

## Maritime Administration News Release

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### Portsmouth Vessel and Crew Receive Awards for Syrian Weapons Neutralization Mission

NORFOLK, Va. – U.S. Department of Transportation’s Maritime Administrator Paul ‘Chip’ Jaenichen today presented Merchant Marine Medals for Outstanding Achievement and the Professional Ship Award to the officers, crew and the vessel manager of the MV *Cape Ray* for their unprecedented work supporting the neutralization, at sea, of the most dangerous chemicals in Syria's declared stockpile. The MV *Cape Ray* is part of the Maritime Administration’s Ready Reserve Force (RRF).

“Our nation’s reliance on our maritime community is centuries-old,” said U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx. “From the Revolutionary War and through every major crisis in our nation’s history, our mariners have willingly defended and served Americans with valor, and these men and women continue in that noble tradition.”

The MV *Cape Ray* was mobilized to serve as a platform for the destruction of Syrian chemical weapons. The unique mission required significant modifications to transport equipment, technology and personnel necessary for what became the primary U.S. contribution toward the international efforts to eliminate Syria's chemical weapons material program. MV *Cape Ray* has earned special recognition for professional operation and exceptional service, support or readiness during the unprecedented operation to support the Joint United Nations and Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons Mission to neutralize 463,000 liters of Syria’s chemical weapon stockpiles at sea, from January 27 through September 15, 2014.

“The Maritime Administration is proud to welcome home the U.S. Merchant Marine crew of the MV *Cape Ray*,” said Administrator Jaenichen. “Thanks to dedicated U.S. mariners like those we honor today, people around the world continue to see the American flag as a symbol of hope. This vessel and her crew show that MARAD’s fleet of Ready Reserve ships stand ready to support the Nation’s Armed Forces and most importantly, national and economic security.”

The Merchant Marine Medal’s for Outstanding Achievement is awarded to U.S. merchant mariners who have participated in an act or operation of humanitarian nature directly to an individual or groups of individuals. The Administrator’s Professional Ship Award is given to RRF/National Defense Sealift Fleet ships that achieve the highest degree of readiness, performance, efficiency, reliability, productivity and safety.

The ceremony was attended by representatives from the U.S. Transportation Command and the Military Sealift Command, which take operational control of RRF ships in support of military sealift logistics requirements and by representatives from two maritime labor unions, the Marine

Engineers Beneficial Association and the Seafarers International Union. Many of the officers and crew of the MV *Cape Ray* are residents of the Portsmouth area. Other attendees included the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, Edgewood Chemical Biological Center and other senior representatives from the Department of Defense.

The MV *Cape Ray* is one of 46 vessels in stand-by status in our Nation's RRF, a fleet managed by MARAD, to provide for rapid mass movement of Department of Defense equipment and supplies to support our Armed Forces and respond to national and humanitarian emergencies. Each vessel in the fleet is maintained in a state of readiness that enables full activation to be achieved quickly and the ship certified as mission ready. In nearly every case, MARAD completes RRF vessel activation in five days or less.