



# Army Mariners

*Nothing happens  
until something moves.*

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The watercraft field stands out among the Army's military occupational specialties. Soldiers serving in this field are assigned to deck and engineer duties aboard Army vessels. These soldier-mariners of the U.S. Army Transportation Corps provide waterborne logistics for military operations worldwide. From combat operations to humanitarian missions, the Army's maritime field has consistently proven its worth and relevance in today's operational arena.

Soldier-mariners aboard Army vessels perform the same mission-essential tasks as their U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), Navy, and merchant marine counterparts. Army watercraft, for example, deliver 90 percent of all U.S. forces equipment and supplies.<sup>1</sup> Soldier-mariners

also receive USCG merchant mariner credentials for qualifying training.

While Navy and USCG sailors typically specialize in a specific area, soldier-mariners train in every aspect of seamanship and engineering duties. The maritime training campus, located at Fort Eustis, Va., provides this training through coursework, simulations, and hands-on opportunities.

### Training Resources

The maritime training campus boasts state-of-the-art training facilities, equipped to provide a simulation-based training curriculum to master the skills necessary to operate a wide variety of Army watercraft and se-



### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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Students perform bridge and watch duties during full mission bridge simulator training. All photos courtesy of the Marine Terminal Department, U.S. Army Transportation School.

lected Naval, USCG, and commercial vessels in all conditions. Simulated vessels include:

- landing craft utility,
- logistic support vessel,
- large tug.

These trainers are standard training equipment used to ensure our soldier-mariners receive the most realistic training in preparation for sea duty, right down to a weapons simulator that simulates firing from a vessel under different threat conditions. Mariners train on all aspects of navigation, piloting, and engine room procedures prior to a vessel assignment.

### NMC-Approved Courses

Courses are designed to meet the National Maritime Center's (NMC) guidelines for qualifying training. In some cases, such as with first aid and CPR, this involves removing some course training requirements and making them stand-alone courses to meet STCW guidelines.

Between 1998 and 2006, additional courses were approved for credentials, including:

- navigation rules of the road,
- stability and trim,
- search and rescue,
- meteorology,
- bridge resource management,
- automatic radar plotting aids,
- marine radar certificate renewal,
- tides and currents,
- Mercator sailings,
- personal survival techniques,
- fire prevention and firefighting,
- Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping (STCW) basic safety training.

NMC also approved training for specific duties, including:

- boatswain,
- marine deck officer/warrant officer,
- radar observer,
- master of steam or motor vessel not more than 200 GT,
- apprentice mate for towing vessels.

NMC granted licensing equivalency for the rating forming part of navigational watch, rating forming part of engineering watch, able seaman with lifeboatman limited, qualified member of the engine department, and first aid and CPR.

### Certification and Licensing

All Army mariners must obtain and maintain certification equivalent to their grade and position. Once Army



Training on the various simulators prepares future vessel masters for actual conditions.

mariners meet the training standard, physical requirements, and pass a test, they are issued marine certificates valid for five years from date of issue. Mariners have a six-month window in which they must recertify by taking a five-part, open-book exam for their skill level.

Army marine certification and licensing is a dual process. Army regulations state:

“U.S. Army marine personnel assigned to a vessel must be certified to grade, U.S. Army Marine Certification, and obtain a U.S. Army Marine License by passing the appropriate vessel-specific duty performance test for the vessel being operated.”<sup>2</sup>

The duty performance test is vessel-specific, and watercraft operators and engineers are required to complete it at every certification level. Upon successful completion, Army mariners receive a U.S. Army marine license, which is valid for one year if the soldier does not remain aboard that type of vessel. In order for a license to remain valid after one year, he or she must revalidate by performing key task items for the level of certification.





A student performs maintenance on a full-size engine mockup.

### Future Initiatives

Continued efforts are in progress to obtain approval for Army programs, including marine engineer warrant officer, watch keeping officer in charge of engineering watches in manned engine rooms or as designated duty engineers in periodically unmanned engine rooms, and STCW rating forming part of an engineer watch. These programs are part of an ongoing, long-



Army watercraft move more than 90 percent of U.S. forces, supplies, and equipment for operations around the world.

term project to continue the mariner licensing process for Army personnel.

The maritime campus is also collaborating with Old Dominion University in this effort. Old Dominion has provided several degree program options that would award credit to soldier-mariners, Army warrant officers, and senior noncommissioned officers. Marine engineering technology and general, mechanical, and industrial engineering are options available at the un-

dergraduate level. Maritime and port operations courses are also available at the graduate level as a degree or certificate program.

With continued command emphasis within the U.S. Army Transportation School to capitalize on the commonality of the different maritime agencies, soldier-mariners will continue to benefit from a seamless transition from Army maritime training to universally recognized merchant mariner's credentials.

### About the author:

Major (ret.) Cheryl Fensom served in the U.S. Army as a transportation officer and is currently an instructional systems specialist at the maritime training campus at Fort Eustis, Va. She spearheads the educational programs for Army mariners.

### Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.eustis.army.mil>

<sup>2</sup> AR 56-9, Watercraft, Chapter 1-5, e (4)

### U.S. ARMY MARITIME OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTIES INCLUDE:

- watercraft operator,
- seaman,
- leading seaman,
- boatswain,
- mate,
- watercraft engineer,
- engineman,
- senior engineman,
- junior marine engineer,
- assistant engineer.

At the officer level, the school provides instruction and the foundation for the specialties:

- marine deck officer,
- marine engineering officer for service aboard class A vessels.

The training curriculum is recognized and accepted by the USCG, and personnel completing the courses receive licenses and USCG merchant marine documents.

