



SEALIFT

U.S. NAVY'S MILITARY SEALIFT COMMAND... *UNITED WE SAIL*

NOVEMBER 2017 ISSUE



The Military Sealift Command hospital ship USNS Comfort (T-AH 20) arrives in San Juan, Puerto Rico, for humanitarian operations. The Department of Defense is supporting the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the lead federal agency, in helping those affected by Hurricane Maria to minimize suffering and is one component of the overall whole-of-government response effort. (U.S. Navy Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Ernest R. Scott)

USNS COMFORT ARRIVES IN PUERTO RICO

By Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Ernest R. Scott and Military Sealift Command Public Affairs

The Mercy-class Military Sealift Command hospital ship USNS Comfort (T-AH 20) arrived in Puerto Rico to assist in humanitarian relief efforts, Oct. 3.

Comfort is part of the whole-of-government response effort and is assisting the Federal Emergency Management System (FEMA), the lead federal agency, in helping those affected by Hurricane Maria.

While in San Juan, the hospital ship hosted a summit with key stakeholders to synchronize efforts for the ship's mission throughout the area.

The hospital ship has one of the largest trauma facilities in the United States and is equipped with four X-ray machines, one CAT scan unit, a dental suite, an optometry lens laboratory, physical therapy center, pharmacy, angiography suite and two oxygen-producing plants.

The hospital ship departed Naval Station Norfolk Sep. 29 and continued to make logistic preparations via an underway replenishment with Military Sealift Command's dry cargo ammunition ship USNS William McLean (T-AKE 12) and fast combat support ship USNS Supply (T-AOE 6) where critical stores and supplies for the hurricane relief effort were transported to Comfort while the ships were at sea.

"The medical capability the ship can deliver can be done underway, it can be done in port, or it can be done at anchor. Between the helicopter capabilities we have and the boats we have, all of those things together give us the ability to be flexible in our mission," said Capt. Kevin Robinson, commander, forward command element aboard USNS Comfort.

USNS Comfort departed Naval Station Norfolk with over 800 Navy medical personnel and support staff with the medical treatment facility (MTF), and over 70 civil service mariners. The medical personnel will provide a full spectrum of medical care to include general practice, family medicine, nephrology and pediatrics. The civil service mariners operate and navigate the ship, load and off-load mission cargo, assist with repairs to mission equipment and provide essential services to keep the MTF up and running.

When not deployed, USNS Comfort is kept

in a reduced operating status but can transition to full operating status in five days.

"Fourty-eight hours ago there were less than 100 people aboard this ship that included civilian mariners and medical treatment facility personnel. Over the past 36 hours, we have flown medical professionals and their support personnel from all over the country and the number of people aboard right now is over 800," said Robinson.

Comfort's MTF is an embarked crew of medical personnel from the Navy's Bureau of Medicine and Surgery responsible for operating and maintaining one of the largest trauma facilities in the United States.

"I am extremely proud of the MTF crew, many of whom just found out last night that they were deploying today," said Capt. Kevin Buckley, commanding officer, USNS Comfort's MTF.

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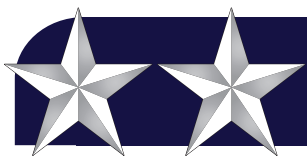
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The Military Sealift Command hospital ship USNS Comfort (T-AH 20), center, conducts an underway replenishment with the dry cargo and ammunition ship USNS William McLean (T-AKE 12), left, and the fast combat support ship USNS Supply (T-AOE 6). (U.S. Navy Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Ernest R. Scott)





HURRICANE RELIEF, RITEMOV, SECNAV VISION AND PRIORITIES, TRANSCOM MARKS 30 YEARS

From Commander, Military Sealift Command

Over recent months, very strong hurricanes made landfall in Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico and several Caribbean islands causing significant destruction and forcing the dislocation of thousands of people. Our thoughts and prayers are with the families and communities affected by this tragedy, and with the responders who are currently helping those in need.

Through preparation and planning, Military Sealift Command is well-positioned to provide assistance and support military, federal and state response efforts. For example, USNS Comfort (T-AH 20), USNS William McLean (T-AKE 12), USNS Spearhead (T-EPF 1) and USNS Supply (T-AOE 6) have commenced support operations in the vicinity of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, providing medical care, fuel and relief supplies in support of hurricane relief operations.

This is the second year in a row where we have responded to a hurricane recovery operation. It should serve to remind us that we may be called upon at any time to support a contingency or crisis operations. Maintaining a high state of readiness is key to our ability to provide assured maritime logistics.

RITEMOV

Last fall MSC began a pilot project to determine appropriate assessments for our ships and to identify the information necessary to develop a meaningful material condition metric. The program, called Readiness Improvement Through Enhanced Material Observation and Validation or RITEMOV, was accomplished using vessel self-assessments (VSAs), port engineer vessel inspections (PEVIs), and existing maintenance, supply, and C4I metrics. The pilot project was successful and provided valuable insight into the material readiness of the tested vessels.

Following this pilot program, the command will now implement the program fleet-wide, assessing all our ship classes. The RITEMOV process owners will develop assessment and inspection scheduling guidance and conduct briefings to afloat personnel, Area Command staffs, and operational commands to inform stakeholders about the benefits and requirements of the program.

The output of the program is a holistic readiness understanding and meaningful assessment metric for each ship that can be used to make informed decisions, prioritize maintenance, and allocate limited resources. Here are benefits of the RITEMOV program:

- Provide ashore staff with an accurate picture of our ships' conditions.
- Help identify and prioritize maintenance issues throughout the fleet ensuring resources are allocated appropriately.
- Capture performance metrics that will allow us to quantitatively and qualitatively assess our operations.
- Establish and implement procedures and controls to ensure meaningful gains are achieved and sustained.

It's important to recognize that the results of a RITEMOV assessment will help both the ashore and afloat teams to better understand the material condition of a ship and therefore make better informed decisions about its operations and maintenance activities. Armed with this knowledge, we can improve support to our customers and successfully execute our assured maritime logistics mission.

Programs such as RITEMOV demonstrate innovation and support the line of effort, "Achieve High Velocity Learning at Every Level," found in the Navy's Design for Achieving Maritime Superiority.

SECNAV Vision and Priorities

Recently we welcomed aboard the new Secretary of the Navy, the Honorable

Richard V. Spencer. Secretary Spencer served in the Marine Corps as a CH-46 pilot, worked in the investment banking industry, and has remained active in Navy and Department of Defense affairs, serving on multiple boards and panels.

Sending a memorandum to all Sailors, Marines, and civilian teammates, he promulgated Department of the Navy mission, vision, and priorities. You can read the memorandum on the MSC portal in the "announcements" section, or your supervisor can provide you a copy. Please read this document as it provides strategic direction and will guide our actions.

I was drawn to the vision statement where the Secretary noted, "We are an integrated Naval force that will provide maritime dominance for the Nation. To accomplish this in the face of current and emerging challenges, we must renew our sense of urgency and speed of execution throughout the entire organization."

Our Voyage Plan is aligned with this vision and should reinforce that we are heading in the right direction. Phrases such as "sense of urgency, and speed of execution" represent the attributes and mindset that are needed today to keep us ahead of our competitors and adversaries.

By working smarter, harnessing the ideas and talent of our people, and seeking innovative solutions to our more pressing challenges, we will "bend the curve" of our mission capability so that we can provide assured logistics and service support today and into the future.

TRANSCOM Marks 30 Years

In October we celebrated the 30th Anniversary of the formation of United States Transportation Command. Over the past three decades, USTRANSCOM has answered the Nation's call, from contingency operations to humanitarian missions around the world, providing a rapid and responsive global force.

USTRANSCOM, one of nine combatant commands, provides air, land and sea transportation, terminal management, patient movement, and aerial refueling to support the global deployment, employment, sustainment and redeployment of U.S. forces.

USTRANSCOM's ability to deliver an immediate force today and a decisive force when needed is a unique capability and a significant strategic advantage of the United States. This ability is only made possible through the people of USTRANSCOM and its supporting units.

As the naval component, MSC directly supports the USTRANSCOM mission by providing assured maritime logistics. Our ship chartering services, prepositioned force, organic sealift ships, and mariner force deliver a powerful capability that supports our nation's joint warfighters.

While we celebrate the proud legacy of this combatant command, we recognize that the work we do today, and our supporting strategic themes, are aligned with USTRANSCOM priorities:

- TC Priority 1: Ensure Today's Readiness...Advocate for Tomorrow's Capabilities.
- MSC Strategic Theme: Assuring Global Maritime Logistical Services.
- TC Priority 2: Advance Cyber Domain Capabilities.
- MSC Strategic Theme: Developing Tactical Capabilities That Support Future Warfighting.
- TC Priority 3: Evolve for Tomorrow.
- MSC Strategic Theme: Dedicated to Continuous Improvement and Innovation.
- TC Priority 4: Champion an Innovative, Diverse, & Agile Workforce.
- MSC Strategic Theme: Harnessing and Developing a Diverse, Capable, and Talented Workforce.

We are gratified and motivated to be part of the team that proudly states, "Together, we deliver!"

USTRANSCOM has a proven ability to deliver national objectives and provide our Nation with options in response to crises around the world. This success can be attributed to its professional and dedicated workforce. We honor their service and say thank you to the men and women who have contributed to the impressive USTRANSCOM legacy.

Happy 30th Birthday, USTRANSCOM!

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

FRANK CABLE'S HYBRID CREW AWARDED CNO AFLOAT SAFETY AWARD



U.S. Navy's Military Sealift Command Director, Ship Management, Christopher Thayer, coins 3rd Officer Darrel Tracy, of the submarine tender USS Frank Cable (AS 40), for his contribution to Frank Cable's Chief of Naval Operations Afloat Safety Award, aboard Frank Cable's observation deck, Aug. 21. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Alana Langdon)

By Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Alana M. Langdon, USS Frank Cable Public Affairs

Recently the Chief of Naval Operations Afloat Safety Award was presented to the hybrid crew of Sailors and Military Sealift Command (MSC) civilian mariners aboard the submarine tender USS Frank Cable (AS 40) in Portland, Oregon.

Christopher D. Thayer, U.S. Navy's MSC Director, Ship Management arrived aboard and praised Frank Cable's safety program, which maintained safe and healthy working conditions for 810 Navy and MSC personnel, throughout 2,965 in-theater repairs to forward-deployed submarines and surface vessels of U.S. Fifth and U.S. Seventh Fleet Areas of Responsibility.

"I read all 13 pages of the write up and this is a very comprehensive safety program lead by Lt. Gonzalez," said Thayer. "I was involved, back in the early 2000's, in the decisions to transfer the submarine tenders to the hybrid crew. It's amazing how far we've come and I wanted to thank this crew."

Lt. Malia Gonzalez, safety officer on board Frank Cable, and Chief Damage Controlman Cyprus Abundo, also from safety department, teamed up with MSC deck department 3rd Officer Darrel V. Tracy to coordinate Frank Cable's safety program.

"This award is a reflection of our command climate," said Tracy. "Our

guys don't need safety police because they use our program's procedures and look out for each other. Yes, we're in a hurry, but the climate is to take the time to do jobs safely."

Tracy heads up fall protection safety and regularly inspects deck department equipment to ensure standards are met.

"I think this award is well-deserved, especially for Gonzalez and Abundo," said Tracy. "We have a hybrid crew and it's a big success to have created a diplomatic and cooperative command that goes above standard."

Safety on Frank Cable went beyond just work. Total command mishaps dropped by more than 41 percent in 2016. The crew took it upon themselves to complete a ship-wide 10 day intensive preservation plan, removing workplace health hazards and corrosion. Sailors and civilian mariners also receive regular safety training and are frequently tested on their knowledge and capability to operate equipment.

"We take the time to give proper training, which makes safety a clear standard aboard," said Abundo. "Our safety team does a great job of implementing the program and we will always take time to educate the crew. It's simple, we train and we hold each other accountable."

Frank Cable is currently in Portland, Oregon, undergoing a scheduled dry-dock maintenance availability, receiving critical preservation and repairs that will add to her award-winning safety program.



The submarine tender USS Frank Cable (AS 40) sails from her position in Vigor Shipyard's dry dock to moor pier-side during a fleeting exercise. Frank Cable is in Portland, Oregon for a scheduled dry-dock phase maintenance availability. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Alana Langdon)

THE CYBER THREAT IS REAL

From Office of the Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Information Warfare (N2N6)

Throughout National Cybersecurity Awareness Month and in subsequent articles, the Office of the Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Information Warfare (N2N6) will describe the things you can do, at home and at work, to protect yourself and the Navy from cyber threats.

Few people today need to be convinced that our networks, computers and smart phones are at risk of compromise. We've grown accustomed to the news of computer hacks.

The confidential information of 143 million Americans was potentially compromised in the recent Equifax breach. In May 2017, the WannaCry ransomware attack infected 150,000-plus computers in over 150 countries within the first 24 hours.

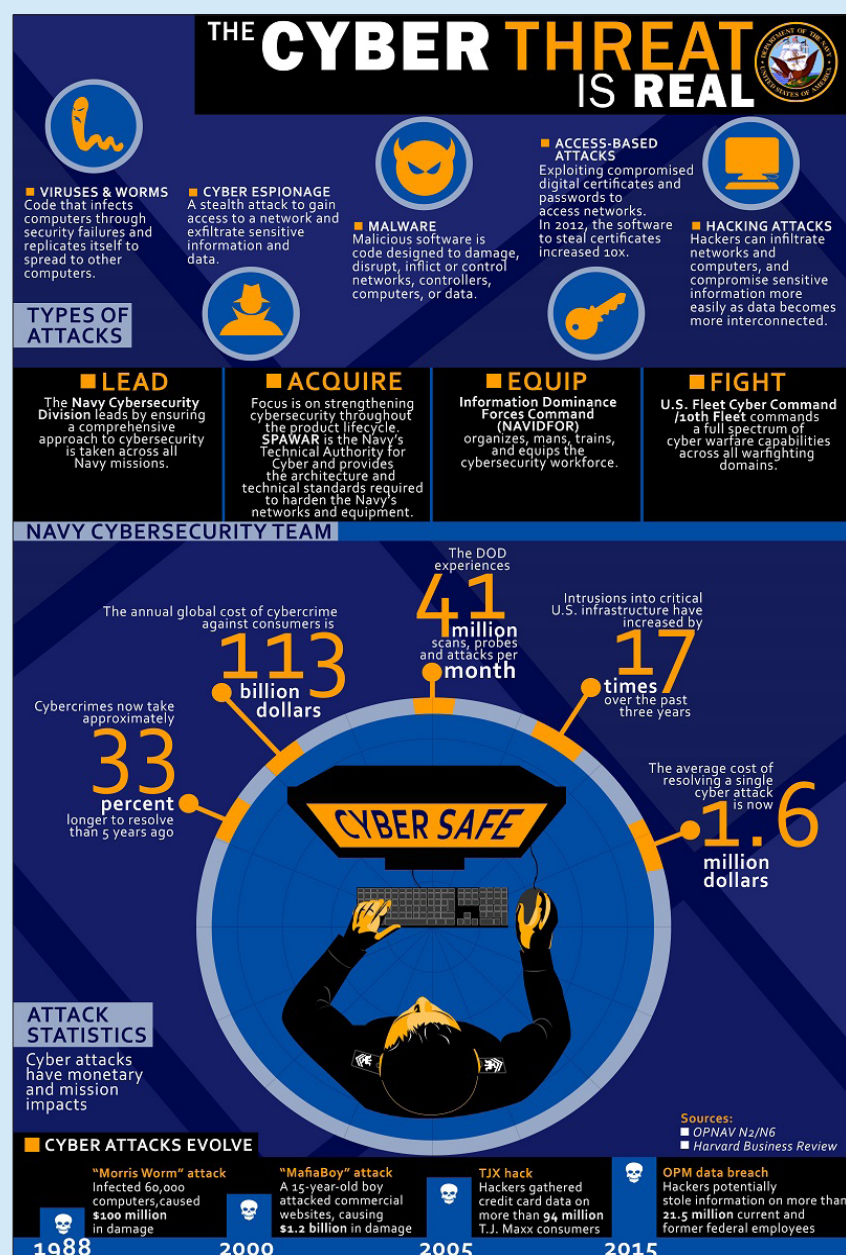
If you keep up with the news, you know of Russia's election-focused data thefts and disclosures. More distant high profile attacks, such as the 2015 Office of Personnel Management hack that resulted in the theft of 21.5 million personnel records, are memorable because they affected many of us in the Navy.

From these example hacks, you can safely assume anything connected to the internet is at risk.

In fact, any electronic device for storing and processing data - a computer - is at risk, regardless of whether it's connected to the internet or whether it looks like the desktop or laptop computers we use at home and at work.

Disconnected systems are also vulnerable as attackers have employed innovative tactics to reach systems not connected to the internet. For example, thumb drives loaded with damaging software were picked up by unsuspecting technicians and used to spread the Stuxnet virus to centrifuges in an underground Iranian nuclear research facility.

Although the compromise of Iran's nuclear facility was well publicized, less well known are other news reports that also demonstrate physical systems controlled by computers (control systems) are at risk.



CYBER THREAT Continued on page 8

USNS SPEARHEAD ASSISTS IN HUMANITARIAN AID FOR ST. MARTIN

By Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Kristen Cheyenne Yarber, Southern Partnership Station 17 Public Affairs



Citizens from the island of Sint Maarten load their vehicle with boxes containing military field rations, known as MRE or meals, ready to eat, offloaded from the expeditionary fast transport vessel USNS Spearhead (T-EPF 1) (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Kristen Cheyenne Yarber)

The expeditionary fast transport vessel USNS Spearhead (T-EPF 1) arrived at the island of Sint Maarten, Martin Sep. 16, 2017, to assist in disaster relief efforts for persons affected by Hurricane Irma, during Southern Partnership Station 17 (SPS 17).

Operating as part of Joint Task Force Leeward Islands (JTF-LWI), Spearhead traveled to the Caribbean nation to support the U.S. Agency for International Development's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance, which led humanitarian assistance efforts.

After offloading the SPS 17 adaptive force package troops and equipment in Guatemala, Spearhead stopped at Naval Station Guantanamo Bay to load supplies for the relief mission Sept. 12.

Upon arrival at Sint Maarten, Sailors and civil service mariners offloaded 1,000 meals, ready to eat (MREs) and 81,000 bottles of water from the ship's mission bay to the pier.

St. Martin sustained significant damage after Hurricane Irma passed over the island's landmass. The hurricane struck as a category five storm, causing widespread destruction of the country's infrastructure. Irma was the first major hurricane to hit the island in 22 years.

"At least one third of all the buildings were destroyed," said Intelligence Specialist 2nd Class Mason Joyner, assigned to the military detachment embarked aboard Spearhead. "The electricity was out, and [potable] water was unavailable because they couldn't make their own water."

While St. Martin is slowly recovering, the demand for basic necessities remains. "Our main needs now are water and canned goods," said Ardwell Iriom, a member of St. Martin's parliament.

Iriom said there were teams of volunteers ready to distribute supplies to those in need, making deliveries, such as those by the Spearhead, greatly appreciated.

"I want to thank the USA and the Navy and Marines for supporting our island," said Iriom. "We really appreciate all the support we are getting internationally."

Iriom also said although there is devastation across St. Martin, the support they are receiving will help them rebuild from the effects of the storm and become even stronger.

U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet supports U.S. Southern Command's joint and combined military operations by employing maritime forces in cooperative maritime security operations to maintain access, enhance interoperability, and build enduring partnerships in order to enhance regional security and promote peace, stability, and prosperity in the Caribbean, Central, and South American regions.

US, SINGAPORE NAVIES ENHANCE MARITIME PARTNERSHIP WITH TRAINING IN GUAM

By Lt. Clyde Shavers, CTF 73/DESRON 7 Public Affairs

Recently the U.S. Navy and Republic of Singapore navies concluded Exercise Pacific Griffin 2017 at U.S. Naval Base Guam.

Pacific Griffin 17 served as this year's U.S.-Singapore annual maritime exercise and ran from Aug. 19 through Sep. 2 in waters near Guam. The exercise was coordinated months in advance by planners from both navies.

Pacific Griffin highlights the longstanding maritime partnership between the U.S. and the Republic of Singapore navies through 23 years of annual-bilateral exercises.

"The U.S. Navy deeply values our close partnership with the Republic of Singapore Navy," said Capt. Lex Walker. "Pacific Griffin 2017 provided a unique opportunity for both navies to interact and engage in a broader and more complex range of maritime scenarios and operations."

As the first bilateral exercise between the two navies taking place outside the vicinity of Singapore, the exercise featured a full-spectrum of naval operations ranging from anti-submarine and anti-surface warfare to air defense, live fire drills, and tactical ship maneuvers.

Republic of Singapore Navy Commander First Flotilla and Commanding Officer of 185 Squadron Colonel Saw Shi Tat highlighted the value of the exercise in enhancing professionalism and interoperability among the two navies.

"The operating environment in Guam gave us the opportunity to hone our edge and push our operational envelopes," said Colonel Saw. "It also allowed us to operate with our friends and partners from around the world, including the U.S. Navy."

Participating naval assets included the littoral combat ship USS Coronado (LCS 4), the Arleigh Burke-class destroyer USS Benfold (DDG 65), replenishment oiler USNS Matthew Pecos (T-AO-197), and the Republic of Singapore multi-role stealth frigates RSS Supreme (FFS 73) and RSS Stalwart (FFS 72) and landing platform dock ship RSS Endurance (LST 207).

"The complexity and sophistication of Pacific Griffin is a direct result of the many accomplishments and lessons we've learned from working together with the Republic of Singapore Navy for many years," said Walker.

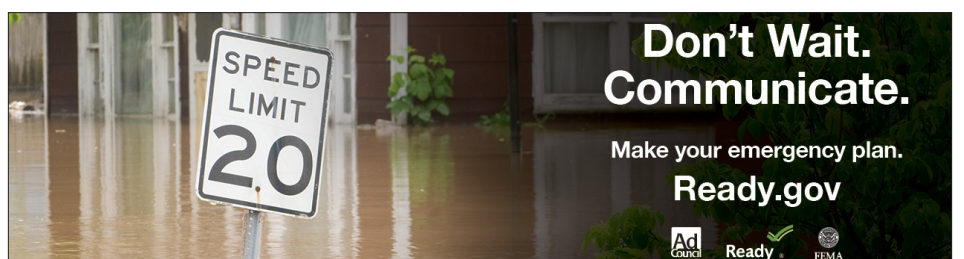
Beyond the exercise, Sailors from both navies developed professional and personal relationships that build lasting bonds between the two navies.



The Military Sealift Command Henry J. Kaiser-class fleet replenishment oiler USNS Pecos (T-AO 197) participates in a PHOTOEX during Exercise Pacific Griffin 2017, off the coast of Guam. (U.S. Navy Combat Camera photo by Mass Communications Specialist 1st Class Benjamin A. Lewis)

"It was an honor for the Sailors of USS Coronado to participate in Pacific Griffin with a respected and capable maritime partner like the Republic of Singapore Navy. This was a tremendous opportunity to build upon previous engagements," said Cmdr. Douglas Meagher, commanding officer, USS Coronado. "We look forward to continue strengthening our cooperation with Singapore through our quality interaction and work together at sea."

COMLOGWESTPAC and Maritime Staff Element staff conduct advanced planning, organize resources and directly support the execution of maritime exercises such Pacific Partnership, the bilateral Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT) series, Naval Engagement Activity (NEA) with Vietnam, and the multilateral Southeast Asia Cooperation and Training (SEACAT) with Bangladesh, Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam.



'AMMO ON DECK!': TRUMAN CONDUCTS AMMUNITION ONLOAD

By Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Kaysee Lohmann, USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75) Public Affairs

The aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75) conducts an ammunition onload with the dry cargo and ammunition ship USNS Robert E. Peary (T-AKE 5). Harry S. Truman is underway conducting an ammunition onload in preparation for future operations. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Tommy Gooley)



USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75) conducted a complex, multi-day ammunition onload with USNS Robert E. Peary (T-AKE 5), Sep. 12-13, using both connected transfers and vertical lifts.

As with any Navy event, this immense undertaking started by prechecking the equipment necessary to complete the task.

"We initiated multiple phases in order to be prepared for this onload," said Lt. Cmdr. Alexa Sandifer, Truman's Ordnance Handling Officer (OHO). "We had to first make sure our equipment and weapons elevators were fully operational and ready to take on the ammunition onload."

Sandifer not only briefed all ordnance personnel on general procedures prior to the movement of ordnance, but also supervised the entirety of the ammunition handling evolution.

Truman and Peary completed 360 connected transfers and 225 vertical lifts on day one, and 576 connected transfers and 143 vertical lifts on day two.

"This onload is what turns an aircraft carrier into an actual warship," said Master Chief Aviation Ordnanceman Steven J. Gill, Weapons Department Leading Chief Petty Officer. "You're looking at two days of evolutions just to fill the ship with over 1,600 tons of ordnance."

Aviation Ordnanceman 2nd Class Jordan Davis addressed the benefit of having ordnance come through both the flight deck and hangar bay.

"[Vertical lifts] is a very fast process," said Davis. "The helicopters can go back and forth transporting cargo and they move in rotations so a lot gets moved in a short amount of time."

Davis added that Deck department contributed by stationing themselves in the hangar bays and collecting cargo as it was delivered, having ordnance ready for Weapons department to move to elevators for stowage in magazines.

Additionally, Weapons administration team took inventory of every single piece of highly-explosive ordnance and materials being brought aboard in order to keep track of ammunition.

"It was seamless, like an act in a play," said Gill. "Each person played a critical role and if something happened, we had a backup plan in order to make sure that the onload never stopped."

Gill emphasized the importance of each Sailor's role in the evolution.

"I had Sailors driving forklifts while transporting ordnance," added Gill. "If any of those forklifts had broken down, it would've slowed down the entire evolution. No matter how small someone's role seemed, it was significant to the evolution."

The ammunition onload was another milestone reached by Truman, allowing the ship to take on Tailored Ship's Training Availability and Final Evaluation Problem (TSTA/FEP). The completion of TSTA/FEP will allow Truman to move to the next phase of its work-up cycle, Composite Training Unit Exercise (COMPTUEX).

"Without ammunition on the jets, we cannot fight," said Sandifer, "And without the onload, we cannot deploy."

PULLER PARTICIPATES IN ALLIGATOR DAGGER 2017

By Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Chad Swysgood, USS America (LHA 6) Public Affairs



The 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit's (15th MEU) Maritime Raid Force fast ropes onto the expeditionary sea base USS Lewis B. Puller (ESB 3) to perform a visit, board, search, and seizure (VBSS) mission during exercise Alligator Dagger 2017. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Kristina Young)

U.S. Marines assigned to the 15th Marine expeditionary unit (MEU) and Fleet Anti-terrorist Security Team Central Command, along with the Sailors aboard the expeditionary support ship USS Lewis B. Puller (ESB-3), completed combat rehearsals for Alligator Dagger 2017 Sept. 16.

Led by Naval Amphibious Force, Task Force 51/5th Marine Expeditionary Expedition Brigade, Alligator Dagger - a dedicated, unilateral combat rehearsal that combined Navy and Marine Corps units of the America Amphibious Ready Group and embarked 15th MEU to practice, rehearse and exercise integrated capabilities available to U.S. Central Command both afloat and ashore - tested USS Puller's maritime capabilities for crisis response and contingency operations within U.S. 5th Fleet.

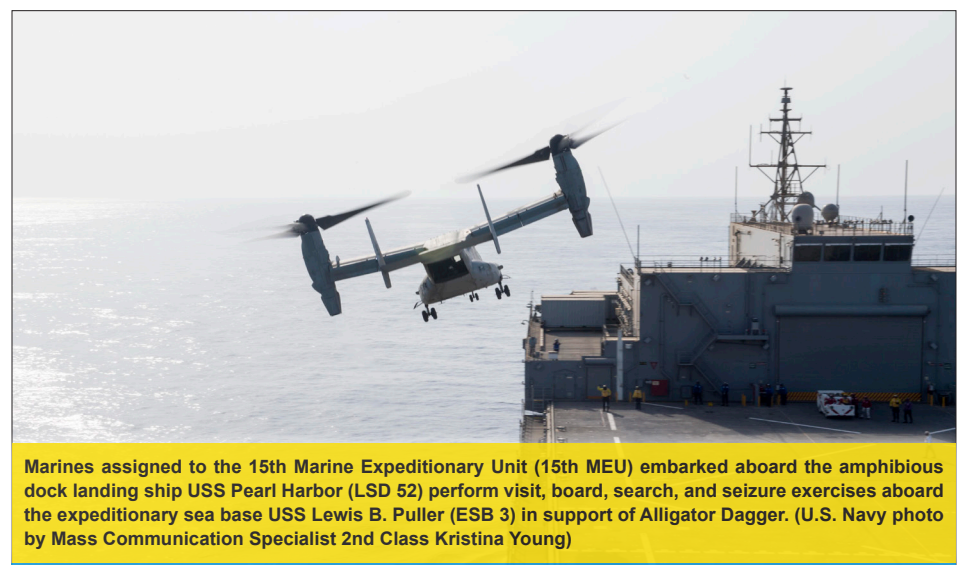
"We deployed with the ability to embark other forces including the mine hunting unit which allows us to sweep a safe path to the beach for the amphibious forces," said Lt. Cmdr. Douglas Ivey, the ship's combat system's officer. "Since then we've been used as a support vessel for various aviation assets, acted as a target vessel for visit, board, search and seizure exercises and provided the mine hunting boats for surface exercises."

Commissioned Aug. 17, Puller is the first U.S. ship to be commissioned internationally and the first of the Afloat Forward Staging Base variant. Due to its versatility and range of capabilities, the ship capable of performing a wide variety of missions.

"A lot of what we're doing in Alligator Dagger 2017 is understanding what this ship's capabilities," said Ivey. "This is a new platform which was designed for aviation mine counter measures and special operation forces support. But now that we're using Puller in an operational environment, we are discovering USS Puller's true potential to support operations in a magnitude of different ways."

The crew and ship also demonstrated their ability to support training for the 15th MEU's Low Altitude Air Defense Detachment (LAAD), further strengthening its blue-green team integration.

"While we were aboard we had the opportunity to perform live fire gun shoots, weapons training with Puller Sailors and establish training plans for defense from low altitude air threats for the ship," said Capt. Thomas Rees, officer in charge, LAAD. "Any time we have a chance to train our personnel on a different platform or environment it improves their ability to defend no matter what the surroundings."



Marines assigned to the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit (15th MEU) embarked aboard the amphibious dock landing ship USS Pearl Harbor (LSD 52) perform visit, board, search, and seizure exercises aboard the expeditionary sea base USS Lewis B. Puller (ESB 3) in support of Alligator Dagger. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Kristina Young)

USS PONCE RETURNS TO HOMEPORT

From Naval Surface Force, U.S. Atlantic Fleet Public Affairs



A view of USS Ponce (AFSB (I) 15) (U.S. Navy file photograph)

Afloat forward staging base-interim USS Ponce (AFSB(I) 15) returned to Naval Station Norfolk Sept. 27, after being forward deployed to the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations for more than five years.

Nicknamed “Proud Lion,” Ponce was reclassified from an amphibious transport dock ship to an interim afloat forward staging base with a hybrid crew of Navy and Military Sealift Command personnel. They deployed to the Navy’s U.S. 5th Fleet and had been forward-deployed there since July 2012. The reclassification was experimental and based on the aircraft carrier USS Kitty Hawk’s (CV 63) role as an afloat special operations staging base during Operation Enduring Freedom in 2001.

“The U.S. Navy’s ‘Proud Lion’ is America’s proof of concept of innovative warfighting operations and a testament to unmatched professionalism,” said Brig. Gen. Francis L. Donovan, commander, Naval Amphibious Forces, Task Force 51, 5th Marine Expeditionary Brigade.

Following a mandate from the Chief of Naval Operations, U.S. Fleet Forces Command, in cooperation with the Military Sealift Command, coordinated efforts to provide Ponce as a response to a U.S. Central Command request for an afloat forward staging base to conduct a variety of in-theater sea operations. After successful implementation, Ponce remained in the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations providing a platform capable of completing a variety of missions including humanitarian relief, special operations, mine countermeasure operations and serving as a command and control asset.

“The high standard you demonstrated throughout the deployment in direct support of real-world operations was critical to national interests of the United States,” Donovan said, addressing Ponce’s combined Navy-civilian mariner’s team prior to their return.

“It’s simply not possible to recount the extraordinary things Ponce has accomplished in her 46 years of service, but it is sufficient to say that the durability, flexibility and clarity of design inherent in Ponce will be missed,” he continued, highlighting the history of the ship and its unique longevity when compared to other platforms. “This is well-reflected by the fact that Ponce has outlived whole classes of ships that were commissioned when Ponce was already 10 years old.”

The ship was commissioned July 10, 1971, in Norfolk, as an Austin-class amphibious transport dock ship (LPD). She became a workhorse of the Atlantic Fleet, completing 27 North Atlantic, Caribbean, Mediterranean, Indian Ocean and Arabian Gulf deployments over the next 42 years. In 2011, the ship was selected for decommissioning after her final deployment and began deactivation in November 2011 for a March 30 decommissioning. Refitted as an afloat forward staging base (interim), the ship gained new life and a hybrid crew.

In 2014, Ponce tested the laser weapons system, the first of its kind to be employed aboard a deployed U.S. Navy warship. This system

provided unmatched capabilities, enabling combatant commanders the ability to employ a new weapons system at the speed of light, undetected and completely silent against a variety of air and surface targets at long distances and at a cost of about a dollar a shot. Ponce’s participation in the development of this system was essential to defining a generation of directed energy weapons currently in development.

During her time in the 5th Fleet, Ponce deployed throughout the Gulf of Aden, Horn of Africa, South Red Sea and Arabian Gulf to conduct expeditionary operations in support of diverse missions that included crisis response, airborne mine countermeasures, counter-piracy operations, maritime security operations and humanitarian aid/disaster relief missions. The crew regularly participated in operations and exercises with up to six foreign countries and shared expertise that built upon partner nation capabilities in order to increase regional stability and improve interoperability.

AFSB(I) 15 was the first ship to be fully realized and dedicated as an afloat forward staging base. The lessons learned from Ponce’s employment will be incorporated in future expeditionary sea bases to be built over the next 15 years. Its performance in this role will be used as a model for concepts and developments across the 30-year shipbuilding plan. Additionally, the ship and its crew provided unmatched UAV, mine sweeping, multinational aircraft and amphibious support during TF 51/5-led missions.

Ponce was relieved in U.S. 5th Fleet by the expeditionary sea base USS Lewis B. Puller (ESB 3), the first U.S. ship commissioned outside the United States and the first ship built specifically for the purpose of serving as an afloat, forward-staging base.

The ship is slated for decommissioning and dismantling later this year.



Afloat forward staging base-interim USS Ponce (AFSB(I) 15) returns to Naval Station Norfolk, Va., after being forward deployed to the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations for more than five years. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Justin Wolpert)

MSC CELEBRATES CONTRIBUTIONS OF LATINO CULTURE IN OBSERVANCE OF HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

By Shevonne Cleveland, Military Sealift Command Public Affairs

Military Sealift Command joined the nation Sept. 23 in celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month, with the theme “Shaping the Bright Future of America.” Military and civilian teammates gathered for the observance at Ely Hall on Norfolk Naval Station.

The nation recognizes and celebrates the contributions made, and the important presence of Hispanic and Latino Americans to the United States, Sept. 15 to Oct. 15.

Guest speaker of the event, Bianca Negron Castro, Human Resource Specialist in Training and Workforce Development for Canon Virginia, was born in New York and raised in Puerto Rico. Her presentation addressed negative and misleading stereotypes aimed at Hispanics and Latinos, and presented practical ways to foster a more inclusive work environment.

“We are not all Mexican,” said Castro. “And we are not all undocumented. We have to acknowledge the benefits of having differences and diversity.”

According to the U.S. Census Bureau the estimated Hispanic population of the United States is over 50 million, or 16 percent of the U.S. population and Hispanics are the nation’s largest ethnic or racial minority. More than 43,000 people of Hispanic origin are Sailors and civilians serving with the U.S. Navy.

Military Sealift Command has three ships bearing the namesakes of Latinos. USNS 1st LT Baldomero Lopez (T-AK 3010) was named after a first lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps during the Korean War, who posthumously received the Medal of Honor for smothering a hand grenade with his own body during the Inchon Landing on Sept. 15, 1950. USNS Benavidez (T-AKR 306) is named after Master Sergeant Raul Perez “Roy” Benavidez, a member of the United States Army Special Forces who received the Medal of Honor for his valorous actions in combat near Loc Ninh, South Vietnam, on May 2, 1968. USNS Cesar Chavez (T-AKE 14) is named after Mexican American civil rights leader and activist Cesar Estrada Chavez.

“I believe, it’s great to celebrate Hispanic heritage, but I don’t think it should just be a day, or just a month because we embrace our culture every single day,” said Castro.

Hispanic Heritage Week was established by legislation sponsored by Rep. Edward R. Roybal and first proclaimed President Lyndon Johnson in 1968. The commemorative week was expanded by legislation sponsored by Rep. Esteban E. Torres and implemented by President Ronald Reagan in 1988 to cover a 30-day period.

Sept. 15 was chosen as the starting point for the celebration because it is the anniversary of

independence of five Latin American countries: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. All declared independence in 1821. In addition, Mexico, Chile and Belize celebrate their independence days on Sep. 16, Sep. 18, and Sep. 21 respectively.



Guest speaker, Bianca Negron Castro, addresses personnel attached to Military Sealift Command during a celebration held for Hispanic Heritage Month, Sept. 23. (U.S. Navy photograph by Jennifer Hunt)

MARITIME PREPOSITIONING FORCE SHIPS SUCCESSFULLY CONDUCT GROUP SAIL

By Grady Fontana, Military Sealift Command Far East

Maritime Prepositioning Ships Squadron THREE (MPSRON 3) successfully conducted an underway multi-ship training exercise, Group Sail, Aug. 2-3, off the coast of Saipan.

For the first time in 10 years MPSRON 3 conducted its largest successful multi-day Group Sail event with six preposition ships, the USNS 1st LT Jack Lummus (T-AK 3011), USNS 2nd LT John P. Bobo (T-AK 3008), USNS GYSGT Fred W. Stockham (T-AK 3017), USNS Pililaau (T-AKR 304), USNS Red Cloud (T-AKR 313) and USNS Soderman (T-AKR 317)

This demanding two-day exercise was used to train the ships in interoperability with other ships within the squadron, and used to prepare them to work with other U.S. Navy assets and escorts.

During the exercise the MPSRON ships executed close quarter turns, torpedo evasions tactics and formation steaming; they also used time to practice night time signal communications as well as working with Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron TWO FIVE for night time deck landing qualifications.

While the purpose of this exercise was to prepare the squadron in tactical movement, it was also used as valuable training time for military staff of the squadron, who took the opportunity to improve their skills in command and control of multiple ships.

“This was the most exciting day that I have had yet, and I am grateful for the chance to learn something new and to be able to take part in this,” said Taylor Crisci a cadet from the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy who is aboard the USNS Lummus.

Under the command of Navy Capt. Eric Lindfors, MPSRON 3 operates in the western Pacific, maintaining tactical control of the 13 ships carrying afloat prepositioned U.S. military cargo for the U.S. Marine Corps, the U.S. Army, and the U.S. Air Force. The squadron’s mission is to enable force from the sea by providing swift and effective transportation of vital equipment and supplies for designated operations. MPSRON 3 is part of Military Sealift Command.

“I am very pleased with how this event was executed. My staff worked very hard with all involved to ensure a crawl, walk, run phasing and the efforts in planning have shown themselves in the results,” said Lindfors. “The success was only possible with the inputs we received from the ships’ masters as we were operating with four different classes of ships all about the size of an aircraft carrier. I look forward to the next event and increasing the complexity so that we are better ready to support any call received.”

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



Maritime Prepositioning Ships Squadron THREE ships conduct training operations during a Group Sail Aug. 2-3, off the coast of Saipan. (U.S. Navy courtesy photo)

For More Information About
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In 2016, hackers who were thought to be from Russia compromised a Ukrainian power company, knocking out power to part of Kiev for over an hour. A 2015 breach of a Ukrainian energy company, which resulted in a power outage to 80,000 customers, may have been related to the 2016 attack. Closer to home, in 2016 "...the Justice Department claimed Iran had attacked U.S. infrastructure online, by infiltrating the computerized controls of a small dam 25 miles north of New York City."

The control systems that manage the Navy's critical infrastructure and other services at Navy bases and facilities are commercial products that have known weaknesses. Like the Ukrainian control systems and the systems controlling the New York dam, Navy control systems and networks used by operational forces could also be at risk of compromise.

During June 2017, a commercial ship off the Russian coast discovered its GPS navigation system erroneously located the ship at an airport 32 kilometers inland. At least 20 other ships in the area had similar problems with their Automatic Identification System, which U.S. Navy ships also use. "Experts think this is the first documented use of GPS misdirection - a spoofing attack that has long been warned of but never seen in the wild."

Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Admiral John Richardson sums up the current cyber threat environment, "The threats reach well beyond what you would consider a traditional computer or information technology network into the control systems and indeed almost every aspect of our lives and of our Navy mission."

These cyber threats can come from nations with highly sophisticated cyber programs, countries with lesser technical capabilities but possibly

more disruptive intent, ideologically motivated hackers or extremists and/or insiders within our organizations, with a variety of motivations. Even cyber criminals threaten the Navy because they sell malicious software to state and non-state actors, thereby increasing the number of potential threat actors.

Vigilance and ensuring a robust defense-in-depth framework that incorporates people, processes and technology to assure our networks are safe is key.

The threat will continue to increase as adversaries look for potential vulnerabilities and increase their level of sophistication for cyber-attacks. In Congressional testimony, former Director of National Intelligence James Clapper described the threat saying, "Cyber threats to US national and economic security are increasing in frequency, scale, sophistication and severity of impact. The ranges of cyber threat actors, methods of attack, targeted systems and victims are also expanding."

But you can make a difference.

By adhering to cybersecurity policies, directives and best practices you can help keep the Navy secure and also protect yourself and your families while online, outside of work. It's an all hands effort, like damage control on a ship.

Knowing adversaries are actively seeking to penetrate our systems, steal our data and disrupt operations should help you understand the CNO's perspective: "Wherever you are, whatever system you're operating, every time you log in, you are in the cyber battlespace."

Be vigilant. Be safe.

ANYDAY

Military Sealift Command's high-speed transport USNS Guam (HST-1) gets underway from Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek-Fort Story, Oct. 5. Guam went to sea to conduct testing and evaluation. (U.S. Navy photograph by Bill Mesta)



A view of Military Sealift Command's fleet ocean tug USNS Apache (T-ATF 172) as the ship pulls into Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek-Fort Story, Oct. 5. (U.S. Navy photograph by Bill Mesta)



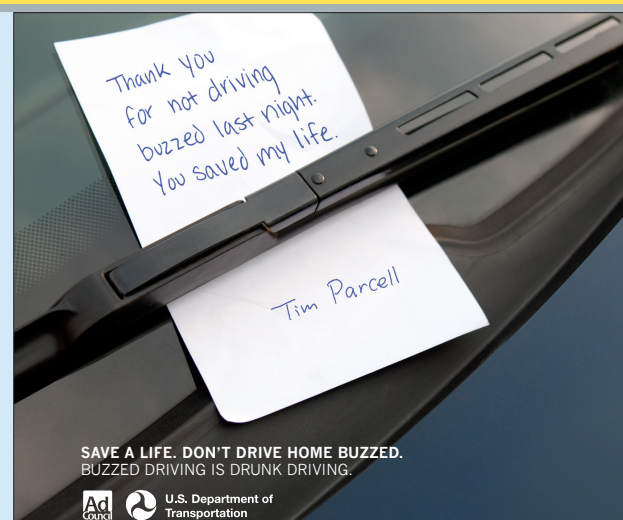
Sailors assigned to the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Chafee (DDG 90) and the USNS Pecos (T-AO 197), break away from a replenishment-at-sea. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Benjamin A. Lewis)



Culinary Specialist 2nd Class Rose Fennell, assigned to USS America (LHA 6), takes inventory of supplies in the hangar bay during a replenishment-at-sea with the USNS Patuxent (T-AO 201). (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Alexander A. Ventura II)



Military Sealift Command's Henry J. Kaiser-class fleet replenishment oiler USNS Big Horn (TAO-198) returns to Naval Station Norfolk after completing an overseas deployment.. (U.S. Navy photo by Jennifer Hunt)



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SEALIFT

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Editor, Sealift, Military Sealift Command
471 East C Street
Norfolk, VA 23511-2419

Commercial: 757-443-2890
DSN: 646-2890

EMAIL: lewis.w.mesta@navy.mil

All photographic submissions must be sent via e-mail, express mail or parcel service.

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