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CIVMARS and Navy personnel (photo at left) launch an unmanned surface vehicle from the Seafarers-crewed *USNS Williams* into the Chesapeake Bay. In photo at right, the unmanned underwater vehicle Knightfish is recovered by the crew on Sept. 14. (U.S. Navy photos by Bill Mesta)

CIVMARS Help Test Mine Counter Measures

CIVMARS from the SIU's Government Services Division recently helped the U.S. Navy conduct tests that are important to national defense.

The crew of Military Sealift Command's expeditionary sea base (ESB) *USNS Hershel "Woody" Williams* in mid-September wrapped up a three-day mission that ended in Norfolk, Virginia. The vessel had tested an anti-mine system in the Chesapeake Bay. Specifically, it launched and recovered an unmanned surface vessel (USV) and an unmanned underwater vessel (UUV), Knightfish.

According to the Navy, "The USV and UUVs are mine counter measure capabilities and the ship went to sea to determine the feasibility of operating these vessels from an ESB."

"Considering the contested environments which our ships sail in, counter-

mine capabilities are very important because we have to be able to keep the enemy at bay," said Capt. David Gray, the *USNS Williams* officer in charge and the ship's prospective commanding officer. "Mines of today are very inexpensive to make. Our adversaries can produce mines for a few hundred dollars and inflict a tremendous loss of life while causing millions of dollars of damage. So, we need the assets out there to detect and destroy these threats ahead of time, and keep the world's shipping lanes open."

A team of Navy Sailors, CIVMARS and civilian technical experts carried out the task of launching and recovering the USV and UUV into the Chesapeake Bay on Sept. 14-15. The two-day operation required shipboard personnel to transport each unmanned vessel from its storage area inside the mission bay to the des-

ignated launching point next to the side of the ship. The ship's crane was used to lift each unmanned vessel off the deck and into the ocean. Once each vessel was launched, they were recovered from the ocean with the ship's crane and returned to the mission deck. In total, the USV was successfully launched and recovered twice and the UUV four times over the two-day period.

According to Gray, the Sept. 14 evolution was the first time a USV has been successfully launched and recovered from any Naval ship. USVs have been launched from other Navy ships, but not recovered, the Navy reported.

After the conclusion of the evolutions, Capt. George McCarthy, master of the *USNS Williams*, recognized the crew's efforts.

"Thank you to everyone aboard the vessel for conducting a safe, efficient and effective evolution here over the last couple of days," he said. "Most importantly, we were able to successfully demonstrate the concepts we set out to."

"There was a lot of hard work across the spectrum of people aboard the ship: civilians, Sailors and CIVMARS," he added. "My thanks to everyone for a great job."

The ship is crewed by a hybrid team of civil service mariners and Sailors who operate and maintain a large flight deck, berthing and messing accommodations and provide command and control support for embarked forces.

The *USNS Williams* was built by union members at the General Dynamics NASSCO shipyard in San Diego. It entered service in early 2018.

Future CIVMAR-Crewed USNS Newport Christened in Alabama

On Nov. 9, the future USNS Newport was christened at Austal USA in Mobile, Alabama. Once in service, the vessel will be partially crewed by SIU Government Services Division members.

"It's an awesome day at Austal when we christen one of our amazing Navy ships," said Austal USA President Craig Percival. "Like the Navy's other EPF (expeditionary fast transport) vessels, Newport is destined for great things with the support she'll soon provide to the global fleet."

The principal speaker was Rear Adm. Shoshana Chatfield, President of the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island. The ship's sponsor is Charlotte Marshall, a Newport native.

"This ship honors the city of Newport, Rhode Island, and serves as a reminder of

the contributions the community has and continues to make to our Navy," said Secretary of the Navy Richard V. Spencer. "Newport is a Navy town where many officers begin their careers and then return later for strategic training. It is right that a fourth ship will bear the name Newport to continue our long relationship, and provide our commanders high-speed sealift mobility and agility in the fight to defend our nation."

EPF class ships are designed to transport 600 short tons of military cargo 1,200 nautical miles at an average speed of 35 knots. Each ship is capable of operating in shallow-draft ports and waterways, interfacing with roll-on/roll-off discharge facilities, and on/off-loading a combat-loaded Abrams main battle tank (M1A2). Each EPF includes a flight deck

for helicopter operations and an off-load ramp that will allow vehicles to quickly drive off the ship.

If the name of the newest EPF seems familiar, it's for good reason. According to the Navy, the first Newport (a gunboat) was commissioned Oct. 5, 1897. During the Spanish-American War, she received credit for assisting in the capture of nine Spanish vessels. The ship was decommissioned in 1898, but recommissioned in 1900 to serve as a training ship at the Naval Academy and at the Naval Training Station at Newport until decommissioning in Boston in 1902.

The second Newport (a frigate) was commissioned Sept. 8, 1944, decommissioned in September 1945 and loaned to the U.S.S.R. and returned to United States

custody at Yokosuka, Japan, in November 1949. Recommissioned in July 1950, the Newport patrolled off Inchon, Korea. Decommissioned at Yokosuka in April 1952, she was loaned to Japan in 1953, and commissioned as Kaede. She was then reclassified and transferred to the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force outright in August 1962.

The third Newport (a tank-landing ship) was commissioned on June 7, 1969. Assigned to the Amphibious Force, U.S. Atlantic Fleet, the Newport alternated amphibious training operations along the East Coast of the United States with extended deployments to the Caribbean and Mediterranean. She was decommissioned in October 1992, and transferred to the government of Mexico in 2001.

President's Column

Big Win and Bright Future

For those who haven't heard, I am pleased to report that on Nov. 12, the SIU and the Military Sealift Command (MSC) agreed to settle an outstanding habitability grievance which was headed for arbitration.



Michael Sacco

This situation involved conditions at the agency-contracted hotel Candlewood Suites in Charleston, South Carolina. That facility was used to house the crew of the *USNS Hershel Williams* when the ship was in an ROH period earlier in the year.

The union alleged there were violations of various habitability standards set forth in the CONUS Hotel MOU previously negotiated by the involved parties. The settlement will provide monetary compensation to all crew members who resided at the hotel from March through July of this year. SIU members overwhelmingly approved the settlement.

I appreciate the hard work and good-faith efforts of everyone involved in reaching the settlement, not only from the union but also from the agency. We have great respect for our partners at MSC and we all know that while we're not always going to see eye-to-eye, we have a long history of rowing in the same direction.

In this same vein, the SIU for many years has led the way in fighting for decent living conditions for CIVMARS, both at sea and ashore. Recently, the union has been involved in challenges to the award of certain contracted hotels which did not meet mandated habitability standards.

These challenges have resulted in CIVMARS being provided cleaner, safer and better-quality hotels while they are awaiting assignment at the CSU or when their ship is in a yard period. The SIU will continue in this effort for the health and safety of all CIVMARS.

Meanwhile, before we flip the calendar to a new year, let me say that I'm quite optimistic about our future. There's strong energy among our rank-and-file members and our officials. There is new tonnage regularly entering the MSC fleet. There is new leadership at the agency, and while they've got very big shoes to fill, I'm confident in our continued willingness and ability to work together.

Finally, this is the time to extend my heartfelt best wishes to the entire SIU family for a safe and happy holiday season. To our active members and retirees and your families, and to all of our staff and officials, here's to an enjoyable time filled with whatever makes the holidays most gratifying for you.

As usual, I also offer a respectful "season's greetings" to our men and women in uniform and to my fellow military veterans. The SIU appreciates your service and we are proud to support you as America's fourth arm of defense. You can count on us in the New Year and for every year that follows!

How to Become an SIU Member

Joining the SIU is easy and an important step in protecting your workplace rights. 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:

<https://www.seafarers.org/news/labor-maritime-news/civmar-news/>

Forms are also available under "SIU Forms" in the ABOUT tab.

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More Jobs Ahead as Navy Christens USNS Miguel Keith



New jobs for members of the SIU Government Services Division are on the horizon following the Oct. 19 christening of the expeditionary sea base *USNS Miguel Keith* (above) at the General Dynamics NASSCO shipyard in San Diego. SIU CIVMARS will provide some of the shipboard manpower for the union-built ship, named in honor of Marine Corps Vietnam veteran and Medal of Honor recipient Lance Cpl. Miguel Keith. The vessel is expected to be delivered soon. (Photo courtesy General Dynamics NASSCO)

CIVMARS Among AOTOS Honorees

U.S. Secretary of Transportation Elaine L. Chao headlined this year's recipients of the United Seamen's Service Admiral of the Ocean Sea (AOTOS) Awards. Chao accepted the honor Nov. 1 in New York City, where she was joined by fellow honorees SIU of Canada President Jim Given, Alaska Tanker Company President and CEO Anil Mathur, and Kirby Corporation Chairman Joseph Pyne.

Four Seafarers-crewed vessels also were recognized for heroic actions: the *Green Lake* (Central Gulf Lines), *Maersk Yorktown* (Maersk Line, Limited), *Great Republic* (Key Lakes), and *USNS Brunswick* (crewed by CIVMARS from the SIU Government Services Division).

SIU President Michael Sacco introduced Secretary Chao at the ceremony. He described her as "one of the strongest champions our industry has ever known.... She not only understands American maritime, but also truly cares about the American worker. She is a tremendous leader and is universally respected, admired and trusted throughout our industry."

Chao received the AOTOS Award based on her career-long commitment to the maritime industry.

"I am honored to have my work over the years recognized by such a distinguished organization and audience," she said. "I understand very well the sacrifices that merchant mariners experience. The men and women in this industry are heroes; I am proud of them and work hard to support them."

"Secretary Elaine L. Chao has worked hard to advance the U.S. maritime industry," said Maritime Administrator Mark Buzby. "Secretary Chao has been a staunch defender of the U.S.-flag merchant marine fleet. She has defended the budget of the Maritime Administration, and many of its policies in the interagency process. Today, we congratulate Secretary Chao on receiving the Admiral of the Ocean Sea Award which is recognized as one of the most prestigious awards in the maritime industry."

This is Secretary Chao's second Cabinet post. She served as U.S. Secretary of Labor from 2001-January 2009. She began her executive career in public service working on transportation and trade issues at the White House. She then served as Deputy Maritime Administrator; Chairman of the Federal Maritime Commission; and Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Given has led the fight for tougher cabotage laws within his country. He also chairs a working group of the International Transport Workers' Federation to support cabotage laws around the world.

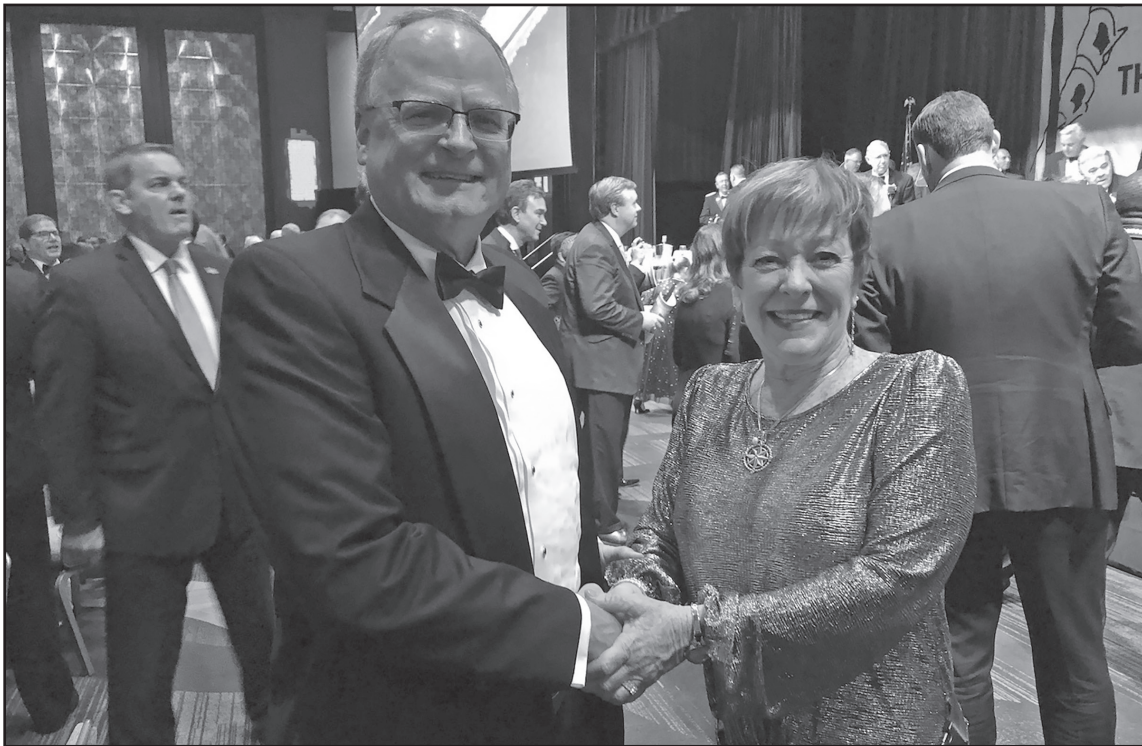
Given is a third-generation Seafarer, having started his career in the deck department in 1979. After sailing for 13 years, he came ashore as a union dispatcher in Thorold. He held other posts within the union before becoming its president in 2013.

Mathur became president and CEO of SIU-contracted Alaska Tanker Company in 2001 after working for British Petroleum for 20 years in management, corporate planning and facilities engineering. He holds an MBA from the University of California at Berkeley and an MS in Engineering from the University of Tulsa. He is an alumnus of the Harvard Business School.

Pyne started with Kirby in 1978 and climbed through its executive ranks, becoming a director in 1988. He retired in April 2018 but continues to serve Kirby's chairman in a non-executive role.

The United Seaman's Service presented the first AOTOS Award in 1970. More than 80 maritime industry leaders have been recognized through years.

Established in 1942, the United Seaman's Service provides community services for the U.S. Merchant Marine, U.S. armed forces and mariners from around the world at its centers in Europe, Asia, Africa and in the Indian Ocean. It also oversees seagoing libraries for American vessels through its affiliate, the American Merchant Marine Library Association.



SIU VP Government Services Kate Hunt (right) greets MSC Director of Total Force Management Michael Morris at the AOTOS event in New York.

USNS Comfort Completes Successful Mission

The SIU-crewed U.S. Navy hospital ship *USNS Comfort* returned home to Naval Station Norfolk, Virginia, on Nov. 15 following the five-month humanitarian mission Enduring Promise in South America, Central America and the Caribbean.

The ship carried nearly 200 medical professionals as well as a crew of 800 (some of whom are CIVMARS from the SIU Government Services Division). The Navy said the *Comfort* provided medical, surgical, dental, and optometry services during its 12 mission stops to Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, Panama, Peru, Saint Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis, and Trinidad and Tobago.

“We saw more than 70,000 patients in the onshore medical sites. We did over 1,200 surgeries on board the ship,” said Capt. Patrick Amersbach, commanding officer for the *USNS Comfort*’s Medical Treatment Facility. The mission also included more than 60 subject matter expert exchanges and 40 community relations events.

The mission’s final stop in Haiti was a personal request from the country’s U.S. ambassador, Michele Sison, according to the head of the U.S Southern Command, Adm. Craig Faller. The arrival of the *Comfort* came as violent demonstrations and barricades led several hospitals across the country to run out of medical supplies, and some were forced to temporarily close as protesters demanded the Haitian president’s resignation.

“It shows the power of an outstretched hand, the power of what we can do when we work together,” Faller said. “Here in Haiti we’ve had the opportunity to see firsthand the impact that it has made, changing lives forever.”

“Haiti is going through a tough time,” Sison said aboard the *Comfort* during the mission stop. “If you haven’t had the opportunity to get down to the Haitian



The *USNS Comfort* returns to Norfolk, Virginia, after another successful deployment. (Photo courtesy U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command and U.S. 4th Fleet)

Coast Guard Base Killick, which is the medical site ... I want to tell you what we all saw down there touches the heart. There were over 1,000 people at the gates yesterday. They told me upwards of 3,000 today at the medical site.”

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 optom-

etry lens laboratory, physical therapy center, pharmacy, angiography suite and two oxygen-producing plants.

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

SIU VP Meets with Members at CSU East



SIU VP Government Services Division Kate Hunt (right in photo at right) recently met with members at Customer Support Unit East in Norfolk, Virginia. Hunt and the members discussed a wide range of issues including job safety, the benefits of union representation and more.



Piracy Report Shows Improvement

The International Chamber of Commerce’s International Maritime Bureau (IMB) recently released their “Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships” report for the period Jan. 1-Sept. 30, 2019. The overall data shows that piracy numbers are down across the globe, with the total numbers for the period almost identical to the same period in 2017.

The total number of incidents through the first three months of 2019 was 119, which breaks down as follows: 10 vessels fired upon, 10 attempted attacks, four hijacked vessels and 95 vessels boarded. The single largest concentration of attacks was in the waters near Nigeria, with 29 separate incidents, followed by Indonesia with 20.

While the number of hostages taken in attacks has sharply fallen from last year’s report, that fall is due in part to an uptick in kidnappings, with 70 incidents of kidnapping occurring during the period. As stated in the report, “As a region, the Gulf of Guinea accounts for 86 percent of those crew taken hostage and for almost 82 percent of the crew kidnappings globally.”

Bulk carriers remain the most popular target for pirates, and ships were most likely to be attacked while they were at anchor. Continuing a trend since 2016, small arms were the most common weapon used in attacks.

According to the report, “In East Africa, no incidents have been reported for Somalia in 2019. IMB continues to urge masters however to maintain high levels of vigilance when transiting these waters and to follow the latest BMP recommendations. Elsewhere, the number of mainly low-level reports for Indonesia has dropped from 31 in 2018 to 20 in 2019.”

There was also a death reported during the period, as stated in the report: “Pirates armed with machine guns in two speed boats approached an offshore support vessel underway. The Captain immediately notified the naval escort security boat which maneuvered to engage the attackers. One speed boat closed in from port side of the vessel and crossed the bow, while the other speed boat engaged fire with the security boat. Alarm raised, crew proceeded to the engine room and all power was shut down. The pirates boarded the vessel with the aid of an elongated ladder. They broke into the accommodation, vandalized the cabins and took crew belongings and vessel’s properties. The pirates then proceeded to the engine room, kidnapped five men and escaped. The remaining crews sailed the vessel under escort to a safe anchorage. One Nigerian Navy armed guard reported killed in the exchange of fire between the naval security boat and the pirates.”

Launched in 1991, the IMB Piracy Reporting Center (PRC) is a 24-hour manned facility that provides the maritime industry, governments and response agencies with timely and transparent data on armed robbery incidents received directly from the master or owner of vessels.

SIU Directory

Michael Sacco, President

Augustin Tellez, Executive Vice President

David Heindel, Secretary-Treasurer

George Tricker, Vice President Contracts

Kate Hunt,
Vice President Government Services

Joe Vincenzo,
Asst. Vice President Government Services

Notice: Free Insurance Coverage for Members

All Unlicensed Personnel: As of October 1, 2019, the Seafarers International Union will be providing Life Insurance coverage to all SIU members through a policy contracted with the Prudential Insurance Company. There is no cost to you for this coverage! If you are an SIU member, please contact your local Representative or the SIU Membership Department to receive a copy of the policy and a beneficiary designation form. The SIU is pleased to provide this benefit to our members to protect them and their families. Stay safe out there!

West Coast Representative: Jesse Ruth (jruth@seafarers.org)

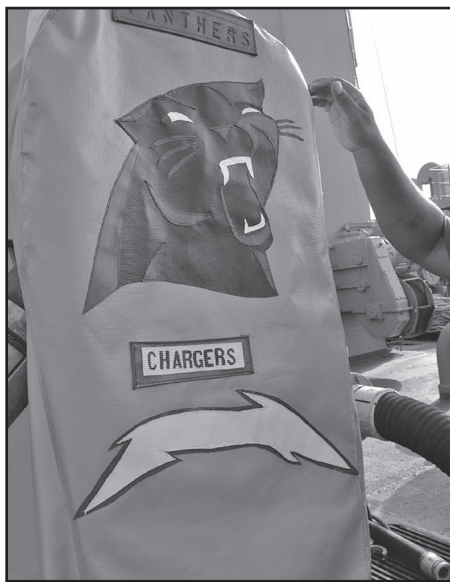
East Coast Representative: Sam Spain (sspain@seafarers.org)

SIU Membership Department: Diana Marrone (dmarrone@seafarers.org)



WITH MEMBERS ON THE WEST COAST – The photo above left was taken aboard the NOAA ship *Bell Shimada*. SIU VP Government Services Kate Hunt is in the back row, far left, while Asst. VP Joe Vincenzo also is in back, far right. The photo at right features new hires who enthusiastically signed on with the SIU.

At Sea and Ashore with the SIU



CREATIVE COVERS CONTINUED – AB Romonia Kesler (above) was featured in the prior edition of *The Federal Mariner*, and she's back by popular demand. In her spare time, she creates covers for bridge wing chairs, forklifts and other reels. The NFL-themed covers in the two photos directly above left also are Kesler's handiwork.



PROMOTING MARITIME TO CONGRESSIONAL REPS -- SIU Government Services Division Representative Sam Spain (right) is pictured with U.S. Rep. Bobby Scott (D-Virginia) (left) and U.S. Rep. Elaine Luria (D-Virginia). Photo was taken Nov. 25 at a U.S. Congressional forum in Norfolk, Virginia. Rep. Scott and Rep. Luria are strong backers of the U.S. Merchant Marine.



WELCOME ASHORE -- Longtime member James Jenkins (fourth from left) recently called it a career after many years sailing in the engine department. He is pictured with (from left) fellow Seafarers Charles White, Javanza Willis, Terry Melvin, SIU Government Services Division Representative Jesse Ruth, Robert Lloyd and John Briggs. Ruth raves about Jenkins, whom he describes as a dedicated philanthropist and family man. For example, years ago, Jenkins built, founded and funded an elementary school in the Philippines -- not for profit, but rather to enhance the educational opportunities of local children. "That is a CIVMAR story worth telling," Ruth said.