

Department of the Navy Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR)



Ship Rider Orientation Guide

Guidance for Civilians on Boarding Procedures and Requirements for U.S. Navy and Military
Sealift Command Vessels

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Ship Rider Orientation Guide

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1 Introduction

The purpose of this guide is to provide information on the environment, customs, living conditions, and expectations while on board a Naval vessel. There are multiple points of contact and rules of thumb that can assist civilians in life onboard, most of which are covered in this guide. While most of the information contained here primarily references U.S. Navy (USN) ships (also called “grey hulls”), specific deviations are noted in the case of Military Sealift Command (MSC) vessels.

Generally, follow the example of the ship’s company and if questions arise, ask the experiment or project lead. Common sense and consideration for fellow shipmates will see one through most situations, as will a positive demeanor. These personal factors can affect the reputation of the entire team and the working relationships aboard, it is important to remember that the officers and crew live and work there too.

As a guest aboard the ship, always have a government ID or activity badge and be prepared to show it when you board the ship. It is important to keep the identification/badge visible, except when underway. All personnel are reminded that they are subject to the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), the military’s legal system, while on board the ship or at a Naval Facility.

2 Before Boarding

There are several policies to address before traveling. Confirm the ship location and station with the experiment lead as ships can change docking positions. Security clearance and visit request information should be sent prior to departure.¹ Travel orders must clearly indicate clearance level. The company/government Facility Security Officer (FSO) can assist in completing these requirements.

2.1 Points of Contact

Your Ship Liaison assists in coordination and communication between the ship and the host, community, and/or the event itself. You will be given a Point of Contact (POC) for the following areas: berthing (room/rack/bed assignments), base access (non-Common Access Card (CAC) holders), classified material, medical forms, and ship networks (NIPR, SIPR, and JWICS). Review the paperwork for each and return promptly. Security Management Office (SMO) codes will be provided per clearance level. Refer to the Security & Requirements section for further information.

MSC ships are operated by civilians, with fleets that consist of sealift vessels, tankers, naval auxiliaries, and various special mission and support ships. If on an MSC ship, ask your primary POC for information on the First Officer or designated Military Treatment Facility (MTF3).

The first entry point in port for any USN vessel is the quarterdeck. Traditionally, this is a ceremonial watch at the top of the brow, however, on modern ships it is the first security check point coming aboard. The watches are usually the Officer of the Deck (OOD), Petty Officer of the Watch (POOW) and a messenger. Once coming onboard (see Reporting Aboard) state your purpose to the OOD.

¹ Naval Oceans Systems Center, 1984

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2.2 Required Forms

System Authorization Access Request (SAAR) forms differ by ship as each has varying requirements. Most request instructions include the organization, office/department, contract expiration, and an official email, with space for ship personnel and security manager signatures.

A token may be provided to access the SIPR network, in which case, date of birth and DOD identification number should be provided to verify clearance for the account. Be sure to bring your CAC as well. Please note the form must be encrypted upon completion as it will become Controlled Unclassified Information (CUI).

Your sponsor may also send you a manning spreadsheet that includes basic contact information. Cyber Awareness training will arrive around the same time as the SAAR forms. You may also be asked for next of kin and emergency information, this will be emailed to your coordinator. This paperwork is sent far in advance to allow time for processing but try not to delay input. Prepare copies of all forms completed to expedite boarding. Bring a blank check to settle outstanding payments accrued aboard as you will receive a temporary cash card to load. For MSC vessels, some of this paperwork is completed once on board. Upon boarding, you must complete a next of kin and telephone information/address for the ship's record. You may also have to provide a visitor's authorization letter.²

3 Reporting Aboard

At the top of the brow (walkway or gangway), face aft (the stern or back of the ship) toward the colors (U.S. flag) and pause at attention. Turn to the OOD (the Sailor ready to greet you) and say, "Request permission to come aboard, Sir/Ma'am." State where you are from, the purpose of the visit and/or the person whom you wish to see. When leaving the ship, request permission to leave from the OOD. Once granted, honor (face) the colors prior to departure. "Facing the colors" is only required during daylight hours.

3.1 Ships Orientation and Briefings

An orientation brief will be offered prior to departing or getting underway, featuring pertinent information regarding messing, berthing, screening forms, and more. Emergency procedures and reporting stations will also be instructed. Drills are frequent at times, expect a man-overboard drill shortly after departure.

The bottom line for going to sea on a warship is to use common sense and follow the lead of the crew. Recognize that there is a multitude of hazards on board and stay alert as you move about the ship. If you have questions, do not hesitate to ask them. The crew will understand you are unfamiliar with your surroundings and provide reasonable assistance.

3.2 Addressing Military Personnel

The ship's Commanding Officer is always addressed as "Captain," regardless of rank. All other officers are addressed by rank and last name, (Lieutenant Smith) or their billet, such as "XO" for the Executive Officer, "OPS" for the Operations Officer, etc. Enlisted personnel are addressed by rate, e.g., "Senior Chief Jones," "Petty Officer Smith", or "Seaman Williams."³ There are also occupational specializations that reference rating, such as "OS" for Operations

² Military Sealift Command, Welcome Aboard for Embarked Visitors, 2008, Revision 1.5

³ Trident Warrior Ship Rider Guide as cited in Coon, (n.d.)

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Specialist or “QM” for Quartermaster. You may hear both. It can be quite confusing for a first-time visitor, so just follow the crews’ lead.

Crewing levels and organization aboard MSC ships are similar to commercial ships. Instead of having Officers and Enlisted personnel, MSC maintains licensed and unlicensed personnel. Licensed personnel have a combination of sea time and completion of a license exam.⁴ For more detailed MSC-specific information, see Section 9.

4 Safety

Safety is of principal importance anywhere, but extra caution should be taken especially on a warship. In case of an emergency, it is vital to know key figures and areas beforehand. Before diving into the specifics, here is a quick review of the hierarchy. The Commanding Officer is responsible and accountable for the ship and everything in it. The CO’s direct representative in all matters is the Executive Officer. All Department Heads report to the Executive Officer. The department heads are responsible for the various departments aboard ship such as Operations, Engineering, and Navigation. The Command Master Chief is the senior enlisted person on board and is responsible to the Captain for matters relating to the crew’s well-being.

On MSC vessels, the Ship’s Master has the overriding authority and responsibility to deviate from written instructions when he or she determines that the deviation is necessary for the safety of the crew, vessel, or surrounding environment. Government civilians and contractors on board follow Navy and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requirements.

4.1 Emergency Procedures

Emergency procedures will be discussed during ship orientation/underway safety brief prior to or just after departure. Ensure you understand where you go and to whom you report in case of an emergency or drill such as Man Overboard, General Quarters, Fire, etc. You will also be assigned a lifeboat station. Be sure you physically locate this area prior to getting underway to ensure you know where to go in the event of an emergency.

In the event of a drill or emergency, you should immediately report to your assigned area and muster with the senior crewmember present. This may save your life or others. Keep calm and listen to the ship’s crew directing you.

To facilitate efficient movement of all personnel to their designated positions during emergencies or drills, the following rule of thumb applies: for transit **forward or up**, use starboard (right side of the ship) passageways (halls) and ladders (stairs), and for **down and aft**, use the port (left side of the ship).

You will be assigned a lifeboat when reporting aboard an MSC vessel. It is important to retain your emergency assignments and lifeboat stations. There are different signal drills for the various alerts. Specific signals will be discussed during training. The signal for Fire/Collision or other emergency will be a continuous sounding of the ship’s whistle and general alarm bell. Upon hearing it, report to the muster (emergency) station. The Abandon Ship signal consists of

⁴ <https://www.msc.usff.navy.mil/Organization/Civil-Service-Marines>

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both short and long blasts from the ship's whistle and general alarm. This alarm means you must report to your assigned lifeboat.⁵

A medical representative will always be available when on board. You are required to report all injuries, no matter how minor. Anyone with special medical requirements or on medication should consult with their personal doctor. All civilian personnel are required to complete and submit a medical screening form that will inform the ship's medical staff of your status and needs. Be sure to bring an adequate supply of medication for the planned underway period plus an additional 3-4 days, in case of delay. Bring preventive measures if you are prone to motion sickness (Dramamine, medicated patch i.e., Transderm Scop patch, "Sea Bands", etc.) You may have to provide medical information about chronic illnesses. Your information will remain private under the Privacy Act and only used in case of an emergency.

4.2 Deck Safety

Use common sense when navigating about the warship. When moving around the deck, take the following into consideration:

- (1) Decks may become wet/slick. Exercise care while moving around the ship, sudden ship movements can occur at any time.
- (2) DO NOT go to the weather decks at night or in rough seas. In the event of rough weather, remember the adage "one hand for yourself and one for the ship". If you get seasick, report to sickbay for aid.
- (3) Do not touch or lean on the lifelines (deck fence).
- (4) Hold handrails while going up and down ladders. Do not use handrails as slides.

4.3 Flight Operations

Flight operations are inherently dangerous evolutions. When "Flight Quarters" is announced, remain clear of the flight deck area and inside the ship. The opportunity to observe flight deck operations will be available on most Navy ships. Ask your sponsor for the best location. As a passenger on an aircraft, protective equipment (life jacket, cranial helmet, etc.) will be provided, as well as specific instructions on how and when to approach the helicopter (see Figure 1⁶). Routine debris checks are conducted to ensure a smooth take off. **Flash photography is not permitted during the hours of darkness.**



Figure 1 Flight Deck

⁵ Military Sealift Command, Welcome Aboard for Embarked Visitors, 2008, Revision 1.5

⁶ Graphic: U.S. Navy Official Page

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4.4 Electrical Safety

Personal electrical/electronic equipment (cell phones, personal computers, tablets, electric razors, etc.) that is not solely battery operated must be safety inspected by ship's electricians prior to use aboard ship.

The positions of valves and switches are also critical to the safety and operation of the ship. Do not change the position of a valve or switch unless specifically ordered to by a member of the ship's company. If you do not know what it does, do not touch it.

The crew follows Lock-out/Tag-out (LOTO) procedures, so you may see tags or locks⁷ attached to equipment throughout the ship. These items indicate the clear status of the equipment being serviced and are important to not intervene with.



Figure 2 Safety Lockout in place. Tag and Lock styles may vary.

4.5 Material Conditions/Hatches

Watertight integrity and air purity are vital to the safety and seaworthiness of the ship and survival in emergencies. Material Conditions are how the crew configures a ship based on the operational situation and risks. Material Conditions specify positions (open/closed) for hatches and doors throughout the ship and are modified for underway transit and special evolutions. It is the responsibility of all personnel to help maintain the correct material condition. If you go through a secured door or hatch, **secure it as you found it prior to your passage**. A good rule of thumb overall is to always leave things where you found them.

Some ships are equipped with systems that over-pressurize the interior of the ship to keep possible airborne contaminants from entering. Airlocks provide passage between the ship and the weather decks; ensure that you carefully shut and secure the first door prior to attempting to open the second door when such a system is activated. Personal injury may result in improper operation of airlocks.

4.6 Trash

Never throw anything over the side of the ship into the water. This can result in a man overboard being reported. Plastic trash must be separated from paper and biodegradable garbage. The blue trashcans are for plastics only as per USN policy.

To prevent spills, please refrain from moving around the ship with open food/drink containers. Bring a water bottle to refill and a coffee mug with a cover for your beverages. This helps keep the ship clean and reduces the workload on the crew. Naval tradition goes by the adage, "If you made the mess, you clean it up."

4.7 Compartment Numbering

Understanding how the carrier is compartmented is crucial for traversing the vast interior. Although ship's personnel will be happy to lend a hand, it is still useful to have a working knowledge of where things are located as this system serves as an internal map. Each compartment of the ship is stamped with a series of alphanumeric numbers, known as "bull's-eyes," which give information on where you are, and what that compartment's function is. This information is given in four parts as shown below, separated by a hyphen.

- (1) The first number is the deck. "1" is the main deck, the highest complete deck running from bow to stern. The quarterdeck is generally found on the main deck. Decks above the

⁷ Graphic: Mariner Gulf Training Course

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main deck are numbered 01 (pronounced “oh one”), 02, 03, etc. and referred to as levels. Decks are numbered sequentially as you go down toward the keel (bottom) of the ship: “2” is directly below the main deck, “3” below that, etc. On a carrier, the hangar deck (the one below the flight deck) is the main deck.

- (2) The second number is the frame number. Frames are the vertical ribs of the ship and are numbered consecutively from the bow (Frame 0) to the Stern. These numbers tell you where you are in relation to the bow of the ship; the numbers increase as you go aft.
- (3) The third number in the bull’s-eye indicates how far from the centerline of the ship that the compartment is, with even numbers to port, odd to starboard. A “1” or “2”, for example would indicate a compartment near the center of the ship. These numbers increase as you travel outboard.
- (4) The fourth number indicates the function of the compartment. Common compartment designations are shown in Figure 3 below.

A	Supply and storage	L	Living quarters
B	Guns	M	Ammunition
C	Ship control	T	Trunks and passages
E	Machinery	V	Void
F	Fuel	W	Water

Figure 3 Carrier Compartment Usage Codes⁸

Using the above information, you can determine that an example compartment, 2-42-1-L, is located on the second deck (one deck below the main deck), 42 frames aft from the bow, on the starboard side, and the space is used for berthing or messing type purposes. See Figure 11 for a detailed diagram of the compartments and the numbering schemes for each.

5 Security & Requirements

One of many important security considerations is the movement of the ship itself. **Information regarding ship schedules and intended movement outside 24 hours is classified** and must be maintained accordingly. Once you are provided with the ship’s name and schedule, you will be responsible for maintaining Operational Security (OPSEC) with this information. Be aware of your surroundings and do not discuss classified information outside of secure areas. Each rider is expected to understand standard classification guidelines, so it would be helpful to review them beforehand. The security training will cover some of these basics. The exercise or experiment taking place underway will also have specific guidelines.

Embarked civilians are not initially allowed to access classified information onboard unless a separate approval is requested and approved. If access is needed, the sponsor will ascertain the clearance level required and work to obtain the necessary disclosure authority.

5.1 U.S. Mail

There is a classified material handler that coordinates receipt and storage of classified material/equipment prior to visit. This POC also coordinates the mailing of material and/or equipment off the ship. Depending on the purpose of the visit, this may include Audio/Visual

⁸ Naval Reserve Intelligence Program, 1999

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(A/V) recording equipment, binders, and paper surveys for data collection. The mailing slip will list dimensions and weight, as well as the proper classification markings.

For mailing unclassified materials to and from a USN Ship, the United States Postal Service (USPS) is the standard carrier and the only one accepted aboard. The Navy's postal system is a group of regional Fleet Post Offices (FPOs) located at bases around the world and supported by Fleet Mail Centers (FMCs). The FMCs are connected to USPS via two Joint Military Postal Activities located at each coast.

Military addresses will use "FPO" as this designation is associated with Navy installations and ships. A customs form will need to be filled out and attached. Certain items are prohibited, such as location-tracking electronics and radios. Refer to your local Post Office for more information on packaging and tracking information. Figure 4 demonstrates a proper address label.

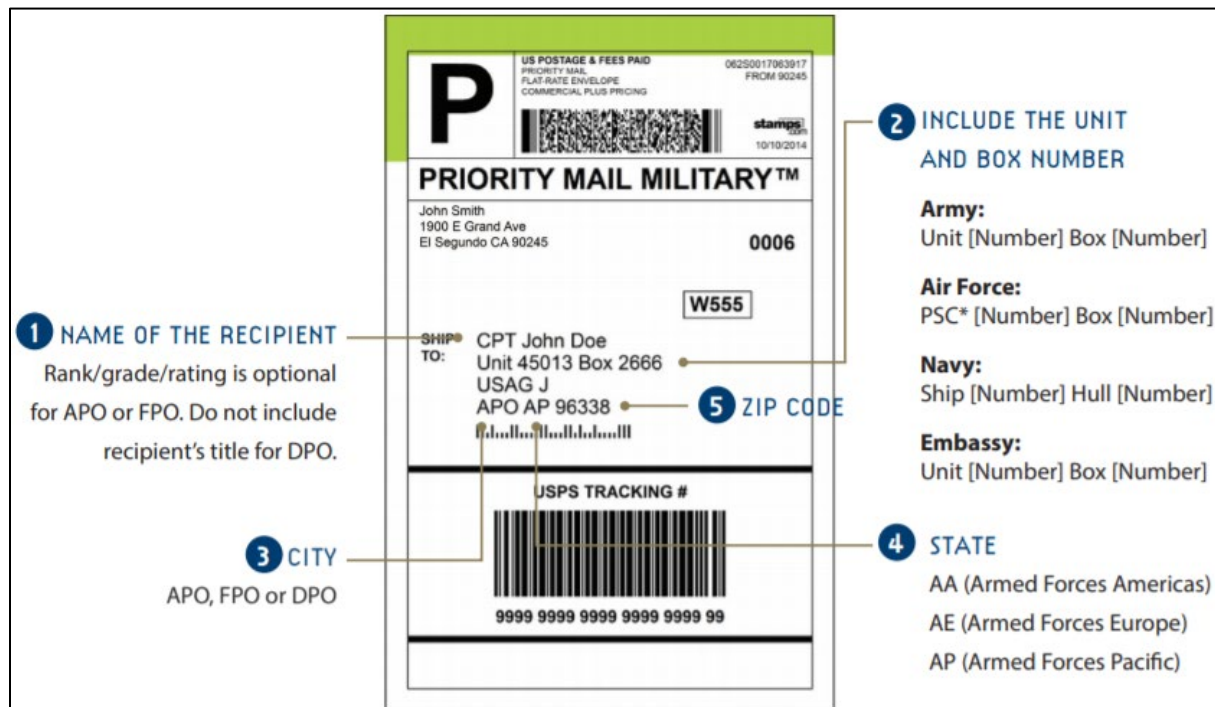


Figure 4 Military Address Label Components⁹

6 Drills & Etiquette

The military honors and relies on many traditions, and the Navy is no exception. Many of these customs and ceremonies have been practiced since the first generations of recruits. You may hear the terms custom and courtesy often, sometimes interchangeably, so let us look at the definitions for each. A *custom* is a usual way of acting in a specific situation, usually long-established and can carry the force of law. A *courtesy* can be acts or words and used to express consideration and respect.¹⁰ Acts of politeness and respect extended to another person are the best way to guarantee receiving them in return, an important note to remember when in close quarters with team members and shipmates alike.

⁹ Stamps.com, 2014

¹⁰ United States Navy Recruiting Command, 2018

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6.1 Colors

While **in port** colors (hoisting of the national flag) are observed daily at 0800 and sunset. Colors are signaled by one whistle blast and a (possibly faint) rendering of the National Anthem. All personnel turn and face the Ensign (on the stern of the ship) and stand at attention, remove your cover (hat), and place your hat or hand over heart until the "carry-on" signal (three blasts on the whistle) is given. Colors are not observed at sea.

6.2 Positions

Civilians do not salute or assume positions; this section is a summary of basic customs and mannerisms you will witness while on board. The Recruit Training Command (RTC) is the Navy bootcamp where recruits train before boarding a ship for the first time. There are basic foundations taught to each recruit and it may be helpful to be familiar with them. Consult Figure 5 below for a detailed sample of commands you might hear while aboard. It describes positions taken only at a halt (stop) and may be executed by an individual or an entire formation. The salute is likely one of the first symbols that comes to mind when thinking about greetings and communication. There are gun and rifle salutes, but the hand salute is the most common and widely used. Not only is it used to greet officers, but the salute is also rendered to the U.S. Flag and National Anthem.

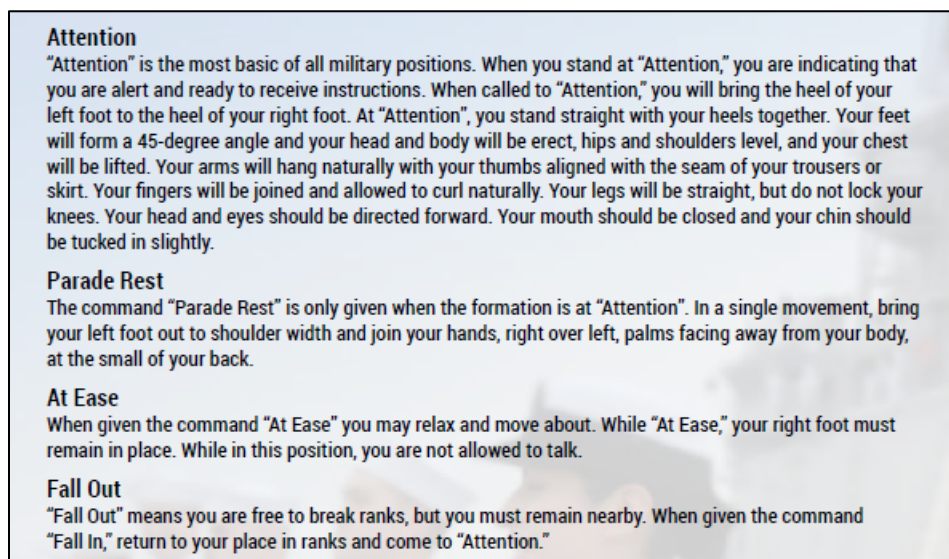


Figure 5 Positions¹¹

¹¹ United States Navy Recruiting Command, 2018

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6.3 Meals (Messing)

When dining in the Wardroom, proper etiquette is important. Never wear a hat/cover or PT attire into the wardroom. Your ship liaison can explain the procedures as no wardroom is the same. There are generally two sittings for meals, you will likely attend the one for the majority of the crew unless directed otherwise. Normally, on smaller units, you should arrive approximately five minutes early for each meal and remain standing behind your seat until the senior member arrives. At that point, he will invite everyone to sit. See Figure 6 for a general example of a wardroom setting.¹²



Figure 6 Wardroom

If you are late arriving for the meal, before sitting you must request the senior person (generally the Captain or the Executive Officer) for “permission to join the mess” and similarly, ask for permission to be excused if you must leave the table before the meal has ended. Other wardrooms (normally larger platforms) are more of a buffet style where you simply come and go during meal hours; however, you should ask permission to join any table before sitting. Larger ships are more cafeteria style dining, but it is custom to request the senior member of the table you wish to join, “may I join you?” before sitting. More information about mealtimes can be found below in Wardroom.

7 Key Areas

7.1 Wardroom & Mess Decks

Most ships have three messes (chiefs', warrant officers'/sergeants', and junior ranks'). Mess decks are also sometimes used to administer examinations and host crew events as shown in Figure 7.¹³

Enlisted riders E1-E6 will eat in the appropriate mess for their rank at no cost. Chiefs will (normally) eat in the Chief's Mess. Officers will eat in the wardroom. All civilian riders are authorized to eat in the wardroom. You may find yourself eating with the crew on the mess decks. Of note, civilians must be invited to the Chief's mess. You should not wear dirty clothes to any messing to help maintain proper sanitation.



Figure 7 Mess Deck

While at sea, you will be charged for your meals by the day. The full day rate of approximately \$15 is charged, even if meals are not eaten. While in port, you will be charged only for meals consumed, a sign-in sheet will be located at the front of the mess line. The Wardroom Officer or SUPPO/ASUPPO will collect these funds before you depart the ship. Mess

¹² Graphic: Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa

¹³ Graphic: Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa

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Bills are settled with Navy Cash or Eagle Cash. Meal hours underway will be posted, but are generally:

Breakfast: 0600-0730

Lunch: 1100-1300

Dinner: 1700-1900

Midrats: 2300-2400

7.2 Berthing

The Executive Officer or his representative (usually Supply Officer) will assign staterooms or racks and lockers. Berthing (sleeping quarter) accommodations can vary from 2–6-person staterooms to berthing compartments that have 30+ racks (bunks) up to four high. Racks are stacked and arranged in aisles facing each other with privacy curtains for each. The middle and bottom racks are called 'coffin locker' racks, due to the 6.5 x 27.5" locker under the mattress and the 20" distance between the top of the mattress and the bottom of the next bunk.

- (1) Storage space is limited. A sea bag (duffel bag) or gym bag is recommended instead of using a suitcase so that it may be readily stowed away in your locker. Nothing should be left lying around the compartment.
- (2) Bunks must be made in the morning. The ship will supply your linens and pillow. No clothes or shoes should be left on the bunk. Your assistance is required in keeping the berthing spaces neat and clean.
- (3) Due to watch rotations, personnel will be sleeping in the berthing compartments around the clock. **Please be considerate of others while they sleep.** Maintain quiet in the compartment and leave the lights in the berthing space red from taps through reveille. Audio devices may be played in berthing compartments but only with headphones. Use your rack light or a flashlight with a red filter if you need to see to get dressed or look for something.
- (4) Do not enter a crew's berthing area unless you are invited, or unless it is necessary to get to a specific location.



Figure 8 Rack and Lockers (USS Midway Museum)

7.3 Laundry

Washers and dryers are located on each ship for personal use at no cost. Laundry detergent is normally available in the Ship's Store, but it is recommended to bring your own laundry pods.

7.4 Ship's Store

Where the ship's store is located varies depending on different classes of ships. Some have more than one. You are welcome and encouraged to buy ball caps, shirts, normal toilet articles, candy, etc., as the profits go to the ship's Morale, Welfare, and Recreation Fund. Vending machines can be found on almost all ships. Ship's Store and vending machines use

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Navy Cash / Eagle Cash only. **All ships are designated as Navy Cash / Eagle Cash ships**, which means that they do not use cash, credit cards, or checks in the ship's store or vending machines. Visitors will be issued a temporary Cash Card and will write a check to a disbursing officer to "load" the card. This card will be used to pay meal bills and buy geedunk (soda, candy and snacks).

7.5 Smoking

When the ship is in port, there will generally be one area designated for smoking. It is usually in a covered area on the main deck located on the side away from the pier. When the ship is underway, smoking is generally permitted on the fantail during the day and in the wave break after sunset but is determined by each ship. Please be sure to extinguish all cigarettes in butt cans provided, do not discard butts over the side. Personnel are reminded that while underway lights and flames may not show after dark. Announcements about the "Smoking Lamp" will let you know when the smoking area is open or closed.

On MSC ships, multiple smoking areas are clearly marked. Disposable lighters and electronic cigarettes are prohibited. Smoking may be limited during certain operations. Anything that produces a heat source or flame shall not be used near any areas holding ammunitions or explosives, including loading zones.

7.6 Ship's Telephone

In port, you will be able to make routine business calls from the ship. Personal calls should be made from phones located on the pier or your personal cell phone, as the number of lines to the ship is limited. At sea, the ship will have limited telephones for business calls. Emergency contact information should be provided by your Ship Liaison upon arrival. Please obtain that number and leave it with family members prior to departing. Cell phone use is not permitted while underway.

8 Personal Effects

Use the following best practices¹⁴ when packing a bag of supplies to bring aboard:

- (1) Work clothes: Steel toe boots are recommended, but sneakers are acceptable. The only requirement is all shoes (unless transiting to/from the head/shower) must be closed toe. Ensure shoes have a good sole with maximum tread remaining, slick, worn dress shoes will become a liability as decks and ladder wells get slick in maritime and humid environments. Slacks/pants are required. Heels, skirts and dresses are not conducive to shipboard life (loose material can get caught). Polo shirts or dress shirts without ties are recommended. Bring a lightweight jacket. Although it is hot outside, the spaces you may be working in often contain sensitive electronics and are therefore very well air conditioned. Quarters can be either too hot or too cold; bring layers so you can control the temperature yourself and make it just right for you.
- (2) Shower attire: Bathrobe or loose-fitting shorts and t-shirt to wear to and from the shower/head. A robe is nice to have, but takes up a lot of space, whereas shorts and shirts can double as workout gear, saving space, but will take longer to get into and out of. Bring a pair of shower shoes such as rubber flip flops or slides. Fresh water is limited on the ship. When taking a "Navy Shower", do not let the water run continuously. Get wet, turn the water off, soap up, then turn the water back on to rinse off.

¹⁴ Trident Warrior Ship Rider Guide as cited in Coon, (n.d.)

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- (3) Toiletries: Medicines, toothbrush, toothpaste, shampoo, soap, electric/manual razors, and comb/brush. Loofas are recommended over wash rags simply due to their ability to dry faster. The ship's store does not sell OTC medicine like aspirin, Dramamine, Pepto, or cold medicine – bring it with you if you think you may need it.
- (4) Towels: Technically you can do with one, but self-service laundry takes a lot of time to get access to so having a second towel comes in handy.
- (5) Covered drink cup: Cups/glasses without lids are not allowed out of the mess decks/wardrooms.
- (6) Small personal flashlight: A red lens filter is recommended in the berthing spaces and mandatory on the bridge, the Combat Information Center (CIC), and on the weather-decks after dark.
- (7) Bring two padlocks that you can use to secure your personnel belongings in a locker. Key or combo locks are okay, but keys are easier to use in the dark.
- (8) Do not bring jewelry. Any ring, including wedding rings, increases the chance of degloving your finger should the ring get caught on anything (especially a ladder well as you descend). Jewelry other than rings, such as necklaces, is not recommended for safety as well as the potential for loss.
- (9) Sleeping bag and travel pillow: Standard issue pillows, sheets, and small wool blankets will be available for your bed, but they tend to go unused. Your bed is the only place that is your own onboard, so comfort is important. Sleeping bags are the easiest thing to bring/travel with. Sheets can be brought instead if preferred but remember space is limited so a king-sized comforter is probably not going to fit. Beds are extra-long twin sized for sheets.
- (10) Computers/Tablets/Cellphones: All these items may be brought on board with the permission of the ship but keep in mind power outlets are limited. Battery-operated items are safer bets for alarm clocks, etc. Anything that plugs into an outlet on the ship will need to be inspected upon arrival. Anything you plug into ship's power is subject to be damaged should ship's power surge/cut out unexpectedly. The recommendation is to plug things in only long enough to charge them. Also, secure storage is limited, and all items stored in berthing must be unclassified, meaning work SIPR laptops are not allowed. Your access to a network will be limited to none, and no external computer will be plugged into the Navy LAN. Tablets and laptops with entertainment pre-downloaded are often your only dedicated TV access. Bring earbuds or headphones. Bluetooth-enabled headphones are authorized in berthing but cannot be brought into secure spaces. Cellphones may be brought onboard but must remain in airplane mode once embarked. In addition, cell phones are never allowed in secure spaces. Apple watches, Fitbit, or any other smart devices are also prohibited in secure spaces.
- (11) Luggage: A large roller bag that stands tall is unwise as moving luggage throughout the ship is your responsibility. Ladder wells and passageways are narrow and there are knee-knockers (random step-overs) periodically throughout the ship. Recommendation is traditional sea bags or trekking type backpacks. One piece of luggage per person and one personal item (laptop bag, purse, small backpack) should be your guide. Anticipate being separated from your baggage, especially if you are transferring ships. Lost luggage can happen but keeping a "go bag" (one set of drawers, socks, toothbrush, essential meds/toiletries) in your personal item helps ensure you can survive for a day or two should your luggage be temporarily separated from you.

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- (12) Restricted Items: Personal firearms are not permitted. Knives (like Swiss Army) are permitted but may not have a blade longer than three inches. Do not bring any heat-producing devices (i.e., hairdryers, hot pads, iron, etc.). Liquor or controlled substances are not permitted aboard the ship.

9 Military Sealift Command Ships

While MSC ships follow similar protocols as above, there are a few areas of deviations. MSC ships are largely operated by civil service mariners (CIVMARs) but also have may have USN or USMC personnel on board for communication, special missions, or protection. Working relationships are alike to a management/laborer system common in many civilian organizations.

The MSC mission is to support warfighters in a full spectrum of military operations. MSC delivers agile logistics, mission support, and strategic sealift with a variety of specialized vessels operating year-round across the world. Refer to Figure 15 for an overview of individual ships.

9.1 Safety

The Master follows the MSC Safety Management System (SMS) for authorizations and determinations. SMS encompasses policies and procedures for the safe operation of ships and protection of the surrounding environment. It defines authority levels, assessments, lines of communication, and steps to take in the case of an emergency or accident.

All visitors reporting aboard should familiarize themselves with the vessel requirements and complete an Embarked Personnel Indoctrination form. The checklist should be completed, signed and submitted within 5 days of reporting aboard to the Master via the Shipboard Representative.¹⁵

9.2 Attire

All crew members on the MSC ships usually wear flame retardant coveralls, except in the cases of special events such as change of command. You are not required to wear these coveralls, but it is advised to wear closed-toed shoes, preferably with a steel toe and a non-skid sole. Long sleeves and pants are advised as there are many high-heat and spill-risk areas. Should you need Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as safety glasses, hard hat, or ear protection, contact the First Officer. All bags are subject to routine search, please respectfully adhere if your bag is chosen.

9.3 Key Areas

9.3.1 Living Conditions

You will be assigned a stateroom upon boarding, please keep it clean and locked. You will also receive fresh linens once a week. There are shifts at all hours of the day and night, so it is important to be cognitive of the crew members that have different sleep schedules. Keep unnecessary noise to a minimum in the passageways, especially when speaking or closing doors. Headphones for personal devices are prohibited in work areas but can be used in the stateroom as long as they do not impact your ability to hear any potential signals or announcements.

For laundry, there is a main room used by all personnel. Please be respectful and load and unload as soon as your clothes are ready, emptying the lint trays after each dryer cycle. Only non-chlorine detergent should be used.

¹⁵ Military Sealift Command, Welcome Aboard for Embarked Visitors, 2008, Revision 1.5

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Laundry should only be done with a full load, as water conservation is very important. Do not leave any faucets running, including in the shower. Take care not to flush anything else down the toilets except for the ship-provided toilet paper.

9.3.2 Mess Hall

Soiled clothes, as well as sleeveless shirts, shorts/skirts, or open toed shoes are prohibited in mess halls or galleys. Times may change and are subject to the ship schedule, but seated meals are typically at the below hours. Any deviations will be announced.

Breakfast: 0730 to 0830

Lunch: 1130 to 1230

Dinner: 1700 to 1800

Proper waste disposal is important and aligns with the MSC values of environmental protection. Never throw anything into the water. Trash bins will be clearly labeled and distinguished by waste type (recyclables, compost, etc.), to separate your trash accordingly.

9.3.3 Emergencies & Medical Care

MSC vessels conduct many drills¹⁶ and training scenarios on board. Dangers can be rare but should never be overlooked. Please cooperate during all drills and bring any questions to the First Officer or Master as they arise so you are prepared in the event of a real emergency.

As noted earlier, you will be given an emergency location upon boarding. This is the area you will report to in case of an emergency. The ship's whistle and alarm bell will emit a continuous noise, the unique pattern signaling a variety of situations. Upon hearing this, report to your assigned station area. Your stateroom will contain a life jacket and exposure suit; familiarize yourself with donning these in case of an emergency. If you need medical care, the Medical Services Department of the Military Treatment Facility (MTF) is assigned to take care of any shipboard medical needs, including first aid. If there is a crisis occurring at home, a family member should contact you via American Red Cross (ARC). You may also use the ship's email for any home communication if it is kept somewhat brief and free of classified information (i.e., ship location, operation, etc.)



Figure 9 MSC mariners retrieve a simulated person during a man overboard drill

9.3.4 Prohibited Areas

There are several spaces that are off-limits to visitors. These spaces include the Bridge (also referred to as the pilothouse), Engineering Operating Station (EOS), Command Center, Producer and Engine Rooms, specific offices and workshops, operating rooms on medical vessels, and the Radio Communications/Network rooms. If in doubt, please ask your representative for guidance.

10 Closing

When leaving the ship, either at the conclusion of the voyage or visiting a port, consult your ship's sponsor on who to check out with (it could be the XO or another officer.). It is efficient and valuable to connect onboard activities to an end product at this time, something that can be designed to further assist the ship, warfighters or the military as a whole. The mess

¹⁶ Graphic: U.S. Navy

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treasurer will settle your mess bill. Upon debarking, in similar fashion to onboarding, obtain permission from the OOD by stating “request permission to leave the ship.” You will then step out on the gangway landing, face the colors at attention, and then proceed down the gangway.¹⁷ Take caution in debarking and be sure to have all your belongings.

While there is a seemingly vast landscape of rules, regulations, etiquette and standards all ship riders adhere to, questions are always welcomed when in doubt. Research and respect for tradition go a long way in preparation for your visit, however there is no need to panic if you need to ask for clarification or a reminder.

11 Glossary

A

Above: Upward, higher, as to go above, above the flight deck

Adrift: Loose from moorings and out of control

Aft: Toward the stern

All Hands: The entire ship’s company, both Officer and Enlisted

Allotment: An amount of money a member has coming out of his regular pay

Aye-Aye: Reply to an order or command meaning “I understand and will comply”

Athwartship: At a right angle to the centerline, as a passageway that runs from port to starboard as opposed to fore and aft.

B

Barracks: Building where Sailors live

Below: Downward, beneath, as to lay below, below the flight deck.

Bow: The forward end of a ship or boat.

Bridge: Area in the superstructure from which the ship is operated.

Bulkhead: A vertical partition, never called a wall.

Bunk/Rack: Bed

Buoy: An anchored float used as an aid to navigation or to mark the location of an object

C

Carry On: An order to resume work or duties

Cast Off: To throw off; to let go; to unfurl

Chain Locker: Compartment in which anchor chain is stowed

Chit/Chit Book: Coupon or receipt book

Chow: Food

D

Deck: 1. Shipboard floor, horizontal plating which divides a ship into layers. 2. Shipboard floors from Main deck and below numbered 1, 2, 3.

E

Ensign: National flag; Commissioned Officer between the rank of Chief Warrant Officer and Lieutenant Junior Grade

¹⁷ Naval Reserve Intelligence Program, 1999

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F

Fantail: The after end (back) of the main deck.

Fast: Snugly secured

Fathom: A unit of length (equal to 6 feet) used for measuring the depth of water

Forecastle: Forward section of the deck on which the anchor handling equipment is located.

Frame: An athwartship beam that provides structural strength to a ship.

G

Galley: Space where food is prepared. Never called a kitchen.

Gangway: An opening in a bulwark or lifeline that provides access to a brow or accommodation ladder; an order meaning to clear the way.

Gear Locker: Storage room

Geedunk: Candy, gum or cafeteria

General Quarters: Battle stations

H

Hatch: A square or rectangular access in a deck.

I

Island: Superstructure on the starboard side of the flight deck on an aircraft carrier.

L

Ladder: A shipboard flight of steps. Never called stairs.

Level: Shipboard floors above the main deck. Numbered 0-1, 0-2, 0-3.

Lifeline: Lines erected around the weather decks of a ship to prevent personnel from falling or being washed over the side

M

Main Deck: Highest watertight (complete) deck aboard ship. On aircraft carriers, the hangar deck is the main deck.

Mess: 1. Place where meals are eaten, such as Mess Decks, Captain's Mess, etc. 2. A group who takes meals together, such as officer's mess or chief's mess.

Midwatch: (The Mid) The watch which begins at 0000 and ends at 0400.

Mid Rats: (Midnight Rations) Meal served around midnight for those crewmembers going on or off watch.

O

Overhead: The underside of a deck from the overhead of the compartment next below. Never called a ceiling.

P

Passageway: A corridor used for interior horizontal movement aboard ship.

Port: To the left of the centerline when facing forward.

Q

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Quarters: Assembling of all hands for muster, instruction, and inspection

R

Rating: A job specialty title

Reveille: Wake up, start a new day

S

Scuttle: Round, watertight opening in a hatch.

Scuttlebutt: 1. Drinking fountain. 2. A rumor.

Second Deck: First deck below the main deck.

Secure: 1. To make fast, as to secure a line to a cleat. 2. To cease, as to secure from a fire drill.

Sickbay: Shipboard space used as a hospital or medical center.

Square away: To put in proper place, to make things shipshape.

Starboard: Right of centerline when facing forward.

Stateroom: A living compartment for an officer.

Stern: The aftermost part of a vessel.

Swab: Mop

T

Taps: Time to sleep, end of day

Tattoo: Five minutes before taps

Topside: General term referring to a weather deck.

Turn To: Begin Work

W

Wake: Trail left by a vessel moving through the water.

Wardroom: Officer's messing compartment.

Weather Deck: Any deck exposed to the elements; a deck outside the skin of the ship.

12 Quick Guides

The following images serve as quick references to alphabet, time, ship and rank information. The Navy uses a phonetic alphabet for clarity in speaking and pronouncing each letter. This alphabet acts as a universal special language to assist in overcoming communication/technology issues and language differences. The hours of the day are exclusively referred to in Military Time. Military rank is more than just who salutes whom, it is a badge of leadership. USMC ranks are included as well for joint exercise purposes.



¹⁹ Naval Education and Training Professional Development and Technology Center, 2001

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COMMISSIONED OFFICERS			
0-10 Admiral			
0-9 Vice Admiral			
0-8 Rear Admiral (upper half)			
0-7 Rear Admiral (lower half)			
0-6 Captain			
0-5 Commander			
0-4 Lieutenant Commander			
0-3 Lieutenant			
0-2 Lieutenant Junior Grade			
0-1 Ensign			
WARRANT OFFICERS			
W-5 Chief Warrant Officer Five			
W-4 Chief Warrant Officer Four			
W-3 Chief Warrant Officer Three			
W-2 Chief Warrant Officer Two			
ENLISTED MEMBERS			
E-9 Master Chief Petty Officer	36 months		
E-8 Senior Chief Petty Officer	36 months		
E-7 Chief Petty Officer	36 months		
E-6 Petty Officer First Class	36 months		
E-5 Petty Officer Second Class	12 months		
E-4 Petty Officer Third Class	06 months		
E-3 Seaman	09 months		
E-2 Seaman Apprentice	09 months		
E-1 Seaman Recruit			

Figure 12 USN Ranks & Recognition²⁰²⁰ United States Navy Recruiting Command, 2018

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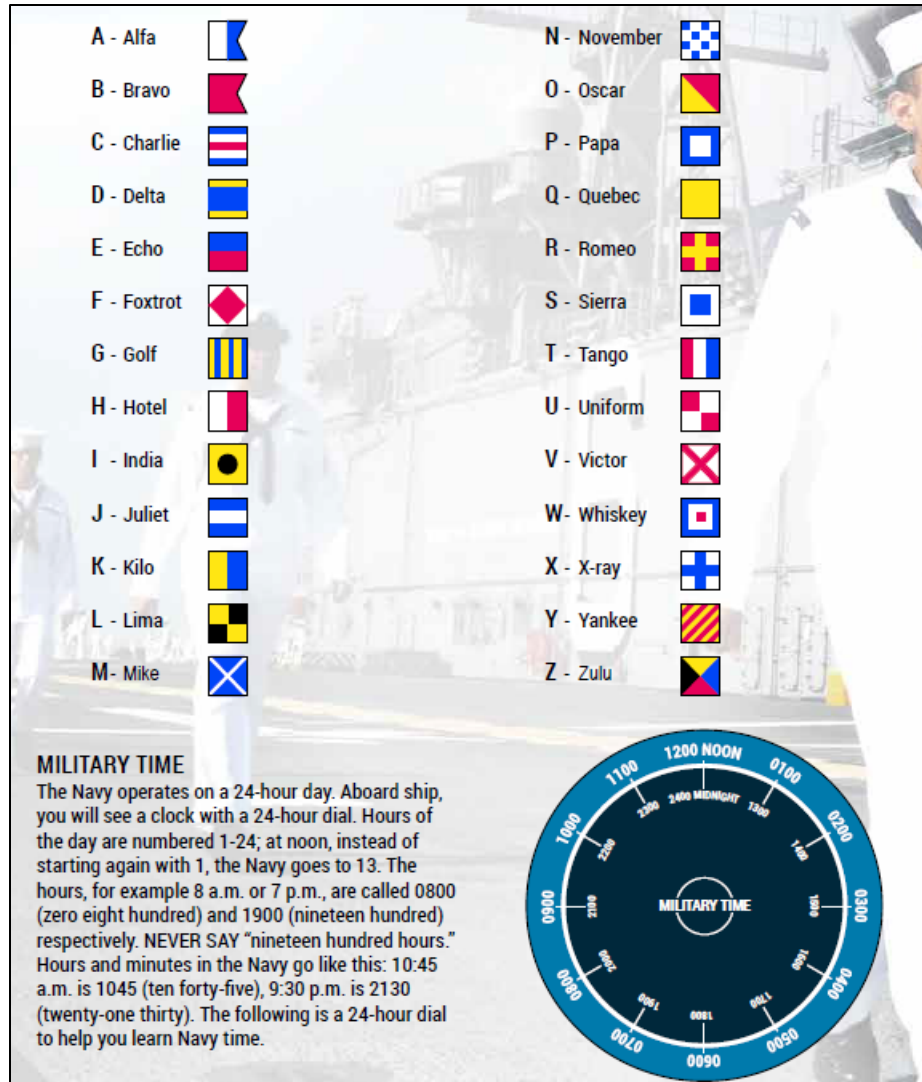


Figure 13 International Signal Flags and Phonetic Alphabet²¹

²¹ United States Navy Recruiting Command, 2018

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Aircraft Carrier Type

All ships designed primarily for the purpose of conducting combat operations by aircraft that engage in attacks against airborne, surface, sub-surface, and shore targets.

Surface Combatant Type

Large, heavily armed, surface ships that are designed primarily to engage enemy forces on the high seas.

Submarine Type

All self-propelled submersible types regardless of whether employed as combatant, auxiliary, or research and development vehicles that have at least a residual combat capability.

Patrol Combatant Type

Combatants whose mission may extend beyond coastal duties and whose characteristics include adequate endurance and sea keeping, providing a capability for operations exceeding 48 hours on the high seas without support.

Amphibious Warfare Type

All ships having organic capability for amphibious assault and characteristics enabling long duration operations on the high seas.

Combat Logistics Type

Ships that have the capability to provide underway replenishment to fleet units.

Mine Warfare Type

All ships whose primary function is mine warfare on the high seas.

Support Type

A grouping of ships designed to operate in the open ocean in a variety of sea states to provide general support to either combatant forces or shore based establishments. (Includes smaller auxiliaries which by the nature of their duties, leave inshore waters).

Mobile Logistics Type

Ships that have the capability to provide direct material support to other deployed units operating far from home base.



Figure 14 Ship Types²²

²² United States Navy Recruiting Command, 2018

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COMBAT LOGISTICS FORCE		32	16 Fleet Replenishment Oiler 14 Dry Cargo/Ammunition Ship 2 Fast Combat Support Ship
SPECIAL MISSION		21	4 Submarine Support Ship 6 Oceanographic Survey Ship 6 Ocean Surveillance Ship 1 Missile Range Instrumentation Ship 1 Navigation Test Support Ship 1 Sea-based X-band Radar Ship 2 Cable Laying/Repair Ship
FLEET SUPPORT AND SPECIAL MISSION	PREPOSITIONING AND SEABASING	18	14 Maritime Prepositioning Force 5 Roll-on/Roll-off Container Ship 5 Large, Medium-Speed, Roll-on/Roll-off Ship 2 Expeditionary Transfer Dock 1 Offshore Petroleum Distribution Ship 1 Offshore Petroleum Distribution SupportShip 4 Expeditionary Sea Base
	SERVICE SUPPORT	14	2 Fleet Ocean Tug 3 Submarine and Special Warfare Support Ship 2 Rescue and Salvage Ship 2 Hospital Ship 2 Submarine Tender 1 Command Ship 2 Fleet Experimentation Ship
	EXPEDITIONARY FAST TRANSPORT	15	13 Expeditionary Fast Transport 2 High-Speed Transport
COMBATANT COMMAND SUPPORT		16	5 Tankers 1 Dry Cargo Ship 8 Army Prepositioned Stocks 6 Large, Medium-Speed, Roll-on/Roll-off Ship 2 Container Ship 2 Air Force Container Ship
U.S. MARITIME ADMINISTRATION READY RESERVE FORCE		41	33 Roll-on/Roll-off Ship 4 Auxiliary Crane Ship 1 Heavy-lift Ship 2 Aviation Maintenance Ship 1 Offshore Petroleum Distribution Support Ship

Figure 15 MSC Fleet²³

²³ Military Sealift Command, 2023 Handbook

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DECK	Master	First Officer	Second Officer	Third Officer

ENGINE	Chief Engineer	First Assistant Engineer	Second Assistant Engineer	Third Assistant Engineer

LOGISTICS	Supply Officer	Junior Supply Officer

PURSER	Purser

MEDICAL	Medical Services Officer

COMMUNICATIONS	Ships Communication Officer

CULINARY	Chief Steward

Figure 16 MSC Ranks & Insignia

²⁴ Military Sealift Command, Cadet Shipping Handbook, 2021

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14 Acronym List

A

A/V Audio Visual

C

CAC Common Access Card

CIVMAR Civil Service Mariner

CO Commanding Officer

COLPRO Collective Protection

COMNAVAIRPAC Commander, Naval Air Forces, Pacific

COMNAVSEASYS COM Commander, Naval Sea Systems Command

COMNAVSECGRU Commander, Naval Security Group

COMPACFLT Commander, Pacific Fleet (Formerly CINCPACFLT)

CPS Collective Protection System

CIC Combat Information Center

D

DoD Department of Defense

F

FLEX Fleet Experimentation

FOD Foreign Object Damage

FMC Fleet Mail Center

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FPO Fleet Post Office
FSO Facility Security Officer

G

GQ General Quarters

H

HELO Helicopter

I

IAW In Accordance With

J

JWICS Joint Worldwide Intelligence Communications System

L

LAN Local Area Network

M

MTF Military Treatment Facility
MSC Military Sealift Command

N

NIPR Non-classified Internet Protocol

O

OOD Officer of the Deck
OPNAV Office of the Chief of Naval Operations
OPS Operations Officer
OPSEC Operational Security
OTC Over the Counter

P

PII Personally Identifiable Information
POC Point of Contact
PPE Personal Protective Equipment
PT Physical Training

U

UCMJ Uniform Code of Military Justice
USMC United States Marine Corps
USN US Navy
USPS United States Postal Service

R

RTC Recruit Training Command

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S

SAAR System Authorization Access Request
SECDEF United States Secretary of Defense
SECNAV United States Secretary of the Navy
SIPR Secret Internet Protocol Router
SMO Security Management Office
SMS Safety Management System

T

TF Task Force
TG Task Group
TT/IATP Travel Tracker/Individual Antiterrorism Plan
TU Task Unit

W

WTD Watertight Door

X

XO Executive Officer