Navy Reservists Support Operation Deep Freeze 2026



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Navy reservists from a Military Sealift Command Pacific expeditionary port unit are currently supporting cargo operations in Port Hueneme, California, in preparation for Operation Deep Freeze 2026, a resupply mission.

The team is overseeing the loadout of supplies and equipment onto the Military Sealift Command chartered heavy lift ship Plantijngracht, which will deliver the cargo to the remote Antarctica outpost of McMurdo Station.

Serving as liaisons between the ship's crew and Military Sealift Command, the reservists are overseeing the loadout of 302 pieces of cargo consisting of containers filled with construction materials, construction equipment, parts for the ongoing barge project at McMurdo Station, as well as dry goods and supplies needed for survival on Antarctica.

"This mission gives us a broader experience of what goes on [for] the logistics side of the Navy; most specifically with MSC and the way they do business," explained Navy Cmdr. Allan Phillips, expeditionary port unit commanding officer. "For us as reservists, it takes us away from the warship aspect of the Navy and focuses us on working with civilians and MSC."

In addition to cargo containers, materials for a 65-ton floating causeway system will also be loaded. The causeway will replace the ice pier at McMurdo Station.

Previously, an ice pier made up of rebar and frozen seawater was used for cargo offloads. Because of the size and weight of the cargo this year, the ice pier is unusable.

Once in Antarctica, the causeway will be assembled into sections on the ship's deck and placed into the water. The sections will be attached to one another to form the final pier.

The four-person unit began operations Dec. 21, 2025, with a brief holiday break. As the "eyes on the pier," the team is providing on-site observations for the onload of cargo, including staying engaged with the ship's crew, the pier crews and serving as a reporting team to the Military Sealift Command operation team in San Diego.

While most people would think working away from home during the holidays would be a hardship, members of the team welcomed the opportunity to be part of the unique operation made up of different military branches and government organizations working together, something outside their normal routine.

“For the enlisted members of the team, we get to see how this type of mission plays into the big picture of an operation,” said Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Marilyn Lazar, a hospital corpsman assigned to the expeditionary port unit.

Plantijngracht is scheduled to depart Port Hueneme Jan. 8. Following a stop in Christchurch, New Zealand, where the ship will load additional cargo, it will travel to McMurdo Station, traveling approximately 8,040 nautical miles over nearly a month.

Once in Antarctica, members of Navy Cargo Handling Battalion 1 will conduct the offload. Before departing McMurdo Station, the ship will be loaded with retrograde cargo for transportation off the continent. This includes trash and recyclable materials for disposal and equipment no longer required at the station.