

# ANNUAL REPORT 2022



STRATEGIC SEALIFT  
OFFICER FORCE



# 2022

## ANNUAL REPORT

The Strategic Sealift Officer Force (SSOF) executed its mission with purpose and passion in alignment with the Operational Commanders and the Navy Reserve's Fighting Instructions. Despite the continued challenges of the global pandemic, the SSOF executed its mission at a five-year high.

The SSOF continues to promote Warfighter Readiness and is focused on manning, training and employing our force to their designed mobilization function. All tasks executed in the 2022 mission were designed to proactively manage the force in preparation for the transition of capabilities from the Active to the Reserve Component.

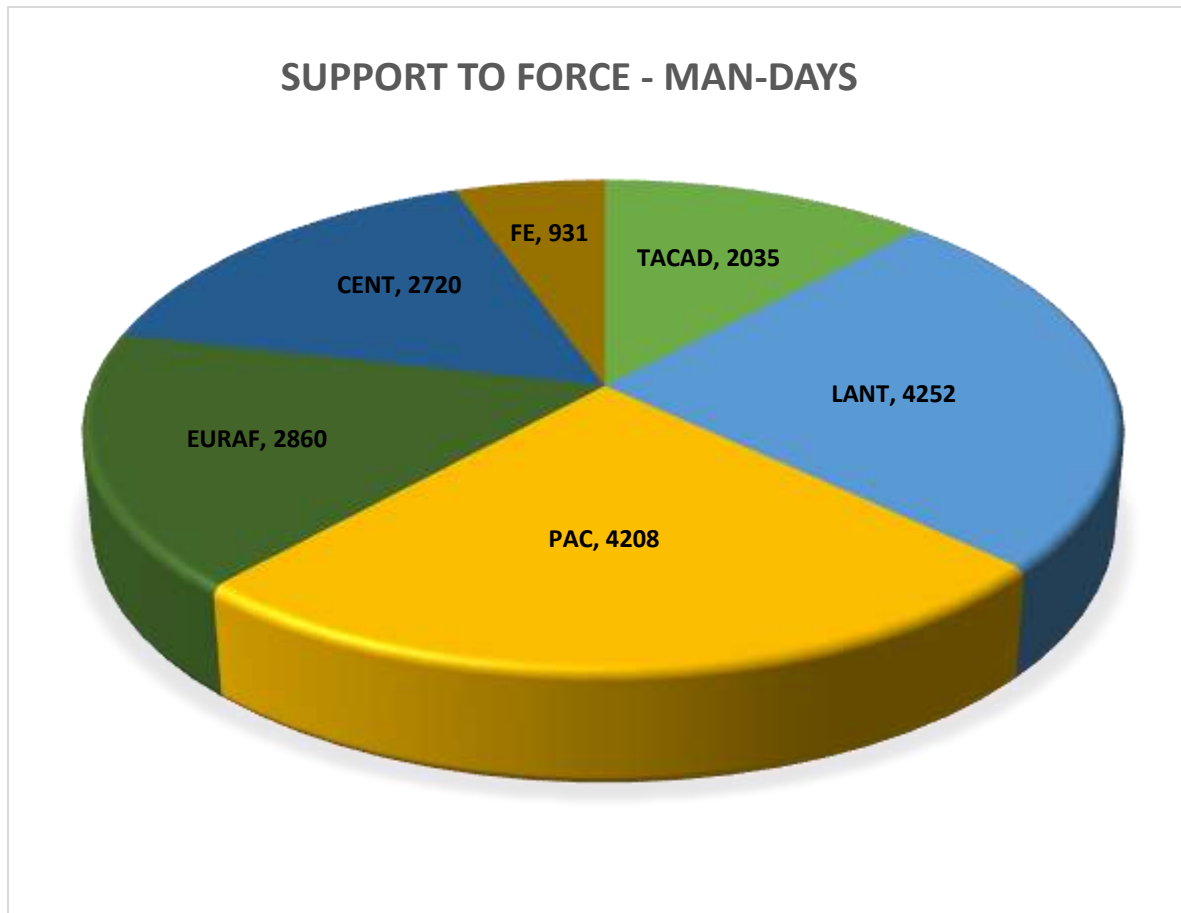
## MISSION

“The Strategic Sealift Officer Force (SSOF) shall provide warfare qualified Navy Reserve Officers with civilian credentials and military training to support the activation, operation, and sustainment of the United States organic Strategic Sealift fleet, in contested environments, and in support of Maritime Domain Operations and the Maritime Industrial Base throughout the continuum of conflict.” – SSOF Required Capabilities Document, 2022

In alignment with the mission of the Navy Reserve, the SSOF provides strategic depth and delivers operational capabilities to the Navy and the Joint Forces in times of peace and war.

# 2022

## SUPPORT TO THE FORCE



**Total man-days: 17,006 with 895 IRR Officers supporting**

Maintaining Warfighter Readiness is paramount to the success of the SSOF. The Unlimited Coast Guard license and Standards of Training, Certification and Watch standing (STCW) must be maintained via classroom and practical training.

Operations, Tactical Advisors (TACAD), Shipyard, Naval Cooperation and Guidance for Shipping (NCAGS) and Pilot support fulfills vital functions to our stakeholders and allows the SSOF to ensure the ability to transfer active component functions to the reserve in time of war. Admin functions employ the necessary staff to proactively manage a globally dispersed SSOF and maintains a trained and capable force.

# MILITARY SEALIFT COMMAND HEADQUARTERS NORFOLK, VIRGINIA

## SSOF Director's and CNRFC N14 Staff

The SSOF staff processed 895 IRR officers on individual orders in support of the SSOF mission and aggressively detailed IRR personnel into billets to utilize skillsets to best meet the needs of the Navy. The SSOF Director's and CNRFC N14 staff managed the force by enforcing Navy standards and assisting in completing requirements to fulfill missions for stakeholders. They leveraged authorized DOD virtual functions to train instructors, fulfill training class requirements and provide valuable skills and training to the workforce.

## TACAD

The Tactical Advisor (TACAD) Program remains an integral part of NAVTRANS afloat operations. TACADs work with national and international stakeholders in a crucial role as secure communications coordinators, naval liaison officers, and a direct command and control representative for Military Sealift Command worldwide.

The Strategic Sealift Officer Force provided a total of 2035 afloat man-days of support to the Military Sealift Command Tactical Advisor (TACAD) Program. In FY22, 103 officers were qualified as NAVTRANS/MSC Afloat tactical Advisors, creating a qualified pool of 421 qualified SSOs.

Afloat, 72 TACADs served across the globe, supporting 27 missions and 3 exercises. A total of 24 TACADs provided embarked support aboard 15 contractor-owned, contractor-operated (COCO) vessels. Mission support included transporting roll-on, roll-off (RORO) cargo, containerized ammunition cargo, Ukrainian aid delivery, and CONSOL fueling.



LTJG D. Jones tests the c-UAS DRAKE unit on the USNS BOB HOPE (PAC/FF)

Exercise support included OPERATION PATHWAYS, COLD RESPONSE, as well as Turbo Activation 22-1, and Turbo Activation 22-2.



LTJG K. O'Brien trains bridge crew on appropriate drone response onboard OCEAN GLADIATOR (EURAF/LANT).

## MILITARY SEALIFT COMMAND ATLANTIC NORFOLK, VIRGINIA

Strategic Sealift Officers (SSO's) support various commands and detachments in the Atlantic AOR, with their unique skill sets as licensed Merchant Mariners leading to the ultimate success of numerous MSC and TRANSCOM Operations. During FY22, 270 SSO members completed a combined 4,252-man days of support to the Command and Training to propel their careers forward within the maritime community.



LT Patrick Rice, LT Jacob Margray and LT Westin Haddock completed long term assignments supporting the MSCLANT staff

## OPERATIONS

During the past year, SSOs have severed the LANT AOR in multiple roles to support shoreside and underway operations within the Military Sealift Command Atlantic (MSCLANT) area of operations. Three SSOs were able to earn the qualification of Staff Duty Officer. This qualification enabled them to better serve the Command and utilize their experiences as licensed maritime officers to support daily shipboard operations. As the MSC Atlantic struggled to return to normalcy after the harsh environment caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, SSO's led the way back to support the staff to operate in a COVID-19 environment by tracking positive cases, drafting liberty exemptions and researching restrictions for ports of call. SSOs were give the responsibility to manage two Turbo Activations Exercises involving over 15 LANT based MSC and MARAD vessels. During the exercise, the SSOs coordinated the TACAD support for the vessels and developed a contested maritime training packet that is now currently used throughout the Command.

SSOs were able to provide their expertise and support multiple shipyard availability periods throughout the fiscal year. Of note, several SSOs were involved in the availability to support the USNS Comfort, in order for the vessel to remain on track



LT Dragon and LT Novak-Smith embark the MV Gary Chouest to support a tow mission

and proceed on the Continuing Promise 22 deployment as scheduled. Over 17 SSOs were aboard the vessel during the maintenance availability and undertook shipyard work items to keep the vessel on track.

SSO's have served a vital role in keeping the timeline of vessels on track in order to support operational tasking requirements through the fleet. Without the support of the IRR members, the vessel was at risk of not deploying on time to provide medical care throughout the Fourth Fleet Area of operation.

SSOs were also vital during this fiscal year in providing support to the TV Kings Pointer, TV Empire State and TV General Rudder as the vessels proceeded underway for their Summer Training cruises. SSOs were able to bring their expertise to a shipboard training environment and teach up and coming midshipmen how to operate and navigate vessels underway.

SSOs also supported the high visibility towing mission of the Moored Training Submarine 635 and 711 to and from their permanently berthed locations at the Nuclear Submarine training facility in Charleston, North Carolina. The SSOs embarked on the MV Gary Chouest and coordinated support between U.S. Fleet Forces, Coast Guard Sector South Carolina and Special Boat Team-20.



CDR Coviello supports the Groton Harbor Pilots getting a vessel underway.

## SUMMARY

Strategic Sealift Officers are at the forefront of operations with the MSCLANT AOR. Their vast, combined knowledge and maritime experience makes them adaptable to any situation, as well as viable assets to any command structure they are put into. However, it is their work ethic to become better Naval Officers as the links between the civilian and military maritime worlds that cannot be understated. LT Dragon and LT Novak-Smith embark the MV Gary Chouest to support a tow mission CDR Coviello supports the Groton Harbor Pilots getting a vessel underway.

## MILITARY SEALIFT COMMAND PACIFIC SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA



Strategic Sealift Officers (SSO's) support various commands and detachments in the Third Fleet AOR, with their unique skill sets as licensed Merchant Mariners leading to the ultimate success of numerous MSC and PACFLT operations. During Fiscal Year (FY22), 176 SSO's provided a combined 4,208 days of support to over 20 different commands in C3F and MSCPAC, additionally 107 SSO's conducted required training to maintain their license which resulted in another 450 days of coordinated Active Duty for Training (ADT).

### OPERATIONS

Over the past year, SSO's have been of vital support to commands within the Third Fleet Area of Responsibility (C3F AOR). The SSO program responded to multiple high-level requirements and short falls with motivated licensed officers who contributed to mission success. As a representative of the fighting force of the Navy, the SSOF pushed through the additional restrictions and requirements created through the COVID pandemic and were able to meet mission needs of the country and the Navy throughout the AOR. SSO's provided their skills and knowledge to support Unmanned Surface Vessel Division One (USV DIV 1) during RIMPAC 2022. Their assistance allowed four USV's to take part in multi-ship formation movements and multiple Surface and Anti-Submarine Warfare exercises. These officers were vital in maintaining clear communication with partner nations and the USV's while embarked on USS Fitzgerald (DDG 62) and USS William P. Lawrence (DDG 110). In addition, two TACAD qualified SSO's were embarked on M/T Maersk Peary and M/T SLNC Goodwill which supported the multi-national exercise by transferring over 13 million gallons of fuel to the oilers via 11 CONSOL operations. By flexing the talent within the SSO community, MSCPAC was able to address and meet the ever-changing operational environment we work in.



LTJG Bouchot training a California Maritime Academy cadet on the TV Golden Bear during the 2022 Summer Training Cruise.

Pacific Partnership, the largest annual multinational humanitarian assistance and disaster relief preparedness mission conducted in the Indo-Pacific, was a success do to the dedication of SSO's aboard the USNS Mercy (T-AH 19). While embarked for six months, our SSO's enabled USNS Mercy to make history with her inaugural visit to the Solomon Islands. This mission was comprised of nearly 2,000 military and medical personnel from the United States, Philippines, Australia, Chile, South Korea, and the United Kingdom. Within two weeks, U.S. sailors from the USNS Mercy and

medical professionals from the Philippines and partner nations performed more than 9,600 medical procedures across the Indo-Pacific. The SSO program committed 38 service members on over 1,200 days before and during the mission to ensure the ship had a successful deployment.

On the home front, SSO's were making sure our soon-to-be newest members of the SSOF were exposed to the amazing career in both the merchant marine world as well as the Navy while sailing onboard the California Maritime Academy's Training Ship GOLDEN BEAR. These SSO's were vital in the education of over 280 cadets.



LCDR Schopflin on USNS Henry J. Kaiser assisting during an UNREP in support of RIMPAC

## SUMMARY

Strategic Sealift Officers are essential to mission success in the Third Fleet AOR. Their resourcefulness, problem solving nature, and maritime experience make them adaptable to any situation, and stacks the deck for success in any command structure they are assigned to. As Naval Officers, their ability to bridge the gap between civilian and military enables the Navy to maintain a sustained dominance in the maritime environment. The role these officers play in our nation's defense cannot be overstated.

*"As SSOs, you will be enhancing our nation's logistics capability," said Bridgewater. "Whether you get the call next week, next year, or 10 years from now, I know that when that time comes, you will be ready."*

CAPT Kendall G. Bridgewater  
Commodore, CTF-33/COMSCPAC

# MILITARY SEALIFT COMMAND EUROPE & AFRICA

## NAPLES, ITALY

Strategic Sealift Officers (SSOs) supported various commands and detachments in US SIXTH Fleet, with their unique skill sets as licensed Merchant Mariners leading to the ultimate success of numerous MSC and NAVEUR operations. During FY22, 42 Individual Ready Reserve SSOs provided a combined 2860 man-days of support to C6F.

## OPERATIONS

Over the past year, SSOs have been of vital support to commands within C6F, including Military Sealift Command Europe-Africa (MSCEURAF), Command Task



CAPT Kenneth Pickard, Commander, Military Sealift Command Europe-Africa, presents LT Heidi Neubelt the Heavy Lifter Award. This COMSCEURAF award recognizing members of his staff for outstanding performance.

Force 63 (CTF 63), Naval Cooperation and Guidance for Shipping (NCAGS), Forward Deployed Regional Maintenance Center-Rota, and other U.S. Navy European Command (COMUSNAVEUR) operations and missions.

As SIXTH Fleet returned to normal operations after struggling with numerous setback relating to COVID-related health risks and regulatory requirements, SSOs smoothed the pathway that led back to standard operations. Utilizing their knowledge and experience gained from their civilian professions in the maritime industry, they could be counted on to deliver solutions to unique logistics problem-sets that often emerge. They were directly responsible for the safe movement of upwards of 40 ships in 2022, coordinating over 150

logistical operations supporting US and NATO Forces needed to maintain the operational readiness of SIXTH Fleet, while maintaining COMUSNAVEUR, MSC, and all host nation COVID requirements.

Shortly after the start of the new calendar year, Europe faced the greatest threat to its internal peace and stability since 1945. In response to a growing Russian threat to Ukraine, COMNAVEUR stood up an Echelon II Joint Force Maritime Component Command (JFMCC) in order to be postured for response to Russian aggression that threatened the NATO alliance for the first time since its founding in 1949. SSO served two crucial roles within the JFMCC- (1) with Naval Cooperation and Guidance for Shipping (NCAGS) as a Maritime Domain Awareness cell; and (2) as augmentees to MSCEURAF's surface operations staff. The NCAGS cell served with a permanent presence at the Maritime Operations Center for the first time in C6F's history. NCAGS

SSOs led with poise and professionalism as they created a full Maritime Domain picture for COMNAVEUR and the first-, second-, and third-order effects of commercial shipping denial to Ukraine/Black Sea shipping for the wider global economy. The cell also responded to innumerable Requests-for-Information and provided daily briefs to senior level European Defense staffs. Command leadership found the research and interpretation of the maritime threat environment and its effects on the commercial shipping industry to be vital to informing the Commander's decision cycle, and the cell's presence was recognized as essential. At the MSCEURAF level, SSOs stood duty and coordinated logistical movements for over 40 ships in theater supporting various efforts in the SIXTH Fleet AOR. At its peak, MSCEURAF/CTF 63 was responsible for delivering 30,000 meals per week to sailors and pumping over 3 million gallons around the Fleet against the persistent supply-chain issues resulting from COVID-19. SSOs quite significantly impacted the charge on keeping US Forces supplied, ready, and at-sea to meet mission.



HAMMARNEDSODDEN, NORWAY – LCDR Tim O'Hara, OIC of EPU 104, and LCDR Joe Michnya, Assistant OIC, conduct cargo watch turnover onboard USNS SISLER (T-AKR 311) in support of Exercise COLD RESPONSE 22.

Finally, SSO engineers kept the ships in theater warfighter-ready by delivering 478 man-days of engineering support. Leveraging deck and engineering skills, the maintenance teams ensure three USNS and two USS ships were delivered back to the fleet better than they entered their Midterm Availabilities or Routine Overhauls.

## SUMMARY

SSOs leverage skills that are not found anywhere else within the Navy Reserve. Their unique experience allows them to provide afloat support as officers, augment workforce to provide inspections and engineering support for ship availabilities, or enhance unit mobilization readiness by providing civilian to military maritime coordination. They are an essential link that allows the Navy to better perform at the junction between civilian and military. The Strategic Sealift Officer Force proves daily- whether on the watch floor, in the wheelhouse, or in the office- that it will provide capability that the Navy doesn't know it needs until it's gone.

*"The Strategic Sealift Officer Force (SSOF) executed their reserve function exactly the way it was designed-- to respond effectively and professionally to an emergent requirement triggered by the need to support the Fleet's Ukraine war effort. The SSOF delivers knowledgeable and dedicated professionals who help the wider Navy accomplish its mission"*

CAPT K.S. Pickard  
Commodore, CTF-63/MSCEURAF/ COMSCEURAF

# MILITARY SEALIFT COMMAND CENTRAL

## MANAMA, BAHRAIN



Strategic Sealift Officers (SSO's) support various commands and detachments in the Fifth Fleet AOR, with their unique skill sets as licensed Merchant Mariners leading to the ultimate success of numerous MSC and NAVCENT operations. During FY22, 22 individual ready reserve SSO's provided a combined 2,720 man days of support to C5F.

## OPERATIONS

The Strategic Sealift Officers Force continues to be the most desired reservist community within C5F. When the world was shook by the events in Ukraine and the needs of the fleet shifting primarily to C6F and C7F for support, stability within C5F was more important than ever. The SSO community stepped up and provided the stability and continuity required, with a full return to normal operations outside of the pandemic. A prime example of this was provided by two SSO's on yearlong orders to Military Sealift Command Central (MSCCENT). These two SSO's directly organized, managed, and oversaw the success of 21 missions across 71 port visits within the CENTCOM AOR, supporting multiple entities, including, but not limited to: Defense



SSO's perform ship visit to USS SIOUX CITY (LCS 11) during her deployment to FIFTH Fleet for scheduled P-MAV

Logistics Agency (DLA), Surface Deployment and Distribution Center (SDDC), Naval Oceanographic Office (NAVOCEANO), Forward Deployed Regional Maintenance Center (FDRMC), Command Task Force-52 (CTF-52), Command Task Force-53 (CTF-53), Command Task Force-54 (CTF-54), Command Task Force-59 (CTF-59), U.S. Marine Corps Forces Central Command (USMARCENT), U.S. Army Central Command (USARCENT), U.S. Navy Central Command (USNAVCENT), Military Sealift Command (MSC), and U.S. Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM).

One of the most important entities within C5F that the SSOF provided vital support to is the NAVCENT Naval Cooperation and Guidance for Shipping (NCAGS). Their mission is to assist C5F in managing risk by providing situational awareness and real-time clarity of the merchant shipping picture and to ensure the safe passage of merchant shipping in crisis or contingency. The SSOF provided 1427 man-days in

support of these efforts, including International Maritime Exercise 2022 (IMX/CE 22), the largest international exercise in the AOR. NCAGS forward deployed 16 U.S. personnel, a majority being SSO's, from their reserve detachment in Chicago to five different countries across C5F/C6F in support of IMX/CE 22. This was the single, largest deployment of NCAGS reservists in NCAGS Federation history. The SSOF ensured that the bridge between the U.S. Navy and the maritime industry partners and allies of all nations stayed connected in order to guarantee the overall success of the Commands mission objectives. Shortly before the beginning of the new fiscal year, the USCENTCOM AOR executed one of the most vital operations of the past two decades: Operation ALLIES REFUGE. The withdrawal of U.S. Military troops from Afghanistan took a heavy toll around the USCENTCOM AOR, and demanded participation from all entities in theater. Again, SSO's answered the call, filling in necessary gaps caused by the operation and volunteering their time in the processing of refugees at ISA Air Base in Bahrain. The support received from SSO's at CTF-53/MSCCENT enabled the operations team to perform the safe and successful transfer of 819 refugees via CTF-53 air assets.



CAPT Jessica Pender, NCAGS OIC, congratulates SSO LTJG Hunter Wickman, NCAGS Maritime Domain Awareness Specialist, during SSOWI pinning ceremony for LTJG Hunter Wickman and LTJG Joshua D'Lima.

## SUMMARY

There is not a more important asset within the Naval Reserve to CENTCOM than the Strategic Sealift Officer Force. During FY22, the SSOF directly supported six operational commands, as well as multiple other USNAVCENT operations and missions. The Force can adapt to every scenario they are in, working seamlessly as a team. They provide the missing piece to the operational puzzle with their unique knowledge and expertise as Merchant Mariners. Without that piece, the bridge between civilian and military operations would be lost. Without the Strategic Sealift Officer Force, success cannot be ensured or guaranteed. The SSOF is a necessity not only to USNAVCENT and USCENTCOM, but to the entire Navy overall.

*"Impressive group of professionals that significantly enhance theater logistics capabilities."*

CAPT Sean Andrews Deputy  
Commodore, CTF-53/COMSCCENT/  
COMLOGFORNAVCENT

# MILITARY SEALIFT COMMAND FAR EAST SINGAPORE

## OPERATIONS

FY22 has been a difficult and challenging time for MSC Far East (MSCFE) in its mission to man, train, and equip the logistics and special mission ships to the US Navy. As restrictions for the COVID-19 pandemic are being lifted both internally and across the 20 different countries in the AOR, Strategic Sealift Officers are re-establishing their presence in the western Pacific.

Luckily, the officers of the SSOF have been able to use their expertise in port and ship operations to bridge the gap to the new normal of operations in the western Pacific. In FY'22, 8 SSOs performed 931 days of active duty service. Usually SSOs are brought in for two-week exercise support ADTs, however, the pandemic took those opportunities away, but opened the door to long term ADTs where SSOs could make meaningful and deep impact.



LT Peter Short at Sembcorp Admiralty Yard during USNS ALAN SHEPARD Dry-Docking

SSOs used their expertise in shipyard maintenance and operations to run the day to day business of the combat logistics fleet and focused on re-opening maintenance and operations that were closed off due to COVID. The SSOF brought in the working knowledge of maritime union relations and ship repair in foreigner nations that proved to be a major contribution in re-opening Singapore and Thailand for maintenance availabilities.

LT Peter Short took orders as an augment port engineer for the repair and overhaul period of USNS ALAN SHEPARD in Singapore. LT Short sails as a

First Assistant Engineer with Military Sealift Command in his civilian career and was able to bring that experience to help complete the repair period on time. He tackled special projects such as overseeing the lifesaving equipment inspections and over one hundred American Bureau of Shipping mandated steel repairs.

SSOs were assigned to SSU Guam to establish an augment Harbor Pilot program for Joint Region Marianas. CDR Andrew Glassing and LCDR Nicholas Pino used their ADTs to demonstrate the capabilities of SSO Harbor Pilots with numerous Apra Harbor transits of commercial and navy vessels to include an aircraft carrier. CDR Glassing met with RDML Nicholson, Commander, Joint Region Marianas, to present the SSO Harbor Pilot community and its potential contributions to harbor operations at Naval Base Guam.



Left to Right: RDML Nicholson  
Joint Region Marianas, CDR  
Medina SSU Guam, CDR Glassing

The Philippines have been one of the hardest hit countries by the pandemic. One of MSCFE's main objectives for FY22 was restore ship operations to pre-pandemic levels at Subic Bay. CDR Matthew Skomo and LCDR Bradford Lawhon were on independent duty in at the Subic Bay Freeport Zone to coordinate port visits and to advocate for policies that would benefit MSCFE. They also took part in planning many distinguished visitor site tours to include a visit from Brigadier General Gavin Gardner, USPACOM J4.

## SUMMARY

Without the support of the SSOF, many critical tasks would not have been completed. The SSOF employs their skills to smooth communication and tasking, especially when it comes to the interaction with the maritime industrial base. Their civilian skills are uniquely suited to this environment.

**2022**

# CONCLUSION

The SSOF provided extensive support to its major stakeholders totaling 17,006 man-days of support. For FY23, our focus is to continue training to the MSC operational commander's Sealift mission and train in support of other active component commands. SSOF Lines of Effort include specific call outs from the Fighting Instructions for IRR and Sealift personnel:

1. Warfighter Readiness is our fitness to serve in a mobilization billet (3.A and 3.B)
2. Transition capabilities for sealift from the Active to the Reserve (3.A.4)
3. Proactively manage the IRR to create strategic depth (3.B.5)

Experienced SSOs are in high demand and are given exceptional opportunities in the Navy, while gaining fleet experience and providing needed operational support in the contested maritime environment.

The SSOF serves a critical need which has been recognized as needing further clarification and support. MSC, CNRFC, OPNAV N4, and MARAD are working hand-in-hand to codify the capabilities needed for the SSOF to project naval power and further enforce strategic depth.