



Ready Reserve Force

Maritime Administration Fact Sheet

Overview

The Ready Reserve Force (RRF) program was initiated in 1976 as a subset of the Maritime Administration's (MARAD) National Defense Reserve Fleet (NDRF) of government owned vessels to support the rapid worldwide deployment of U.S. military forces. As a key element of the Department of Defense (DOD) strategic sealift, the RRF primarily supports transport of Army and Marine Corps unit equipment, combat support equipment, and initial resupply during the critical surge period before commercial ships can be marshaled. The RRF provides nearly three quarters of the government-owned surge sealift capability for service in times of military need and national emergency. The program is managed by MARAD on behalf of DOD, which determines vessel requirements.



Military cargo loaded onto RRF vessel *Cape Diamond*.



RRF ships can be identified by their red, white and blue exhaust stacks.

RRF ships are expected to be fully operational within their assigned readiness status, typically five days, and prior to sailing to their designated loading berths. Commercial U.S. ship management companies provide for crewing, activation, equipment maintenance and repair, logistics support, and operations management by contract. Ships are maintained in priority readiness at Reduced Operating Status (ROS) with core maintenance crews of up to ten civilian merchant mariners that are supplemented by additional mariners when the ships are activated. Readiness of the RRF is periodically tested by DOD through directed activations of ships for military cargo operations and exercises; the RRF has over a 96 percent activation on-time success rate.

Background

- The program began with six ships in 1977, peaked at 102 in 1994, and now consists of 46 ships: 35 roll-on/roll off (RO/RO) vessels (which includes eight Fast Sealift Ships (FSS)), two heavy-lift (or barge-carrying) ships, six auxiliary crane ships (TACS), one Off Shore Petroleum Discharge System (OPDS) tanker, and two aviation repair vessels.
- Three RRF vessels are located at the NDRF anchorages in Beaumont, Texas, and Suisun Bay, California. The rest are berthed at various U.S. ports: layberth facilities leased from commercial sources or berths at government-owned facilities, including the MARAD Layberth Facility in Orange, Texas. These outported locations are coordinated with military planners and selected for their proximity to strategic loadout ports.
- RRF ships are also used as training platforms for cargo handling by U.S. Navy and U.S. Army units and for security and law enforcement training by the military services as well as various federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies.

Operational History

- The program has experienced more than 700 vessel activations, with an average of about 27 activations per year since 1990.
- The RRF made a major contribution to the success of Operations *Desert Shield/Desert Storm* from 1990 - 1992, when 79 vessels were activated to meet military sealift requirements by carrying 25% of the unit equipment and 45% of the ammunition needed.
- Two RRF tankers, two RO/RO ships and a troop transport ship were activated for Operation *Restore Hope* in Somalia in 1993 and 1994. During the Haitian crisis in 1994, 15 ships were activated for Operation *Uphold Democracy*. In 1995 and 1996, four RO/RO ships were used to deliver military cargo as part of U.S. and U.K. support to NATO peace-keeping missions in the Balkan region. Four ships were activated to provide humanitarian assistance for Central America following Hurricane Mitch in 1998.
- From 2002 to June of 2008, 118 ship activations were directed to support Operations *Enduring Freedom* and *Iraqi Freedom*. In that period, there were 13,575 ship operating days with a reliability rate of 99 percent. Nearly one quarter of the initial equipment needed to support the U.S. Armed Forces operations in Iraq was transported by the RRF.
- The RRF was called upon to provide humanitarian assistance to the U.S. Gulf Coast following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005 with 866 ship-days of support. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) used nine MARAD vessels to support relief efforts; five from the RRF and four from the NDRF, two of which were active state maritime academy training vessels. The vessels provided approximately 83,000 berths (sleeping accommodations) and 270,000 meals to refinery workers, emergency response teams, and longshoremen.
- Two RRF vessels took part in the relief efforts in response to the earthquake that struck Haiti on January 12, 2010. These vessels carried supplies and equipment for the U.S. Navy's Seabees (Construction Battalions) and provided logistical support for the relief efforts from Port au Prince's harbor. A third MARAD-operated vessel provided high-speed passenger and freight service between Haiti and the continental U.S.
- Following Hurricane Sandy, one RRF vessel and two NDRF training ships, docked in New York Harbor, provided approximately 44,000 berths and served over 77,000 meals, across 130 ship-days, to the FEMA employees and other groups involved in the recovery efforts.
- In 2014, RRF vessel *Cape Ray* served as a chemical weapons disposition platform for the Defense Threat Reduction Agency. As part of a multi-lateral international effort, the vessel underwent extensive modifications, hosted nearly 100 U.S. Army civilian personnel, and facilitated the neutralization of more than 450,000 liters of chemical agents transferred from Syria.
- As a part of Operation *United Assistance* in 2014, two RRF vessels carried military cargo to West Africa as a part of a mission to combat the spread of the Ebola virus.



RRF auxiliary crane ship *Flickertail State*