MSC’S USNS **HENSON**’S EIGHT MONTH DEPLOYMENT

It was announced from Naples in mid-January that the Military Sealift Command’s oceanographic survey ship USNS *Henson* completed her eight-month deployment to the US 6th Fleet area of responsibility. She spent 163 days on station and conducted survey operations in the Norwegian Sea and the Gulf of Guinea. The ship, its crew of civilian mariners, and an embarked team of 29 oceanographers, historians, underwater archaeologists and researchers, also participated in the most recent search off the coast of England for the Revolutionary warship *Bonhomme Richard*, captained by John Paul Jones when it was lost at sea in 1799.

Arriving in the US 6th Fleet area of responsibility on 6th May *Henson*, which is operated by MSC for the Naval Meteorology and Oceanography Command, performed survey operations in the Norwegian Sea off the coast of Iceland from 21st May to 5th September and she made several port visits to Reykjavik, during this period for food, fuel and personnel transfers. From there, *Henson* proceeded to the North Sea off the coast of Flamborough Head, England, from 10th to 19th September to continue the search for the elusive *Bonhomme Richard*. As it had for four previous searches, Ocean Technology Foundation, a non-profit undersea research and education service organization, spearheaded this effort, garnering support from various commands within the US Navy. Those commands included oceanographers from the Naval Oceanographic Office, faculty and midshipmen from the US Naval Academy, and representatives from the Office of Naval Research and the Naval History and Heritage Command. Operating during days that saw 25- to 30-knot winds with gusts over 40 knots, and 10- to 12-foot seas, *Henson* searched 63 square miles of water, allowing the survey team to identify more than 30 sites deemed worthy of further investigation. The crew of *Henson*, civilian mariners who work for a private company under contract to MSC, expressed their enthusiasm for being able to participate in the historic search. “Finding the wreck could provide insight into the lives of Captain Jones, his crew, and their battle with the Serapis, and perhaps even some new discoveries about the events of the time,” said civilian mariner Third Officer Barnaby Bosanquet in *Henson*. “I watch television shows about this type of mission when I am home, so I am feeling quite lucky to have been involved.” Civilian mariner Able Seaman James Copeland agreed. “To be part of a mission that could bring history back to life – to be able to see how time has preserved, or deteriorated, the Bonhomme Richard,
to see what secrets, if any, might be waiting to be discovered – that is what was significant to me about this expedition.”

After completing a follow-up port visit to Portsmouth, Henson headed south. During a port visit from 17th to 19th October to Casablanca, Henson hosted hydrographers from the Kingdom of Morocco to a tour and a reception, a part of the Navy’s theatre security co-operation efforts in the region.

Said Navy Commander Brian Connon, deputy hydrographer of the Navy, “The visit by USNS Henson and embarked hydrographers from the Naval Oceanographic Office continues a long tradition of co-operation between the Royal Moroccan Navy and the US Navy in the fields of hydrography and nautical charting.”

Henson next conducted operations in the Gulf of Guinea off the coast of West Africa from 1st November to 19th December surveying approximately 83 square miles.

The last stop in the region was a port visit to Cape Town, from 3rd to 7th January 2011. The ship hosted tours and a reception on 6th January for local and visiting guests, including Navy. Captain Brian Brown, commanding officer of the Naval Oceanographic Office; South African Navy Captain Abri Kampsfe, chairman for the South African and Islands Hydrographic Commission; Navy Captain James Tranoris, commander, Sealift Logistics Command Europe/Commander Task Force 63; personnel from the South Africa Hydrographic Office and the US consulate.

Henson left South Africa en route to the Pacific Command area of operations, detaching Naval Forces Africa late on 17th January.

US 6th Fleet Commander, Vice-Admiral Harry B. Harris, Jr., praised Henson for her work in the areas of operation. He said, “Your survey work in the Norwegian Sea and approaches to Lagos, provided critical support for operations in 6th Fleet. Your surveying in the North Sea provided valuable information in the search for Bonhomme Richard, an important part of US naval history. In addition to your success at sea, team Henson was exceptional as ambassadors for the US while in port.”