

## Despite Pandemic Restrictions, Inauguration Supply and Demand Fulfilled

By LCDR Keith Darby, SC, USN, Member

As COVID-19 continues to impact every aspect of daily life, the troops working on America's 59th Presidential Inauguration had to adapt to unprecedented circumstances in support of the country's democratic transition of power. In particular, the Selected Reserve community was tasked with providing support in the areas of contracting, lodging, bus movement, inventory of supplies and meals.



Adapting to the pandemic, as RADM **Jacquelyn McClelland** describes it, “truly aligned with what we do in the Supply Corps—total support in the face of challenges,” she said. Undoubtedly, the issues faced by Supply Officers and Logistics Specialists were multifaceted. “COVID-19 made advanced planning very challenging and complex,” said RADM McClelland. “Keeping the sailors safe while expecting them to execute the mission was another big challenge. [The pandemic] also affected the costs with respect to Restriction of Movement accommodation, transportation, and contract negotiations.”

Mission ready, our Supply Corps had to be creative and maximize resources to ensure the supply and demand needs of the inauguration were met. Commander **George Lawton**, who was involved with the 2013 and 2017 inauguration as the senior Logistics Liaison Officer, Naval District Washington, says that in his role as Senior Planner for the 59th Presidential Inauguration he, “quickly drew from lessons learned and forward planning experience to coordinate with base installations, Navy Facilities and Engineering Command (NAVFAC) and the Navy Supply Systems Command (NAVSEA).”

*Above: Petty Officer Second Class Courtney Ritchwood (left), Petty Officer First Class Katherine Ronsairo (middle), and Petty Officer Second Class Eric Batts (far right) loaded boxes of Meals, Ready-to-Eat (MREs) that were transported to service members supporting the 59th Presidential Inauguration. The Navy Liaison Office secured \$9,000 in MREs and water to nourish 224 sailors that participated on Rehearsal and Inauguration Day.*

*Photo by LCDR Keith Darby*

Well-versed from his participation in historical inaugurations, Lawton continued to project and analyze the support level needed while providing cost savings for National Security Special Events.

Chief Logistics Specialist **Moses C. Rogers**, from Goldsboro, N.C., who served as the Logistics Chief for the Navy Inaugural Liaison Office explains, “Pre-COVID, asset availability was low. We were not sure if we would receive all the vehicles we had reserved...certain supplies we felt we needed (sanitizer, disinfectant sprays/wipes) were hard to come by as well.” Rogers and his team had the critical responsibility of managing the Navy’s supply, readiness, contracting, and fiscal matters in support of the 59th Presidential Inauguration. Rogers further expounds that during the pandemic, “The supplies that were hard to come by, were now available for us since we could now justify the need in this new COVID environment.” While certain supplies became more available, navigating the challenges of quarantining and housing certain incoming members of the team proved more challenging. Rogers elucidates that a significant portion of lodging on Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling was sacrificed to provide safe and adequate quarantining of the troops. Therefore, in order to meet the team’s lodging needs, Supply Officers and Logistics Specialists were propelled “into a search for other lodging options, which eventually lead to the use of contract berthing, off base, for our Support Personnel,” said Rogers.

No stranger to how technological advancements have been lauded for connecting folks both personally and professionally during the pandemic, the Supply Corps also took advantage of technology to carry out its mission with the 59th Presidential Inauguration. In particular, McClelland says, “despite the pandemic challenges, advancement in technology provided the platform for the team to deliver by supporting the mission remotely all over the world. Microsoft Teams enabled the virtual meetings, collaboration and discussions that helped execute the mission.” Elaborating further, Rogers, who faced many supply chain challenges with three prior desert deployments under his belt, said that he was impressed that advancements in technology allowed for “the quick turnaround [in] acquiring the meals and contract berthing,” said Rogers, for service members participating in the inauguration.

Proving adaptable and resourceful logisticians through the mission, McClelland explains that the Supply Corps members masterfully provided other key functions, such as “collaborating with the U.S. Secret Service, Capital Police and other local Law Enforcement

Agencies to ensure efficient and timely arrival of all Navy personnel at various locations on the inauguration day,” he said.

In reflecting on the experience holistically, Chief Rogers says he, “take[s] a sense of pride knowing [he] had a key role, in the Navy’s footprint,” he says. “This will be a once-in-a-career event for a lot of the personnel we have brought on.”