



SEALIFT

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Military Sealift Command Civil Service Mariners aboard the Emory S. Land-class submarine tender USS Frank Cable (AS 40) prepare for line handling operations during sea and anchor as the ship transits to White Beach, Okinawa, Japan, Dec. 6. Frank Cable was on patrol conducting expeditionary maintenance and logistics in support of national security in the U.S. 7th Fleet area of operations. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Chase Stephens)

USS Frank Cable Moors at Okinawa, Japan for First Time

By Petty Officer 1st Class Charlotte Oliver, USS Frank Cable (AS 40) Public Affairs

The Emory S. Land-class submarine tender USS Frank Cable (AS 40) moored at White Beach, Okinawa, Japan, Dec. 6.

This is the first time that the submarine tender has moored pier-side in Okinawa.

Though White Beach Naval Facility is mainly used by the U.S. Marine Corps as a staging area to bring their equipment aboard amphibious naval ships, Frank Cable is once again proving the versatility of the ship in today's ever-changing military environment.

"Mooring in White Beach, Okinawa was a first-time event for both Frank Cable and for U.S. Navy submarine tenders," said Capt. Albert Alarcon, Frank Cable's commanding officer. "Besides validating submarine tender access and sustainability in Okinawa, this provides another option for supporting submarines and surface combatants in the Pacific Theater."

This is the fifth port visit during Frank Cable's fall patrol and fourth port of call in the country of Japan. Prior to pulling into Okinawa, Frank Cable's crew hosted Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) distinguished visitors, including Vice Adm. Yoshitaka Ozama, commander, Fleet Submarine Forces Japan, in Yokohama; conducted tender operations with the JMSDF Soryu-class submarine JS Sekiryu (SS 508) in Kure; and provided expeditionary repairs to America-class amphibious assault ship USS America (LHA 6) in Sasebo.

As Frank Cable's mooring lines were doubled up and the accommodation ladder was lowered to the pier, Rear Adm. Christopher Engdahl, commander, Expeditionary Strike Group 7/ commander, Amphibious Force, 7th Fleet came aboard to visit crew and tour the ship.

"This class of ship keeps the fleet armed and running because of the phenomenally skilled Sailors and Civil Service Mariners that crew her," said Engdahl. "Frank Cable provides essential services to submarine forces but leverages opportunities like this one to provide broader Fleet expeditionary repairs in support of a free and open Indo-Pacific region. I'm truly impressed by the incredible expeditionary repair and rearm capabilities this platform possesses."

Okinawa provided Frank Cable yet another opportunity to promote stability and security in the Indo-Pacific region, demonstrate commitment to regional partners, and foster growing relationships.

Frank Cable departed Apra Harbor, Guam, Oct. 18, for their deployment to the U.S. 7th Fleet area of operations.



Military Sealift Command Civil Service Mariners aboard USS Frank Cable (AS 40) prepare the anchor chain while the ship prepares to moor at White Beach Naval Facility, Okinawa, Japan, Dec. 6. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Chase Stephens)



Military Sealift Command Civil Service Mariner Eric Nampai throws a heaving line from the submarine tender USS Frank Cable (AS 40) to a tugboat while the ship prepares to moor at White Beach Naval Facility, Okinawa, Japan, Dec. 6. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Chase Stephens)

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Active Duty, Reserve Sailors Encouraged to Get Boosted

From the Chief of Naval Operations Public Affairs



Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Dennis Hamilton, right, administers the COVID-19 vaccine booster to Electronics Technician 3rd Class Tyler Vazquez. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Conner Foy)

Vice Adm. W. R. Merz, Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Operations, Plans and Strategy, OPNAV N3/N5, released NAVADMIN 289/21, recently encouraged all active duty and reserve component Navy personnel to obtain a COVID-19 booster shot.

The new NAVADMIN indicates that while a booster is not currently mandatory, Navy leadership anticipates that it may become so in the future.

“We know the vaccines are effective – they’re protecting our Sailors,” said Merz. “Studies are showing the booster is a critical step in continued protection against COVID-19 and we absolutely encourage everyone to receive it.”

The guidance applies to Active Duty and Reserve Sailors who completed the primary Pfizer-BioNTech/Comirnaty or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine series more than six months ago, or who received a primary dose of the Johnson & Johnson/Janssen COVID-19 vaccine more than two months ago. The NAVADMIN further states that individuals may “mix and match” their dosing, allowing Sailors to choose any U.S. authorized COVID-19 vaccine booster that has received either FDA licensure or FDA Emergency Use Authorization (EUA).

Service members can elect to receive the booster from military or commercial health sources, but must provide documentation to their command within five working days if they obtain the shot via commercial means. Before receiving any booster shot, Sailors should review that vaccine’s Fact Sheet for Recipients and Caregivers and contact their Primary Care Manager with any concerns which cannot be addressed by the vaccine provider.

To make an appointment to receive your vaccine, please visit:

<https://tricare.mil/vaccineappointments>.

The Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Operations, Plans and Strategy (N3/N5) is the principal advisor to the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) on Navy strategies, plans, and policies, including planning and coordinating the global employment of naval forces.

Missile Range Instrument Ship USNS Invincible Inactivated

By Susan A. Romano, U.S. Air Force Technical Application Center Public Affairs



Christopher Thayer, Director of Maritime Operations for Military Sealift Command, delivers his keynote address during the inactivation ceremony of the USNS Invincible (T-AGM 24) (seen in background) at Cape Canaveral Space Force Station, Florida, Dec. 15. Pictured to the right is Col. Katharine Branson, commander of the Air Force Technical Applications Center, overseer of the Invincible’s GRAY STAR ballistic missile radar system. (U.S. Air Force photo by Matthew S. Jurgens)

With the white-hulled ship serving as the backdrop for the festivities, the Air Force Technical Applications Center and Military Sealift Command held a joint ceremony, Dec. 15, to inactivate the missile range instrument ship USNS Invincible (T-AGM 24), at the U.S. Army Transportation Wharf, near Patrick Space Force Base, Florida, where AFTAC has its headquarters.

More than 150 people including Congressional staffers, U.S. Air Force general officers, senior MSC representatives and local elected officials were in attendance at Cape Canaveral Space Force Station to hear Christopher D. Thayer, Director of Maritime Operations for MSC, and Col. Katharine G. Branson, AFTAC’s commander, speak about the importance of the ship and the role it played in national security for the past 35 years.

USNS Invincible housed the GRAY STAR radar system that provided unique, high quality, high resolution, multi-wavelength radar products used to monitor U.S. or foreign missile, space or weapons test events worldwide. Launched in 1986, and put into full operational service in 1987, Invincible’s original mission was to patrol the seas looking for submarines using its sonar array.

The vessel was refitted in 2000 to support Joint Chiefs of Staff missions to monitor missile or weapons test events that could pose hazards or threats to air or surface navigation.

During its tenure, USNS Invincible deployed worldwide and AFTAC provided a company grade officer to serve as the ship’s Mission Commander; whose responsibility was to ensure the platform’s team successfully collected and delivered vital mission data.

The decision to inactivate the ship was based on higher headquarters requirements to balance sustainment costs, operational effectiveness, and the Department of Defense’s pivot to strategic competition.

The DoD has a wide range of capabilities to support ballistic missile defense operations that continue to operate throughout the world today.

Maj. George W. Statzell V, a former Invincible mission commander and current officer-in-charge of AFTAC’s Commander’s Action Group, reflected on his time at the helm of the ship and the importance his crew played in national security.

“It takes a lot of coordination and teamwork to effectively employ an asset like GRAY STAR radar,” said Statzell.

“The team aboard the Invincible made it work by focusing on the importance of the information they provided to national decision makers.” He added, “It was a highlight of my career to serve as Invincible’s MC. It’s not often a junior officer gets the opportunity to command a naval mission, much less an Air Force officer. The job was demanding and had its own heightened level of stressors, but it was also a richly rewarding experience and one I’ll carry with me for a lifetime.”

During his remarks, Thayer commended the crew who “faithfully executed the mission.”

“While these mariners operated in a threat environment, they answered the call to serve across all parts of the globe,” he said, “bravely facing threats daily from weather at sea to pirates and combatants, as they served their fellow Americans.”

He thanked the thousands of crew members who maintained and sailed on Invincible to enable other organizations to execute their complex mission set.

“The success of Invincible over these many years was due in great part to a series of highly effective partnerships between military commands and services, industry partners, and labor sources,” Thayer said. “Whether civil service, uniformed military member or contractor, you contributed daily to the safety and security of our nation, and each one of you is a patriot.”

USNS Invincible played a critical role in the U.S. National Security Strategy serving as a mobile tracking platform for recording data on missiles and satellites that were typically out of range of established land stations. During its time abroad, Invincible collected data on 73 different systems in its primary area of responsibility, the Middle East, providing the nation’s most senior decision makers with technical measurements to monitor nuclear treaty compliance.

“I was struck by the way Mr. Thayer categorized today’s event,” Branson said during her remarks. “It’s not so much the end of the line for Invincible, but a moment of transition. We must be able to adapt and respond to the ever-changing global environment to make us a strong, more efficient and successful force.”

Branson congratulated the Airmen and all the mission partners for a job “exceedingly well done.”

“Please accept my gratitude for your ‘high-seas expertise’ and willingness to get the job done. I am incredibly proud of you, and I look forward to what our maritime future has in store for us,” he said.

It will take approximately seven months to fully inactivate the ship, with plans to re-purpose it into a training vessel or stored as part of the National Defense Reserve Fleet. The radar system will be re-purposed by the Air Force Research Laboratory to conduct testing and evaluation of advanced radar technologies.

USNS Charles Drew Rescues Iranian Mariners in Gulf of Oman

From NAVCENT Public Affairs

A U.S. Navy vessel rescued two Iranian mariners, Nov. 27, from a fishing vessel after it was adrift for eight days in the Gulf of Oman.

Military Sealift Command's dry cargo ammunition ship USNS Charles Drew (T-AKE 10) responded after the Combined Maritime Forces, an international maritime coalition, headquartered in Bahrain, received a distress call from the stranded mariners at 10 a.m. local time.

Charles Drew arrived on scene six hours later and provided food, water and medical care.

"This is what we are trained and ready to do," said Vice Adm. Brad Cooper, commander of U.S. Naval Forces Central Command, U.S. 5th Fleet and Combined Maritime Forces. "As professional mariners, we have a responsibility to help people in need at sea."

Today, Charles Drew safely transported the mariners to an Omani coast guard vessel sailing near Muscat, Oman. The mariners were in good health and spirits at the time of the transfer.

"We appreciate the government of Oman for its assistance and support in helping us return the mariners home," said Cooper.

Combined Maritime Forces consists of 34 nations and is the largest naval partnership in the world. Its naval vessels and personnel operate in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Northern Arabian Sea, Gulf of Oman, Indian Ocean and Arabian Gulf promoting security and stability.



Two Iranian mariners signal for assistance, Nov. 27, after their fishing vessel is adrift for eight days in the Gulf of Oman. Military Sealift Command's dry cargo ammunition ship USNS Charles Drew (T-AKE 10) responded and provided food, water and medical care. (U.S. Navy photo)

Construction Begins on Future USS Robert E. Simanek

From Team Ships Public Affairs

Construction started on the fifth expeditionary sea base (ESB), the future USS Robert E. Simanek (ESB 7), at General Dynamics National Steel and Shipbuilding Company (GD-NASSCO) in San Diego during a small ceremony, Dec. 1.

The ESB ship class is highly flexible and used across a broad range of military operations supporting multiple operational phases, similar to the Expeditionary Transfer Dock class. Acting as a mobile sea base, they are part of the critical access infrastructure that supports the deployment of forces and supplies to provide prepositioned equipment and sustainment with flexible distribution.

"ESBs are optimized to support the core capabilities of aviation facilities, berthing, special operations, equipment staging support, and command and control operations," said Tim Roberts, Strategic and Theater Sealift program manager, Program Executive Office (PEO) Ships. "The ESBs have demonstrated their ability to enhance the fleet's flexibility and capability as they operate around the world. The addition of the future USS Robert E. Simanek will help continue to provide critical access in the maritime domain."

The ship is named in honor of Marine Corps veteran Robert E. Simanek, who was awarded the Medal of Honor after he threw himself on an enemy grenade shielding his fellow Marines during the Korean War.

In 2019, the Navy made the decision to commission all expeditionary sea base ships to allow them to conduct a broader and more lethal mission set, compared to original plans for them to operate with a USNS designation. ESBs are commanded by a Navy O-6 with a hybrid-manned crew of military personnel and Military Sealift Command Civil Service Mariners. This designation provides combatant commanders greater operational flexibility as to how the platform is employed.

GD-NASSCO has delivered three other ESBs and is currently constructing the future USS John L. Canley (ESB 6).

As one of the Defense Department's largest acquisition organizations, PEO Ships is responsible for executing the development and procurement of all destroyers, amphibious ships, special mission and support ships, boats and craft.

USS Miguel Keith Overcomes Invasive Volcanic Stone From August Eruption

By Lt. John Stevens, Amphibious Squadron 11 Public Affairs

USS Miguel Keith's (ESB 5) crew of Sailors and Civil Service Mariners overcame the impact of a rare geologic event while operating in November near Okinawa; the drifting remnants of an underwater volcanic eruption.

Fukutoku-Okanoba, a submerged volcano about 800 miles southeast of Japan, erupted Aug. 13, spewing pumice stones that drifted as far as Okinawa, where the ship was operating in late October.

"According to reports, this was the biggest underwater eruption Japan has seen since World War II," said Capt. Troy Fendrick, Miguel Keith's commanding officer. "Almost three months later we still experienced the impact, as the ship developed issues in the engineering plant's cooling system. It took a whole-team effort of several days to avoid a total loss of power and propulsion at sea, and I could not be more proud of the crew's efforts to keep the ship in the fight."

Fendrick said pumice had clogged strainers on the ship's sea chests, which suck in seawater for firefighting, equipment cooling, and other services. He added that some particles were small enough to pass through the strainers into critical propulsion systems.

"Over time, pumice ingestion plagued virtually the entire engineering plant," Fendrick said. "Clogs caused high temperatures in both port and starboard coolers, which provide vital cooling water to all propulsion and electrical generating equipment. All of our stern tube seal pumps were also clogged,



A view of the expeditionary sea base Lewis B. Puller-class expeditionary sea base USS Miguel Keith (ESB 5) underway. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Jessica Ann Hattell)

as well as our evaporators, which we use to make fresh drinking water for the crew."

Fendrick said the engines on each shaft were shut down for almost four days at a time while the crew disassembled and thoroughly cleaned vital equipment.

"Our hybrid crew worked exhaustively for countless hours, doing what is typically a depot-level job," said Fendrick. "It's something we would normally do in port, with help from an outside repair activity. The fact that our crew was able to accomplish this at sea in such a short time, keep us on station ready to 'fight tonight,' and avoid costly damage and repairs, speaks to our warrior toughness, and our ability to adapt and sustain ourselves in the face of adversity."

For More Information About
Military Sealift Command
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MSC Ships Support USS Abraham Lincoln Strike Group Pre-Deployment Exercises

By Sarah Burford, Military Sealift Command Pacific Public Affairs

Military Sealift Command Pacific's (MSCPAC) fleet replenishment oiler USNS Guadalupe (T-AO 200) and the dry cargo, ammunition ship USNS Richard E. Byrd (T-AKE 4) provided logistics services to the ships of the USS Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group as they conducted routine, pre-deployment training operations in the Pacific area of operations.

Through a series of 39 replenishments-at-sea (RAS), Guadalupe and Richard E. Byrd delivered 439 pallets of food, parts and equipment through a series of vertical and connected replenishments at-sea. In addition, the ships delivered over 5 million gallons of diesel ship fuel and nearly 3 million gallons JP5 aviation fuel.

MSC's ability to replenish ships at-sea benefits the Navy by providing all the items needed to sustain the ships at sea, and allows them to stay in the area of operation longer, and without the need to come into port for supplies. In the COVID-19 world, this is even more important as staying underway ensures ship crews reduce their risk of exposure to COVID-19, keeping them healthy and able to perform the missions assigned to them.

"This was an extremely challenging event for our MSC ships, as our resources were spread very thin over a large geographical area, with the need to support a large strike group," explained Leonard Bell, MSCPAC deputy commander. "As with all our missions, our Civil Service Mariner crews stepped up and met the challenges head on, once again proving once again their professionalism,



The aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) breaks away after a replenishment-at-sea with the Military Sealift Command fleet replenishment oiler USNS Guadalupe (T-AO 200), Nov. 27. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Javier Reyes)

commitment to duty and pride in the work they do. Through their efforts, we were able to provide outstanding support to the Fleet, ensuring mission readiness."

In addition to providing logistics services to the Abraham Lincoln Strike Group, USNS Guadalupe also served as the Pacific duty oiler, delivering supplies to other Navy ships in the area, something they continue following the conclusion of the operation.

USNS John Lenthall Returns Home in Time for the Holiday Season

By LaShawn Sykes, Military Sealift Command Public Affairs

Military Sealift Command's combat logistics force (CLF) fleet replenishment oiler USNS John Lenthall (T-AO 189) returned to Naval Station Norfolk, Dec. 16, after completing a five-month deployment overseas.

Lenthall's Operation Chief Lewis S. Montague said he is super proud of the crew, "We all worked tirelessly around the clock to get the vessel ready for a last minute-emergent deployment overseas. Now that we are back at NAVSTA, I know everyone is looking forward to the holiday season. Being home is a great way to ring in the New Year."

MSC's fleet replenishment oilers play a vital role in the U.S. Navy's logistics system, making it possible for combatant ships to stay forward deployed in order to protect America's interests worldwide.

Steaming 35,000 nautical miles over 150 days, stretching from the Eastern Atlantic Ocean to the wide and very rough seas of the Indian Ocean with 72 Civil Service Mariners (CIVMARS), Lenthall served as the region's primary fleet replenishment oiler, providing multi-mission capable combat logistic tanker support in both U.S. 5th and U.S. 6th Fleet's areas of operation.

Lenthall's flexibility and commitment enabled the safe delivery of 4.5 million gallons of fuel and 48 pallets of critical cargo and supplies during 23 underway replenishments with 15 U.S. Navy and allied surface combatant ships at-sea.

In addition to being the sole replenishment oiler for two Navy fleets, Lenthall served as an ambassador during Task Force 65's Aegean Sea and Black Sea operations, providing timely logistic services to USS Porter (DDG 78) as she conducted interoperability exercises with regional Navy ships from Turkey, Georgia, and Romania.

Likewise, while in the Mediterranean Sea, Lenthall supported Porter's participation in a French-led multilateral maritime war-at-sea exercise, Polaris 21, that involved the participation of a 6,000-strong workforce, 65 aircraft, one submarine, and 23 ships from across NATO's alliance, creating opportunities for NATO and partner nations to work together to integrate and validate lessons learned in order to improve real-world operations.

Lenthall is the third ship of the U.S. Navy's 15 Henry J. Kaiser-class replenishment oilers. Her motto is "Shaft of the Spear." Although retired on Nov. 11, 1996, the vessel was placed back in service with MSC on Dec. 7, 1998.

CLF ships provide logistics support to deployed U.S. Navy combatants and coalition force ships to include fuel, ordnance, food, stores and repair and spare parts. These ships enable combatants to remain on station and continue their primary mission, without having to resupply at a port. They are particularly important when combatants are unable to receive supplies

from local ports in theater due to force protections measures. CLF ships are U.S. Government-owned and are operated by Civil Service Mariners. All CLF ships are capable of integrating rotary-wing aircraft operations.

MSC operates approximately 125 civilian-crewed ships that replenish U.S. Navy ships, conduct specialized missions, and strategically preposition combat cargo at sea around the world while moving military cargo and supplies used by deployed U.S. forces and coalition partners.

For more news from Military Sealift Command, visit www.msc.usff.navy.mil.

Military Sealift Command's Combat Logistics Force (CLF) fleet replenishment oiler USNS John Lenthall (T-AO 189) returns to Naval Station Norfolk, Dec. 16, after completing a five-month deployment overseas. MSC's fleet replenishment oilers play a vital role in the Navy's logistics system, making it possible for combatant ships to stay at sea and on mission. (U.S. Navy photo by LaShawn Sykes)



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USNS Big Horn Conducts Replenishments-at-Sea, Enhances Interoperability during Annual Exercise

By Leslie Hull-Ryde, Military Sealift Command Far East Public Affairs

Military Sealift Command's (MSC) Henry J. Kaiser-class replenishment oiler USNS Big Horn (T-AO 198) conducted underway replenishments with partners and allies as part of Annual Exercise (ANNUALEX), in the Philippine Sea, Nov. 21-30.

Naval forces from Australia, Canada, Germany, Japan and the United States took part in the multilateral, multinational exercise, led by the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF). The exercise helped strengthen enduring relationships while sharpening naval proficiencies. As part of the exercise, participants engaged in various events to include enhanced maritime communication tactics, anti-submarine warfare operations, air warfare operations, replenishments-at-sea (RAS), cross-deck flight operations and maritime maneuvers.

During ANNUALEX, the combat logistics force ship resupplied JMSDF ships Takanami-class destroyer JS Ohnami (DD 111) and Kongō-class guided missile destroyer JS Kirishima (DDG-174), the German Navy's Brandenburg-class frigate FGS Bayern (F217), the Royal Canadian Navy's Halifax-class Frigate HMC Winnipeg (FFH 338), and the Royal Australian Navy's Hobart-class air warfare destroyer HMAS Brisbane (DDG 41) and Anzac-class frigate HMAS Warramunga (FFH 152). Although recent underway replenishments took place as part of the exercise, many of the countries work together frequently in the U.S. 7th Fleet area of operations – and beyond.

“JMSDF vessels have the capability to work with the U.S. Navy at any time and in any sea area,” said Capt. Yoshihuku Toshihiko, commanding officer of JMSDF's replenishment ship JS Oumi (AOE 426).

He explained that when operating together, both countries place the “highest priority” on operating safely, making sure each event is carried out carefully and without fail.

“Although there may be subtle differences between Japan and the U.S. in the way these operations are carried out, I hope that the JMSDF ships will be watched with trust as they carry out their operations,” Yoshihuku added.

During RAS events, Big Horn's involvement gave all participants opportunities to make approaches, connect hoses, take fuel and hone

Henry J. Kaiser-class fleet replenishment oiler USNS Big Horn (T-AO 198) conducts underway replenishments in the Philippine Sea with partners and allies, including FGS Bayern (F217), Germany's Brandenburg-class frigate, as part of Annual Exercise. (U.S. Navy photo by Juahn Gaskins)



ship-handling skills, all while maintaining a lateral distance of 48-60 meters while alongside.

“Helping international partners and allies integrate equipment and resources helps coalition forces to react well to adversity and scale up our responsiveness when needed,” said Big Horn's Chief Mate Matthew Twomey. “Exercises like this validate our compatibility and verify that our NATO gear is standardized and can be operated safely by all involved. They also allow us to explore how we can scale our operations so that we can collectively respond successfully to any tasking, in any theater – worldwide.”

ANNUALEX and other exercises and operations allow partners and allies and MSC crews to enhance interoperability.

“The greatest advantage of working with the USNS is that we can confirm the operation and equipment of the USNS underway replenishment ships in the field,” Yoshihuku said. “In addition, it is possible to directly ask questions about the slight differences in the way Japanese and U.S. underway replenishment ships conduct their operations, which will further deepen the mutual understanding between the U.S. and Japanese underway replenishment ship units.”

Santa Has Nothing on Ship's Master who Spreads Holiday Cheer

By Leslie Hull-Ryde, Military Sealift Command Far East Public Affairs



Second Mate Nicholas Grippo says he appreciates the efforts of the ship's master who makes the holiday season special. (U.S. Navy photo by Deatra Thompson)

Military Sealift Command's large medium speed roll-on, roll-off ship USNS Dahl (T-AKR 312) brings joy all year long to U.S. Armed Forces operating in the Indo-Pacific Region.

The prepositioning and sea-basing ship prepositions containerized and palletized cargo, heavy equipment and vehicles throughout the region, ensuring U.S. forces have what they need, when they need it and where they need it. While this effort makes warfighters happy, knowing they have the essentials that help accomplish the mission, the master of Dahl brings smiles to her crew and community this time of year.

For several years, Capt. Deatra Thompson, master of USNS Dahl, spearheaded the

collective effort of several other prepositioning ships' crews. The contracted mariners collect, wrap and donate gifts and toys to children and mothers in the Guma Esperanza Women's Shelter in Saipan, spreading holiday cheer.

“It is hard for the crew to be away from friends and families for such long periods of time, especially over the holidays. If they can get involved in decorating the ship, the Secret Santa gift exchange, or the toy drive, it really boosts morale, and it definitely gives them something to talk to their family about,” Thompson says.

The U.S. Naval Academy Class of '94 alumna has a heart for making the season special, not only for members of the local community but for her crew as well. The former U.S. Navy surface warfare officer adorns every possible inch of space aboard Dahl with festive lights and decorations.

Although it's a balmy 80 degrees in the Western Pacific in December, Thompson turns the ship into a veritable winter wonderland. It is a month-long project with new decorations being added somewhere on the ship almost every day. She likens the effort to an advent calendar.

“You never know what you are going to find when you open your stateroom door.”

Thompson says her crew works hard making sure Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine and international partners and allies have what they need all year long. Come holiday time, she wants her crew to feel at home.

“Many of the crew members are assigned to the vessel for eight or more months a year. They spend more time at sea than they do ashore and consider the Dahl their home. One of the crewmembers is a plank owner and has been serving

aboard since the ship was delivered more than 20 years ago,” Thompson said.

The time and energy she invests into hanging lights, stockings and wall decorations seem to pay off. Dahl's crew members say they truly appreciate Thompson's effort.

“Until all the decorations and lights started going up, we were having trouble getting into the spirit of the season because the warm weather is a physical disconnect,” said Dahl Second Mate Nicholas Grippo who hails from a cold-weather locale in the United States.

“The decorations are similar to what I'd see at home this time of year, and they made the holiday season seem real.”

Thompson's festive approach has spread along the waterfront. Other Military Sealift Command crews contribute to the enjoyment by decorating their ships as well. In fact, Thompson often lends decorations to her fellow masters who help light up the area. In addition, she's inspired other masters and crews to acquire their own decorations.

USNS Watkins (T-AKR 315), USNS Charlton (T-AKR 314) and USNS Red Cloud (T-AKR 313) – all part of Maritime Prepositioning Ships Squadron 3 – have joined the effort. These ships not only sport large illuminated Santas and sleighs, complete with reindeer, but they also have stockings for the entire crew and chair decorations for their dining areas. Red Cloud's boatswain's mate really got involved by building large hanging stars and trees, found now on the ship's stern.

Thompson says the collaboration among the MPSRON 3 crews creates what she calls “Nautical Christmas Tree Lane.”

We are MSC: Ordinary Seaman Larry J. Gonzales, Sr.

By LaShawn Sykes, Military Sealift Command Atlantic Public Affairs

Larry James Gonzales, Sr., is not your typical ordinary seaman. At 63 years old, he is beginning his third career with Military Sealift Command in Norfolk, Virginia. His first career began in December 1978, with the U.S. Navy as a signalman aboard USS Aylwin (FF-1081) in Charleston, South Carolina.

Over the next 20 years, he served aboard five naval ships and completed two shore tours as a law enforcement officer. One of his biggest personal achievements during his military career was winning the Pacific Fleet Golden Anchor Award for his nomination aboard USS George Philip (FFG-12) at Naval Weapons Station Fallbrook in Fallbrook, California, as the Command Career Counselor, a rather remarkable feat. He was honorably discharged from the Navy in January 2000 at the rank of Petty Officer First Class. Five months later in May, he joined AT&T, where he worked in the wonderful 'world of billing' for the next 20 years.

During his tenure, he earned numerous awards and accolades, receiving four President Club awards for his elite customer service. After retiring in May of 2020, he spent the summer with his two grandchildren, traveled a bit, and completed various home projects. "I eventually rejoined the workforce because I missed having human contact and the esprit de corps that is found on a naval ship."

What is your name, job title, and MSC ship assigned to?

My name is Larry James Gonzales, Sr. I am an ordinary seaman aboard USNS Walter S. Diehl (T-AO 193). As an OS, I am in an apprenticeship status to become an able seaman, after my required sea time is complete.

When did you join MSC, and what is unique about your job aboard USNS Walter S. Diehl?

I came out of my second retirement to join Military Sealift Command in October 2020. I have been assigned to Walter S. Diehl now, a little over five months, and I am very excited to be back on the water again – my home away from home.

Because of my 20 years of experience as a Navy signalman, I have been given the rare opportunity to reestablish the duties of a signalman aboard USNS Walter S. Diehl. As the lead person in charge of operating the signal bridge (the platform above the pilot house), I am responsible for sending communication messages to other ships (foreign or domestic) at sea. Having a rated signalman aboard the Walter S. Diehl during either a replenishment-at-sea (RAS) or a fueling-at-sea (FAS), allows a tanker to set and observe emissions control (EMCON) or radio silence. A signalman's abilities range from sending and receiving messages by flashing light via morse code, flag-hoist, and semaphore to expert lookout duties and assisting the ship's navigator. My ability to perform the signalman duties affects the ship's operation as well as other ships with whom I communicate. The last time USNS Walter S. Diehl had signalmen was at the beginning of the millennium.

What type of military training or education have you taken to prepare you to work aboard USNS Walter S. Diehl?

On January 31, 2000, I retired from the US Navy, with 20 years of service, as a signalman first class. With more than two decades of naval experience, I bring a wealth of knowledge to the OS position. I feel I am qualified for this position and truly believe that an American veteran is a very special person due to the many sacrifices they've endured while performing their untiring duties.

What does a typical day look like for you aboard USNS Walter S. Diehl?

During morning musters, I enjoy observing the harbor of ships because

I am able to see the military smartness of morning colors, observe the unique characteristics of ships, and notice how knowledgeable sailors and Civil Service Mariners are about the variety of ships that are moored on Naval Station Norfolk.

Currently, my main duty is ship's preservation. Because the signal bridge is always the showpiece of any ship, Walter S. Diehl will be no exception. Chipping, sanding, priming, and painting are all my middle names. I love keeping the ship pristine at all times. I also enjoy operating the ship's store, which I have named Mr. G's General Store, which is open to the crew three days a week for 30 minutes on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, from 12:00 p.m. to 12:30 p.m.

What is the best thing about working aboard USNS Walter S. Diehl?

I am truly respected and have the flexibility to get any job done. My partner in crime is the Navigator. He is always there to provide the tools and advice I need.

What is the most challenging part of your work aboard USNS Walter S. Diehl?

While there are different aspects of hard work found on the ship, our primary mission is to support the U.S. fleet. We are constantly maintaining and improving day to day operations. The maritime industry today requires constant diligence due to modern technology.

My biggest challenge is the inability to communicate and practice traditional seamanship with other ships. Over Independence Day, I wanted to assist a U.S. ship but was unable to reach it via flashing light. Since then, I have instituted planned maintenance systems to identify and correct deficiencies within our visual signaling equipment for all U.S. naval ships.

What is your most favorite memory at sea?

Crossing the Atlantic on New Year's Eve and the captain allowing the signalmen to shoot pyrotechnic flares over the side for the crew to observe.

What would you tell someone who is interested in joining MSC and working aboard USNS Walter S. Diehl?

I have already told my cousin that MSC is an excellent place to work. The benefits are great and the challenges are equaling as rewarding. And, if she has the privilege of working aboard the Walter S. Diehl, she will definitely gain weight, with the delicious food made by our superb cooks.



Larry James Gonzales, Sr., ordinary seaman aboard USNS Walter S. Diehl (T-AO 193), poses for a photo aboard the fleet replenishment oiler. (U.S. Navy photo by LaShawn Sykes)

MSC Benefits from Reservist's Skills, Work Ethic

By Leslie Hull-Ryde, Military Sealift Command Far East

Keep questioning. Keep learning. Keep solving problems. Accomplish the mission.

That's the charge Chief Radio Electronics Technician Jonathan Courtney gives his Sailors, peers and supervisors.

"Do not be afraid of rising to a challenge. It may seem intimidating at first, and yes mistakes will be made, but that is how one grows and develops," the reservist with Military Sealift Command Expeditionary Port Unit 102 says.

"Keep learning and keep developing. You'll never and cannot know it all. Use the resources available to you, and strive to acquire the skills, knowledge and experience you need to handle any task."

He believes reservists' flexibility and civilian skill sets are invaluable to mission accomplishment.

"You can have a great deal of satisfaction when working in your rate and marrying it with what you do in the civilian sector and vice versa. This combo makes you a better resource, and you provide quality service to both your employer and the Navy."

When not in uniform, Courtney works for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority Information Technology Division in New York City. In that role, he applies many lessons learned while serving in uniform. Likewise, much of what he does in the Big Apple directly relates to what he does for the MSC and the Navy.

"The reserve community contributes in a major way because we are flexible and have a breadth of expertise in our civilian jobs. Our diverse experiences give our active duty counterparts some creative solutions which ultimately contribute to mission accomplishment."

"Speaking as a reservist myself, we bring experience from the civilian workforce to the fleet. This is especially true if the service member's civilian skill set matches his or her rate."

MSC Reservist continued on page 8



Chief Radio Electronics Technician Jonathan Courtney, a U.S. Navy Reservist serving at Military Sealift Command Port Unit 102. (U.S. Navy photo)

Fisher Crew Member's Gadgets and Get-it-Done Approach Keep Gears Good to Go

By Leslie Hull-Ryde, Military Sealift Far East Command Public Affairs

One crew member aboard the surge sealift ship USNS Fisher (T-AKR 301) puts his whole heart into keeping the gears in the heart of the ship's engine room operating cleanly, safely and efficiently.

"Turning wrenches and getting into engines is what I like to do," said Wiper Dennison Forsman.

The self-described 'gear-head' from Poulsbo, Washington, has the critical responsibility of cleaning and organizing the engine and engine control rooms. His efforts not only keep the engine running smoothly, but they also help increase the lifespan of the surge sealift ship.

"I ensure the bilges are clean of oil, keeping the vessel safe from hazardous situations," Forsman said.

"I also assist the qualified members of the engine department and licensed engineers with engine overhauls, preventive maintenance and troubleshooting.

"Seeing the end result of a job I've been tasked with and receiving praise from my supervisors gives me a feeling of accomplishment."

To get it all done, Forsman must constantly multi-task, allowing for unexpected requirements and emerging priorities.

"Each day brings new challenges, and a person must prioritize as tasks change throughout the day," he said.

"It keeps us on our toes."

As he juggles all the little considerations to get the big responsibilities of a wiper done, he tries learning as much as he can.



Wiper Dennison Forsman, a self-described 'gear-head', has the critical responsibility of cleaning and organizing the engine and engine control rooms. His efforts not only keep the engine running smoothly, but they also help increase the lifespan of the surge sealift ship USNS Fisher (T-AKR 301). (U.S. Navy photo by Cmdr. Dawn Hansen)

"I enjoy the opportunity to be included in jobs outside of my written scope of duties as I definitely want to move up the ladder and eventually get my the [qualified member of the engine department] endorsement and perhaps even become a third engineer," Forsman said.

Prior to becoming a contract mariner and serving with Military Sealift Command, he worked for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, or NOAA, also as a wiper. Then he enrolled in the Seafarers International Union apprentice program. Currently, he is in the fourth phase of that program.

The educational, advancement and exploratory opportunities are what Forsman says called him to a life at sea.

"This career has given me the opportunity to earn a good wage, travel the world and meet new people. I'm looking forward to a world without COVID where there are more chances to go ashore."

February is Heart Health Month

From Leighanne Gerstbrein, Military Sealift Command Health Coordinator

Military Sealift Command is proud to celebrate American Heart Health Month this February 2022! American Heart Month is observed to raise awareness of the importance of a healthy heart and promote healthy habits that help decrease the risk of heart disease.

American Heart Month is crucial because it reminds us to take care of our heart. During this month we are encouraged us assess our health habits and risks and take steps to enhance our heart health. This month-long observance also promotes education about heart health.

Understanding the risk factors for heart disease and lessening them can help people lead healthier lives and reduce their risk for heart attacks or other cardiovascular diseases. Lastly, American Heart Health Month helps increase awareness of heart disease. The number one cause of death for Americans is heart disease, a slow-moving epidemic that affects nearly everyone.

More than 600,000 Americans die from heart disease each year. Heart disease is the number one cause of death for most groups and affects all genders, ages, and ethnicities. Risk factors include high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, smoking, and excessive alcohol use.

How do you keep your heart healthy? Be inspired to take an active role in lowering your risk for heart disease by consuming a nutritious diet, participating in physical activity, and managing your cholesterol and blood pressure. This is an excellent opportunity to start some heart-healthy habits!

Five interesting facts about heart health:

- 1. Heart attacks can be silent.** One in five heart attacks happens without the person knowing they had one.
- 2. Heart attacks affect women differently.** Women may experience different symptoms than men. These include pain in the back, arm, neck, or shoulder; nausea; fatigue; shortness of breath; and vomiting.
- 3. Young women are at higher risk than men.** Women under 50 years old are twice as likely to die of a heart attack as men in the same age group.
- 4. Another reason to hate Mondays.** Heart attacks are more likely to happen on Monday mornings than on other days of the week. Scientists attribute this to the disturbance in our circadian rhythm over the weekend, which leads to increased blood pressure and other changes to the nervous system.
- 5. Diet soda raises heart attack risk.** Your chances of having a heart attack are 43% higher if you drink one or more diet sodas a day than those who drink regular soda or none at all.

If you or someone you know may benefit from any of the above listed services, or for more information on the MSC Health Promotion program, contact one of your Health Promotion Coordinators:

CSU-East: Email: leighanne.gerstbrein.ctr@navy.mil, (757) 443-5630
CSU-West: Email: kylie.kutina.ctr@navy.mil, (858) 224-3068

USNS Mercy Concludes MERCEX 22-1

By Petty Officer 2nd Class Jacob Woitzel, USNS MERCY (T-AH 19)

Military Sealift Command's hospital ship USNS Mercy (T-AH 19) and its embarked Medical Treatment Facility (MTF) recently returned to San Diego, concluding Mercy Exercise (MERCEX) 22-1.

MERCEX is a training evolution held quarterly; both pier-side and underway.

Over 300 Sailors embarked Mercy, and participated in both pier-side and underway training exercises and drills to test overall medical capability and efficiency.

"MERCEX 22-1 was a resounding success," said Capt. Timothy Quast, Mercy's commanding officer. "Our crew executed safe and precise

flight operations with an MV-22B Osprey, participated in small boat operations alongside our MSC shipmates and treated a variety of patients during mass casualty drills in all phases of care and injury. We witnessed proof that Mercy is ready and reliable for any future mission."

During MERCEX 22-1, Sailors conducted directorate-specific and cross-directorate training, medical readiness training and patient transport training. Sailors also participated in exercises such as firefighting and damage control drills, small boat drills and flight operations, all alongside their MSC shipmates.

MERCEX continued on page 8

MSC Reservist continued from page 6

I'm fortunate to bring the IT skills I have from working as an IT computer associate for the Transportation Authority to the Navy and vice versa. It hones your skill sets by marrying your skills together," the Long Island, New York, resident said.

For much of the last nine years, Courtney has served MSC, specifically managing parts of the communications programs and requirements. He is responsible for maintaining, repairing and ensuring the integrity of secure communications equipment and systems. Keeping these systems functioning properly is important, especially as his efforts make sure high-priority, emergent or classified messages are received and transmitted properly.

Courtney also trains Sailors at all levels to ensure all secure data-related policies and procedures are followed.

"At MSC, qualified individuals are needed to establish communications, maintain electronic storage and provide secure protection of ship records. Stated simply, this position establishes and maintains a system of electronic storage and telecommunications to protect data, both on and off ship and from ship-to-shore installations in theater."

It can be a rather complex job, but paying attention to the small details that can make it more challenging ultimately makes it easier to tackle.

Courtney says this approach has been one he's fine tuned during his career. Born in Trinidad and Tobago, he earned a bachelor's degree in information security at Western Governors University in Millcreek, Utah. While in college and sailing with MSC, he developed his work ethic – one that the Navy has benefited from for close to 20 years.

"I affiliated with the reserves in 2005 primarily because of the education benefits they provided for college. I planned to stay for one enlistment," Courtney said.

"Looking back 16 years, I can say the Navy Reserve has offered me a lot more than that."

MERCEX continued from page 1

"The MERCEX [22-1] was very successful," said Capt. Peter Nolan, Mercy's ship's master. "We accomplished all of our objectives and goals, and we are very happy with the outcome of the week's exercises."

To conclude MERCEX, Sailors and Civil Service Mariners participated in an all-hands, mass casualty capstone event to test their abilities learned throughout the week.

MERCEX 22-1 is a three-week-long, pier-side and underway training evolution that highlights integration, training and camaraderie between Military Sealift Command (MSC) CIVMARS and Military Treatment Facility (MTF) Sailors. When called upon, Mercy can steam to assist anywhere to provide relief. The ship is a symbol of Navy Medicine's abilities around the world, and must be in a five-day-activation status in order to support missions over the horizon. Mercy is charged with being ready, reliable and resilient to support mission commanders.



Rescue Swimmer Carlos Velez, a Civil Service Mariner assigned to Military Sealift Command's hospital ship USNS Mercy (T-AH 19), pilots a fast rescue vehicle, while the ship was underway for Mercy Exercise 22-1. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Jacob Woitzel)

ANYDAY SINGAPORE BAHRAIN NORFOLK GUAM ROTA



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Military Sealift Command reports to the Commander, U.S. Transportation Command for defense transportation matters, to the Commander, U.S. Fleet Forces Command for Navy-unique matters and to the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition for procurement policy and oversight matters.



Contract civilian mariners assigned to USNS Dahl (T-AKR 312), USNS Red Cloud (T-AKR 313), USNS Charlton (T-AKR 314), USNS Piliilau (T-AKR 304), USNS SGT William R. Button (T-AK 3012) and MV Bernard F. Fisher (T-AK 4396) voluntarily donated toys and gifts for residents of Guma' Esperansa. The shelter provides a temporary safe haven for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking, and their children in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. (U.S. Navy photo by Capt. Deatra Thompson)



Contract civilian mariners assigned to USNS Dahl (T-AKR 312), USNS Red Cloud (T-AKR 313), USNS Charlton (T-AKR 314), USNS Piliilau (T-AKR 304), USNS SGT William R. Button (T-AK 3012) and MV Bernard F. Fisher (T-AK 4396) voluntarily donated toys and gifts for residents of Guma' Esperansa. (U.S. Navy photo by Capt. Deatra Thompson)