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American Maritime Operators and Civilian Mariners Answer Call to Deliver Healthcare Resources on *USNS Comfort* and *USNS Mercy*

WASHINGTON — The American Maritime Partnership, the voice of the domestic maritime industry, applauds the American maritime operators and mariners that once again came together in time of crisis to serve our nation, supporting the swift arrival of the *USNS Mercy* to Los Angeles, and the *USNS Comfort* to New York City. As our nation focuses on providing the needed medical attention and resources to our communities, the American maritime community is proud to help enable this delivery of care.

Speaking at the *USNS Comfort* in Norfolk, Virginia, before its departure for New York City, **President Donald J. Trump stated**: "This great ship behind me is a 70,000-ton message of hope and solidarity to the incredible people of New York."

The *USNS Comfort* was last stationed in New York City in response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks where it helped treat hundreds of first responders. Once again, in a time of need, American maritime took on the mission, and urgently delivered for fellow Americans in need.

In preparation for the arrival of the *USNS Comfort* in New York, U.S. dredging company **Donjon Marine Co., Inc** of Hillside, New Jersey, expedited dredging operations at Manhattan Cruise Terminal with a crew of 60 workers operating twenty-four hours each day across two shifts. This two-week job was completed in eight days, deepening Berth 4 to 40-feet deep and removing 92,000 cubic yards of dredge material. The *Clamshell Bucket Dredge Delaware Bay* was supported by three U.S. flagged dump scow barges and three tugboats, completing the job in record time.

The *USNS Comfort* and *USNS Mercy* required tug assists provided by American maritime towing companies when departing and arriving into port. When departing Norfolk, Virginia, tug assist was provided to the *USNS Comfort* by **Moran Towing** and was assisted by **McAllister Towing** in New York City. In Los Angeles, **Foss Maritime** alongside **AmNav Maritime Corporation (AmNav)** assisted the *USNS Mercy* into port.

The *USNS Mercy* and *USNS Comfort* are U.S. Navy hospital ships, operated by the U.S. Military Sealift Command. There are an estimated 70 civilian mariners aboard each vessel, supporting the additional 1,200 Navy crew members, including doctors, nurses, and other health care professionals. The civilian mariners, built from the readied and "on-call" Military Sealift Command, hail from across the nation. Once onboard, the crew does not leave the vessel and continues to support the mission. Mariners "drive" the ship to the desired location and provide the needed potable water, electrical, HVAC, and sanitation facilities to support the embarked medical staff, over 1,000 beds, and patients.

Acting Secretary of the U.S. Navy Thomas Modly said at a press conference: "The white hulls and red crosses of these hospital ships have long become a welcome sight around the world, standing at the

forefront of our humanitarian mission as the United States Navy and Marine Corps team. They represent all that is good about the American people that they represent, and now they will serve our own people in this time of need, providing critical surge hospital capacity to America's two largest cities."

Stationed in the Port of Los Angeles and Pier 90 in Manhattan, the hospital ships are treating non-COVID-19 patients, providing a full spectrum of medical care to include general surgeries, critical care and ward care for adults. The availability of these vessels is relieving the pressure on local hospitals by enabling local health professionals to focus on treating COVID-19 patients and for shore-based hospitals to use their Intensive Care Units and ventilators for those patients. Typically, these vessels are stationed across the globe to assist in humanitarian missions, and are not normally deployed domestically for the same mission.

Both hospital ships were built in the **United States at National Steel and Shipbuilding Company (NASSCO)** in San Diego and are maintained and serviced at U.S. shipyards. The *USNS Comfort* was in the midst of a maintenance period at its homeport of Naval Station in Norfolk, Virginia, after a five-month goodwill mission in Central and South America. The major maintenance items were accelerated at a historic record, enabling the *USNS Comfort* to arrive in New York City three weeks ahead of schedule. This is due to the skilled shipyard workers and industrial base present in Norfolk, enabling American workers to quickly and expertly complete these needed repairs in an expeditious manner.

Each ship is equipped with twelve operating rooms, eighty ICU beds, 1,000 patient beds, 5,000 units of blood, two oxygen-producing plants, an isolation ward, medical laboratory, pharmacy, optometry lab, and a CAT scan. They also have a helicopter deck capable of landing large helicopters and side ports to take on patients at sea.

Editor's Note: For more information or to connect with a civilian mariner, including former captains of the hospital ships, please contact media@americanmaritimepartnership.com

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American Maritime Partnership (AMP) is the voice of the US domestic maritime industry, a pillar of our nation's economic, national, and homeland security. More than 40,000 American vessels built in American shipyards, crewed by American mariners, and owned by American companies, operate in our waters 24-hours a day, seven days a week, and this commerce sustains nearly 650,000 American jobs, \$41.6 billion in labor compensation, and more than \$154.8 billion in annual economic output. You can learn more by visiting www.americanmaritimepartnership.com.