West meets East for ANNUALEX 21G

USNS Carl Brashear · USNS Rappahannock · USNS Alan Shepard

support U.S. and Japanese forces
Happy 2010, shipmates! I hope all of you had an enjoyable holiday season whether you were at sea with your MSC family or at home surrounded by loved ones. Even in these challenging economic times, we all have much to be thankful for, and I see positive signs for MSC in the coming year and beyond.

I personally am particularly thankful to have fallen in with the remarkable men and women of MSC who literally do our country’s heavy lifting day at sea around the world. You, those who support you ashore, make it happen so reliably and seamlessly that you can easily be taken for granted.

Part of my aim in the coming year is to make sure your sacrifices and contributions are better understood by those who rely on your dedicated efforts. My New Year’s resolution!

End of an era

This month marks the end of an era. After 46 years of service, the final crew will depart from the last combat stores ship to serve the Navy fleet. Before January is over, my Kings Point classmate Capt. Keith Walzak and his crew on USNS San Jose will have the honor of pulling fires for the last time, making the final deck log entry, and saying goodbye to the T-AFS class as their ship is deactivated and stricken from the Navy rolls.

For almost five decades, combat stores ships have been providing the food and supplies needed by Navy sailors and American embassies around the world. It all began in 1963 when USS Mars was commissioned and began delivering fresh and frozen food and repair parts to Navy combatants wherever they sailed. Mars was operated by Navy sailors and had six sister ships: USS Sylviana, commissioned in 1964; USS Niagara Falls, commissioned in 1967; USS Concord and USS White Plains, both commissioned in 1968; USS San Diego, commissioned in 1969, and USS San Jose, commissioned in 1970.

As the Navy expanded during the Reagan era, the demand for replenishment at sea increased, so the Navy purchased three Sirius-class ships from the British Royal Fleet Auxiliary in the early 1980s, complete with their bathtubs for officers and the padded leather bars in the messes. Military Sealift Command began operating the renamed USNS Sirus and USNS Spica with civil service mariner crews in 1981, followed by USNS Saturn in 1983. The next time you meet someone who served aboard Saturn, ask them about the “rubber ducky stop” for public tours.

By 1994, all the combat stores ships still in commission were operating with CIVMAR crews, serving the Navy on every ocean, providing food and supplies to sailors and Marines in peace time, during contingencies, in war time and for humanitarian missions.

From Vietnam to Libya; from Operation Desert Storm to Operation Freedom – our combat stores ships and their dedicated crews have steamed in harm’s way wherever the Navy has gone. Bosnia, Kuwait, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Haiti... combat stores ships delivered.

Service with a smile

Growing up in the cruiser-destroyer Navy during my career, getting alongside the T-AFS for our monthly “hit” was always a greatly anticipated event, because it meant fresh milk, ice cream and no more brown lettuce and mushy tomatoes! It also meant the ship’s store would have a fresh supply of “gudunk” – sodas, coffee and smokes – all those things that keep sailors going. San Jose and her sisters brought us a little bit of “home” whenever Romeo was closed up and the spanwire passed – no matter where we were sailing.

The exemplary service provided by combat stores ships and the lessons learned by their crews were prime reasons for our newest underway replenishment ships being designed from the keel up for operation by MSC and CIVMAR crews. The Lewis and Clark-class dry cargo/ammo ships are the beginning of a new era as they take over the bulk of the replenishment at sea missions, incorporating many of the innovations suggested by you. The new ships are already making a positive impact in the fleet, but they’ve got a hard act to follow. There is no doubt in my mind that their ultimate success will be a result of the many T-AFS mariners who are now crewing up the T-AKEs.

Thanks for the memories

So, thanks to all of you T-AFS sailors out there. From Mars to San Jose, you delivered and wrote some great history for MSC in the process. As Captain Walzak and the last crew of the last T-AFS head off today, I know that many of you will be right there with them in spirit – as well you ought to be.

Sail safe, and carry on!

Yours, aye,

Mark H. “Buzz” Busby
Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy
Commander, Military Sealift Command

Emory S. Land changes homeport

Military Sealift Command submariner USS Emory S. Land will change homeports in spring 2010. The ship’s move from Bremerton, Wash., to Diego Garcia will occur in accordance with submarine defense agreements between the U.S. and British governments.

Land, which provides at-sea repairs for submarines, is currently completing maintenance at Naval Base Kitsap in Bremerton, where the ship has been homeported since the commissioned ship was transferred to MSC in February 2008. The ship will forward-deploy to Diego Garcia upon completion of its maintenance, which is scheduled for spring 2010.

The 649-foot ship, one of two MSC ships whose hybrid crew of civil service mariners and uniformed Navy personnel is commanded by a Navy captain, will provide an expeditionary maintenance capability to fast-attack submarines and guided missile submarines in the U.S. 5th Fleet area of responsibility.

“Forward-deploying USS Emory S. Land to Diego Garcia will dramatically reduce transit time for our submarines operating in U.S. 5th Fleet that require intermediate-level maintenance, emergent repair or logistics support,” said Commander Submarine Force U.S. Pacific Fleet Rear Adm. Douglas McAney when making the announcement that Land will be changing homeports.
Navajo is platform for U.S./Indian diver training

Navajo's crew members set up a two-point anchor moor and positioned the ship to provide the divers with the depth of water they required and to provide a lee, or barricade, from the prevailing wind and waves so that the divers could enter the water in calm conditions, said Capt. Jesse Fletcher, Navajo’s civil service master.

Navajo had to recover and re-lay the moor a couple of times during the exercise. Navajo’s deck crew provided crane support and worked with the divers to expeditiously change out the dive and mooring equipment, allowing for training to continue with minimal interruption.

MSC makes diving exercises “very convenient for us,” said Duncan. “We load up our portable dive systems and gear, and MSC does the actual ship driving. It’s nice. I have nothing but great things to say about working with the captain and crew of USNS Navajo.”

One of the biggest challenges Navajo’s crew overcame was accommodating the new guests aboard. Navajo’s three stewards made the necessary adjustments to ensure that life aboard the ship went as planned.

With nearly 50 personnel on deck at one time, the stewards needed to feed a much larger shipboard contingent every day of the exercise, said Fletcher. The staggered diving schedule complicated the task.

Navajo was an outstanding stage for two maritime allies to build upon an already-strong relationship. Divers from both the U.S. and Indian navies left the exercise with a better understanding of each other because of the successful training environment provided by Navajo’s master and crew. In the event a real-life scenario calls them back together, they will be well prepared.

2009 AOTOS AWARDS

Rear Adm. Mark H. Buzby, commander, Military Sealift Command, presents the Sailor’s Plaque to Capt. James White, master of MSC dry cargo/ammunitions ship USNS Lewis and Clark, at the Admiral of the Ocean Sea Awards banquet in New York City Nov. 13.

The master accepted the award on behalf of his crew for actions taken to avoid a pirate attack May 6 off the coast of Somalia. The ship’s crew fended off an attack by two pirate skiffs using evasive maneuvers. The crew was also commended as an example for both commercial and military vessels of how to prevent a successful pirate attack.

The AOTOS awards are presented annually by the United Seamen’s Service. They recognize the crews or individuals of U.S. government-owned and other U.S.-flagged ships who have risked their lives to save others or have demonstrated exceptional seamanship.
A SHOW OF POWER:
in 7th Fleet’s largest exercise

MSC ships operate with U.S./Japanese fleets
in 7th Fleet’s largest exercise

By Edward Baxter,
SEALOGFE Public Affairs

MSC dry cargo/ammunition ships USNS Alan Shepard and USNS Carl Brashear, and MSC fleet replenishment oiler USNS Rappahannock provided logistic support to U.S. and Japanese warships during ANNUALEX 21G off the coast of Okinawa, Japan, Nov. 10-18. ANNUALEX, the 21st exercise of its kind, is the U.S. 7th Fleet’s largest annual naval exercise.

Fifty ships, including 17 U.S. Navy ships and 33 Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force ships, participated in the exercise, which is designed to strengthen military relationships and provide cross-training in complex operational scenarios and communications.

U.S. 7th Fleet ships included the Navy’s only permanently forward-deployed aircraft carrier, USS George Washington, and its 13-ship carrier strike group.

The Japanese fleet is strictly defensive in nature and protects the Japanese mainland from potential aggressors by patrolling its waters. The Japanese Maritime Defense Self-Defense Force, was formed following the dissolution of the Imperial Japanese Navy after World War II. The Japanese fleet is strictly defensive in nature and protects the Japanese mainland from potential aggressors by patrolling its waters.

In addition to ANNUALEX, Japan participates in several major international exercises each year, including exercises Rim of the Pacific and Pacific Shield. The Japanese also support Operation Enduring Freedom and anti-piracy operations in the Indian Ocean.

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Brashear brings …

“Brashear was heading to Okinawa for a routine port visit at the time and was in the best position to support the Japanese ships, so she was tasked to support,” said Navy Lt. Cdr. Mike Rodman, replenishment officer for Commander, Logistics Group Western Pacific and Commander, Task Force 73.

“All of the MSC ships showed great professionalism by responding so well to the frequent requirement changes throughout the exercise,” said Rodman.

Capt. Mike Grogan, Brashear’s civil service master, said that working with the Japanese crews was easy. “In technical terms, there is very little difference between working with a U.S. ship or a Japanese ship,” he said.

Rappahannock refuels …

Rappahannock conducted underway replenishment operations with 15 Japanese ships during the exercise. On Nov. 12, Rappahannock provided 216,000 gallons of fuel to two Japanese destroyers. The next day, the ship delivered a total of 525,000 gallons of fuel to four Japanese destroyers. On Nov. 15, Rappahannock passed 124,000 gallons to one destroyer, and on Nov. 16, Rappahannock supported seven Japanese destroyers, delivering a total of 625,500 gallons of fuel. Rappahannock completed her role in the exercise on Nov. 17, when the ship passed 206,000 gallons of fuel to destroyer JS Chokai.

In only 15 minutes, a Japanese ship was able to come alongside Rappahannock, attach its hoses and commence pumping, said Rappahannock’s civil service master Capt. Rob Seabrook. “The Japanese ships executed each approach and replenishment operation with extreme precision,” he said. The smoothness of Rappahannock’s at-sea replenishment operations with Japanese vessels was all the more remarkable since all these evolutions occurred at night, between 6 p.m. and midnight.

During the exercise, Rappahannock provided a total of 585,000 gallons of fuel to four U.S. ships.

Shepard supports …

Shepard also kept busy providing supplies and fuel to participating ships. Shepard completed 11 at-sea replenishment evolutions with nine different U.S. warships and Brashear. In total, Shepard delivered more than 625 pallets of stores and 755,000 gallons of diesel fuel.

ANNUALEX included both connected and vertical replenishment operations. Capt. Mike Flanagan, Shepard’s civil service master, described the exercise as high tempo. “The entire operation required focus and attention to detail from every member of the crew,” Flanagan said, speaking from on board Shepard.

Shepard completed six replenishment at-sea operations on Nov. 15 alone. Cargo Officer Alex Munz and Assistant Cargo Officer Brian Hughes worked around the clock to safely execute the delivery of cargo to the U.S. ships. Flanagan said the Shepard crew members were dynamic in the performance of their duties.

“They count ammunition down to the last bullet, and, once that is done, man the flight deck,” Flanagan said. “They just never stop.”

Navy Rear Adm. Kevin Donegan, commander, Battle Force, U.S. 7th Fleet and Commander, Carrier Strike Group Five, said MSC ships contributed greatly to the success of the exercise. The efforts of the MSC personnel “will have a tremendous impact on enhancing the already superb interoperability we have with the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force,” he said.

The Japanese Maritime Defense Self-Defense Force, was formed following the dissolution of the Imperial Japanese Navy after World War II. The Japanese fleet is strictly defensive in nature and protects the Japanese mainland from potential aggressors by patrolling its waters.

In addition to ANNUALEX, Japan participates in several major international exercises each year, including exercises Rim of the Pacific and Pacific Shield. The Japanese also support Operation Enduring Freedom and anti-piracy operations in the Indian Ocean.
The Imperial Japanese Navy was dissolved after World War II. The Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force, or JMSDF, was formed in 1954 as a branch of the Japanese Self-Defense Force following the passage of the 1954 Self-Defense Forces Law.

The primary missions of the JMSDF are to maintain control of the nation’s sea lanes and to patrol territorial waters. The JMSDF serves a vital role for Japan, which relies heavily on imported natural resources.

The first ships in the JMSDF were former U.S. Navy destroyers, transferred to Japanese control in 1954.

Today, the JMSDF, which is commanded by a four-star equivalent admiral, includes approximately 46,000 personnel, operating 166 vessels to include 16 submarines and 44 destroyers. The force also has 128 fixed-wing aircraft and 114 helicopters.

Following the end of the Cold War, the mission of the JMSDF expanded to United Nations-led peacekeeping operations. The force has also been active in joint naval exercises and has dispatched a number of its destroyers on a rotating schedule to the Indian Ocean in an escort role for Operation Enduring Freedom.

The ship prefix for JMSDF ships is JDS (Japanese Defense Ship) for all ships commissioned before 2008. Ships commissioned on or after 2008 use the prefix JS (Japanese Ship) to reflect the upgrading of the Japanese Defense Agency to the Ministry of Defense.

-Information from GlobalSecurity.org, Jane’s Fighting Ships and JMSDF homepage.
MSC’s Joint Plans, Strategic Studies and Wargaming Directorate (N5) was the winner of the Fleet of the Year Award at the Seapower Symposium and staff members received their trophy at Headquarters’ annual holiday luncheon on Dec. 8. MSC’s Strategic Planning Directorate (N9), Front Office (N00) and Command, Control, Communication and Computer Systems Directorate (N6) tied for runner-up, and MSC’s Contracts and Business Management Directorate (N10) came in 3rd/5th. The year-long competition included 19 headquarters offices. Events included sports competitions, Karaoke, a trivia contest, a holiday-door decorating contest, dessert and chili contests, and other events. Points were awarded based on performance and percentage of office staff participating in the event. With the success of the 2009 Admira’s Cup competition, plans are underway for the 2010 contest.

Military Sealift Command fleet replenishment oiler USNS Yukon visited to MSC headquarters’ Seattle, Wash., during a three-month mid-term availability period at the Cascade Shipyard in Portland, Ore. Yukon is expected to continue its operations as part of the California Coastal oiler duty oiler through mid-January, MSC fleet replenishment oiler USNS Henry J. Kaiser is preparing to relieve Yukon as the Southern California duty oiler. MSC is planning to move a hospital ship from NMCHEC to the Fleet Forces, Mark H. Buzby, command- er, Military Sealift Command, provided remarks. The ceremony included two performances by the Maru Montero Dance Company, one of which was inspired by an Aztec warrior dance.

Military Sealift Command dry cargo/ammunition ship USNS Wally Schirra arrived in Norfolk for the first time on Nov. 17. The ship, which is scheduled to achieve full operating status in May 2010, is currently undergoing sea trials and engineering tests in the Atlantic. MSC oceanographic survey ship USNS Henson located the sunken wreckage of an aircraft missing since late October in the waters off Netherlands Antilles in the southern Caribbean Sea Nov. 30. The small passenger airplane crashed into the sea Oct. 22. All nine passengers escaped, but the pilot remains missing. Henson, which was conducting survey operations in the area at the time, received direction from U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command and U.S. 4th Fleet to search for the aircraft in response to a request for help from the government of the Netherlands Antilles.

Rear Adm. Mark H. Buzby, commander, Military Sealift Command, was accompanied by Sealift Logistics Command Atlantic’s commander, Navy Capt. Michael Graham, when Buzby visited MSC dry cargo/ammunition ship USNS Robert E. Peary on Nov. 4, during the ship’s refueling at Port Everglades in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. Sen. George LeMieux toured the cargo bay of Maritime Prepositioning Ship USNS PFC De- nean during a three-day mid-term availability period at the Cascade Shipyard in Portland, Ore. LeMieux is expected to continue its operations as part of the California Coastal oiler duty oiler through mid-January, MSC fleet replenishment oiler USNS Henry J. Kaiser is preparing to relieve Yukon as the Southern California duty oiler.

MSC welcomes Richard Higgins and Carl Wellborn, Seafill Program; Navy Operations Specialist 2nd Class Adam Schwengel and Kevin Bass, Navy Lt. Kurt Davis, operations; and Navy Information System Technician 3rd Class Donald Smith, command, control, communica- tions and computer systems.

Shipboard Bandwidth
MSC senior leadership’s update on shipboard bandwidth: MSC and the Defense Information Systems Agency are currently seeking a new contract for satellite services scheduled to be awarded in June 2010. Technology may allow an increase in the usable bandwidth, however, market demand may drive up costs, limiting the number of channels MSC can afford. New equipment and services are expected to start deploying during the fall in 2010. Bandwidth availability at the ship/unit level should improve, but the degree of improvement is still to be determined, based on the market prices at the time of the acquisition. MSC continually sees improvements in both the quantity and efficiency of ships’ bandwidth. Stay tuned for more details.

HQ HIGHLIGHTS

PACIFIC BRIEFS

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In the eight days following the senator’s visit, the crew of Williams – with the assistance of Bolduc – discharged 897 pieces of cargo, which displaced 167,617 square feet and 7,500 barrels of petroleum products.


Tom D’Agostino, SEALOGPAC’s资深 marine transportation specialist in Charleston, S.C., as- sisted with the arrival and cargo offload of large, medium-speed, roll-on/roll-off ship USNS Ponceon Nov. 22 and Nov. 20. MSC fleet replenishment oiler USNS Laramie and USNS Poncean returned to Norfolk on Nov. 20 and Nov. 23, respectively, after assisting with Navy exercises. Laramie participated in a high-tempo replenishment operation with the USS Wasp on Nov. 4. The ship steamed 14,267 miles and performed 53 underwater replenishments, delivering nearly 4.6 million gallons of fuel. Poncean supported two back-to-back composite-training exercise units for amphibious-assault ship USS Nassau and USS Essex for U.S. 6th Fleet. The exercises were designed to train ships’ operational specialty prior to departing on six-month deployments. Poncean performed 66 underwater replenishments and delivered more than 8.8 million gallons of fuel to the ships of the strike groups.

Richard Caldwell, SEALOGPAC’s lead marine transportation specialist, was responsible for securing aircraft and cargo, itineraries, crew, roll-on, roll-off ships USNS Worsdell and USNS Charton as training exercise platforms for 28 participants from the U.S. Army National Guard, U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Secret Service and New York City Fire Department Nov. 18-20 in Newport News, Va. The exercise, coined Cold Steel, trained participants in finding or assisting teams tasked to find chemical, biological, nuclear or radioactive threats on board commercial vessels. The training, which was designed primarily for National Guard civil support teams, also drew participants from other agencies that respond to defense support to civil authority emergencies. The training included an orientation to maritime operations, ship architecture, drone flying and ship boarding via Jacob’s ladder.

“This has been a great opportunity to train on an MSC ship,” said Army Lt. Col. Carl Hierta, commander of the 24th Civil Service Team. “It was a challenging training exercise. We were able to see the entire vessel and understand what it might look like on a commercial vessel. This has been an incredible confidence-building experience for those of us who have had little opportunity to work in a maritime environment.”
Military Sealift Command Fleet replenishment oiler USNS Kanawha returned to the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations in November, departing its construction shipyard in San Diego, Calif., and arrived in Norfolk in mid-November. While in Norfolk, the ship began a brief port stop in Port Canaveral, Fla., to give ship tours to National Aeronautic and Space Administration personnel on Veterans Day.

MSC Fleet replenishment oiler USNS Walter S. Diehl civil service master Capt. Lawrence E. Lee, MSC Ship Support Unit Singapore, coordinated the event for the ship's crew members.

The rest of Sealift Logistics Command continued to provide outstanding support to coalition ships throughout the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations in November. This included 126 underway replenishments and delivery of 12.2 million gallons of F76 fuel, 356,000 gallons of F44 fuel and 1,495 pallets of cargo. Most ships received the above supplies.

MSC tanker USNS Samuel L. Cobb departed the U.S. European Command area of operations in November, after five months of service moving fuel throughout the region in support of the U.S. Defense Logistics Agency’s Defense Energy Support Center logistics plan.

Sealift Logistics Command Europe welcomes Navy Lt. Alan Presley to the command. Presley comes to SEALOGJECT from USS Taylor, where he served as damage control assistant.

At a ceremony held at Seoul, South Korea, Nov. 4, Army Gen. Walter L. Sharp, commander, U.S. Forces Korea, presented Military Sealift Command Office Korea’s Operations Officer Xavier Monroy with the U.S. Forces Korea Civilian Supervisor of the Year Award. MSCO Korea’s Commanding Officer Navy Cmdr. Chris Cruz and the MSCO Korea staff were in attendance.

The annual award, which was created in 1991, is presented to individuals who exemplify the dedicated service, accomplishments and contributions of U.S. and Korean national civilian employees toward U.S. Forces Korea’s mission. More than 80 employees were nominated for seven award categories: manager, supervisor, professional, administrative, technician, clerical and customer-service employee of the year. Winners at each command’s installation level advanced to the local level. Winners at the local level advanced to U.S. Forces Korea. Those who were included were: Maury Brumley for the GS-12 level; Karen Wright for the GS-13 level; and Larry D. Golke for the GS-14 level.

Cruz spoke at a World War II memorial ceremony, Nov. 4, honoring 11 U.S. Army Air Corps crew members who were killed when their B-24 Liberator bomber crashed after being shot at by Japanese anti-aircraft fire near the summit of South Korea’s Mangwoom Mountain in August of 1945. South Korean resident Kim Duk Houng found the crew members’ bodies in the wreckage and later began an annual memorial service to honor their service and sacrifice. In 1956, Kim led efforts to fund and build a memorial statue in their honor. Cruz paid tribute to these heroes and others killed in past conflicts during his address. On Nov. 19, MSCO Korea’s executive officer Navy Lt. Cmdr. Jon Marlar hosted Navy Rear Adm. Peter Gumataotao, commander, U.S. Naval Forces Korea, and his staff. Gumataotao then met MSCO staff and its operations off the Korean peninsula. Gumataotao then met MSCO staff and the MSCO Korea staff were in attendance.

Fair winds, following seas and much appreciation go to the following individuals as they enter into retirement roles: Boatswain’s Mate Robert Chin, boatswain’s mate Richard Collins, able seaman Patrick Cunningham, medical services officer Lonnie Hawkins, mechanical engineer Arthur Levesque, able seaman John Monroy, able seaman storekeeper Claudius Taylor.

For more MSFC and civil service maritime news view the online newsletter at www.msc.navy.mil/news.
By Laura M. Seal

MPS Squadron Two includes nine government-owned vessels, launched this past 15 months. MPS Squadron Two was changed of command during a Nov. 25 ceremony held on board MPS Squadron Two during a port call to Diego Garcia, Royal Navy's commanding officer Navy Capt. Hugh Harr, reported to Diego Garcia from Imperial Beach, Calif., where he served as commandant of the basic training command of the U.S. Navy's Maritime Expeditionary Security Group One. Harr is a native of Rockville, Md., and a 1985 graduate of Old Dominion University. He has served on board USS Enterprise, USS Ranger, USS Virginia, USS John Paul Jones and USS Chancellorsville, and commanded nuclear destroyer USS O'Brien. Ashore, Harr has served as chief staff officer of Destroyer Squadron 15, First Battalion Officer at the U.S. Naval Academy, and as an instructor of Naval Science at the University of Mississippi.

Following the change of command ceremony, Martin returned to the United States and will soon retire from active duty following 30 years of Naval service.

Change at helm for MPS Squadron Two

By Ed Baxter,

A time-honored U.S. Navy tradition, Navy Capt. Gene "Fred" Harr relieved Navy Capt. Anthony "Tony" Martin to become the 25th commander of Military Sealift Command's Indian Ocean-based Maritime Prepositioning Ships Squadron Two during a Nov. 19 ceremony held on board MPS Squadron Two flagship USNS Sgt. William R. Button. The ceremony featured the traditional honors for the official party, presentation of colors by a Navy honor guard and the singing of the National Anthem by Navy Yeoman Chief Dean Walls.

Guest speaker, Navy Capt. Jim Romano, commander, Sealift Logistics Command Far East, spoke highly of Martin's accomplishments over the past 15 months. MPS Squadron Two includes nine government-owned and chartered ships that strategically place combat gear at sea to enable fast delivery to warfighters ashore.

"Tony is one of those guys whose enthusiasm and positive attitude affects everyone around him," Romano said to an audience of 120 people. "He is a world-class leader."

The relationship between the CIVMARs and divers is integral to the success of the mission. The CIVMARs connected the divers with their counterparts from partner country defense forces. The goal of Grapple’s mission is to improve maritime-security collaboration and increase the rescue and salvage capabilities of all participants. Collaboration of this kind is especially important to ensure preparedness for real-world rescue and salvage operations – like recovering drowned aircraft and dealing with other rescue and salvage missions in international waters.

In the summer of 2008, MSC rescue and salvage ship USNS Grasp conducted a similar deployment to Latin America and the Caribbean. Grasp’s mission included two main components: trading diving procedures with host nation divers and completing maritime security projects in each nation. At each stop on its African mission, Grapple’s divers conducted classroom and hands-on training and information-sharing sessions with their host nation counterparts. Topics included diving safety and medicine; diving techniques for both surface-air-supplied dives and scuba dives; anti-terrorism and force-protection diving procedures; recompression-chamber operations and dive-equipment maintenance.

In Kenya, 20 host country divers participated. “We’re enjoying the unique opportunity to share our diving and salvage expertise with our African partner-nation dive units,” said Navy Chief Warrant Officer William “Toby” Turner, company commander of Mobile Diving and Salvage Unit Two, Company 2-2 – the dive unit assigned to Grapple for this mission. “This is the first Theater Security Cooperation engagement that our unit has been involved with. We really enjoyed it tremendously.”

Outside the classroom, Grapple’s CIVMARs played an important role in mission success. The seasoned maritime professionals operated and navigated the ship and provided food, lodging and other support services for the embarked Navy divers. In addition, the CIVMARs connected the divers with their dive sites by providing small-boat support, operating a 35-foot workboat used to transport the divers’ salvage gear and providing maintenance, launch and operating support for the rigid-hull inflatable boat, or RHIB, that transports divers to their dive sites.

The relationship between the CIVMARs and divers is a close one, and not just because of the tight quarters aboard the 255-foot ship. The teamwork that exists between the CIVMAR crew and the divers is integral to the success of our mission,” said Smith.

Turner agrees. “We enjoy an exceptional working relationship with the CIVMARs and greatly appreciate and rely on their professionalism and many years of experience.”

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"Tony is one of those guys whose enthusiasm and positive attitude affects everyone around him," Romano said to an audience of 120 people assembled on the ship’s flight deck. “This is exactly why he is a world-class leader.”

CIVMAR guests included Naval Support Facility Diego Garcia’s commanding officer Navy Capt. Hugh Flanagan, British representative to Diego Garcia Royal Navy Cdr. Richard Stevens, and masters and crew members from seven MPS Squadron Two ships.

Romano praised Martin for initiating pioneering programs which will have long-lasting benefits.

Martin’s tenure program was his initiation of a group-sail program, which requires MPS Squadron Two ships to routinely get underway and train in convoy operations.

The program began as a simple communication and maneuvering exercise, and evolved into a complex, scenario-driven exercise. Thanks to Martin’s close work with MPS Squadron Two ships masters, training now includes a special focus on responses to geopolitical tensions and a diverse array of tactical situations.

"The ship masters provided me with wisdom and sound recommendations on a constant basis," said Martin during the ceremony.

Romano also commended Martin for initiating and implementing an anti-piracy training program that included real-world, at-sea exercises with small-boat simulation attacks on the vessels. He then introduced a program to regularly train crew members in small-arms defense. The training helped qualify 160 mariners on three different weapons.

To familiarize Diego Garcia’s tenant commands with the U.S. merchant marine, Martin encouraged camaraderie among the differently uniformed people living on the island, Martin instituted “around the island” cruises and invited individuals from tenant commands to spend time on board a merchant vessel.

Romano presented Martin with a Legion of Merit medal to recognize his “superior tenure with the command.” Navy Gunners Mate Chief Harold Williams, MPS Squadron Two’s senior enlisted advisor and weapons officer, then presented Martin with the squadron pennant.

Martin and Harr then read their orders and exchanged salutes with Romano to mark the formal change of command.

"Captain Martin leaves a tremendous legacy and a firm foundation to build upon,” said Harr. “I very much look forward to working with the finest merchant mariners in the world.”

Harr reports to Diego Garcia from Imperial Beach, Calif., where he served as commanding officer of Maritime Expeditionary Security Group One. Harr is a native of Rockville, Md., and a 1985 graduate of Old Dominion University. He has served on board USS Enterprise, USS Ranger, USS Virginia, USS John Paul Jones and USS Chancellorsville, and commanded nuclear destroyer USS O’Brien. Ashore, Harr has served as chief staff officer of Destroyer Squadron 15, First Battalion Officer at the U.S. Naval Academy and as an instructor of Naval Science at the University of Mississippi.

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Grapple hosts Africa Partnership Station Mission

By Laura M. Seal

MPS Squadron Two includes nine government-owned vessels, launched this past 15 months. MPS Squadron Two was changed of command during a Nov. 25 ceremony held on board MPS Squadron Two during a port call to Diego Garcia, Royal Navy's commanding officer Navy Capt. Hugh Harr, reported to Diego Garcia from Imperial Beach, Calif., where he served as commandant of the basic training command of the U.S. Navy’s Maritime Expeditionary Security Group One. Harr is a native of Rockville, Md., and a 1985 graduate of Old Dominion University. He has served on board USS Enterprise, USS Ranger, USS Virginia, USS John Paul Jones and USS Chancellorsville, and commanded nuclear destroyer USS O’Brien. Ashore, Harr has served as chief staff officer of Destroyer Squadron 15, First Battalion Officer at the U.S. Naval Academy and as an instructor of Naval Science at the University of Mississippi.

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