Members of the SIU Government Services Division are playing vital roles assisting in humanitarian relief efforts in Puerto Rico. Specifically, the CIVMAR-crewed hospital ship USNS Comfort arrived at the island Oct. 3. The vessel is part of what the U.S. Navy described as “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.”

The Comfort is a seagoing medical treatment facility which at press time had more than 800 personnel embarked for the Puerto Rico mission. More than 70 CIVMARS are responsible for work in the deck, surgery and communications departments. CIVMARS ensure the safe operation of the vessel at all times. Also traveling with the vessel are Navy medical and support staff assembled from 22 commands.

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 Navy reported.

According to Navy representatives, the “Comfort’s primary mission is to provide an at-sea, mobile, acute surgical medical facility to the U.S. military that is flexible, capable, and uniquely adaptable to support expeditionary warfare. Comfort’s secondary mission is to provide full hospital services to support U.S. disaster relief and humanitarian operations worldwide.”

On Nov. 6, the Comfort got an assist from another SIU Government Services Division vessel. The ship replenished its medical supplies, food and other necessities by connecting with the fleet replenishment oiler USNS Big Horn while underway off the coast of San Juan. As of Nov. 8, the Comfort had treated 1,476 patients, performed 147 surgeries and admitted 203 patients. Patients continued to be treated on the ship during the short underway period.

Meanwhile, the SIU is continuing to help collect, transport and deliver hurricane relief supplies to Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI), in addition to assisting victims on the U.S. mainland.

Seafarers-contracted vessel operators Crowley Maritime and Tote Maritime, respectively, also are playing important roles in ongoing efforts in Puerto Rico. Other labor organizations and the AFL-CIO also are contributing significantly to what is sure to be a years-long endeavor.

Working with the labor federation and other unions (both maritime and non-maritime), the SIU continues collecting relief cargoes in Houston; Philadelphia; Jacksonville, Florida and elsewhere. The SIU also established a new fund to assist Seafarers and retirees living in areas affected by the recent hurricanes (this includes SIU affiliates). The fund’s name is Seafarers Disaster Aid Fund.

Click on the PayPal link on the SIU home page (www.seafarers.org) in order to donate. If donating by check, please make it out to Seafarers Disaster Aid Fund and mail to: Seafarers Disaster Aid Fund c/o SIU Secretary-Treasurer 5201 Auth Way Camp Springs, MD 20746

Unlike prior relief funds set up by the union, the plan is to make the Seafarers Disaster Aid Fund a permanent entity. This should help expedite donations and payments in the event of future catastrophes.

Understandably, Puerto Rico has garnered most of the headlines following the spate of hurricanes. Texas, however, is also facing a long, costly recovery. One news outlet noted that the Houston region has cleared “enough post-flood debris from its neighborhoods to fill 700 Olympic-size pools.”

More significantly, two months after Hurricane Harvey battered Texas, tens of thousands of people remained in temporary housing, and not all schools had reopened at the time of this writing. By some estimates, Harvey caused approximately $73.5 billion in economic losses, making it the second-costliest natural disaster in U.S. history (after only Hurricane Katrina).

Estimates of Maria’s economic impact are also gigantic, ranging from $45-$85 billion. Irma, too, is expected to cost tens of billions of dollars in recovery.

Editor’s note: Visit the News section of the SIU website (www.seafarers.org) for updates on hurricane relief operations. We are also regularly posting photos and information on our social media sites, which are linked on the SIU home page.

A patient is escorted near the Seafarers-crewed hospital ship USNS Comfort in San Juan, Puerto Rico. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Stepane Belcher.)

Chad Lomas, a pediatrician from Naval Hospital Pensacola embarked on the Comfort, treats a patient in Department of Health and Human Services medical tent on the pier. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Stepane Belcher.)

CIVMARS Active in Hurricane Relief Operations

SIU Continues Efforts in Puerto Rico, United States Virgin Islands
President’s Column
Our Winning Team
At this time of year, many of us pause to give thanks and reflect on the past 12 months. When I look back on all the stories in the Federal Mariner this year and the information I have collected from our federal mariners, I see an amazing amount of work and collective efforts to support our military personnel, support our reduced operating status ships, safeguard our environment and so much more.

As always, the SIU executive officers and I are very proud and grateful for the efforts of the federal mariners working for ACOE, SUISUN Bay - MARAD, NOAA and MSC.

We have been carefully following the work of the CIVMARS aboard the hospital ship USNS Comfort. This ship underwent an emergency deployment in October to assist in the Puerto Rico hurricane recovery efforts. On October 16, I wrote a thank you letter to the crew noting in part that the Comfort’s mission was timely and critical and that the work of the CIVMARS aboard the vessel was outstanding and uplifting.

You can read more about the effort on page 4.

As we were conducting and attending the 2017 SIU convention along with the SIU affiliated Paul Hall Center’s 50th anniversary event, we were also thinking about our fellow citizens and our seafaring brothers and sisters in Texas, Florida and the U.S. Virgin Islands who were impacted mightily by the destructive force of several hurricanes. At our SIU convention in September, U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao (the MARAD SUISAN Bay unit is located within this agency) was a featured speaker, as was Rear Admiral Mark Busby, the current DOT Maritime Administrator (previous MSC Commander, now retired). They both expressed strong support and acknowledgement of the critical importance of the U.S. Merchant Marine. Their comments were timely and well received. You can read about these events on the front page.

During every holiday season, our thoughts also turn to those in need. To help those impacted by these weather-related disasters, the SIU launched a relief fund. Information is included in this edition and you can also donate by going directly to our home page, www.seafarers.org.

At the end of this year, certainly a tumultuous one, I send my best wishes to all our federal mariners here in the States and working worldwide. I wish you and your families good health, happiness. If you are away from home this season, here’s to a very safe voyage and a safe return home.

We have a lot to look forward to in the New Year. I’m energized and ready to continue aggressively promoting the Merchant Marine as well as standing up for workers’ rights. Your professionalism and your support are crucial parts of that effort. Together, we will succeed.

Michael Sacco

Federal Mariner
November - December 2017

Check Out this Labor Website
NATIONAL PHILIP RANOD PH PULLMAN PORTER MUSEUM
"CELEBRATING AFRICAN AMERICANS IN U.S. LABOR HISTORY"
Union Communication Services-Worker Institute at Cornell ILR recently helped publicize the A. Philip Randolph Pullman Porter Museum, which it described as “a cultural institution whose mission is to promote, honor and celebrate the legacy of A. Philip Randolph and contributions made by African-Americans to America’s labor movement. The site places a significant focus on the African American Railroad Employee.” Like maritime, the railroad industry is one in which employees sometimes live in their workplace. Visit the website at https://aprpullmanportermuseum.org/

GAO Study Shows Need for Seafleet Boost
Editor’s note: The Government Accountability Office (GAO) is the audit, evaluation and investigative arm of the U.S. Congress. The GAO examines the use of public funds; evaluates federal programs and policies; and provides analyses, recommendations, and other assistance to help Congress make informed oversight, policy and funding decisions.

A new study by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) underscores the need for the United States to further invest in its sealift capacity and ensure there are enough civilian mariners to crew active ships in the U.S. Maritime Administration’s (MARAD’s) sealift fleet. MARAD oversees 47 vessels in the Ready Reserve Force. These ships, normally maintained with reduced-operating-status (ROS) crews, may be called upon at any time and are required to be operational in a matter of days. The study was undertaken as a result of an National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) of 2017 request.

In the report, the members of the House Armed Services Committee noted that the Navy planned increased demands on the Merchant Seafaring Community as the Navy moves to extend the global reach of its forces. This is in addition to the new tasking that MSC has been ordered to incorporate into its current missions. The report also noted that in some areas, MSC-operated vessels such as the expeditionary fast transport ships (formerly called joint high-speed vessels) and the afloat forward staging base have taken on additional roles in assisting forward-deployed Navy vessels.

The GAO released its report Aug. 22 with a revision on Oct. 31, 2017 outlining the need for the Navy to develop a long-term sealift recapitalization plan to protect the continued utility of MSC ships. MCS is one of the biggest employers of merchant mariners in both the federal and private merchant marine sectors. The Navy would be unable to operate its vessels without the support of the CIVMARS working abroad MSC-operated vessels or seafarers working aboard MSC vessels operated by private or time companies. Both CIVMARS and seafarers receive important protections as employees sailing under SIU collective bargaining agreements.

According to the GAO, “This report (1) describes trends of the sealift sector, combat logistics fleets since 2012, (2) evaluates the extent to which the Navy has plans to address an aging surge sealift fleet, and (3) evaluates the extent to which the Navy has assessed the effects of widely distributed operations on the combat logistics force. GAO analyzed 3 to 5 years of readiness, maintenance, and exercise data, based on available data, visited surge sealift and logistics ships; and interviewed Navy, U.S. Transportation Command, and Maritime Administration officials.”

The study found that since 2012, the readiness of the surge fleet has decreased, mission-limiting maintenance events have increased, and maintenance periods are taking longer than expected. Additionally, the GAO determined that the projected sealift capacity shortfall in 2024, a fill next year, will be far higher than currently projected. The report states that this fill will drop from roughly 11 million in 2017 to 3 million by 2025, and then reduced to zero by 2055 without preventative action.

As stated in the study, “Given the (Navy) fleet’s dependence on the combat logistics force, waiting until 2019 or 2020 to conduct an assessment, as planned, could result in poor investment decisions as the Navy continues to build and modernize its fleet. Furthermore, without assessing the effects of widely distributed operations on logistics force requirements and modifying its force structure plans accordingly, the Navy risks being unprepared to provide required fuel and other supplies.” In order to prevent this, the GAO recommended that the Navy design a comprehensive sealift recapitalization plan, and assess the effects of that plan on the combat logistics force.

The Navy concurred with the GAO’s recommendations. The Navy responded to Defense and stated that: “In November 2016, the Deputy Secretary of Defense directed the Navy to develop a plan for recapitalizing the surge sealift fleet. As the GAO report notes, that effort is in progress and is being finalized. Navy has coordinated planning options with Office of Secretary of Defense, U.S. Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM), and the Department of Transportation’s Maritime Administration (MARAD). The sealift recapitalization strategy that has been developed includes a three-phased plan that extends the service life of select vessels, acquires a limited number of used vessels, and a new construction, common-hulled shipbuilding program.”

The Navy continued, stating that the Department of Defense’s proposal for the Fiscal Year 2018 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) requested authorization for the purchase of used ships that, if approved, will begin the recapitalization process for the MARAD fleet.

The full GAO report is 33 pages long. It contains the Navy’s comments to the GAO recommendations. A link to the report can be found on the SIU’s website.

CIVMARS Note
Restriction to ship grievance updates: CIVMARS sailing on the 2015 Continuing Promise mission filed restriction to ship grievances during several of the South American port visits. The SIU completed an arbitration and submitted two briefs for the 10-day restriction in Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua, requesting back pay for those CIVMARS impacted. This leaves three other grievances to be addressed for this particular mission. Additionally, the union and CIVMARS recently filed grievances for the recent UNSC Comfort restrictions in the Puerto Rico hurricane relief mission. There is an outstanding restriction grievance for CIVMARS aboard the USNS Mercy for restrictions in Vietnam.

The SIU will be updating CIVMARS about the progress of these grievances.
The year was 1942. “Casablanca” was the Oscar-winning film, Bing Crosby’s “White Christmas” was the top song, and the Dow bottomed out at 92. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt announced a national economic policy stabilizing wages, farm prices, and rents, and urged rationing scarce essential commodities. The Second World War raged in both the Atlantic and Pacific, and in the midst of such historic events, the United Seamen’s Service (USS) was born with the mission of providing services abroad for American seafarers. Within a short time, we did so at 144 global locations.

Now, 75 years later and in light of the technological events that have impacted shipping, vessels and the role of American seafarer along with globalization, our agency continues in fewer locations. But the services provided – nearly 200,000 each year – are still necessary. It was FDR and the maritime unions who felt the urgency to provide assistance to the exhausted, battle-traumatized, wounded and vulnerable merchant seafarers – strangers in unsavory or small, run-down ports far from home where they would stay for weeks on end. Thus, the USS was founded. The founders would never recognize those harbors today, clean, sprawling and run by computers with some ships that if stood on their end, would exceed the height of the Empire State Building. Nevertheless, the USS services are still vital in six strategic locations across the globe.

America’s seafarers were the first casualties of World War II. In harm’s way as they manned the vessels that carried supplies to U.S. troops. The U.S. War Shipping Administration recognized a need and developed the idea of the USS, recommended it to FDR and on August 8, 1942 the agency opened its doors around the world.

The centers were a home away from home, where, as a safe haven, they provided hearty meals, medical attention, hotel-like facilities, recreation and personal amenities among the many services that were available. Rest homes for the convoy-weary and even gift shops for the mariners wanting to bring mementos back home provided additional needed, and desired, services.

The war ended and while the needs for more than 100 centers abated, USS services focused on a changing commercial and political world. In 1950, the Korean War outbreak meant that Asian ports were busy and looking to the USS for help in meeting the needs of those seafarers manning vessels carrying supplies and munitions for the military. At the same time, the Italian government for help in meeting the needs of those seafarers manning vessels carrying supplies and munitions for the military. At the same time, the Italian government offered the agency rent-free space to the USS as a safe haven, they opened seven facilities in the Middle East to serve the needs there. The Military Sea Transportation Service (MSTS), predecessor to the Navy’s Military Sealift Command, developed a relationship with the USS in 1950 and over the years has rendered invaluable assistance to our agency’s mission. The USS serves all American seafarers who deliver military cargo worldwide.

In 1965, our agency opened its first center in Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam. Many of the USS staff were the last to leave Saigon in 1975, including our present Executive Director, Roger Korner. Throughout our 75-year history, the USS has opened and closed centers as needed: virtually every experienced American seafarer can recall a stop at “the seaman’s center” in a harbor they have visited. The USS is also in the book business, providing reading materials to seafarers. The American Merchant Marine Library Association (AMMLA), founded in 1921, became a USS affiliate in 1973 and has endeavored to make life at sea more enriching and entertaining for the crew by installing sea-going libraries on USNS, Ready Reserve Force, and U.S.-Flag commercial vessels worldwide.

In 1970, USS efforts in Congress resulted in a law signed by President Richard Nixon mandating the Department of Defense to provide USS support “whenever the President finds it necessary in the interest of the United States commitments abroad.”

As military conflict goes on, American merchant mariners continue to work to support U.S. forces in the Persian Gulf, Afghanistan and elsewhere. The delivery of services to U.S. prepositioning crews and U.S. Fleet Sailors continues to be a priority for the USS. Our centers in Diego Garcia (a small atoll in the Indian Ocean opened in 1981), Okinawa, Busan, and Bremerhaven work closely with military commands in these locations to meet the needs of all seafarers. Other locations are in Casablanca and Yokohama.

Throughout our history, the USS has striven to improve the seafarer’s quality of life by delivering necessary services to mariners from our port centers around the world. Over the years, we have had to adjust our course to keep our programs relevant, with the help of labor, management, and U.S. and allied governments, we have succeeded. In today’s complex transportation system, such cooperation is crucial.

Thus, within this context we are writing on behalf of the USS Board of Directors and the seafarers we serve to request your support in maintaining USS services worldwide.

Donations to the USS are tax deductible. They may be sent to United Seamen’s Service, 104 Broadway, Jersey City, NJ 07306 or donate through our website. www.yourcaring.com/uss or you may donate through the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC). Our CFC Donor Number is 12086.

SBI Secretary-Treasurer David Heindl recently noted, “If you have sailed into Bremerhaven, Germany; Casablanca, Morocco; Okinawa and Yokohama, Japan; Busan, Korea; and on the island of Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean, these centers are a home away from home for all seafarers. Many mariners have visited USS centers throughout their 75-year history and I am sure have many fond memories of them and their staff.

“The USS has been struggling to keep these centers open and needs our help,” he continued. “If you’re in a position to make a donation, in any amount, it would go a long way in assisting this organization to reach their goal in capital funding to maintain these facilities. Please visit their funding website and make your donation today.”

United Seamen’s Service: 75 Years of Dedication to Seafarers

Editor’s note: This article was submitted by the United Seamen’s Service, which has an office within the SIU hall in Jersey City, New Jersey.

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How to Become an SIU Member

Joining the SIU is easy. The union’s website – www.seafarers.org – includes printable PDF versions of forms that mariners may use to request and authorize payroll deductions for labor organization dues. The forms are posted at: www.seafarers.org/memberbenefits/cisvar.asp. Forms are also available under “union forms” in the SIU membership tab.

Contact Information

Asst. Vice President Governmental Services Chem Wheeler: Phone: (510) 444-2360, ext. 17 Email: c.wheeler@seafarers.org

Government Services Fleet Representative Sam Spain: Phone: (737) 622-1892 Email: s.spain@seafarers.org

Donations to the USS are tax deductible. They may be sent to United Seamen’s Service, 104 Broadway, Jersey City, NJ 07306 or donate through our website.

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November - December 2017 Federal Mariner 3
Guard Against Aneurysms

Aneurysm is an enlarged part of the blood vessel. These areas are important to discover quickly because they may become larger and weaker over time.

As we all age, there may come a time when the wall of the artery becomes harmed by plaque. This is a serious health event that will affect many individuals in many different ways.

Aneurysms may range from life-threatening to just being found on a routine X-ray. Your doctor may want it treated quickly or he/she may just watch the aneurysm and see what happens over time.

Aneurysm depends on where they are in the body. If an individual has a cerebral aneurysm, that person may experience fatigued, loss of balance, speech problems, double vision, severe headaches, loss of vision, neck and jaw pain. Another person may experience abdominal pain or tenderness, hypertension, and signs of shock if it is an abdominal aneurysm.

Risk factors for an aneurysm include diabetes, obesity, hypertension, smoking, alcohol abuse, high cholesterol, and increasing age. Atherosclerosis can be the cause of many aneurysms.

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