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The self-geared heavylift ship **Maersk Texas** called at the Port of Everett, Washington to load two range testing support craft for the US Navy and transport them to Guam. Photos Courtesy of the Port of Everett.



Reflagged Maersk Freighter Calls at Port of Everett

By Michael A. Moore

When the **Maersk Texas** made a port call at Everett, Washington in late August, it was a first on two counts: it was the first time the multipurpose freighter has called at Everett, and the **Texas** is the first US flag Maersk vessel to call at the port. It was also probably the first time that a freighter with a reported pirate attack (2012 in the Gulf of Oman) in its logbook has called at Everett.

This first visit to Everett will probably not be the last for the multi-purpose **Maersk Texas**. In fact, Everett will probably be seeing more of the **Texas** and its twin sister ship **Maersk Illinois**, according to David Harriss, Director of Business Development for Maersk Line, Ltd., the US flagged American subsidiary of A.P. Moller-Maersk Group.

The newly-built **Maersk Texas** and **Maersk Illinois** weigh in at 19,500 DWT apiece, almost twice the size of most other US flag multi-purpose vessels (MPV) currently in operation. The heavy-lift vessels are geared for a maximum lift of 480 MT and provide flexible cargo hold capacity and functionality to meet unique cargo needs.

The **Texas** came to Everett to pick up two range testing support craft, one 95 feet long, the other 114 feet, for the US Navy and transport them to Guam.

The 95-foot vessel, sporting the designator **MPC-1**, is a multi-purpose craft, and is a Seattle area product. It was designed by Seattle naval architects Hockema and Whalen Associates and built by Tacoma's Modutech Marine. There are

three more of the 100-ton aluminum-hulled craft scheduled for Modutech's yards.

The 114-foot boat, designated **RTSC-110**, is a product of the San Diego-based Marine Group Boat Works, and is the first of three range training support craft scheduled to be delivered to the Navy this year.

Whenever the **Maersk Texas**, or its sister ship **Maersk Illinois**, returns to Everett, the port will be ready for the call. Especially if the call is to pick up the yet to be delivered Navy support vessels.

The port knows the procedures for handling and loading the boats from the first delivery to the **Maersk Texas**. Procedures that involved teamwork and advance planning between the port and all stakeholders to ensure the lift and load operation happened without any problems.

"We had several general conversations about a month before the operation," said Walter Seidl, marketing director for the Port of Everett. "A week prior to the loading, we met with all the key players, from Maersk to the Navy. Maersk did a great job of coordinating.

"When it was time to load, the boats were towed to the Port of Everett from their sea trial berths at Naval Station Everett. A cradle had been built onshore by Local 32 Longshoremen. The whole operation went smoothly."

The **Maersk Texas** and **Illinois** will more than likely return to pick up the remaining boats for the Navy. The two 148-meter-long ships are the multi-purpose workhorses of Maersk Line, Limited, MLL, which provides US flag transportation, ship management and maritime technical services to government and commercial customers.

Maersk Line, Ltd., is the largest US fleet in international commerce, and operates a fleet of container ships, tankers, ro/ros and articulated tug-barges for small scale distribution of LNG, plus operates ships for the US and Canadian governments.

The **Texas** and **Illinois** originally flew the flag of the Marshall Islands, but were reflagged for US service by Maersk Line, Ltd., in 2011 and 2012.

"Reflagging is not synonymous with

the Jones Act," said Maersk's David Harriss.

The Jones Act applies to vessels that must be products of US shipyards to transport cargo between US ports.

Reflagging for US service is a process that ensures a foreign vessel meets the stringent safety, environmental, operational and compliance standards required by the US Coast Guard (USCG) and other US maritime authorities before being allowed to sail under the US flag. A US flag vessel must be crewed by US officers and crew.

Maersk formed a joint venture with Rickmers-Linie, Maersk-Rickmers US Flag Project Carrier to operate the two heavy lift vessels. Their target markets include international projects and equipment financed with US Exim-Bank financing, which carries a US flag shipping requirement. The ships operate with American union crews and officers.

"The Maersk-Rickmers service is designed for shippers needing US flag service and seeking the advantageous economics of large multi-purpose vessels," said Harriss. **PM**



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