By Petty Officer 3rd Class Cole Keller, USS Dwight D. Eisenhower

While the Eisenhower Carrier Strike Group (Ike CSG) leads the way in support of Operation Inherent Resolve by flying combat missions and providing presence, Military Sealift Command fast combat support ship USNS Arctic (T-AOE 8) plays a key role in making the CSG’s success possible.

Arctic supports all the ships, and gives them everything they need to stay on station and continue their mission.

The United States is one of the few countries in the world which maintains the ability to have an operational aircraft carrier and provide the logistics to support it. The noncombatant, civilian-crewed ships of Military Sealift Command make this possible by providing everything from fuel, food, mail, and replacement parts.

“I absolutely love this ship; I wouldn’t be here if I didn’t,” said Master Joseph Goodwin, whose position on Arctic is equal to that of a commanding officer aboard a Navy vessel. “I love supporting the Sailors aboard the ships we replenish. It’s extremely rewarding to see them receive mail and supplies, [and] we are the Navy’s best asset when it comes to logistics.”

Arctic is readily equipped to provide for several platforms, day or night. The ship is capable of storing more than 7 million gallons of fuel, 750 tons of food stores, and more than 2,000 tons of ammunition.

In 2002, in an effort to increase efficiency, USS Arctic (AOE 8) was transferred to MSC. It went from a Sailor-manned combatant ship to a civilian-manned noncombatant ship. This change freed up Sailors to fill critical billets on warfighting ships and allowed Arctic to spend more time at sea.

“We are a professional and efficient group of mariners,” said Chief Mate Matthew Sobey, whose position is the Navy equivalent of an executive officer. “We work around the clock to provide anything and everything a naval vessel needs. The men and women aboard take an enormous amount of pride in supporting America’s Navy.”

Filling the role of what used to be a 700-man crew, Arctic’s crew of 176 civilian mariners work tirelessly in an effort to bring vital supplies to the more than 7,500 Sailors in the strike group.

Arctic was constructed with dual rudders and dual propellers, which allow her to steam at high speeds and keep up with warships in the strike group. Because of its design, the ship can simultaneously conduct a replenishment-at-sea on both sides.

Being tethered to another ship and restricted in movement can make a vessel vulnerable, but because of the speed and efficiency, Arctic greatly reduces the time alongside.

“After spending half of the deployment on a carrier, it’s incredible to see the work that goes into getting supplies from shore to ship,” said Petty Officer 3rd Class Joseph Snider, who works as a naval aviation rescue swimmer. “I direct the helicopter to pick up and land almost every pallet that goes from Arctic to Ike. None of it could be possible without the skill and professionalism of civil service mariners who support us.”

Arctic keeps an air detachment of more than 30 Sailors who operate and maintain two MH-60S Seahawk helicopters for use in vertical replenishments.

The aircraft carrier USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN 69) receives fuel and stores from the fast combat support ship USNS Arctic (T-AOE 8) during a replenishment-at-sea. Arctic is deployed supporting coalition maritime forces ships in the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations. (U.S. Navy photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Cole Keller)
McDew summarized U.S. Transportation Command priorities: ensure we are ready today to rapidly project forces anywhere on the globe, advance cyber domain capabilities, evolve for tomorrow, and champion an innovative, diverse, and agile workforce.

The strategic themes in the MSC Voyage Plan are aligned with these priorities as well as the lines of effort in the Navy’s Design for Maintaining Maritime Superiority. My strategy for achieving this alignment is a team-centered work environment focused on collaboration, transparency, ownership, and responsive planning and execution. This is our charge and challenge as valued members of the MSC team.

I also had the opportunity to provide McDew with my 90-day assessment of the state of Military Sealift Command, focusing on our support to U.S. Transportation Command. I highlighted the important work we completed in the areas of dry cargo and petroleum sealift, missions and operations such as JLOTS and Turbo Activation, and operations and exercises such as Deep Freeze and Pacific Pathways. I let him know that it is a dedicated and professional staff that enabled MSC to accomplish these missions while staying responsive to customer requirements.

Finally, I made him aware of our areas of concerns. The areas include operating in a contested maritime domain, cyber-readiness, the health of our surge fleet, the fiscal environment we are heading into, and finally, ensuring our human capital is best positioned to enable our organization to succeed. These are the areas where we should focus, and everyone has a part to play, using our collective energy and innovative ideas to seek positive solutions.

Thank you for your continued focus on our strategic priorities and areas of concern.

United We Sail,
Rear Adm. Dee L. Mewbourne, USN
Commander, Military Sealift Command

THrift savings plan contribution limits will not change for 2017

All MSC Civilian Employees,

The Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) contribution limits for 2017 will be the same as in 2016:

- $18,000 - Regular employee contributions
- $6,000 - Catch-up contributions (for employees age 50 and older)

There is no TSP Open Season – you can make your election at any time. Calendar year 2017 has 26 pay dates so you would elect to contribute $693 per pay period to reach the 2017 contribution limit of $18,000. If you are eligible to make Catch-up contributions, you would elect to contribute $231 per pay period to reach the 2017 contribution limit of $6,000.

If you have any questions, please call the Benefits Line at 888-320-2917 from 7:30 a.m. - 7:30 p.m., Eastern Time, Monday - Friday, except on Federal holidays. The toll free phone number is 866 359 5277.

Another way to reach the Benefits Line is to email your questions to navybenefits@navy.mil. You must include your full name, pay plan, grade, contact telephone number and the best time to call. Please do not include Privacy Act or other Personally Identifiable Information such as date of birth or Social Security number in your email correspondence.

Thank you,
Mary E. Foley
Director Civilian Benefits Center
GENERAL MCDEW, ‘WHAT YOU DO IS IMPORTANT AND VALUABLE’

By Bill Mesta, Military Sealift Command Public Affairs

As Military Sealift Command’s systems and functions become increasingly reliant on cyberspace, adhering to best cyber practices and behaving with integrity on-line are critical to protecting its networks.

A team of information technology specialists is providing training and information to MSC’s afloat platforms to ensure the fleet is up to date about the latest cybersecurity issues.

“Cybersecurity is anything designed to protect networks, computers, programs and data from attack, damage or unauthorized access,” said Kate Sobus, one of MSC’s Cyber-Assist teammates. “This can be technical solutions like firewalls, processes and procedures such as requiring a token to log into a network, or even a user awareness training program.”

“A cybersecurity assist visit allows us to have one-on-one discussions with, and provide training to, shipboard personnel along with performing audits and other security reviews that can’t be done remotely,” said Sobus. “Every ship we’ve visited has had unique issues that only came to light during the on board visit.”

So far, MSC’s Cyber Security Team has conducted over 15 visits in Norfolk, San Diego, Military Sealift Command Atlantic, Military Sealift Command Central, and Military Sealift Command Far East.

“Our primary focus areas during the assist visits are education and security posture review,” said Sobus. “We send a pre-visit questionnaire to each ship so we can tailor additional training and discussions to the right subjects, in addition to the core elements.”

“Some of the key areas addressed in the security posture review: Electronic Spillages, Cyber Incidents (malware, Trojan, virus), and Personnel Identifiable information (PII) Breaches” added Sobus. “On a system level, cybersecurity assist visits address antivirus protection, backups of system and data files, tracking and monitoring system activity (memory usage, CPU usage and system monitor) and the review of audit logs to identify suspicious or inappropriate web browsing behavior activity. Another key area is addressing monthly patching and scanning procedures, processes, and tools.”

Military Sealift Command is the Lynchpin of the Navy’s logistics system, making it, and each of its users, high priority targets to our adversaries.

“Over the past few years, cyber-attacks have increased exponentially in both frequency and sophistication,” said Sobus. “In addition to the increase of cyber-attacks, we have become more dependent on computer systems and networks to accomplish our mission and empower Global Warfighting Capabilities.”

“We must be able to minimize the effects of a cyber-attack on our networks by implementing cybersecurity in a way that identifies an attack early and isolates it so we can continue to function while combating the attack,” added Sobus. “MSC’s Cybersecurity program supports that requirement through education, inspections, audits, external collaboration, and other activities with the goal of keeping adversaries from degrading MSC’s mission effectiveness.”

CYBER-ASSIST TEAM; KEEPING MSC’S DIGITAL PROFESSIONALS TRAINED, INFORMED

By Bill Mesta, Military Sealift Command Public Affairs

Gen. Darren W. McDew, commander, U.S. Transportation Command, addressed hundreds of service members and civilian teammates at NAS Norfolk on an ‘all call’ on board Naval Station Norfolk, Nov. 29.

McDew’s address focused on the importance of TRANSCOM’s and MSC’s capabilities, cybersecurity, logistics and innovation. He also took the time to credit MSC’s teammates for their hard work and dedication.

“It is important to me that the force of people who have decided to do something greater than themselves, for other people, are appreciated for what they do,” said McDew. “So there are two words I like to use which are not used enough in our vocabulary: thank you.”

“Thank the people who told you what they do is important and valuable,” continued McDew. “I can’t pay you more, but I can appreciate you for what you do. So I would like to start out with a ‘thank you very much’.”

The ‘all call’ was McDew’s first opportunity to address MSC as the commander of U.S. Transportation Command and he used the event to reinforce the importance of unity.

“I am proud that as an O-5, U.S. Air Force C-17 Squadron Commander at Charleston Air Force Base, I knew every single first name of the 170 people who served in the squadron,” said McDew. “I could match every single spouse to the military member they were married to. I knew who all of the families’ children were.”

“I worked very hard to know who my people were because I understood the impact this would have on a daily basis on those human beings,” continued McDew. “I could see the impact this had on the members of the squadron and the positive results we enjoyed every day and this practice was foundational for me as a leader.”

McDew continues to draw on his experience to encourage others in support of the military’s global logistics capabilities.

“The capabilities we provide, no other nation in the world can provide,” said McDew. “There are nations who are unable to sustain themselves more than 90 miles from their own capital. We provide sustainment globally.”

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The USNS Williams is named after Medal of Honor recipient, Marine Pfc. Dewayne T. Williams (T-AK-3009). The more than 80 pieces of rolling stock and equipment offloaded in the port of Apra Harbor represented a rare three-week maintenance opportunity where the use of NBG’s reinforced piers for amphibious and tracked vehicles was more than a proof of concept, but also an exercised capability for the port at Apra Harbor far west of a typical port of call, such as Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. (U.S. Navy photograph by Jeff Landis, Major, USMC (Ret.))

Guam is not a typical port of call for MPS offloads but according to Parker, the maintenance was a must. “These tanks were recently used in Exercise Freedom Banner 2016 in the Republic of Korea back in late February-early March,” said Parker. “The required corrective maintenance, assessment, inspections, as well as post-maintenance inspection actions will bring the vehicles and equipment up to acceptable readiness levels for their 3-year ship cycle and so that the MPS will be ready for any contingency.”

Freedom Banner is a Navy and Marine Corps deployment and offload/back-load exercise that strengthens interoperability and working relationships for proficiency at numerous military operations ranging from disaster relief to complex expeditionary operations.

MPS ships have sufficient equipment, vehicles, supplies and ammunition to support a Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) – upwards of 27,000 troops – for 30 days during a contingency.

The USNS Williams is named after Medal of Honor recipient, Marine Pfc. Dewayne T. Williams, former native of Brown City, Mich., who died during a battle at Quảng Nam Province, Vietnam, on Sept. 18, 1968. Williams was awarded the Medal of Honor posthumously for his conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty while diving on an enemy grenade that was thrown into the middle of his patrol amidst an intense enemy nighttime ambush. Williams’ body absorbed the full impact of the grenade, ultimately saving the lives of his patrol members and enabling them to defeat the attackers and hold their position till assistance arrived.
MISSION COMPLETE; GRASP RETURNS TO LITTLE CREEK

By Military Sealift Command Public Affairs

Sailors and civilian mariners of submarine tender USNS Grasp (T-ARS 51) completed a four-month deployment to the U.S. Naval Base Guam, Nov. 8.

Grasp deployed to the U.S. Sixth Fleet’s area of operation where its crew provided vital flexibility to the fleet commanders, extending the range and impact of U.S. naval forces in the U.S. Navy’s 5th and 7th Fleets.

"You know we had a good trip, but it’s always good to come home and spend time with your family and be home," said Wayne Taglieri, 3rd assistant engineer. "We have thanksgiving come up, so I’m real excited about that."

"The rugged construction of the steel-hulled ship combined with its speed and endurance makes the Grasp well-suited for rescue and salvage operations throughout the world," said Sykes. "The ship’s hull below the waterline is ice-strengthened."

"Grasp was the right platform for this mission," added Sykes. "With all of the ship’s unique capabilities, equipment, and supply units, the ship’s civilian mariner crew is able to operate the vessel in remote regions of the world so the Navy divers can execute their missions in a timely and efficient manner without additional support."

FRANK CABLE RETURNS FROM INDO-ASIA-PACIFIC REGION DEPLOYMENT

From USS Frank Cable (AS 40) Public Affairs

Sailors and civilian mariners of submarine tender USS Frank Cable (AS 40) completed a five-month deployment, returning to their homeport at Naval Base Guam, Nov. 8.

Frank Cable, which departed Guam June 6, concluded a successful five-month deployment to the Indo-Asia-Pacific region and U.S. Central Command area of operations. The crew and ship provided vital flexibility to the fleet commanders, extending the range and impact of U.S. naval forces in the U.S. Navy’s 5th and 7th Fleets.

"With great pride I watched the combined Navy and Military Sealift Command crew of the USS Frank Cable rise to every challenge as they demonstrated the flexibility and capability of a submarine tender," said Capt. Drew St. John, Frank Cable’s commanding officer. "Through their dedication and hard work, this ship successfully supported the ships and submarines of both the 5th and 7th Fleets, reinforcing more than ever the relevance of the submarine tender into today’s security environment. Their actions ensured our naval combatants were ready to fight tonight."

Frank Cable was a persistent presence throughout the Indo-Asia-Pacific region, where the crew performed more than 10 community relations events designed to deepen the crew’s understanding of other cultures and built friendships with people living in host nations.

Repair Department provided support to submarine and surface ships, providing vital flexibility to the fleet commanders and extending the range and impact of U.S. naval forces in the U.S. Navy’s 5th and 7th Fleets.

"As a forward-deployed submarine tender, we bring a tremendous capability to the fleet commander," said St. John. "We pride ourselves in our mission, providing critical repairs to forward-deployed naval forces. Those we supported are better prepared for mission success."

A first for the ship and crew was pulling into Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam, the first U.S. ship to dock since the Vietnam Conflict in 1973.

"I was excited to go back!" said Petty Officer 3rd Class Nhat Q. Vu, a native of Dong Nai, Vietnam. “To go back to my home and share my culture with my shipmates, my friends, was amazing. I was excited to share what I do in the Navy every day, and the positive impact we can have wherever we go."
Military Sealift Command’s fleet replenishment oiler USNS John Ericsson (T-AO 194) performed a dual-ship replenishment at sea (RAS) with the British Royal Navy’s fleet flagship HMS Ocean (L-12) and amphibious assault ship HMS Bulwark (L-15) in the Gulf of Aden, Oct. 26.

According to the John Ericsson’s master, Capt. Kevin J. Farrin, “The replenishment conducted with Ocean and Bulwark was coordinated and scheduled by the vessels’ operational commander in support of Operation Inherent Resolve and the ongoing anti-piracy efforts in the U.S. Navy’s Fifth Fleet’s area of responsibility.”

The Bulwark received approximately 96,000 gallons of diesel propulsion fuel and the John Ericsson delivered approximately 115,000 gallons of fuel to the Bulwark.

“The John Ericsson has conducted numerous replenishment operations with coalition vessels from the United Kingdom, France, Italy, Spain and Pakistan throughout the current deployment,” said Farrin. It is common for MSC oilers to work with allied Navy ships from many different countries.”

John Ericsson is one of 15 fleet replenishment oilers in MSC’s fleet.

“Ships like the John Ericsson play an important role in MSC’s combat logistic force,” said Farrin. “We are equipped to transport essential fuel, provisions, stores spare parts and personnel from strategic port facilities to Navy ships at sea, allowing those ships to remain on station while conducting their mission.”

USNS John Ericsson is currently crewed by 86 Civil Service Mariners (CIVMARS) and 12 active duty Navy personnel.

“Our CIVMARs ensure that the vessel is operationally ready at all times and that it completes all mission requirements in a safe and efficient manner,” said Farrin. To accomplish this they adhere to the highest standards of maintenance throughout the vessel, striving for 100 percent inventory accuracy and accountability with all stock and cargo items and they project positive customer service with a can-do attitude in their daily routine. Mariners are the keystone of the organization and the operations conducted around the world.”

Military Sealift Command’s fleet replenishment oiler USNS Joshua Humphreys (T-AO 188) pulled into Naval Station Norfolk, Dec. 6. The evolution signified the completion of a six year forward deployment in support of military operation in the U.S. Fifth Fleet’s area of responsibility.

“The Humphreys participated in a multitude of Naval Forces exercises and operations to strengthen relationships with our allies and regional partners in the Arabian Gulf, Red Sea, Indian Ocean, and as Far East as Japan,” according to MSC Atlantic Spokesperson LaShawn Sykes.

There are 89 civil service mariners (CIVMARS) who serve aboard the Humphreys. The CIVMARS perform all required task aboard the ship to include navigation, propulsion equipment operation and maintenance.

“This ship spent most of its time in the Fifth Fleet, which is the Persian Gulf, predominantly in the ports of Jebel Ali and Bahrain,” said Chief Mate Eric Naranjo.

“The accomplishments of the crew are staggering and the ship’s numbers are truly impressive,” added Sykes. “Supporting 238 U.S. and Coalition ships, Humphreys executed 702 underway replenishments and transferred more than 137.5 million gallons of fuel and 11,730 pallets of cargo with high precision.”

Captain Matthew Neylon is the 12th master to serve aboard the Humphreys during the six year deployment. He served aboard the oiler during the six year deployment. He served aboard the oiler during the six year deployment.

“As always, USNS John Ericsson’s crew performed remarkably well during the replenishment and all fuel was delivered safely and efficiently,” concluded Farrin.

The ship’s namesake, John Ericsson, was Swedish born inventor and mechanical engineer credited with inventing the screw propeller and designing the ironclad USS Monitor.

“The crew is fantastic. They make me look good,” said Neylon. “A captain is only as good as his crew and I’ve got the best.”

MSC’s fleet replenishment oilers provide underway replenishment, fleet cargo and stores to U.S. Navy and allied ships at sea.

“Humphreys is also lauded for further enhancing regional relationships during her 181 friendship building port visits to Bahrain, Djibouti, Greece, Japan, Oman, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and several ports of the United Arab Emirates: Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Jebel Ali, and Fujairah,” concluded Sykes. "The entire crew proudly represented MSC’s Combat Logistics Force, the U.S. Navy and the Nation.”
By Bill Mesta, Military Sealift Command Public Affairs

Military Sealift Command civilian support staff and service members hosted a special emphasis observation for National American Indian Heritage Month on board Naval Station Norfolk, Dec. 1.

The event, hosted by MSC’s Special Emphasis Program, was held to honor American Indians and Alaska Natives.

The Presidential Proclamation for National American Indian Heritage Month was read aloud for the audience in attendance.

“As the First Americans, Native Americans have helped shape the future of the United States through every turn of our history,” the Presidential Proclamation read. “Today, young American Indians and Alaska Natives embrace open-ended possibility and are determining their own destinies.”

“During National Native American Heritage Month, we pledge to maintain the meaningful partnerships we have with tribal nations, and we renew our commitment to our nation-to-nation relationships as we seek to give all our children the future they deserve,” it continued.

The Keynote Speaker for the special observance was Sharolyn Graybiel. Graybiel is a coordinator for Industry and Professional Certifications for Workforce Development at Thomas Nelson Community College, Virginia and the Administrative Assistant to the Vice President for Workforce. Graybiel is also former U.S. Navy Officer.

“My friends and fellow Americans, what I have to say today comes straight from my heart,” said Graybiel. “I want to tell you in my own way how the Native American culture impacted my decision to serve my country and how those same values still serve me today.”

“I am one-fourth Chippewa Native,” she said. “I am very proud to say I am part of the Chippewa tribe. I am proud not only to be a Native American but a Veteran as well.”

The nation’s population of American Indians and Alaska Natives, including those of more than one race, was 5.4 million in 2014, making up about two percent of the total population.

“My father was an elder in our tribe known as Chief Walking Eagle,” continued Graybiel. “He was a storyteller and he inspired the members of our tribe. He was very devoted to our country, to our people and prided himself with our ancestry.”

By the year 2060, the population of American Indians and Alaska Natives is expected to be 10.2 million.

“To help re-enforce the theme of ‘serving our nation’ Native Americans have always been dependent on our private virtues,” said Graybiel. “We do not live for ourselves but we live for our country.”

“A sense of honor is pervasive in all aspects of Native American life,” she added. “We take care of those who cannot take care of themselves.”

“For Native American women, we stand on our morals. We are expected to be equal to Native American men in physical endurance and skill,” said Graybiel. “Women are told to be ready to undertake the impossible and if we see a path we do not recognize to follow it so we can see where it leads.”

“Also, in Native American culture, other people are held in higher regard than ourselves. Duty is inspiring and patriotism is sacred,” added Graybiel.

Tony Verducci, MSC Counsel, also addressed the audience during the special observance.

“In many ways, Native Americans are not only our ancestors but also our nation’s mentors,” said Verducci. “Native Americans understood ecology long before the rest of us woke up and understood the interrelationship between people and our environment. They also understood the importance of working together for a greater good.”

Currently, there are 567 federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes and more than 100 state-recognized tribes.
The world is changing and the enemy we face is changing as well," said McDew. "Traditionally, we break down our conflicts into geographic regions and think in terms like the 'U.S. Central Command fight', the 'U.S. European Command fight' or the 'U.S. Pacific Command fight.' But not necessarily the global fight."

"The enemy we face does not recognize the same traditional geographic boundaries we do," added McDew. "To counter this we provide trans-regional support. Our missions are global by nature."

"We understand the contested access and the fact our force may suffer attrition in the next fight," said McDew. "The enemy we have been facing for the last 15 years has primarily been low-tech extremists. But we must be ready to face an enemy who can match our force in technology, equipment and numbers of service members."

"We have enjoyed domain dominance for the last fifteen years globally," added McDew. "We could sail our ships anywhere we wanted to. We could fly anywhere we wanted to. We didn't have to worry about cyber-attacks."

"We will not enjoy domain dominance with an adversary who can match our capabilities," said McDew. "This is why our leadership is having us look at how we conduct multi-domain warfare around the globe. We must focus on the next war and not the last one."

A significant portion of the presentation focused on McDew’s push to strengthen our cybersecurity.

"Cyber takes up quite a bit of our time and is what I consider our biggest vulnerability," said McDew. "We can defend our networks but people have to start thinking about cybersecurity in a different way."

McDew also addressed concerns about the future manning of military logistics.

"We need to focus on finding leaders who will help us win the next war," said McDew. "We are now at a crossroads after 15 years of war which has produced the most battle-tested, battle-hardened force we have ever had. We need to develop our next leaders from this force as they are likely working in our midst today."

"The question is 'how do we recruit these leaders moving forward?' And 'what are we doing to enable them to think differently about the work we do?'" asked McDew.

McDew charged the audience with examining innovation in how we conduct business.

"You may be whatever you resolve to be," he said. "We need to resolve to conduct better training exercises. We need to resolve that we know we can make a difference in our own world without needing permission to make improvements."

"We need to resolve ourselves to get rid of old procedural baggage which we have been perpetuating and does not add value today as it did when it started," he said. "We can be our own worst enemy and we need to figure out how to unshackle our brains and innovate."

McDew’s ‘all call’ included an awards presentation for teammates who have served as federal employees for an extended amount of time and a motivational video.