MSC-Chartered Ship MV Ocean Giant Conducts Cargo Operations At McMurdo Station, Antarctic in Support of Operation Deep Freeze

By Sarah Burford, Military Sealift Command Pacific

Military Sealift Command-chartered container ship MV Ocean Giant recently conducted cargo off-loads in one of the most remote and challenging environments on the planet; McMurdo Station, Antarctica. The operation was part of MSC’s annual resupply mission in support of Operation Deep Freeze, the Joint Task Force Support for Antarctica mission to resupply the remote scientific outpost.

Seabees from Navy Cargo Handling Battalion ONE (NCHB-1) homeported in Williamsburg, Virginia, worked around the clock, off-loading the cargo, which consisted of containers and various breakbulk equaling over 6,000 tons of supplies. The delivery included frozen and dry food stores, building materials, vehicles, and electronic equipment and parts which were transported to McMurdo station.

The supplies will provide nearly 80% of the items needed for survival over the severe winter during periods when the station is cutoff from the rest of the world.

The cargo handlers worked with Ocean Giant’s crew, and the MSC representative, to execute a safe and efficient off load. They also back-loaded a variety of retrograde cargo to be removed from McMurdo.

Close coordination was required between NCHB-1 and the Antarctic Support Contract logistics team who managed the ‘loads and stow’ plans for United States Antarctic Program, as well as the New Zealand Defense Force who assist with rigging and transporting loads from the pier to designated laydown areas. Ocean Giant’s mission began in late December in Port Hueneme, where the ship was loaded with cargo. From Port Hueneme, the ship sailed to Lyttelton, New Zealand, where it took on additional cargo and then transited to Antarctica.

With its remote location and inhospitable climate, traveling to Antarctica is challenging for even the most seasoned ship captain. For Capt. John Hawkins, Ocean Giant’s civilian master, this was no exception. According to Hawkins, as you get close to Antarctica, icebergs appear. There is an ice belt, where in the space of a few hours, can go from a few scattered “bergy bits” to an expanse of smalls flows for as far as the eye can see, eventually requiring help from the ice-breaker Polar Star.

MV Ocean Giant continued on page 8
The achievement of FOC signifies 2nd Fleet has reached sufficient capacity to sustain command and control over assigned forces using the operational functions and processes of the Maritime Operations Center and Maritime Headquarters, in accordance with Navy Doctrine.

C2F will primarily focus on forward operations and the employment of combat ready naval forces in the Atlantic and Arctic, and to a smaller extent, on force generation and the final training and certification of forces preparing for operations around the globe.

“Our involvement in force generation is limited to the integrated phase — the final stages of the training cycle when our ships are operating at the high-end in aggregate," Lewis said. “This is an important distinction from the previous 2nd Fleet that disestablished in 2011 in that it aligns us with all other OCONUS numbered fleets.”

In June, C2F led exercise Baltic Operations on behalf of Naval Forces Europe, marking it the first time the Fleet operated in the European theater since its reestablishment, leveraging increased lethality, interoperability and integrated warfighting capability with regional allies and partners.

Building its expeditionary warfighting capability, C2F established a Maritime Operations Center (MOC) this past September in Keflavik, Iceland. This forward operating MOC, made up of approximately 30 members of C2F staff possessed the ability to command and control forces, provide basic indicators and warnings for situational awareness.

The DON’s civilian workforce – more than 220,000 strong – plays an indispensable role in supporting the strength of the Naval operation and the defense of our nation. The Department is committed to keeping its workforce competitive with those of our nation. The Department is committed to keeping its workforce competitive with those of our nation. The Department is committed to keeping its workforce competitive with those of our nation.

DON Releases Civilian Human Capital Strategy

The Department of the Navy (DON) released its new civilian human capital strategy, Jan. 09, charting the course for the development of its civilian workforce through the next decade and beyond as the Department positions itself to compete with other world-class organizations in the "war for talent."

“We are implementing a new human capital strategy to better access and curate best in class talent,” said Acting Secretary of the Navy Thomas B. Modly. “This strategy was developed leveraging leading private sector business practices designed for the new economy. Initial pilot programs in support of this strategy will begin this year.”

The DON’s civilian workforce – more than 220,000 strong – plays an integral role in supporting the Navy’s Sailors and Marines, building, manning, and maintaining its ships and submarines, and ultimately supporting the strength of the Naval operation and the defense of our nation. The Department is committed to keeping its workforce experience, work processes, systems and tools competitive with those of leading private sector organizations. The DON recognizes that shifting global geopolitical and technological forces require a dynamic strategy designed to address challenges impacting work today while preparing the organization to be more agile and capable in response to shifts in the future.

“The Department of the Navy’s civilian workforce is a critical part of the Navy and Marine Corps team," said Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Manpower and Reserve Affairs Greg Slavonic. “No mission could be accomplished without them. That is why we must have a far-reaching strategy that meets the demands of the future.”

To address unprecedented changes to the work and the workforce— including disruptions like the use of artificial intelligence, robotics, and cognitive computing to augment human capabilities, shifts in the nature and duration of careers, and the rise of the contingent workforce—this strategy will help the Department access, curate, and engage top talent:

**Access**: Tap into people, capabilities, and skills necessary to accomplish the DON’s objectives

**Anchor 1**: Access and Curate Best in Class Talent - Leverage the unique opportunities, mission, and work of the DON to create a globally recognized and unparalleled experience for world-class talent

**Anchor 2**: Develop Skills for the Future - Identify, assess, and acquire the skills that the DON needs to be best equipped to do the work of the future

**Anchor 3**: Harness the Power of Data - Accelerate to a holistic, dynamic model for workforce planning and talent analytics to enable smarter, more informed, real-time decision-making

**Anchor 4**: Strengthen the Bench of Future Talent - Embed talent development, such as next-gen learning and leadership programs, to enable a succession planning process and build a robust pipeline of the best future leaders

**Anchor 5**: Enable a Tech Augmented Workforce - Leverage smart technologies to enhance the human experience for the DON’s workforce, unleash capacity to focus on higher-value work and optimize business processes

Leveraging leading practices from across industries, this strategy and its series of coordinated enterprise-wide initiatives should enable the Department of the Navy to build a world-class workforce experience that is motivated by the mission and supported by “always on” opportunities for continuous learning and career mobility to drive organizational and individual performance.
Military to Mariner: Your Future as a Civilian Mariner is Within Your Grasp

From Military Sealift Command Public Affairs

Military Sealift Command’s Executive Director, Steven Cade, led a panel focused on the U.S. Navy’s Military to Mariner program during the 2020 Surface Naval Association National Symposium, Jan. 15.

The Military to Mariner Program allows service members to earn U.S. Coast Guard credentialing towards becoming a civilian merchant marine by way of the Navy Credentialing Opportunities On-Line (COOL) system.

“Civilian merchant mariners who crew our U.S.-flagged ships and the crews who go to sea on MSC’s ships are the bedrock of our surface Navy capability,” Cade said. “When we are talking about re-supplying the Department of Defense (DOD) forces at sea or ashore, transporting our joint forces from garrison to the theater of operations, performing our many special missions, such as oceanographic research or transporting the seaborne freight which drives the economic engine that drives our nation, the question we often discuss is how many merchant mariners we need to meet our missions?”

“The Military to Mariner Program is one the tools we are focused on as part of MSC’s crew manning solution,” he continued. “This program is focused on easing the transition from active duty service into the merchant marine community.”

On March 4, 2019, President Donald Trump signed an executive order to promote employment opportunities for United States military veterans while growing the cadre of marine community. From Military Sealift Command Public Affairs

“The Military to Mariner Program allows Sailors to pursue credentials throughout their military life cycle, from completion of technical training until they become eligible for transition opportunities and economic security. “Active duty service members and military veterans are a great people to target as future mariners because they come with traits which benefit the maritime community; such as dedication to service, professional knowledge, naval culture and experience, which they bring to our work force” according to Cade. “So whether they are supporting the DOD, supporting other government agencies or sailing in the commercial maritime industry, these people have exactly the skills we need in the maritime community.”

Navy COOL provides active duty and reserve Sailors, whether forward deployed, underway or ashore, a way to map their Navy education, training, experience and competencies to civilian credentials and occupations. It also allows Sailors to pursue credentials throughout their military life cycle, from completion of technical training until they become eligible for transition opportunities.

“We can’t operate at MSC without new military veterans joining our workforce,” according to Cade. “Last year we had approximately 2,500 applicants at MSC-52% of those applicants where for positions at sea. Fifty-two percent of our applicants were veterans. On any given day, one-third of our workforce at sea is a veteran. So the Military to Mariner program is very important program for MSC.”

As part of the Military to Mariner Program and credentialing programs supported by Navy COOL, MSC provides the mandatory Coast Guard certification training to Sailors seeking to transition into merchant marine careers.

Service members who are interested in learning more about earning USCG credentialing towards employment in the maritime community should visit https://www.cool.navy.mil/, talk with their career counselor and consult with their chain of command.

USNS Brunswick Crew Recognized for Support of Super Typhoon Wutip Relief Efforts

From Military Sealift Command Public Affairs

The U.S. Maritime Administration Administrator, Rear Adm. (Ret.) Mark H. Buzby presented the crew of Military Sealift Command’s expeditionary fast transport ship USNS Brunswick (T-EPF 6) with the Merchant Marine Medal for Outstanding Achievement at Ely Hall on Naval Station Norfolk, Jan. 27.

The civil service mariners earned the awards in recognition of their relief efforts in response to relief efforts by providing immediate assistance and disaster relief to the people of the Federal States of Micronesia (FSM) in the aftermath of Super Typhoon Wutip.

“We gathered here today to recognize the performance of USNS Brunswick who was called upon to embark upon a mission she was not originally tasked with doing when circumstances thrust the ship into service,” Buzby said during the awards presentation.

“While operationally tasked for Pacific Partnership, [Brunswick received] emergent operational needs manifested in the form of Super Typhoon Wutip, which hit Chuuk, FSM Feb. 22, 2019,” according to the award citation. “Operation Asini involved bringing Brunswick on station off the shores of multiple islands and launching small boats to bring personnel and supplies ashore for aid.”

After completing their mission in Chuuk, Brunswick traveled over 200 miles to the Northwest Islands for the second phase of the operation.

“Over the course of eight days, encompassing four islands, the crew covered down on operational gaps encountered by their embarked forces, shoring up communications, maintenance, supplies, navigation and positive control of the operation,” the citation read. “Serving mariners ashore, on their own volition, the crew contributed to the clean-up and relationship-building tantamount to the mission’s success. They donated supplies, clothing and time to ensure the assisted personnel felt the full care and effort of the Pacific Partnership team.”

During the over 80 hours that Brunswick was on station in the Northwest Islands the crew conducted over 60 small boat transits were completed, over 200 gallons of potable water was transferred and 50 gallons of fuel was delivered.

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Second MSC Ship Departs Port Hueneme In Support of Operation Deep Freeze 2020

By Sarah Burford, Military Sealift Command Pacific

Military Sealift Command-chartered ship SLNC Magothy concluded cargo onload operations and departed Port Hueneme, Calif. The ship heads for the remote Antarctica outpost of McMurdo Station, in support of Operation Deep Freeze, the Joint Task Force Support for Antarctica mission to the NSF-managed U.S. Antarctic Program (U.S. Navy photo by Sarah Burford)

Military Sealift Command-chartered ship SLNC Magothy concluded cargo onload operations and departed Port Hueneme, California. The ship headed for the remote Antarctica outpost of McMurdo Station, in support of Operation Deep Freeze, the Joint Task Force Support for Antarctica mission to the NSF-managed United States Antarctic Program.

During the cargo on-load, 566 containers, filled with building materials for an expansion project at the NSF facilities at McMurdo Station, were loaded onto the ship under the watchful eye of Navy reservists from MSC’s Expeditionary Port Unit (EPU) 114.

Magothy is scheduled to stop in Taranga, New Zealand, where the ship will load additional cargo, and then travel to McMurdo Station, where members of Navy Cargo Handling Battalion ONE will off load the ship at a floating causeway being used in lieu of the traditional ice-pier, that was delivered by another MSC chartered ship, MV Ocean Giant. Magothy is one of three MSC chartered ships that will deliver 80 percent of the supplies and 100 percent of the fuel needed for the year’s survival at McMurdo Station.

Operation Deep Freeze is a joint service, on-going Defense Support to Civilian Authorities activity in support of the National Science Foundation (NSF), lead agency for the U.S. Antarctic Program. Mission support consists of active duty, Guard and Reserve personnel from the U.S. Air Force, Navy, Army, and Coast Guard as well as Department of Defense civilians and attached non-DOD civilians. ODF operates from two primary locations situated at Christchurch, New Zealand and McMurdo Station, Antarctica. 2020 marks the 65th anniversary of the establishment of McMurdo Station and its resupply mission, which began in 1955.

An MSC-chartered cargo ship and tanker have made the challenging voyage to Antarctica every year since the station and its resupply mission were established in 1955.

USS Key West, USNS Richard E. Byrd Conduct Mobile Logistics Demonstration

By Lt.j.g. Meagan Morrison, Commander, Submarine Squadron 15

The Los Angeles-class fast attack submarine USS Key West (SSN 722) conducted a mobile logistics demonstration with the Lewis and Clark-class dry cargo and ammunition ship USNS Richard E. Byrd (T-AKE 4) in Apra Harbor, Guam, recently. This evolution was the second forward-deployed logistics demonstration and was designed to evaluate supply ships’ ability to sustain submarine operations in an expeditionary setting.

The demonstration, which involved Key West mooring alongside Byrd, was the first overnight mooring between a U.S. submarine and a dry cargo class ship.

Dry cargo ammunition ships are responsible for providing logistic lifts to deliver cargo (ammunition, food, limited quantities of fuel, repair parts and ship store items) to U.S. and allied ships at sea.

The demonstration was performed to highlight the submarine’s ability to safely pull alongside a dry cargo and ammunition class ship, to receive logistical support such as the transfer of weapons, stores, critical repair parts, and provide the ability to support crew rest.

“This demonstration confirms the capability of a T-AKE to receive a forward-deployed submarine independent of external entities,” said Lt. Cmdr. Christopher Jack, the operations officer at Commander, Submarine Squadron 15.

“This ultimately increases the submarine force’s sustained lethality in the Indo-PACOM area.”

In addition to being the first overnight mooring, the demonstration showcased the first time water facilities were moved from a submarine to a dry cargo ammunition ship.

“These evolutions are a tremendous opportunity for our submarines to practice key demonstrations with dry cargo class ships,” said Capt. Tim Poe, assigned to Commander, Submarine Squadron Fifteen. “The training we gain from these demonstrations help us improve on the submarine community’s ability to replenish at sea and to provide key facilities needed to keep our submarines forward deployed.”
The submarine tender USS Emory S. Land (AS 39) arrived in Kure, Japan, Jan. 22 for a port visit.

This is Land’s first visit to the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force base in Kure. The ship last visited Japan May 2018.

“It’s great to be back in Japan,” said Capt. Michael Luckett, Land’s commanding officer. “The Japanese people have always been such gracious and hospitable hosts when I’ve visited in the past. I’m excited for the crew to get an opportunity to experience this as well.”

While in Kure, Land’s officers and crew joined with members of the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force for professional military engagements. Crewmembers from Land also had an opportunity to engage with the community by participating in community service events.

Since beginning the current deployment in August, Land has visited seven countries, conducting training and engaging in mutually beneficial meetings and subject matter expert exchanges with U.S. partners.

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**2020 Mariner Examination Process Updates**

**From the National Maritime Center**

In an effort to provide consistent, quality customer service to all mariners, the National Maritime Center (NMC) is implementing the following changes at all Regional Examination Centers (RECs). These changes take effect April 6, 2020:

1. Using the Schedule Exam/REC Appointment link on the Examinations page of the NMC Website.

2. Calling the NMC Contact Center at 1-888-IASKNMC (427-5662).

3. Contacting the NMC Contact Center by chat.

   - All RECs will have two examination periods daily, a 3.5-hour a.m. (morning) session and a 3.5-hour p.m. (afternoon) session with a minimum half-hour break between sessions. See the REC webpage for specific hours.

   - Mariners who finish a module early may take additional modules during an examination period but will not be given additional time to complete the extra modules. Requests for additional modules during a specific examination period are coordinated with the REC staff at the time of examination.

   - There will be no changes to the First Class Pilot examination process.

   - Appointments are highly recommended for all other services. See the REC webpage for facility access requirements.

Should you have any questions or concerns visit the Examinations or Frequently Asked Questions webpages, or contact the NMC Customer Service Center by e-mailing IASKNMC@uscg.mil, by using the NMC online chat system, or by calling 1-888-IASKNMC (427-5662).

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**The Original Renewable Energy Source: Food is Medicine**

*From Leighanne Gerstbrein, Military Sealift Command Health Coordinator*

What you fuel your body with will produce a positive, or a negative, impact on your health – the choice is yours.

What does a healthy diet look like, anyway?

Fruits and vegetables: They are a natural choice for nutritionally dense foods, so you can be generous with both. In fact, fruits and vegetables should make up half of your plate at any given meal—aim for about 30% vegetables and 20% fruit. As a general rule of thumb, the more color you have on your plate, the better. Think variety.

Whole grains: At least half of your grains should be whole grains. Whole grains not only contain more nutrients, but they are high in fiber as well, something most Americans do not get enough of. Men should aim for about 35 grams of fiber in a day, and women should aim for about 25 grams of fiber in a day. (Side note... the average American only eats half of the recommended 25 grams of fiber in a day. Fiber plays an important role in weight loss, as it helps keep us fuller longer and aids in digestion.).

Lean sources of protein: This is an important part to a smart diet and should make up about 20% of your plate. Good sources include lean meats like chicken and turkey, seafood, soy products, eggs, beans and nuts.

Dairy and other calcium-rich foods: These foods can be a good source of protein and calcium. You can find calcium rich foods in dark leafy vegetables, like turnip greens, kale, and mustard greens, yogurt, and calcium-fortified food sources like cereals, breads, and some juices, as well as soy, rice, and nut beverages.

Approach these foods with caution…

- Saturated fats – less than 10% of your daily calories should come from saturated fats
- Added sugars – less than 10% of your daily calories should come from added sugars
- Sodium - try not to exceed 2,300 milligrams daily
- Other high-calorie/low-nutrition foods

MSC has available resources for you. For more information on this or the Health and Wellness Program at MSC, contact your Health Promotion Coordinator: Leighanne.gerstbrein.ctc@navy.mil, (757) 443-5630.
The mariners were given the opportunity to sit down one-on-one with the children at the Foundation for Differently-Abled Persons (FDAP). The team visited the Foundation for Differently-Abled Persons (FDAP) event in Olongapo, Philippines, Jan. 15. The FDAP is crucial to support kids who have hearing and speaking disabilities.

“Visits by the mariners are always inspiring for the kids. It is really important for them,” said Emilia Sanchez, President of FDAP.

USNS Brunswick is crewed by approximately 20 civil service mariners who operate all aspects of the ship, including navigation, propulsion and culinary services.

“Having the opportunity to build relationships with locals while in port allows everyone involved to see life through a different perspective,” added Roshenda Josephs, USNS Brunswick’s First Officer. “The local citizens we are able to interact with Americans and see how we live life away from home and we are able to interact with locals and see how life at home is for them; making everyone more appreciative of each other.”

USNS Brunswick is currently operating in the U.S. Navy 7th fleet area of responsibility.

**We Are MSC: Strategic Sealift Officer Cristina Fernandez-O’Toole**

By Travis Weger, Military Sealift Command Europe and Africa

I had the opportunity to sit down with my cubicle-mate, Lt. Cristina Fernandez-O’Toole, a former MSC second mate and current Strategic Sealift Officer with more than seven years of sea-time. Sitting next to Cristina the past few months, you would have no idea that she had so much salt under her nails.

A very hard-working and driven officer, Fernandez-O’Toole is a huge asset to MSC Europe and Africa and Commander, Task Force 63. Here are the highlights from our meeting:

**What is a Strategic Sealift Officer and what are the particulars of your position?**

We are merchant mariners, both deck and engineering officers, that support the Navy in multiple roles supporting strategic sealift in times of national emergency. The SSO program provides officers for emergency crewing and shore-side support of Military Sealift Command’s Surge Sealift Fleet and the Ready Reserve Force in times of war.

I attended King’s Point, where upon graduation, midshipmen are typically commissioned as an Ensign in the U.S. Navy Reserve. We automatically became SSOs with an eight-year commitment to the Navy. I went to sail with MSC after graduating, but some of my classmates went active duty in the Navy or other branches of the military. In short, SSOs are a community of licensed mariners.

I am currently on year-long Active Duty for Training orders with the Navy Reserve. I am the SSO Operations Officer, and am currently dual-hatted supporting as Operational Support Officer for MSCEURAF. In the SSO Program, we have five area Operations Officers which are in San Diego, Norfolk, Bahrain, Singapore and here in Naples, Italy.

My role is to act as a liaison officer between the SSO program office, which is our virtual Navy Operational Support Center, and the command. My official function here is to coordinate yearly active duty for training orders for reserve SSOs, support and mentor reservists who are supporting the command, and represent the SSO community in 6th Fleet and the larger Navy.

**How long have you been an MSC teammate?**

I started with MSC at 19 years old while sailing as a deck cadet. The first MSC ship I was attached to was the USNS Carl Brashear (T-AKE 7) operating in 7th Fleet. I sought a job with MSC, and was hired before graduation. I sailed as a third mate and then promoted to permanent second mate. I sailed with MSC for a little over three years and then switched gears to sail commercially with the Masters Mates and Pilots union.

As an SSO, I do my reserve time in support of MSC and have been a reservist for nine years.

**What did you do before becoming an MSC teammate?**

I went to King’s Point right out of high school at 17 years old. I used to babysit a little bit, and led the Model United Nations club in high school, but MSC was my first real job.

**What do you attribute your success at MSC to?**

I have seen a lot of different aspects of the MSC mission. Sailing as a deck officer, you see underway replenishments first-hand, you understand manpower challenges and you understand the material condition of the ship. I think my sailing background with MSC has given me a depth of knowledge in my reserve capacity.

**Why have you chosen MSC as your place of work?**

Looking back, I think MSC was much more dynamic than sailing commercially. If I would have known what my commercial experience was going to be, I would have stayed with MSC my entire time at sea. I saw so much more of the world with MSC.

I have stayed as an SSO beyond my commitment because I want to continue to serve and support, as I believe in MSC’s mission.
Military Sealift Command Honors Dr. Martin Luther King

By Bill Mesta, Military Sealift Command Public Affairs

Service members and civilian support staff attached to Military Sealift Command gathered at Vista Point on Naval Station Norfolk for a special observance in honor of the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Jan. 27.

King is widely regarded as America’s pre-eminent advocate of non-violence and one of the greatest civil rights leaders in world history. Each year MSC hosts a special observance to celebrate his life and achievements and encourage people everywhere to reflect on the principles of non-violent social change and racial equality.

"MLK Day is observed on the third Wednesday of each year around the time of Dr. King’s birthday on Jan. 15," according to Chief Warrant Officer 3 Brandi Ziglar, the mistress of ceremonies for the special observance. “This year’s national reoccurring theme is ‘Remember! Celebrate! Act! A day on...not a day off!’

"I have a dream" declared King to the crowd, "That one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal. I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave-owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.

Information Systems Technician Second Class Michelle Gonzales, read the 2020 Presidential Proclamation for Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

"One hundred years after President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, the great Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., took to the steps of the Lincoln Memorial and shared his vision of an America lifted from the quick-sands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood," Gonzales read. “His extraordinary message that momentous day in August of 1963 stirred to action Americans of every race and creed, and it continues to reverberate in the hearts and minds of patriotic citizens across our great land.

"Today, as we pause to mark the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., we recommit ourselves to the advancement of equality and justice for all Americans, and to the full realization of his worthy dream," Gonzales continued.

The keynote speaker for the special observance was J.D. Myers II, senior vice president and region manager for Cox Communications, Virginia.

"I grew up, and many of us here today grew up, with segregation," Myers said. "We grew up with the concept of 'separate but equal'.

"During that time, Dr. King was marching for all of our rights," Myers added. "Think about Dr. King for a minute. His common theme was that there had to be change. He was passionate about the fact that there had to be change.

As a U.S. Army veteran, Myers offered some insight for the audience, to make an impact to improve intrapersonal relationships in our community.

"I grew up on a military base and it was like a mixing bowl of races, backgrounds and thoughts. And we all lived together and experienced little or no discrimination," according to Myers. "The reason for this is in the military we all have common bonds which keep us together. And military bonds, families, structure and community are strong.

"We all shared common denominators in the military community which bound and rallied us together as a community, even with segregation happening outside the base gates," he added. "It is important to understand that this is the type of world Dr. King hoped for back in the 1960’s.

Growing up as the child of the military community had an impact on Myers as an adult.

"Growing up in a military community during segregation instilled some key characteristics in me in that I know I need to give back," Myers added. "Growing up as a military person is really simple: who I am today and is a part of who I have always been. I have always volunteered. This is part of that legacy that Dr. King left for all of us."
“Once we entered Antarctic waters, you could almost feel the excitement aboard. Everyone was looking for that first iceberg as the days became longer and eventually the sun never set,” explained Hawkins. “We slowly steamed through what can only be truly appreciated by being there. Seals and penguins seemed only curious as we slowly and quietly passed them by as they sat atop their ice flow islands. Their raised heads and lazy stares saying, ‘You’re not from around here, are you?’”

In years past, Ocean Giant would have arrived at the ice-pier at McMurdo Station; a structure made up of rebar and frozen seawater, where cargo offloads were conducted. Due to severe damage, the ice-pier was unavailable this year, so MV Ocean Giant delivered a marine causeway system. The 65-ton pier consisted of ten, 24-foot, pre-assembled pieces. Six string units were assembled on deck and placed into the water and joined into two sections. These sections were attached to the others to form the final pier.

According to Hawkins, offloading the sections of pier presented challenges for the ship’s crew. The main issue was moving the large and heavy pieces with shipboard cranes. As the pieces swing over the side of the ship, the weight can cause the ship to lean over or list. To counteract this, MV Ocean Giant is designed with an anti-heeling system. The system is comprised of aboard water tanks and pumps that quickly move huge amounts of water from one side to the other in order to maintain balance and stability. As the vessel begins to lean one way, the water is pumped to the opposite side and keeps the ship upright and stable.

MSC ships operate in a wide variety of climates and conditions around the world, but nothing like the unforgiving environment of Antarctica. Conditions at McMurdo Station can vary from day to day. One day it could be in the mid 30’s and then -20 Fahrenheit with gale force winds the next.

Aboard MV Ocean Giant, the 27-member crew has one mission, cargo off load; and with the importance of delivering supplies to Antarctica, operations move forward, despite the weather.

"Cold weather operations create their own set of challenges; things can freeze, workers can get cold, decks can get icy, hydraulic fluids and fuels can get thicker, and machinery in general just prefers a more moderate climate,” said Hawkins. “We deal with cold by providing proper climate rated clothing and training, so we can be as prepared as we can.”

Hawkins also noted Antarctica’s remote location as a challenge. Antarctica has no readily available communication grid, which means no cellular access and limited access to the Internet. The simple act of making a phone call can become a challenge and requires the use of a satellite phone system that can be unpredictable and unreliable.

"The thing that many may not consider is that people have become so used to having communications and access to information that used to be at their fingertips with their mobile phones. Your mobile phone doesn’t work down here (Antarctica). There is limited access to Internet, so you can’t easily check your email or your bank accounts,” said Hawkins. "For someone used to texting a friend or checking out social media with their phone, it can be a rude awakening.”

Despite the challenges, the cold and the remoteness, the small number of people who make the trip acknowledge that it is a unique opportunity that most people will never have. For the crews of the MSC ships and the MSC professionals on the ground at McMurdo Station, the experience includes the professional aspect of a cargo move in one of the most remote and unforgiving places in the world; something that challenges their knowledge base and skill sets unlike any other mission.

"For me personally, it gives me the career experience of polar operations that I may never have gained otherwise," said Hawkins. "Being here has opened my eyes to the challenges and possibilities of this part of the world. Experience, especially unusual experiences, always make us better prepared for future operations.

Upon completion of their cargo offload, MV Ocean Giant loaded containers of retrograde material and equipment as well as ice-core samples for scientific study, and return to Port Hueneme, California.

Operation Deep Freeze is a joint service, on-going Defense Support to Civilian Authorities activity in support of the National Science Foundation, lead agency for the United States Antarctic Program. Mission support consists of active duty, Guard and Reserve personnel from the U.S. Air Force, Navy, Army, and Coast Guard as well as Department of Defense civilians and attached non-DOD civilians. ODF operates from two primary locations situated at Christchurch, New Zealand and McMurdo Station, Antarctica.

A section of a Marine Causeway System (MCS) is moved into place at McMurdo Station Antarctica. The MCS replaced the traditionally used ice-pier for cargo operations, due to damages. The MCS was part of nearly 6,000 tons of cargo delivered by the Military Sealift Command-chartered ship MV Ocean Giant. (U.S. Navy photo by Sarah Burford)

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Editor, Sealift, Military Sealift Command 471 East C Street Norfolk, VA 23511-2419 Commercial: 757-443-2839 DSN: 446-2890 EMAIL: lewis.w.mesta@navy.mil

Commander………Rear Adm. Mike Wettlaufer, USN
Director, Public Affairs …………Tom Van Leenen
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Editor ………………………………Bill Mesta, Norfolk, VA
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Writer ………………………………Cathryn Lindsay, Norfolk, VA
Writer ………………………………Lualhawa Skye, Norfolk, VA
Writer ………………………………Sarah Burford, San Diego, CA
Writer ………………………………Travis Weger, Naples, Italy

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