USNS Comfort Supports COVID-19 Relief Efforts

From Commander, U.S. 2nd Fleet Public Affairs

Comfort Treats First Patients in New York

The hospital ship USNS Comfort (T-AH 20) treated its first patients April 1 in support of the nation’s COVID-19 response efforts.

Local health officials, in coordination with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), have established patient transfer protocols, with careful consideration to the safety and security of patients and medical care providers aboard USNS Comfort. Both civilian physicians and USNS Comfort physicians continue to work directly in concert, to provide and carry out patient care plans.

“T’ll immensely proud of our Sailors, Marines, civilian mariners and medical staff for safely, efficiently and effectively getting Comfort to New York ahead of schedule when our fellow Americans need us most,” said Capt. Joseph O’Neill, mission commander, Task Force New York. “The ship is manned with professionals; it was no surprise that our team was able rapidly coordinate with local healthcare professionals and begin accepting our patients.”

Patients treated on Comfort are assessed upon need on a case-by-case basis and once identified, they are screened prior to transfer. Infection control procedures are strictly enforced aboard Comfort, just as any civilian hospital ashore. There are no anticipated costs to patients treated on the ship. This deployment of America’s hospital ship Comfort is an investment in health and wellness for America’s people.

While in New York, the ship is serving as a referral hospital for patients currently admitted to shore-based hospitals, providing a full spectrum of medical care to include general surgeries, critical care and ward care for adults. This allows local health professionals to focus on treating COVID-19 patients and for shore-based hospitals to use their Intensive Care Units and ventilators for those patients.

“High quality and safe patient care is the top priority for our professionals, and we are ready to go to work,” said Capt. Patrick Amersbach, commanding officer of the Military Treatment Facility aboard Comfort. “Our crew is predominately from Naval Medical Center Portsmouth as well as other Navy Military Treatment Facilities and Reserve Centers on the east coast, leaving their homes, families and friends behind because their nation needs them during this time of crisis.”

Comfort’s primary mission is to provide an afloat, mobile, acute surgical medical facility to the U.S. military that is flexible, capable, and uniquely adaptable to support expeditionary warfare. Comfort’s secondary mission is to provide full hospital services to support U.S. disaster relief and humanitarian operations worldwide.
USNS Mercy COVID-19 Support
From U.S. 3rd Fleet Public Affairs

Military Sealift Command’s hospital ship USNS Mercy (T-AH 19) accepted its first patients in Los Angeles, March 29 in support of the nation’s COVID-19 response efforts.

“I couldn’t be more proud of our crew for all the hard work they did to get us here and ready in such a short time,” said Capt. John Rotruck, Mercy’s Military Treatment Facility commanding officer. “Being able to accept our first patients is a true testament of the teamwork between Mercy, the Navy, the State of California, the county of Los Angeles, and the City and Port of L.A.”

While in Los Angeles, the ship is serving as a referral hospital for non-COVID-19 patients currently admitted to shore-based hospitals, and will provide a full spectrum of medical care to include general surgeries, critical care and ward care for adults. This will allow local health professionals to focus on treating COVID-19 patients and for shore-based hospitals to use their Intensive Care Units and ventilators for those patients.

“The men and women embarked on board Mercy are energized, eager, and ready to provide relief to those in need,” said Rotruck.

Mercy is a sea-going medical treatment facility that currently has personnel embarked for the Los Angeles mission, including Navy medical and support staff assembled from 22 commands, as well as over 70 civil service mariners.

Mercy’s primary mission is to provide an afloat, mobile, acute surgical medical facility to the U.S. military that is flexible, capable, and uniquely adaptable to support expeditionary warfare. Mercy’s secondary mission is to provide full hospital services to support U.S. disaster relief and humanitarian operations worldwide.

Mercy arrived in Los Angeles, March 27, to begin its support the nation’s COVID-19 response efforts.

“The men and women of the USNS Mercy and the United States Navy are honored to be here in Los Angeles supporting FEMA, the state of California, and the city in their ongoing COVID-19 relief efforts,” said Rear Adm. John E. Gumbleton, Commander, Expeditionary Strike Group Three, at a press conference.

Mercy’s primary mission while in Los Angeles is to provide an afloat, mobile, acute surgical medical facility to the U.S. military that is flexible, capable, and uniquely adaptable to support expeditionary warfare. Mercy’s secondary mission is to provide full hospital services to support U.S. disaster relief and humanitarian operations worldwide.

USNS Mercy Departs San Diego

Mercy departed Naval Station San Diego, March 23 to begin its journey to Los Angeles in support of the nation’s COVID-19 response efforts.

“USNS Mercy Arrives in Los Angeles

USNS Mercy Accepts First Patients in Los Angeles

USNS Mercy Departs San Diego

Mercy is the first of two Mercy-class hospital ships. A converted San Clemente-class supertanker, Mercy was delivered to the Navy’s Military Sealift Command Nov. 8, 1986.
Reserve Sailors Deploy Aboard USNS Comfort

By Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Craig Rodarte and Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Zachary Van Nuys, Commander, Navy Reserve Force Public Affairs

Comfort will serve as a referral hospital for patients currently admitted to shore-based hospitals. This allows shore-based hospitals to focus their efforts on COVID-19 cases.

One of the Department of Defense’s (DoD) missions is Defense Support of Civil Authorities. DoD is supporting the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the lead federal agency, as well as state, local and public health authorities in helping protect the health and safety of the American people.

“The sheer strength of what the ship can do, from all the cat scans, to full operating rooms and how fast it can be there to support different areas is awesome,” said Yeoman 1st Class Chad Williams, who traveled from NOSC Washington D.C. “This mission is important because it shows that we are not only doing humanitarian missions outside of the U.S., but that we support missions inside the country as well.”

The ability to rapidly provide support to missions like the Comfort’s is a key purpose of the continual training and mobilization readiness efforts of the Navy Reserve, but the motivated responses from the volunteer Sailors was remarkable.

Rear Adm. John Schommer, deputy commander for Commander, Navy Reserve Force, says the response to the call for volunteers was humbling.

“We diligently ensured our volunteer reservists are available to support the medical relief efforts without impacting their local and state communities,” said Schommer. “When we were asked to help find medical professionals to help support this mission, we received hundreds of volunteer requests from our reserve medical community in less than 24 hours."

Another volunteer, Chief Hospital Corpsman Robert Willis, from NOSC Charlotte, stressed the importance of the response effort. "Supporting this national mission and helping to contain this virus is important," said Willis. "I want to help in whatever way I can to make sure it gets eradicated."

The Navy Reserve prides itself on being ready, agile force providing valuable and vital support to the Navy and the Nation. Today, the Reserve force consists of 59,641 Selected Reserve Sailors (including 10,153 Full Time Support members) 43,754 Individual Ready Reserve members and 422 civiliana. The Navy Reserve team, over 100,000 strong, delivers strategic depth and operational capability to the Navy and Marine Corps team and Joint Forces in times of peace and war.

After 14 days at sea conducting flight operations and multiple certifications, USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) completed its first vertical replenishment (VERTREP) with MH-60S Sea Hawk helicopters, attached to the “Tridents” of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 9 while alongside USNS Joshua Humphreys (T-AO 188) in the Atlantic Ocean, March 24.

Ford is executing an 18-month phase of operations known as Post-Delivery Test and Trials (PDT&T) to ensure her overall deployment readiness. Cmdr. Carl Koch, Ford’s supply officer, explained that by accomplishing this task, Ford is one step closer to being fully mission ready.

“We exercising and proving our ability to conduct simultaneous fueling and replenishment-at-sea increases the ship’s flexibility to respond to mission requirements as it minimizes our required time alongside a supply ship,” said Koch.

Master Chief Logistics Specialist Sunshine Ridgeway, Ford’s S-6 division leading chief petty officer, shares a mutual feeling with Koch of the ship being independent at sea.

“By conducting these types of evolutions, we are able to keep the ship at sea for longer periods of time, which in turn allows us to maintain our focus on our current mission of qualifying pilots to support the fleet,” said Ridgeway.

Koch added, “We can extend our endurance for both air operations and sustaining the Sailors aboard to increase our time on station and minimize our time in port. By conducting simultaneous operations, we can be available for other missions in a shorter amount of time.”

Logistics Specialist 2nd Class Katie Ruff, assigned to Ford’s supply department, has arguably one of the most dangerous jobs during the VERTREP which involves placing the cargo pennant pole underneath the helicopter.

“We have to use this hook so that the helicopter can return material and equipment that we are sending back to the supply ship,” said Ruff. “I was very impressed with the dexterity and ingenuity of the entire flight deck team involved with the VERTREP.”

There are many Sailors that work throughout the evolution and Ridgeway explained how all the food and dried goods gets to its final storage space until needed for use.

“We brought on the pallets of fresh fruits and vegetables, dried goods and frozen food stores during the VERTREP,” said Ridgeway. “Our team moves all the pallets from the flight deck to the aircraft elevators where it is moved to the hangar bay. Once inside the hangar bay, the pallets are dispersed to various elevators that move all the stores and supplies to the storage areas below decks.”

Ford completed the VERTREP of 77 pallets of food and other dried goods in just over four and a half hours.

Koch explained that this type of evolution takes effort from Sailors from multiple departments all working together and training each other to complete the task.

“And air and weapons departments provided us a tremendous amount of assistance in training our team, offering their experience and knowledge from past VERTREPs on other platforms,” he said. “Our Supply VERTREP team has comparatively less experience in conducting VERTREPs. We continue to increase our proficiency to minimize our dependency on other departments — while we all work well together as a team, we want to get to a point where we can increase our self-reliance so our shipmates can focus on their areas of expertise.”

Ready to answer the nation’s call, Navy Reserve Sailors reported to the Military Sealift Command’s hospital ship USNS Comfort (T-AH 20) more than 120 Reserve volunteers were selected to support Comfort’s upcoming deployment to New York City. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Zachary D. Van Nuys)

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For the ship’s COVID-19 response deployment, Commander, Navy Reserve Forces Command selected more than 120 volunteers from a group of Navy Reserve medical professionals and other ratings to embark on the ship in support of the upcoming mission.

“Right now, medical centers are doing everything they can to help their communities,” said Lt. Derek Hinkley, selected from Navy Operational Support Center (NOSC) White River Junction, New Hampshire, to support the response effort. “I see this mission as an opportunity to do what we can to help, in whatever way we can.”

This was the second short-fused request for reserve support on a Navy hospital ship as nearly 60 Reserve Sailors departed Wednesday on the USNS Mercy (T-AH 19) in support of the COVID-19 response efforts in Los Angeles.
Military Sealift Command’s Bob Hope-class large, medium speed roll-on/roll-off ship USNS Benavidez (T-AKR 306) recently executed convoy operations alongside the guided-missile cruiser USS Vella Gulf (CG 72) and MV Resolve in the Atlantic Ocean in support of DEFENDER-Europe 20.

In an effort to simulate a wartime military materials and equipment convoy operation, U.S. Navy personnel worked alongside MSC contract mariners aboard Benavidez to complete a contested waters evolution. This evolution gave the crew an opportunity to combine their knowledge and experience to ensure a safe and efficient transit in today’s contested environment.

Lt. Stephanie Mantz, the MSC Atlantic operations officer and Lt. j.g. Kelsey Ireland are two U.S. Navy strategic sealift officers worked closely with the mariners on Benavidez.

Strategic Sealift Officers are able to connect more personally with the crew, because they are licensed civilian mariners, in their civilian profession, who serve that in U.S. Navy reserve units as commissioned officers.

"Because we are mariners and have sailed on commercial ships, we understand what the crew is going through," said Ireland. "SSOs serve as a helpful liaison between mariners and the U.S. Navy, having the background knowledge of both professions."

Military Sealift Command plays a crucial role in delivering the more than 1.3 million square feet of equipment required for the exercise using a combination of ships from the MSC surge fleet as well as a number of U.S.-flagged commercial merchant ships.

U.S.-based equipment will leave from ports in four states and arrive in six European countries.

"The arrival of the first ship marks the beginning of the main phase of the deployment, which is actually the center of gravity of this whole exercise," said Chief of the German Joint Support and Enabling Service Lt. Gen. Martin Schelleis.

Although airlift has expanded exponentially over the last several decades, sealift remains the primary and most cost-efficient method for transporting military equipment, supplies and material around the world.

The MV Endurance was the first ship into Bremerhaven, delivering more than 14,825 long tons of Army equipment to be used during DEFENDER-Europe 20.

"What you are looking at right here is the ARC Endurance," U.S. Army Europe Commanding General, Lt. Gen. Christopher Cavoli, "which is unloading a brigade combat team from the 3rd U.S. infantry division from Fort Stewart in Georgia."

MSC’s Army partner in U.S. Transportation Command is Surface Deployment and Distribution Command, also known as SDDC. This command is involved in planning and executing the surface delivery of equipment and supplies across the globe. During DEFENDER-Europe 20, SDDC delivered cargo at the U.S. ports to MSC ships, which transports cargo by sea to the European ports. Upon arrival, SDDC delivers the cargo to end users by land.

"Military Sealift Command, our Navy component partner in United States Transportation Command, provides critical support in moving equipment on this scale across the globe," said Brigade Commander, 598th Transportation Brigade, Col. Jin Pak. "Our global deployment and distribution enterprise is another 'Team of Teams.'"
Navy Surface Forces, Army Attack Helicopters Conduct Integration Ops in Arabian Gulf

From U.S. Naval Force Central Command Public Affairs

The U.S. Navy's expeditionary sea base ship USS Lewis B. Puller (ESB 3), assigned to U.S. Naval Forces Central Command (USNAVCENT), has been conducting joint naval and air integration operations with U.S. Army AH-64E Apache attack helicopters assigned to U.S. Army Central Command's (USARCENT) Task Force Saber, throughout the month of March.

The operations, which were designed to enhance the capabilities of U.S. forces to respond to surface threats, have involved Puller performing as a landing base platform for the Apaches, while Cyclone class Patrol Coastal (PC) ships select simulated targets for them to engage. The guided-missile destroyer USS Paul Hamilton (DDG 60) also participated in the joint operations.

"The integration of U.S. army weapons teams with other joint fires into the maritime environment greatly enhances our ability to expand reconnaissance and attack capability," said Capt. Peter Mirisola, Commander, Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 50/Commander, Combined Task Force (CTF) 55. "The Apaches, in coordination with our surface ships, allow us to hold an adversary at high risk at extended ranges. Combined with other joint fires, these aircraft significantly increase the precision lethality of our joint maritime forces."

The Apache AH-64E is a twin-engine, four bladed, multi-mission attack helicopter designed as a highly stable aerial weapons-delivery platform. It is capable of destroying an array of mobile armored targets on land and sea using a 30mm automatic gun, aerial rockets and AGM-114 Hellfire missiles.

Similar integration operations with Special Operations assets were conducted in the Arabian Gulf between U.S. naval forces and MH-6M Little Bird helicopters during Operation Earnest Will from 1987 to 1988. More recently, USNAVCENT surface forces also conducted joint naval and air integration operations with U.S. Army AH-64 Apache helicopters assigned to the U.S. Army Central Command's (USARCENT) Task Force Saber, operate with the expeditionary sea base (ESB) Lewis B. Puller (ESB 3) during a joint naval and air integration operation, March 27. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Cody Rich)

"Working with USARCENT forces represents another key capability in our ongoing integration of naval and air assets across our joint and coalition force to ensure maritime superiority," said Vice Adm. Jim Malloy, commander, USNAVCENT/U.S. 5th Fleet. "This kind of cross-domain integration allows us to maintain highly lethal and effective defensive capabilities, regardless of what platforms are operating in theater."

DESRON 50/CTF 55 conducts maritime security operations in support of regional security and stability. Its responsibilities include planning and executing a robust regional engagement program with coalition forces from regional partners and allied navies who operate and deploy to the Arabian Gulf.

The U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations encompasses about 2.5 million square miles of water area and includes the Arabian Gulf, Arabian Sea, Gulf of Oman, Red Sea and parts of the Indian Ocean. The expanse is comprised of 20 countries and includes three critical choke points at the Strait of Hormuz, the Suez Canal and the Bab el-Mandeb Strait.

Equipment for AFRICOM’s Largest Military Exercise Arrives in Morocco

By Maj. Cain Claxton, U.S. Army Africa

The Maritime Administration’s ready reserve fleet roll-on/roll-off ship MV Cape Edmont, arrived in Africa, from the United States, Feb. 29, with nearly 7,000 tons of military equipment for use by more than 9,000 troops during Exercise African Lion 20 in the coming weeks.

A team of U.S. Army military logistics and transportation professionals received the equipment Saturday and moved it off the port to training locations in Morocco by Sunday night.

"It takes a lot of coordination. It takes a lot of teamwork," said Lt. Col. Scott Wyatt, commander of the 839th Transportation Battalion, Surface Deployment and Distribution Command. "We at SDDC focus on a team of teams: partnerships, friendships and relationships. All of that is being showcased in this movement here in support of African Lion."

Members of the U.S. Army Reserve 451st Expeditionary Sustainment Command and the 970th Movement Control Team joined Utah Army National Guard 1st Battalion, 145th Field Artillery Regiment, and the 101st Airborne Division’s 1st Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, to assist the SDDC in clearing the port.

Second Lt. Jean Rossy-Negron, the 970th MCT platoon leader, ensured all pieces were accounted for and tracked their movements all the way to the final destinations at nearby training areas.

Almost 4,000 U.S. troops are scheduled to join 5,000 warfighters from Morocco, Tunisia, Spain, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and many others in African Lion’s 17th year. This year’s iteration is the largest in its history.

"We work hand in hand with the SDDC," Rossy-Negron said. "As soon as it comes off the vessel, it is in our jurisdiction. Once we accounted for everything, it’s about getting them ready to roll, whether that’s by getting them loaded onto trucks and having them line hauled, or preparing them to be fueled and convoy down on their own."

The crew of about 40 Soldiers and Army civilians worked in darkness before sunrise through darkness after sunset to complete port operations.

The effort was monumental, Wyatt said.

"In order to make something like this exercise be successful," Wyatt said, "to activate reserve component units from the United States, to activate a Ready Reserve fleet vessel from the Department of Transportation, through the Military Sealift Command and, ultimately, U.S. Transportation Command, and get all of that equipment to the port in the U.S., and then get it on the vessel, have it shipped over here, and offload it in the country of Morocco, using Moroccan forces to support our own movement, as well as Moroccan local authorities to protect our forces here as they download, and to facilitate the movement, is pretty amazing."

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The 970th Movement Control Team of the U.S. Army National Guard is staged for movement from the port in Agadir, Morocco, to training areas where they will be used as part of African Lion 20, the largest exercise in Africa. More than 9,000 troops from eight countries will participate in the exercise from March 23 to April 3. (U.S. Army photo by Maj. Cain Claxton)
On March 18, President Trump announced Navy hospital ships USNS Mercy (T-AH 19) and Comfort (T-AH 20) to be activated and deployed stateside to serve as referral centers for patients. The longest-serving hospital ships in continuous operation in our history, Mercy and Comfort have long captured the public’s imagination due to their vast medical capabilities as floating hospitals. But in the storied history of our hospital ships, stateside deployments during global pandemics remain unchartered waters.

Hospital ships have played pivotal roles in naval operations since the early days of our Republic. During the Barbary Wars, Commodore Edward Preble ordered that USS Intrepid be used as a hospital ship. The reconfiguration of this former bomb-ketch in 1803 marks the standard for almost all hospital ships used thereafter. To date, only USS Relief (AH 1) was built from the keel up to serve as a hospital ship. All other ships—including USNS Mercy and USNS Comfort—were converted from other uses whether as super tankers, troop transports or passenger liners.

Floating Ambulance

Whether it is the USS Red Rover transporting patients up the Mississippi to Mound Island in the Civil War or USS Solace (AH-5) taking wounded Marines from two Jima to Guam hospital, ships have long served in the capacity of ambulance ships.

During the Great Influenza Pandemic of 1918, Comfort (AH-3) and Mercy (AH-4) were each briefly stationed in New York where they took care of overflow patients from the Third Naval District before returning to the fleet and sailing across the Atlantic. Along with USS Solace (AH-2), these ships ferried thousands of wounded and sick (including virulent cases of the flu) back to stateside facilities.

Station Hospitals

Throughout 19th and early 20th centuries, a host of Navy ships was sent around the country to serve as “station hospitals” for burgeoning naval bases.

From the 1850s until the early 1860s, supply ships USS Warren and later USS Independence operated in this capacity at Mare Island, California, until shore facilities were constructed. Decades later, the Navy employed the former gunboat USS Nipsic at the Puget Sound Navy Yard, where it took care of patients from the Third Naval District before returning to the fleet and sailing across the Atlantic. Along with USS Solace (AH-2), these ships ferried thousands of wounded and sick (including virulent cases of the flu) back to stateside facilities.

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Humanitarian Measures

Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Response (HADR) operations have long been the clarion call for hospital ships. In March 1933, following the devastating earthquake that hit Long Beach, USNS Relief (AH-1) sent teams of physicians and Hospital Corpsmen ashore to assist in treatment of casualties. Some 66 years later, following the Loma Prieta Earthquake of October 1989, USNS Mercy—then moored in Oakland—provided food and shelter for hundreds of victims of the disaster.

Since 2001, USNS Comfort and USNS Mercy have taken part in some 19 HADR missions, from Continuing Promise to Unified Assistance, and treated over 550,000 patients. But of these missions, only two were stateside deployments.

Following Hurricane Katrina in 2005, Comfort deployed to the Gulf Coast where she treated 1,258 patients at Pascagoula, Mississippi, and New Orleans. Years earlier, she was sent to New York City following the attacks on Sept. 11.

Originally envisioned as a floating trauma hospital for the victims of the Twin Towers’ collapse, the ship’s mission changed when it became clear there were not the large numbers of injured expected. Vice Adm. Michael Cowan, Navy surgeon general in 2001, recalled that New York’s Emergency Management Office stated the city was being overwhelmed with the requirements of humanity. “The island didn’t have facilities to support the firemen and rescuers and police digging through the rubble and sleeping on the hood of their engines,” Cowan said. “They were becoming dirty, going without water as they worked in harsh environments. NYC requested the Comfort to provide humanitarian services, as the ‘Comfort Inn,’ which could be docked close to the site.”

From Sept. 14 to Oct. 1, Comfort provided hot meals, showers, a berth, a change of clean clothes to about a 1,000 relief workers a day from its temporary home at Pier 92 in Manhattan.

Capsabilities

When commissioned on Dec. 28, 1920, Relief (AH-1) could boast the same amenities as the most modern hospitals at the time—large corridors and elevators for transporting patients, and fully equipped surgical operating rooms, wards, galleys, pantries, wash rooms, laboratories, dispensaries, as well as a sterilizing/disinfecting room—all with “sanitary” tiled flooring.

USNS Mercy and USNS Comfort are no different in this regard and are comparable to some of the largest trauma hospitals in the United States. Each ship contains 12 fully equipped operating rooms, a bed capacity of 1,000 and can boast of digital radiological services, medical laboratories, full-service pharmacies, blood banks, medical equipment repair shops, prosthetics and physical therapy.

Sources:


Cowan, Michael, Oral History conducted with (Session conducted by A.B. Sobocinski and D.V. Ginn on September 12, 2013). BUMED Oral History Archives.


Underway with USNS Yuma (T-EPF 8), I had the opportunity to spend the week with Second Officer Kevin Coleman. I met Kevin at dinner a few months earlier during their port visit to Naples with the Captain and several other members of the crew. After dinner, Kevin told me about his unique career path, how he joined MSC at 48 years old and was proof that it is never too late to start a new career. Yuma got back underway and I promised Kevin I would sit down with him to hear the rest of his story.

A month later, Yuma was back in Naples and I sprang at the opportunity to spend time underway to hear the rest of his story. This is the highlight of our meeting underway in the Adriatic Sea on Yuma.

What is your name, title and what ship are you on?

Coleman: My name is Kevin Coleman, I am the second officer on USNS Yuma.

What is unique about your career with MSC?

Coleman: I didn’t join MSC until I was 48 years old. I was $30,000 in debt and I wasn’t sure what my next step would be. I had an Ordinary Seaman Merchant Marine Credential, so a friend of mine said I should check out MSC.

What does a typical day look like for you?

Coleman: I am a Second Officer. As such, I am the Navigator and Operations Officer on board Yuma. I handle the navigation of the ship and manage Navy messaging.

What does USNS Yuma do to assist the joint warfighter?

Coleman: This ships general purpose is to move gear and personnel. Lately, we have been working with the Seabees moving their gear around. We have been hitting some great ports during this underway such as Gibraltar, United Kingdom; Corfu, Greece; Odessa, Ukraine; Poti, Georgia; Varna, Bulgaria; Izmir, Turkey; Ashdod, Israel; Málaga, Spain and Astakos, Greece.

What would you tell someone looking to join MSC?

Coleman: With life at sea there are many hardships, like missing family weddings, funerals and graduations. You have to be prepared to leave home facing severe financial losses after falling victims to card-cracking scams.

NCIS, Sailors, Marines, Civilians Beware of Card-Cracking Scams

NCIS has recently observed increased reporting from service members facing severe financial losses after falling victims to card-cracking scams initiated via social media with promises of getting out of debt and making extra money.

There are two primary methods used to establish contact with potential victims. One version involves a social media post or message sent by a purported debt consolidator or business owner to lure service members into responding; the other involves the service member receiving a friend request from a person who presumably shares many friends in common. After establishing contact, the service member receives a message from the scammer offering grant money as a “thank you” for their service or offering to pay money for their “debt relief.”

Both methods involve requesting the service member provide online bank account login information; service members may also be asked to answer security questions established through their online bank account. Victims have reported that after the money is deposited directly into their accounts, the scammer then asks the victim to send a portion of the money via wire or cash to a third party. Victims then discover that loans have been opened in their name with the same financial institution. Any attempts to further contact the scammer are unsuccessful, leaving the victim to pay off the loan.

If you suspect you’ve been targeted with this scam:

Immediately discontinue correspondence with the suspected scammer.

Notify your bank or financial institution and attempt to have your accounts locked.

Change all account passwords and seek additional security steps by your financial institution.

Consider a credit lock through one or all three of the major credit bureaus (Equifax, Experian, and Transunion).

Notify your respective command, NCIS office, and/or respective law enforcement authorities.

May is National Physical Fitness and Sports Month

We make choice every day, yet the one that never seems to let us down is choosing to move our bodies.

Physical activity lowers our risk for chronic diseases. It strengthens our muscles and bones and improves our mood, positively impacting both our physical and mental health.

For substantial health benefits, adults need...
Comfort Arrives in New York

The hospital ship USNS Comfort (T-AH 20) arrived in New York, March 30, in support of the nation’s COVID-19 response efforts.

Comfort is a seagoing medical treatment facility that currently has more than 1,100 personnel embarked for the New York mission including Navy medical and support staff assembled from 22 commands, as well as over 70 civil service mariners.

“The USNS Comfort arrived in New York City this morning with more than 1,100 medical personnel who are ready to provide safe, high-quality health care,” said Capt. Patrick Amersbach, commanding officer of the USNS Comfort Military Treatment Facility. “We are ready and grateful to serve the needs of our nation.”

Comfort’s sister ship, the hospital ship USNS Mercy (T-AH 19) is supporting COVID-19 Relief efforts in Los Angeles.

“Like her sister ship, USNS Mercy (T-AH 19), which recently moored in Los Angeles, this great ship will support civil authorities by increasing medical capacity and collaboration for medical assistance,” said Rear Adm. John Mustin, vice commander, U.S. Fleet Forces Command.

“This USNS Comfort team of Sailors, Marines and civilian mariners came together during the transit to New York City and our medical professionals are ready to begin receiving patients from local hospitals tomorrow,” said Capt. Joseph O’Brien, mission commander of Task Force New York City. “Our personnel are our strength—the men and women of our military services accomplish incredible things every day, and I am confident in their abilities as we start the next phase of this mission.”

The ship began receiving in short notice after arriving in New York City. All patient transfers are being coordinated with local hospitals, thus ensuring a consistent handoff of care between medical providers. Patients will not be accepted on a walk-on basis, and should not come to the pier with any expectation that they can receive care.

“The last time that this great hospital ship was here was in the wake of 9-11, where she served as respite and comfort for our first responders working around the clock,” said Mustin. “Our message to New Yorkers—now your Navy has returned, and we are with you, committed in this fight.”

The U.S. Coast Guard provided a security escort of USNS Comfort into New York Harbor, comprised of crews and assets from around the region to include the Coast Guard Cutter Shrike, Coast Guard Cutter Sitkinak, Maritime Safety and Security Team New York, Coast Guard Station New York, and Coast Guard Air Station Cape Cod.