of such a big accomplishment for Frank Cable.

"It was pretty cool being a part of the first UNREP [in more than 10 years] with Frank Cable," said Electrician's Mate 3rd Class Bradley Jeffrey-Moe. "It was an honor to be part of such a special event."

Frank Cable, forward deployed to the island of Guam, conducts maintenance and support of submarines and surface vessels deployed to the U.S. 7th Fleet area of responsibility and is currently on a scheduled underway period.

For more information on Frank Cable, visit www.cable.navy.mil or like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/USSFrankCableAS40.

Cover: Marines off-load equipment from USNS 2ND LT John P. Bobo (T-AK 3008) in South Korea. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Lauren Whitney)

This page, background: A Marine guides an assault amphibious vehicle as it backs off USNS Bobo. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Matt Myers)

Below, left to right: USNS Bobo personnel use a crane to attach to boats for off-loading. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Lauren Whitney)

A Marine loads equipment onto USNS Sacagawea (T-AKE 2) during exercise Freedom Banner 2014. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Matt Myers)

A Humvee disembarks USNS Bobo. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Matt Myers)

A Marine guides a container off USNS Sacagawea. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Matt Myers)

Navy personnel use a crane to safely off-load boats from Bobo over the side and into wooden cradles, awaiting pierside. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Lauren Whitney)

MSC:

Moving USMC cargo where it matters, where it counts



Freedom Banner 2014: A reservist's perspective

Navy Lt. j.g. Benjamin Weinstein, a maritime cartographer in civilian life, has been a drilling reservist with two MSC Reserve units for three years, supporting the readiness of the Strategic Sealift Officer program. His current unit is Strategic Sealift Unit 206, based in Washington, D.C. In March, he deployed to the South Korean port of Gwangyang supporting annual exercise Freedom Banner 2014. More than 320 Marine Corps tactical vehicles and amphibious assault vehicles were offloaded, pierside, from USNS 2ND LT John P. Bobo (T-AK 3008), a maritime prepositioning force ship assigned to Maritime Prepositioning Ship Squadron Three. The following blog highlights his experiences.

I am attached to Expeditionary Port Unit 111 working here at the port of Gwangyang located on the southern coast of the Republic of Korea. Members of EPU 111 are tasked with using their mobile communications suite, a Mobile Sealift Operations Command Center, as well as their combined expertise, to ensure a smooth discharge of the vessels participating in the exercise. My specific duties include interfacing with crew members from USNS 2ND LT John P. Bobo (T-AK 3008) – tracking the discharge of everything

from M1-A1 Abrams tanks to 20-foot containers.

Observing the discharge of a vessel such as Bobo, first-hand, was an eye-opening experience. Eighty-ton tanks and other massive pieces of machinery came ashore with apparent ease. However, the smooth offload was the culmination of months of planning, coordination and hard work between the U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps. From a professional perspective, I enhanced my understanding of what it takes to discharge a ship in a contingency scenario. Freedom Banner 2014 underscores the highly professional sealift capabilities of the Maritime Prepositioning Squadrons and their readiness to support as needed, when needed!

Aside from the long days supporting the ship, we were able to participate in a community outreach event with a local orphanage during the exercise – handing out toys to children and playing games with them. Seeing the smiles on the kids' faces made the event a very rewarding experience for all EPU 111 members.

The Strategic Sealift Officer Program, an invaluable asset to the U.S. Navy, allows merchant mariners to hold a commission in the U.S. Navy Reserve and be used to crew ships during a time of war. These SSOs participate in nearly every major sealift exercise around the world, including Freedom Banner. SSOs use their professional knowledge to better plan and coordinate the discharge of cargo from Bobo.

Freedom Banner 2014: An ensign's thoughts

After off-loading equipment and supplies at Gwangyang, South Korea, supporting annual exercise Freedom Banner 14, USNS 2ND LT John P. Bobo (T-AK 3008) jumped right into its next mission. Bobo sailed back to Okinawa, where it loaded 1,500 tons of Marine Corps equipment, and set sail for Darwin, Australia, where the ship off-loaded March 29 to April 1. In the following blog,

Maritime Prepositioning Ship Squadron Three supply officer Navy Ensign Ben Nichols shares his thoughts about the ship's support of deployed U.S. Marines to Australia's northern coast.

Bobo recently wrapped up an operational sealift of 200-plus pieces of rolling stock, cargo containers and equipment from Okinawa, Japan, to Darwin, Australia.

The cargo lift supports Marine Rotational Forces-Darwin, whose mission is to enhance relationships with the Australian Defense Force, validate training opportunities within their country and establish a limited contingency response capability in the Southeast Asia region.

"Bobo is happy and excited to arrive at Darwin, Australia, to participate in MRF-Darwin," said Bobo's civilian master Capt. Michael Faraday. "Bobo is looking forward to venturing into new areas and exploring the proof-of-concept ideas of the U.S. Marine Corps."

At Darwin, a city in Australia's northern territories, Bobo is augmented by Navy Cargo Handling Battalion Detachment One for crane operations and an offload preparation party consisting of U.S. Marines from various units.

NCHB Det-1 plays a pivotal role in every evolution, conducting lift-on/lift-off operations both pierside and at anchorage.

The equipment belongs to the 1st Marines, 5th Battalion, which is currently scheduled to deploy to Darwin.

Bobo heads back to Korea later this month to reconstitute Marine Corps cargo completing its Freedom Banner commitment. Freedom Banner is held annually in support of a major Pacific-based theater exercise. This year, Freedom Banner provides the military hardware for a 3rd Marine Expeditionary Force exercise ongoing at various sites throughout the Republic of Korea.

When it matters



FAR EAST • HAILS



Navy Rear Adm. **Vincent Griffith**, commander, Naval Supply Systems Command Global Logistics Support, visited MSC Far East March 21 and MSC Office Korea March 28. In Singapore, MSCFE commander Navy **Capt. Jim Hruska** briefed Griffith on MSC operations in the U.S. 7th Fleet area of responsibility. While visiting Busan, Griffith toured the Pier Eight facility, home to MSCO Korea, and toured USNS Red Cloud (T-AKR 313) with civilian master **Capt. Wayne Keinanen**.

MSCO Korea commanding officer Navy **Cmdr. Ed Plott** briefed Republic of Korea Army Logistics School commander **Brig. Gen. Kook Yoon** and ROK Port Operations Group commander **Col. Se Yeong Choe** on MSC operations on the Korean peninsula March 28.

Army **Col. Shannon Cox**, commander, Surface Deployment and Distribution Command's 599th Transportation Brigade, visited Hruska at Singapore's Sembawang Wharves April 2.

During a ceremony held at Sembawang Wharves April 1, Marine Corps **Master Gunnery Sergeant James D'Errico** received a promotion to his current rank. Hruska administered the oath of office to D'Errico, a Marine Corps Aviation Ordnance manager in the command's logistics directorate.

Strategic Sealift Readiness Group coordinator Navy **Lt. Brian Stocker** departed the command after a five-month assignment. Navy **Cmdr. Bill Hartman** relieved Stocker, who earned the Navy and Marine Corps achievement medal.

MSCFE tanker officer **Thad Reap** left the command and reports to MSC Pacific.

MSCO Korea bids fair winds and following seas to executive officer Navy **Lt. Cmdr. Cedric Edwards**.

Diego Garcia-based Maritime Prepositioning Ship Squadron Two welcomes assistant materiel officer **Damage Controlman 1st Class Alfred Gonzalez** and Medical Service Officer and civil service mariner **Mike Coffman**.

USNS Charles Drew (T-AKE 10) crew members visit the Human Help Network, Foundation Thailand Children Protection Center in Pattaya, Thailand. They raised money for food and gifts for the children, and donated money to the foundation. (U.S. Navy photo)



USNS Safeguard (T-ARS 50) receives diesel fuel marine from USNS Charles Drew (T-AKE 10) in an astern underway replenishment in the South China Sea. (U.S. Navy photo)

CENTRAL • CURRENTS

MSC Central and Commander Task Force 53 continued another successful month in March, organizing 65 underway replenishment evolutions for U.S. Navy and coalition ships. These efforts ensured that U.S. 5th Fleet combatant ships were materially prepared to patrol the area of responsibility and defend the national interests of the United States and its allies.

MSCCENT and CTF-53 sent bravo zulus to USNS Arctic (T-AOE 8) and USS Emory S. Land (AS 39). Arctic was a stalwart member of the Combat Logistics Force, completing 154 fuel replenishments and transferring more than 36 million gallons of fuel to U.S. 5th Fleet and coalition ships. Land also provided invaluable services, performing 295

repairs on forward-deployed ships. The command bids fair winds and following seas to both ships with gratitude for their support.

MSCCENT and CTF 53 also bid farewell and following seas to several personnel, including Navy **Lt. Oscar Garcia**, Navy **Lt. j.g. Matt Freeman**, **Chief Petty Officer Leslie Garcia**, and **Petty Officers Abram Herringshaw, Vincent Theus, Maria Simmons and Joseph Kemple** who have been critical members of our team, and we wish them all the best in their futures. We are also pleased to welcome the arrivals of Navy **Cmdr. Shannon Wells**, Navy **Cmdr. John Leed**, and **Petty Officer Camia Chambers** to the MSCCENT and CTF-53 team.

DC • HIGHLIGHTS

Air Force **Gen. William Fraser**, commander, U.S. Transportation Command, visited MSC Washington March 31. During an all-hands call, Fraser praised members of the team that readied MV Cape Ray (T-AKR 9679) for its deployment as part of the joint mission to eliminate Syria's chemical weapons materials, including: **Rick Caldwell**, **Larry Larsson** and **Intelligence Specialist 1st Class Kelly Pritt**, operations; **Kelly Rogers**, office of counsel; **Anton Clemens**; Marine Corps **Maj. Josh Tuttle** and Air Force **Maj. Steve Wick**, joint plans, strategic studies and wargaming; **Mimi Bolaffi**, **Steve Frazier**, **John Goering**, **Jitesh Kerai** and Coast Guard **Cmdr. Dan Somma**, engineering; **Renee Martin**, command, control, communication and computer systems; Navy **Cmdr. Craig Fay**, Combat Logistics Force; **Art Clark**, **Tyrone Graves**, **Laila Linares**, **Tom Walters** and **Johanna O'Neill**, Sealift Program; **Krishana Wright**, contracts and business management.

MSC hosted two guest speakers in Washington D.C. and Norfolk, Va., to celebrate Women's History Month in March. **Gary Frantz**, comptroller, served as the champion for this year's celebrations, which highlighted the theme "Celebrating Women of Character, Courage, and Commitment." MSC Norfolk celebrated by hosting the **Honorable Daun S. Hester**, delegate for the 89th House District in Virginia, March 19. **Ariane Whittemore**, assistant deputy commandant for Programs and Resources, Headquarters, Marine Corps, spoke at MSC Washington March 25.

The command welcomes **Tinelle Rose**, office of counsel; **Monica Phillips**, engineering; and **John Motichka**, contracts and business management.



MSC Commander Rear Adm. T.K. Shannon presents an MSC-stack-colored lawn mower to almost-retired commander, U.S. Transportation Command Gen. William M. Fraser III. (U.S. Navy photo by Barry Lake)

PACIFIC • BRIEFS

Adm. Harry B. Harris, commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet, visited USNS Sioux (T-ATF 171) March 6, while the ship was in port in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Harris was onboard Sioux to thank the crew for their successful tow of the Canadian oiler HMCS Protecteur. Protecteur experienced damage following a main machinery space fire during their return to British Columbia following a period of service as the Middle Pacific Oiler. Sioux completed the tow in high seas and severe weather.

USNS Mercy (T-AH 19) completed a maintenance period at the Vigor Shipyard, Portland, Ore., and returned to San Diego March 6. During the transit, Mercy completed Deck Landing Qualifications and a refueling at sea with USNS Rainier (T-AO 7). Coordination is currently underway for Mercy's participation in the multinational maritime exercise 2014 Rim of the Pacific this summer in Hawaii.

Navy **Cmdr. Louis Costa**, Combat Logistics Officer for MSC Pacific, provided training on CLF operations to the leadership of the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit's logistics staff at Camp Pendleton, Calif. This hands-on training provided the opportunity to discuss the formal process for requisitioning underway replenishment services, including routing requests through the shipboard chain of command, the Amphibious Squadron staffs and the Commander Task Force 33 schedulers.

Bernie Donathan, office of MSC Representative Pearl Harbor, attended the Hawaii and American Samoa Area Maritime Security Committee annual general membership meeting on March 6. Subjects discussed included the implementation plan for the TWIC card readers at commercial port facilities; the \$3.6 million Port Security Grant Program funding for a mobile crane purchase to increase cargo handling capabilities at the Honolulu Commercial Port; and the potential cyber security impacts to the ocean commerce of Hawaii.

Welcome aboard Navy **Lt. Cmdr. Homer Buen**, who assumes the position of Commander Task Force 33 scheduler. He joins the MSC PAC team following duty at Navy Supply Global Logistics Support Command where he served as the Project Handclasp Operations and Plans officer.



Third Officer ordnance trainees count missiles and small arms aboard USNS Rainier (T-AOE 7) during OPLIFT operations at Naval Magazine Indian Island in Port Hadlock, Wash. The hands-on training is part of qualifications to become ordnance officers. (U.S. Navy photo)



Boatswain's Mate Rondell Barnes and 3rd Officer Blake Krell, two search and rescue swimmers aboard USNS Charles Drew (T-AKE 10), train off the ship's fast rescue boat. (U.S. Navy photo by Cargo Mate Todd Kutkiewicz)

EUROPE/AFRICA • NEWS

USNS Spearhead (JHSV 1) began the Africa Partnership Station phase of its maiden deployment after it departed Rota, Spain, March 2, for operations off West Africa and the Gulf of Guinea, which included port stops in Dakar, Senegal, and Sekondi, Ghana; participation in binational operations off the coast of Monrovia, Liberia; and participation in multinational exercise Saharan Express as a tracking vessel. Africa Partnership Station is an ongoing effort to leverage training and operational engagements among regional partners.

USNS John Lenthall (T-AO 189) operated in the U.S. 6th Fleet area of operations throughout March as the Mediterranean Sea duty oiler. Lenthall conducted 30 underway replenishments with 14 U.S. Navy and NATO assets, delivering 4,723,733 gallons of fuel and transferring 229 pallets of cargo.

At the end of the month, Lenthall participated in multinational exercise Noble Dina, along with Greece and Israel. Noble Dina is a combined exercise designed to increase interoperability by developing individual and collective maritime proficiencies of participating

nations, as well as promoting friendship, mutual understanding and cooperation.

Prior to commencing Noble Dina, Lenthall responded to a distress call March 30 from a small boat carrying approximately 400 immigrants off the coast of Greece. Lenthall remained with the boat for more than 12 hours until a Greek coast guard unit arrived on scene to transfer the personnel onto a Greek vessel. Lenthall then delivered relief supplies including milk, water, bread, blankets and towels to the Greek ship to assist in the care and feeding of the people from the distressed vessel.

USNS Big Horn (T-AO 198) conducted a port visit to Augusta Bay, Italy, March 3-5, before transiting to Souda Bay, Greece, for emergent repairs March 6-16.

USNS Robert E. Peary (T-AKE 5) off-loaded cargo in Rota, Spain, Feb. 26 to March 1, before delivering cargo to Augusta Bay, Italy, March 5-6. Peary then off-loaded cargo, and received fuel and replenishment cargo in Souda Bay, Greece, March 7-10.

USS Mount Whitney (LCC 20) returned to its homeport of Gaeta, Italy, March 3, after operating in

the Mediterranean and Black seas in February.

MV Cape Race, an activated Ready Reserve Force cargo ship, off-loaded cargo in Agadir, Morocco, for Exercise African Lion in mid-March, before stopping in Rota, Spain, for voyage repairs on its way to support operational requirements in the U.S. 5th Fleet area of responsibility.

MSC Europe and Africa conducted sealift operations in March with Malta-flagged tanker MT Marvea, which discharged a total of 188,000 barrels of JP-8 fuel in St. Theodore, Greece, and Mersin, Turkey.

USNS Arctic (T-AOE 8) crossed into the U.S. 6th Fleet area of operations March 28, making a port stop in Souda Bay March 28-30.

MSCEURAF/CTF-63 bids farewell to **Petty Officer 2nd Class Derek Piotrowski**, air logistics.

MSCEURAF/CTF-63 warmly welcomes Navy **Lt. Cmdr. Craig Rosen**, air logistics; **Petty Officer 2nd Class Michelle Pimiento**, air logistics; and **Petty Officer 1st Class Geneysabel Dizon**, commodities.

ATLANTIC • LINES

USNS Medgar Evers (T-AKE 13) participated in a pierside sea-basing and ordnance exercise March 3-10, sponsored by the Naval Expeditionary Logistics Support Group. Exercise participants used Evers to practice loading and unloading specific missile containers by crane at the pier.

USNS Kanawha (T-AO 196) deployed March 14 in company with six Navy surface combatants, en route to exercise Joint Warrior 141 off the coast of the United Kingdom. Joined by 28 NATO and other nations' ships, the vessels comprise the largest Joint Warrior exercise in more than a decade. Joint and multinational operations help the U.S. build strong maritime partners and enhance mutual capabilities to contain or deter hostile actions at sea. USNS Kanawha will average seven underway replenishment events per day.

USNS Apache (T-ATF 172) towed ex-Nicholas and ex-Bradley from Norfolk, Va., and Mayport, Fla., respectively, to Philadelphia, Pa. USNS Grapple (T-ARS 53) towed the ex-Observation Island from its inactivation shipyard in Mobile, Ala. to Beaumont, Texas, for turnover to the Maritime Administration.

USNS Millinocket (JHSV 3), the Navy's third joint high-speed vessel, officially delivered to the Navy March 21.

Navy **Cmdr. Chris Anderson**, operations, and **LaShawn Sykes**, public affairs, participated in an initial planning conference for the War of 1812 anniversary celebration slated to take place in Baltimore in September; USNS Choctaw County (JHSV 2) will be showcased at the event.

Navy **Lt. Adam Schuman** and **Randle Dixon** covered two planning conferences in preparation of HURREX

2014, preparing for the upcoming hurricane season, June 1 – Nov. 30. **Al Chapman** attended the Special Mission Program T-AGS Program Review at Stennis Space Center in Mississippi; **Dean Doolittle** traveled to Camp Lejeune, N.C., to attend the MPFEX planning conference for the exercise, a subset of Bold Alligator 2014, that will take place in August 2014 off the coast of Jacksonville, Fla.; Rick Adside and Navy **Lt. Frank Lemene** attended the Final Planning Conference for Southern Partnership Station to put the finishing touches on preparations for USNS Spearhead's (JHSV 1) upcoming deployment to U.S. 4th Fleet.

The Anti-Terrorism/Force Protection team coordinated a highly successful Individual Ship Assessment aboard USNS Kanawha (T-AO 196) March 4-5. The Naval Criminal Investigative Service Security Training Assistant and Assessment Team Atlantic executed the evaluation while the ship was in port in Norfolk undergoing voyage repair. The assessment included a comprehensive review of the ship's anti-terrorism program, force operating posture and the crew's ability to detect, deter and defend against asymmetrical terrorist threats. NCIS lauded the captain, officers and crew for thorough preparation in advance of the team's arrival and were most impressed with the overall state of readiness. The ISA is conducted on board all classes of MSC ships once every three years.

MSCLANT and CTF 83 bid farewell to **Petty Officer 1st Class Toyar Vaughn** and **Chief Petty Officer Derrick Clark** March 31.

Two takes on Navy's first JHSV

APS mission commander

By Capt. Marc Lederer
USNS Spearhead

The following blog was originally posted to navylive.dodlive.mil:

Today [April 11] we wrapped up three weeks of Africa Maritime Law Enforcement Partnership (AMLEP) operations with our Ghanaian partners, during which small teams operating in rigid-hull, inflatable boats off USNS Spearhead boarded several small fishing boats found illegally operating in Ghana's territorial waters in the Gulf of Guinea. Ghanaian law enforcement officials issued infractions that could equal fines of up to \$2 million once the judicial process is complete.

A strong Navy is a recognized United States commitment to the world. Spread across the globe, there is a strong demand for a naval force presence from our political leaders, combat commanders, and partner nations worldwide. The countries of West Africa represent a cross section of maritime nations that value the enduring nature of partnerships already developed with the armed forces of the United States.

As a part of Spearhead's maiden deployment to the U.S. 6th Fleet area of responsibility, we are participating in Africa Partnership Station (APS), an international security cooperation initiative aimed at strengthening global maritime partnerships through training and collaborative activities in order to improve maritime safety and security in Africa. We are there now. We will be there tomorrow, and we will be there in the future. Our African partners are there around the clock, eager to increase both their capacity and capability to deter counter-illicit trafficking and other illegal activities.

The continual development of maritime skills and enhancing relationships with our African partners plays a critical role in enhancing maritime security. This strategy focuses on building capabilities with our partners and facilitating regional integration so our partners can directly address challenges within their waters. They recognize the critical nature of protecting their natural resources so fishermen can maintain their livelihood; they acknowledge the need to interdict any and all flow of narcotics across their borders; and our partners understand that illicit trafficking of any kind should be viewed as a destabilizing factor if not addressed as a unified effort.

More than 90 percent of the world's commerce travels by sea. When piracy threatens innocent lives and disrupts shipping traffic in the Eastern Atlantic Ocean; and when narcotics traffickers look to ferry illegal drugs across the oceans and into Africa for distribution across the globe; being there matters. America's Navy is there, ensuring the free flow of global trade, helping to bolster our partner nation's maritime domain awareness and natural resource security, and in turn, preserving America's economic prosperity.

As part of APS engagements in Senegal, I had the distinct pleasure of meeting with Rear Adm. Cheikh Bara Cissoko, the chief of the Senegalese navy. Well-educated, well-traveled, and of course well-versed in maritime affairs, Rear Adm. Cissoko is passionate about increasing the capacity of his forces to counter illicit trafficking activity. With thousands of miles of coastline to protect along Western Africa, a threat to any one country's maritime and national security becomes a threat to all of these countries.

I also had the opportunity to work with members of the Liberian Coast Guard while operating off the coast of Monrovia. The Liberians – an extremely warm, engaging, and dedicated group of professionals – conducted several hours of familiarization training aboard Spearhead before using the ship's RHIB for bilateral training with embarked members of the U.S. Marine Corps, demonstrating the joint, high-speed vessel's operational capabilities within the maritime domain.

And most recently, as part of the past few weeks of the AMLEP program in Ghana, I was fortunate enough to partner with Ghanaian navy Capt. Eric Adu, who is currently assigned to Ghana's Western Command Naval Base in Sekondi. We extensively discussed maritime security and governance as they related to Ghanaian waters, and the associated importance of deterring illicit fishing activities. While in Ghana, I also met with Paramount Chief of the Essikado Traditional Area Nana Kobina Nketsia V. Both a scholar and leader of his people, his passions hold to the importance of continuing to build a solid foundation upon which Ghana will build an enduring future.

When it comes to protecting and defending America, being there matters. And the U.S. Navy's joint high-speed vessel is already there.



An aviator's viewpoint

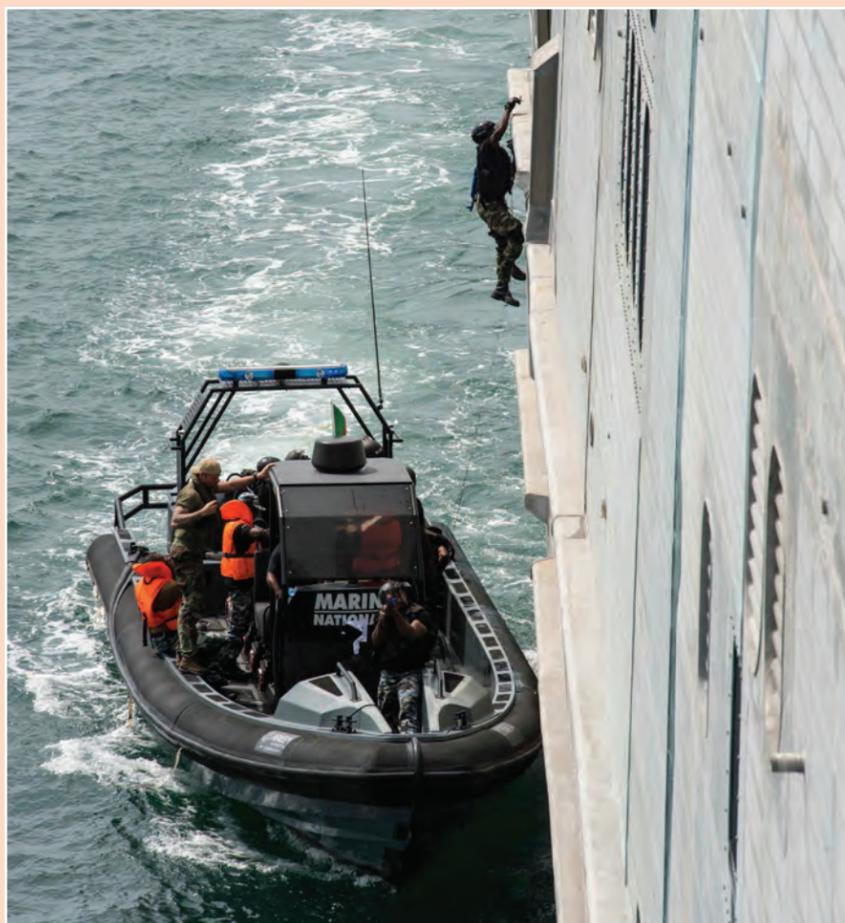
By Cmdr. Gregory "Pugs" Byers

Navy Cmdr. Gregory "Pugs" Byers became director of current operations for Military Sealift Command Europe and Africa/Commander, Task Force 63, during the summer of 2013. Previously, MSC and the civilian side of the U.S. Navy were foreign concepts to Byers, an aviator who last served as commanding officer of Electronic Attack Squadron One Three Four at Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, Wash. Now Byers' daily vernacular includes terms such as "JHSV," "USNS" and "CIVMAR." Byers describes his experiences embarking the Navy's first joint high-speed vessel, USNS Spearhead, off West Africa during the ship's maiden voyage in support of Africa Partnership Station 2014.

I suspect most Americans don't know what to expect during their first journey to the continent of Africa. I experienced this feeling twice over when I recently traveled to Dakar, Senegal, to meet up with USNS Spearhead. This was not only my first trip to Africa, it was my first experience embarking one of the U.S. Navy's noncombatant ships, which are crewed by civilians known as "CIVMARs" who work for the Navy's Military Sealift Command. As an aviator who spent my career flying from the decks of aircraft carriers, I certainly did not know what to expect when we got underway for my first at-sea period on the Navy's first-in-class, joint high-speed vessel. As someone accustomed to flying at speeds of more than 400 knots, part of me thought "how impressive could this ship capable of just 35 knots be?" After stepping aboard a bridge with a complexity and layout equivalent to most modern airliners, I can say I am quite impressed.

Spearhead's civil service master, Capt. Doug Casavant, graciously let me observe ship operations from the starboard bridge wing as we got underway from the port of Dakar in mid-March after the ship finished multinational exercise Saharan Express. Without the use of port tugs, he maneuvered the 2,000-ton vessel away from the pier with a deftness more characteristic of a helicopter than a ship as big as a football field. I was also impressed by the coordination and fluid movement of the crew during such evolutions. This coordination is challenging but vital for the movement of a ship capable of maneuvering in any direction, but simultaneously lacking a single location on board with visibility of all directions. Crew coordination is particularly important when operating in small areas like ports. As I watched the ship pull out of Dakar, the crew cleared the deck as skillfully as the best helicopter air crewmen I've encountered during my 21-year aviation career.

So, yes, surprises and new experiences abounded for me both in the friendly and welcoming city of Dakar and aboard the Navy's newest ship on its maiden deployment. As the deployment continues on, and the Navy gains a greater understanding of the full-range of capabilities of the ship, I suspect there will be no shortage of opportunities for Spearhead and the JHSV class to shine in the coming years. The ship certainly impressed this aviator.



Above: Jack Karg, a civil service mariner aboard USNS Spearhead (JHSV 1), off-loads goodwill materials donated through the Navy's Project Handclasp, a program that accepts and transports goodwill material aboard Navy ships for distribution to foreign nations. (U.S. Navy photo by MCSN Justin R. DiNiro)

Personnel assigned to U.S. Naval Special Warfare Group 10 and Cameroonian Rapid Intervention Battalion conduct a simulated boarding of Spearhead during exercise Obangame Express 2014. (U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Jeff Atherton)