Navy's first Joint High-Speed Vessel christened

By Laura M. Seal,
Military Sealift Command Public Affairs

MOBILE, Ala. – USNS Spearhead (JHSV 1), the first of Navy's joint high-speed vessels designed for rapid intra-theater transport of troops and military equipment, was christened Sept. 17 during a ceremony at Austal USA in Mobile, Ala.

Military Sealift Command (MSC) will own and operate Spearhead and the other other joint high-speed vessels, or JHSVs, that are under contract to be built for the Navy. Spearhead will be crewed by 22 civil service mariners working for MSC who will operate, navigate and maintain the ship.

"USNS Spearhead and her MSC crew will be indispensable as they perform critical logistics and fleet support missions around the world," said Rear Adm. Mark H. Buzby, commander, Military Sealift Command, during his address to an audience of more than 1,200 people including leaders from the military services, Congress and maritime industry. U.S. Sen. Jeff Sessions served as the principal speaker at the ceremony.

Retired Army Chief Warrant Officer 4 Kenneth Wahlman is the ship's sponsor. His daughter Catherine, a staff sergeant in the Army Reserve Officer Training Corps at Virginia Tech University, broke the traditional bottle of champagne across the bow to formally christen the ship.

The 338-foot-long aluminum catamarans are designed to be fast, flexible and maneuverable, even in shallow waters, making them ideal for transporting troops and equipment quickly within a theater of operations.

"Flexibility may the best attribute of this ship," said civilian Capt. Douglas D. Casavant, Jr., Spearhead's civil service master who has been sailing for MSC for 22 years. "Our 20,000-square-foot mission bay area can be reconfigured to quickly adapt to whatever mission we are tasked with, for instance carrying containerized portable hospitals to support disaster relief or transporting tanks and troops."

The JHSVs are capable of transporting 600 short tons of military troops, vehicles, supplies and equipment 1,200 nautical miles at an average speed of 35 knots and can operate in shallow-draft, austere ports and waterways, providing U.S. forces added mobility and flexibility. The JHSVs' aviation flight decks can support day and night flight operations. Each JHSV also has sleeping accommodations for up to 146 personnel and airline-style seating for up to 312.

The Military Sealift Command joint high-speed vessel USNS Spearhead (JHSV 1), the first of 10 Navy joint high-speed vessels designed for rapid intra-theater transport of troops and military equipment, prepares for its Sept. 17 christening ceremony at Austal USA in Mobile, Ala. The 338-foot-long aluminum catamarans are designed to be fast, flexible and maneuverable even in shallow waters, making them ideal for transporting troops and equipment quickly within a theater of operations.
U.S. Navy photo courtesy Austal USA

One of the things Casavant is most looking forward to in his role as master of the first JHSV is working to define how these new ships will be used.

"It's going to be very interesting working with the fleet commanders to develop the ship and see how we can best support all of the services," said Casavant. "This is going to change the way a lot of people think about moving equipment and personnel."

Following acceptance trials, delivery to the Navy and operational testing, Spearhead will be based in Little Creek, Va., and is expected to begin conducting missions for the Navy in the first quarter of fiscal year 2013.

The Navy honored the ship's original U.S. Army-chosen name and sponsor after the decision earlier this year to transfer five JHSVs originally slated to be owned and operated by the Army to the Navy.

As MSC assets, all of the JHSVs will be civilian-crewed. The first four - including Spearhead - will be crewed by federally employed civil service mariners while the remaining will be crewed by civilian mariners working for private companies under contract to MSC. Military mission personnel will embark as required by the mission sponsors.

MSC operates approximately 110 noncombatant, U.S. merchant mariner-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 deployed U.S. forces and coalition partners.

For more news from Military Sealift Command, visit www.navy.mil/local/MSC/.

SPAWAR's SAILOR 2.1 now available on Navy ships

By Nicole Collins,
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SAN DIEGO – In response to overwhelming fleet requirements and positive user feedback of the SPAWAR Acquisition Integrated Logistics Online Repository (SAILOR) 2.0, the Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command (SPAWAR) launched SAILOR version 2.1 on Sept. 15.

Developed in collaboration with Program Executive Office Command, Control, Communications, Computers and Intelligence, the updated tool provides additional product features in anticipation of fleet demands for expanding the number of systems covered by this powerful tool.

"I see critical value with SAILOR in terms of a direct technical knowledge medium between the fleet and subject matter experts ashore," said Lt. Cmdr. Donald Wilson, force combat systems information officer, Commander, Naval Air Forces. "Having the documentation readily available at the click of a mouse, allows Sailors to properly configure, operate and maintain equipment and software; in turn you get improved system performance and support which equals increased fleet C4I (Command Control Communications Computers and intelligence) readiness."

SAILOR was developed in November 2010 as a user-friendly tool to assist the fleet in accessing current hardware and software configurations as well as product support documents. SAILOR allows the fleet to exchange technical knowledge with subject matter experts through blogs and a technical exchange forum which ultimately increases transparency and decreases response time.

"Not only will the fleet have access to critical documents and configuration files for their C4I products, they'll have 'how to' videos to help trouble shoot their equipment," said SPAWAR Product Data Management Technical Director Margaret Fellenbaum.

Originally designed for Sailors between ages 18 to 30, users can now navigate a comprehensive interface that includes video streaming capabilities, convenient document aggregation, fleet feedback mechanism, consolidated navigation menus and enhanced user support areas.

"Bandwidth is limited out in the fleet. SAILOR 2.1 loads significantly faster and is more responsive," said Information Systems Technician 1st Class Justin Roysdon, SPAWAR C4I Help Desk.

SAILOR 2.1 offers the fleet an array of features such as "tech tube," updated navigation and interface display and a media center. Tech tube, a series of "how to" videos, was created based on SPAWAR Commander Rear Adm. Patrick Brady's recommendation to display, track and report video tutorials to the fleet in an effort to proactively counter critical fleet issues like readiness and technical support.

"SAILOR has become an essential tool for the fleet to enhance C4I readiness and ultimately the Navy's information dominance capabilities," said Brady. "SPAWAR continues to strive to meet fleet requirements, and SAILOR 2.1 provides additional features that the fleet has been asking for."

With an increasing response to the promotion of fleet readiness and ensuring warfighter efficiency, requirements are rapidly increasing for a faster, more efficient means of accessing online training, technical manuals and "how to" videos for Sailors on board a Navy ship.

With a focus on fiscal efficiency, SPAWAR took the reins and pursued a more cost effective approach in quickly distributing logistics, training and instructional material to the fleet with version 2.1.

Forward moving trends have also shown systems leaning toward central online distribution points to provide an on-demand environment, where data can be instantly accessed without the need for physical media.

SAILOR 2.1 significantly decreases program sustainment costs in maintaining, shipping and tracking of training materials.

"[SPAWAR]...listened to the fleet Sailors and placed a majority of our C4I system information in a single location," said Information Systems Technician 1st Class Christopher Tierney, *USS John Paul Jones* (DDG-53).

SAILOR 2.1 will maintain its current security, privacy methods and policies, with the new changes not having an effect on security measures.

As the Navy's Information Systems Dominance systems command, SPAWAR and the SAILOR 2.1 team looks forward to receiving feedback on the launch of a product that directly benefits the Sailor, increases fleet readiness and improves product data availability, accuracy and accessibility.

To access SAILOR 2.1: https://sailor.nmci.navy.mil. For more information about SAILOR 2.1, visit sailor@spawar.navy.mil.