



The WHEAT taking on cargo in Kuwait. MEBA officers have done a Herculean job in readying the ship for service following its conversion that had the vessel ready for action in 2003.

## MEBA SCORES DECK AND ENGINE JOBS AS KEYSTONE WINS MSC PREPO VESSELS

*MEBA will put more deck officers to work along with their counterparts in the engine room after Keystone Shipping Co. triumphed in its bid to operate three Maritime Prepositioning Force Enhanced ships, or MPF(E) ships. MEBA will serve aboard the Navy's Military Sealift Command vessels courtesy of our contract with Keystone in all licensed positions.*

The ships are the USNS 1st LT HARRY L. MARTIN, USNS GUNNERY SGT. FRED W. STOCKHAM, and USNS LANCE CPL. ROY M. WHEAT. Our mates and engineers already serve aboard the WHEAT, and will continue to do so after the current contract expires midway through 2006. MEBA will take over the officer billets aboard the STOCKHAM and MARTIN from non-MEBA labor. Keystone expects to take control of the diesel powered vessels USNS MARTIN in early summer of 2005 and the STOCKHAM by early 2006. With all options exercised, the company will operate the vessels under the new contract for the next six plus years.



The MARTIN pier side in Rota, Spain. The 754-foot vessel contains almost anything the U.S. Marine Corps could need to sustain military operations.



The STOCKHAM unloading Navy vehicles utilizing its capacity as a Roll-On/Roll-Off vessel.

The three container & Roll-On/Roll-Off ships are conversion vessels owned by the Navy that preposition supplies and equipment at sea in strategic locations around the world for U.S. forces. Each is part of separate maritime prepositioning ship squadrons deployed on location in the western Pacific Ocean, the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. In addition to ammunition, vehicles, food and spare parts, MPF(E) ships carry a Navy fleet hospital, an expeditionary airfield and a naval construction battalion.

The USNS STOCKHAM was a Danish-built container ship converted into a Large, Medium Speed, Roll-On/Roll-Off vessel that operated for MSC as the USNS SODERMAN. Home berthed in Diego Garcia, it was built in 1980 and retrofitted/modified in 1997. It was converted into an MPF(E) in 2000 and renamed STOCKHAM just before its March 2001 recommissioning. Modifications included berthing for 50 additional personnel, a helicopter deck upgraded for night operations, and a stern ramp modified for in-water operation (to launch amphibious vehicles).

The USNS MARTIN was a container ship built in a German yard in 1980 known as the TARAGO. She was converted into an MPF(E) in Jacksonville, FL and delivered to the MSC in 2000. The vessel has a helicopter landing pad and is equipped with two large cranes and a stern ramp. When not engaged in high tempo operations, the vessel traverses the oceans of Northern Europe and the Mediterranean Sea.

The USNS WHEAT is a Russian built vessel converted at Bender Shipbuilding in Mobile, AL and placed into service for the MSC in 2003. Keystone and MEBA officers have worked tirelessly on this gas turbine powered vessel over the past few years demonstrating much professionalism to bring the vessel up to code and into service for the war on terror.

MEBA President Davis declared that, "MEBA salutes Keystone for capturing this high-profile contract. The MPF(E)s are instrumental to our sealift efforts in the war on terror. MEBA has proven to be unrelenting in support of our country since our Union's inception in 1875. We have shined brightly during the ongoing Operation Iraqi Freedom and our commitment to our military will continue steadfast and resolute." ■