

**E**VERYBODY LIKES a warm welcome. And what a welcome the Army gave Navy families when they arrived at the port of Piraeus, Greece, in September!

There was no doubt that an Eastern Area MTMTS Transportation Terminal Unit was handling details for the arrival of Navy families at the newly established headquarters and home port of the Sixth Fleet in Athens. Each of four U.S. Navy vessels bringing a total of 833 dependents to their new home were met in the harbor and escorted by an Army J-boat sporting Transportation Corps insignia. At the pier the center of attraction was an enormous banner proclaiming that "U.S. Army Transportation Terminal Unit Welcomes Sixth Fleet Families."

The MTMTS green arrow was also much in evidence as members of the unit went about their work wearing the distinctive arm brassard.

The huge TTU banner shared the spotlight with a bouzouki band playing traditional Greek music and welcoming speeches by American and Greek dignitaries, including the military governor of Piraeus. Light poles were bedecked with circular shields bearing United States and Greek flags.

The operation, which encompassed several weeks, was carried out under the direction of Lieutenant Colonel John Wilmes, Commander, USATTU, Greece. Preplanning and coordination with various government and local agencies resulted in the smooth and orderly offloading of passengers, more than 11,000 MTONs of household goods, privately-owned vehicles, pets and unaccompanied baggage.

Unit planning commenced on July 1, 1972, under a joint task force concept, with the assumption that dependents and accompanying effects would arrive in Piraeus on four U.S. Navy ships in September. The Navy and Air Force were briefed on August 3 and agreed upon the concept of the TTU assuming the debarking mission. TTU then reorganized its operations in order to accomplish



*Project Marathon:*

# AN ENTHUSIASTIC WELCOME

Captain Stephen R. Norton, USA



Above: The TTU J-Boat and assigned Hellenic Navy crew provided the first "Welcome" to Navy families when it met all USS Ships in the stream.

Left, right, below right: Husbands and wives reunite.

Far right: Ambassador to Greece Henry J. Tasca thanks one of the ladies of Women of the Army, Navy, Air Force (WANAF) for assisting the wives and children to debark.





the mission. This reorganization involved split work shifts for unit personnel of 12 hours each and subsequent assignment to positions that were outside their primary occupational specialties. Accountants rolled up their sleeves and served as warehousemen and documentation specialists served as passenger debarkation team assistants. Sealift Division personnel were used in security liaison positions, and most were checkers in some phases of the operation. Training sessions were conducted by the unit in advance of the task.

Several problems had to be solved prior to arrival of the Navy vessels. Because available navigation charts were several years old, TTU and Navy personnel alike were not certain whether water depth near the military pier complex was sufficient for the Navy ships. The *USNS Harkness*, a hydrographic ship operating in Greek waters, was called upon to sound the approaches and area adjacent to the military pier. This was accomplished on July 20, and the charts were found to be correct.

Because local port authorities stored household goods in open storage, under tarpaulins, a method prohibited under DoD regulations, additional warehouse space had to be obtained. Recognizing the shortage of covered storage space that would result from Project Marathon, the terminal unit arranged to

use containers as temporary storage for general cargo transiting TTU pier facilities. MILVANs were added to the TTU inventory on a one time basis through approval secured by Eastern Area, MTMTS. The first of 25 MILVANs arrived aboard the *USS Riegel* on September 2. MILVANs provided adequate covered storage and proved to be a "life saver" on several occasions.

TTU representatives, through negotiations with the president and manager of the port authority, were able to obtain 33,000 square feet of additional warehouse space, a sufficient amount to house the projected amount of incoming household goods and unaccompanied baggage. In order to accommodate the request, local port authorities placed their own warehoused cargo under tarpaulins.

The need for increased security precautions also had to be considered. U.S. Naval forces, new to the area and relatively low in personnel, were unable to augment local security forces. The military governor of Piraeus assisted by supplying additional security for the military pier, while the Port of Piraeus harbormaster provided security for the waterways adjacent to the military pier.

On September 2 the *USS Riegel* arrived with 319 pieces—1363 MTONs—of household goods and 90 privately owned vehicles, all personnel effects of Navy personnel. On September 4 a round was made of the destroyers at anchor and 33 bicycles and 15 motorcycles were brought ashore. The *USS Puget Sound*, a destroyer tender, arrived on September 5, and 670 Navy dependents were debarked by the Army terminal unit. In addition, 1335 pieces of passenger baggage, 40 dogs and 13 cats were discharged. Commencing also on this date was the discharge of 163 pieces—702 MTONs—of household goods, 253 pieces—175 MTONs—of unaccompanied baggage and 32 privately owned vehicles.

When the *USS Puget Sound* arrived at Piraeus, it was met and guided to the pier by the unit's J-Boat which displayed a welcome





Husbands watch wives and children aboard an incoming ship.

banner for the Navy dependents. Wives and children were assisted in their departure from the ship by ladies of the Women of the Army, Navy, and Air Force (WANAF) who were easily recognized by the MTMTS arm brassards provided by the unit. Many VIPs, including the U.S. Ambassador, the Honorable H. Tasca, participated in the welcoming ceremony. News media coverage was extensive, and included Mike Wallace from the CBS production "60 Minutes." Refreshments were provided by the European Exchange System and entertainment was furnished by a local Bouzouki band.

The *USS Nashville*, an amphibious transport dock ship, arrived on September 8, and the reception given the previous ship's passengers was repeated. TTU discharged from this vessel 152 passengers, 365 pieces of passenger baggage and seven dogs, along with 207 privately owned vehicles and 78 pieces of unaccompanied baggage.

Prior to the scheduled arrival of the last Project Marathon ship, due in Piraeus on September 19, the terminal unit continued its routine service to all customers. Container

operations, forwarding and receipt of cargo, issues and receipt of privately owned vehicles, issue and receipt of household goods and unaccompanied baggage, barge operations and preparation for the unit Annual General Inspection, scheduled for September 23, continued. Additional warehouse space for household goods was obtained by TTU to cope with a 56 percent increase above the estimate, and again the port authority cooperated by putting its own cargo outside under tarps.

The *USS Diamond Head*, an ammunition ship, arrived on September 19 with 1930 pieces of Navy household goods amounting to 4249 MTONs. The location of the additional storage space caused the terminal unit to shift its operation from the military dock to the passenger zone of the port. During September 19-21, all household goods were discharged from the ship by TTU and warehoused in the terminal.

During Project Marathon 18 commercial ships were also unloaded and 23 ships loaded. Nevertheless, all the incoming privately owned vehicles were available for pickup within 24 hours. A one-stop

processing facility, operated by the unit and manned by TTU and Navy personnel, enabled all owners to pick up and license their automobiles promptly. The input of 329 privately owned vehicles within a four day period represented a tremendous workload in that more vehicles were received than are normally received by the unit in a year. Incoming household goods shipments were handled with similar efficiency.

A congratulatory letter from Admiral E. R. Zumwalt, Chief of Naval Operations, to the Army Chief of Staff summed up the manner in which Eastern Area's TTU in Greece performed its mission.

"I am pleased to report that Lieutenant Colonel John Wilmes and his unit performed superbly in receiving and processing our people. The thoroughly coordinated plan and record offloading time was of tremendous benefit in assuring a positive and enthusiastic welcome into Greece for Navy dependents.

"The Navy is most grateful for the superior performance of Lieutenant Colonel Wilmes and his officers and men."