



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**MARITIME
ADMINISTRATION**

400 Seventh Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

THE NATIONAL DEFENSE RESERVE FLEET

The National Defense Reserve Fleet (NDRF) was established under Section 11 of the Merchant Ship Sales Act of 1946 to serve as a reserve of ships for national defense and national emergency purposes. The NDRF anchorages were originally located at Stony Point in New York, Fort Eustis in the James River in Virginia, Wilmington in North Carolina, Mobile in Alabama, Beaumont in Texas, Benicia in Suisun Bay in California, Astoria in Oregon and Olympia in Washington. At its peak in 1950, the NDRF had 2,277 ships in lay-up.

NDRF vessels are now located at the James River, Beaumont and Suisun Bay sites and at designated outported berths. As of September 30, 2005, the NDRF consisted of 255 vessels, which are primarily dry cargo ships with some tankers, military auxiliaries and other types. A Ready Reserve Fleet component was established in 1976 as a subset of the NDRF to provide rapid deployment of military equipment and later became known as the Ready Reserve Force (RRF), which numbers 58 vessels. An additional 18 non-NDRF ships are held for other Government agencies on a cost-reimbursable basis.

There are 54 vessels in retention status, which are preserved in a way that is designed to keep them in the same condition as when they entered the fleet. Dehumidification of air-tight internal spaces is an effective means of controlling the corrosion of metal and the growth of mold or mildew. A cathodic protection system uses an impressed current where DC power is distributed through anodes to the exterior underwater portions of the hull, resulting in an electric field that suppresses corrosion and preserves exposed surfaces of the hull. External painting and other cosmetic-appearance work is generally deferred, since it is not detrimental to the ability to activate and operate the vessel.

MARAD is authorized as the disposal agent for Federal Government owned obsolete, merchant type vessels that are equal to or greater than 1500 gross tons. The obsolete vessels are disposed through a variety of methods that include domestic and foreign recycling, sinking as artificial reefs and deep-sinking in conjunction with the U.S. Navy's SINKEX Program. Of the 143 non-retention vessels in the NDRF, 125 are being disposed, are ready for disposal or are being prepared for disposal, 9 are being held for donation, and 9 are being held for further evaluation of their historic significance.

Through an authority to transfer government property to United States memorial ships, the NDRF program has been able to enhance U.S. maritime heritage by providing items that are no longer commercially available. Additionally, historic artifacts are loaned to worthy organizations so they can present displays that are reminiscent of this rich heritage. Entire ships can also be donated for non-profit uses.

Prior to RRF operations, NDRF vessels supported emergency shipping requirements in seven wars and crises. During the Korean War, 540 vessels were activated to support military forces. A worldwide tonnage shortfall from 1951 to 1953 required over 600 ship activations to lift coal to Northern Europe and grain to India. From 1955 through 1964, another 600 ships were used to store grain for the Department of Agriculture. Another tonnage shortfall following the Suez Canal closing in 1956 caused 223 cargo ship and 29 tanker activations from the NDRF. During the Berlin crisis of 1961, 18 vessels were activated, which remained in service until 1970. The Vietnam conflict required the activation of 172 vessels.



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THE READY RESERVE FORCE

The Ready Reserve Force (RRF) program was initiated in 1976 as a subset of the Maritime Administration's (MARAD) National Defense Reserve Fleet (NDRF) to support the rapid worldwide deployment of U.S. military forces. As a key element of 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 one-half of the government-owned surge sealift capability. Management of the RRF program is defined by a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between DOD and Department of Transportation.

The program began with 6 ships in 1977, peaked at 102 in 1994 and now consists of 58 ships including: 31 roll-on/roll off (RO/RO) vessels, 6 heavy lift or barge carrying ships, 10 auxiliary craneships, 6 tankers, 2 helo repair vessels and 3 combat logistics ships. Seven RRF ships are homeported in the NDRF anchorages in Beaumont, Texas and Suisun Bay, California. The balance is berthed at various U.S. ports with three small tankers outported in Japan. Layberth facilities are leased from commercial sources and by negotiating for government owned facilities. These outported locations are coordinated with military planners and chosen to minimize sailing time to strategic loadout ports. Outported RRF ships are also used as training platforms for cargo handling by Navy and Army units and for homeland security training by various law enforcement agencies.

RRF ships are maintained in a 4, 5, 10, or 20-day readiness status by commercial U.S. ship managers that are under contract for maintenance and repair, activation, manning, and operation. Each ship is expected to be fully operational and ready-for-sea to sail to a loading berth within the assigned readiness. Ships in priority readiness (4 and 5 day) have Reduced Operating Status (ROS) maintenance crews of 10 or 9 commercial merchant mariners respectively, which are supplemented by additional mariners during activations. Readiness of the RRF is periodically tested by DOD directed activations of ships for military cargo operations and exercises. Since DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM, there have been almost 400 RRF mission activations.

The RRF made a major contribution to the success of DESERT SHIELD/STORM Operations from August 1990 through June 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 needed in Somalia for Operation RESTORE HOPE in 1993 and 1994. During the Haitian crisis in 1994, 15 ships were activated for UPHOLD DEMOCRACY operations. 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. Four ships were activated to provide humanitarian assistance for Central America following Hurricane Mitch in 1998. Three RRF ships currently support the Afloat Prepositioning Force (APF) with two specialized tankers and one dry cargo vessel capable of underway replenishment for the Navy's Combat Logistics Force.

In 2003, 40 RRF ships were used in support of Operations ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM. This RRF contribution was significant and included sealifting equipment and supplies into the theatre of combat operations, which included combat support equipment for the Army, Navy Combat Logistics Force, and USMC Aviation Support equipment. By the beginning of May 2005,

RRF cumulative support included 85 ship activations that logged almost 12,000 ship operating days, moving almost 25% of the equipment needed to support the U.S. Armed Forces liberation of Iraq.

The MARAD RRF was called upon to provide humanitarian assistance to gulf coast areas following Hurricane Katrina and Rita landfalls in September. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) requested a total of eight (8) vessels to support relief efforts. Messing and berthing was provided for refinery workers, oils spill response teams, longshoremen. One of the MARAD T-ACS vessels provided electrical power.

The RRF has rightfully been called "America's Sea Power Reliant Partner."