

CHOUEST VESSELS



DOLORES CHOUEST

Military Sealift Command's special ships take on unique missions for the Department of Defense and other government agencies. These ships track the flight paths of missiles, survey the ocean floor after tsunamis, and lay underwater cable for surveillance devices. Now they can add making TV history to that list.

In a breakthrough moment for live television, ABC's "Good Morning America" did the first-ever live broadcast from inside a submerged Navy submarine. During the segment, "Run Silent, Run Deep: The Secret World of a U.S. Attack Submarine," reporter Robin Roberts broadcast live from USS SCRANTON while it was underway, thanks in part to Military Sealift Command submarine support ship DOLORES CHOUEST.

"Live broadcasts have been done from surface ships at sea and a submarine pier in the past, but never from a submarine underway at sea," said Capt. Troy Pappas, master of the DOLORES CHOUEST. "This was a first-ever attempt to broadcast from a submarine at sea and, though not seen on the broadcast except for a brief glimpse through the periscope, the DOLORES CHOUEST was a key piece of this mission, without which the show would not have occurred."

The DOLORES CHOUEST's role in the broadcast was two-fold. First, the ship followed the nuclear submarine during her journey to link video equipment aboard the submarine to satellites connected to the ABC television studio in New York City. The SCRANTON transmitted the video to the DOLORES using bi-directional microwave radios. The DOLORES then up-linked the signal to a video broadcast network using satellite communications technology. Television crews onboard the DOLORES CHOUEST also broadcast external footage of the submarine while underway at sea.

"We also kept track of other commercial ships in the area," said Capt. Pappas. "We communicated with each vessel to assure that they maintained a safe navigation track and did not impact the broadcast."

Second, the crew had to prepare the ship to serve as a platform for sophisticated television equipment and to host several embarked production members who came aboard for the broadcast. The ship's crew worked with the television production team to convert the ship's conference room into a television video processing center. Together they also installed a satellite antenna to transmit signals received from the SCRANTON directly to New York.

The groundbreaking segment gave television viewers across America a live look inside a Navy submarine. Roberts and her crew got underway with the sub in the North Atlantic Ocean. During the segment, Roberts listened to dolphins and whales using the sub's acoustic technology and interviewed the ship's commanding officer and sailors.

Although this broadcast is a first for the 240-foot special mission ship, the DOLORES CHOUEST is accustomed to unusual assignments – the ship performs tasks from escorting submarines to conducting underwater search and recovery operations.

"Like all of our special mission ships, the DOLORES CHOUEST and her crew are flexible and capable in every sense," said acting Special Mission Program Manager Rusty Bishop. "The ship was able to rise to the occasion and meet this unusual request from the fleet."

The DOLORES CHOUEST is crewed by eight civilian mariners who work for ECO under contract to MSC. Besides Pappas, the crew includes Chief Mate Bob Burton, Mate Hulsey Bray, Engineer Joe Kolmetz, Oiler James Powell, AB Mike Serios, OS Chris Tucker and Steward Marcus Paparozzi. MSC's 24 special mission ships provide operating platforms for specialized U.S. military and federal government missions, including oceanographic and hydrographic surveys, underwater surveillance, acoustic survey and missile flight data collection and tracking.

KELLIE CHOUEST



A Russian Federation Navy Delegation visited the Deep Submergence Unit (DSU) aboard the KELLIE CHOUEST December 14, 2005 to observe the Deep Submergence Recovery Vehicle (DSRV) MYSTIC conduct recovery training exercises off the coast of California.

The KELLIE CHOUEST is a submarine support vessel home ported at the Naval Air Station in North Island, California.

This was the second bilateral meeting this year between the Russian and American navies to work on general guidelines for a proposed memorandum of agreement on submarine search and rescue. The first meeting was held in September in Moscow.

"We are discussing the standardization and technical certification of their recovery vehicle, which is a long process," said Capt. Chris Murray, Deputy Director, Deep Submergence Systems. "We are trying to build their confidence in our recovery system by showing them how we conduct recovery operations. Taking them down with the MYSTIC, showing them firsthand the equipment we would be using, is a major step in building that mutual understanding and confidence."

This was the first time the Russians dove with the MYSTIC. They were taken to a depth of 2,000 feet, where the MYSTIC conducted a video sweep and mounted onto a platform. The platform is used to simulate a submarine hatch. One of the Russian delegates was also allowed to take control of the MYSTIC and steer for a while.

"I was surprised at how pleasant and professional the pilots of the MYSTIC were," said Capt. 1st Rank Andrey Zvyagintsev, Commander of the Russian Expeditionary Search and Rescue Detachment. "They are the right people for the job. If we join our rescue forces, I know we will be able to do effective recovery work."

"Immediate response is the key for sub rescues," said Bill Orr, International Submarine Escape and Rescue Liaison Office Coordinator and Submarine Rescue Officer for Commander, Naval Submarine Forces. "If you don't know who your neighbors are, you're not going to ask them for a cup of sugar. If we can foster confidence and understanding in our system and vice versa, we will be able to ask each other, like good neighbors, for assistance and not make a situation worse."

Building on this interaction, the two navies hope to conduct a future visit to Russia, where representatives from the United States will be able to observe Russian personnel perform rescue operation exercises.

"This was a great opportunity to foster goodwill between our two countries," said CDR Kent Van Horn, Commander of DSU. "Any chance we get to show our capabilities, like we did today, will only improve the understanding between our navies."