

## NATIONAL REGISTER ELIGIBILITY ASSESSMENT VESSEL: *Antares (AKR-294)* / ex- *Sea-Land Galloway*



Figure 1: *Antares (AKR-294)*, unloading cargo, date and location unknown.<sup>1</sup>

### Vessel History

*Antares (AKR-294)* was originally the container ship *Sea-Land Galloway*, built by A.G. Weser. Weser for the Sea-Land Industries in 1972. Military Sealift Command (MSC) and the Maritime Administration (MARAD) acquired the vessel in 1982 for service in the Ready Reserve Force (RRF), a fleet of merchant vessels kept in readiness for use in event of national emergency. In 1984, MSC converted *Sea-Land Galloway* from a container ship to a new class of fast sealift ship, featuring deck cranes and a roll on/ roll off (Ro/Ro) cargo system. MSC renamed the vessel *Antares (AKR-294)*. *Antares* served in the RRF until 2020. MARAD retained the vessel at a layberth in the outport Baltimore, Maryland as part of the National Defense Reserve Fleet (NDRF).<sup>2</sup>

### Civilian Service

The SL-7 container ships were built in the early 1970s for Sea-Land Industries. They were designed to be fast, efficient, and to carry 50-percent more cargo than the next largest United States flagged containership. This made them the largest in the world. A.G. Weser of Bremen, Germany, launched the hull for the *Sea-Land*

<sup>1</sup> “*Antares (AKR-294)*,” *Vessel History Database*, Accessed on June 7, 2024, <https://vesselhistory.marad.dot.gov/ShipHistory/Detail/6443>.

<sup>2</sup> *Antares (AKR-294)* Ship File, MARAD 05.05 NDRF Ship Files, HQ office.

*Galloway* on May 1, 1972. The vessel was delivered to the Sea-Land Industries on September 1, 1972.<sup>3</sup> *Sea-Land Galloway* was a pure container vessel from the ground up. It was designed to work with Sea-Land's shore based intermodal infrastructure. The vessel was based out of the Sea-Land Terminal at Port Elizabeth, New Jersey and could carry 1,968 35 ft. Sea Land containers and cruised at 33 knots.<sup>4</sup>

The SL-7s were a significant advancement in containerized shipping, but they quickly ran into problems. SL7s consumed considerable amounts of fuel at high speeds, which cut down on the economic value of the vessel. This became a bigger issue as energy costs rose during the 1970s. Also, the continued use of steam for propulsion proved costly to maintain. Even though the SL-7s were capable of incredibly high speeds, transatlantic passage in inclement weather slowed the vessels by as much as a third of their advertised speed. In addition, global shipping companies soon adopted a 40' standard large shipping container. SL-7s were equipped to carry 35' Sea-Land containers and could not be adapted for the 40' containers. This limited their operating potential. Sea-Land responded by focusing on cargos requiring climate control in their proprietary 35' containers refrigerated containers. Still, they struggled to find consistent profitable use.<sup>5</sup>



<sup>3</sup> *Antares (AKR-294)* Ship File, MARAD 05.05 NDRF Ship Files, HQ office.

<sup>4</sup> "Navy Buys Six SL-7 Sea-Land Containerships in 207.5 Million Contract," *Maritime Reporter*, September 1981, p. 7.

<sup>5</sup> Rik van Hemmen, "Using and SL-7 to Preserve our Container Ship History," *Marinelink*, Published June 20, 2024, <https://www.marinelink.com/news/using-sl-preserve-container-ship-history-514634>; "T-AKR 287 Algol SL-7 Type Fast Sealift Ships," *Globalsecurity.org*, accessed on June 21, 2024, <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/systems/ship/takr-287.htm>.

**Figure 2: *Sea-Land Galloway* underway. Date and location unknown.<sup>6</sup>**

## **Government Service**



**Figure 3: *Antares (AKR-294)* underway. Date and location unknown.<sup>7</sup>**

The speed and size of the SL-7 container ships attracted the attention of the United States Navy Military Sealift Command who saw them as candidates for strategic mobility. MSC envisioned Fast Sealift Ships (FSS), vessels with all the necessary space and equipment to carry and deploy a heavy mechanized Army division. They planned to add Ro/Ro capability, reinforced decking, onboard cranes, and side ports to facilitate loading and unloading in extreme environments.<sup>8</sup> The Navy proceeded with an initial purchase of seven SL-7s along with 4,000 containers, chassis and spare equipment and parts for \$207.5 million in 1982. In the end it purchased all eight SL-7s and spent an additional \$700 million to convert the vessels to meet their fast sealift needs.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> “*Antares (AKR-294)*,” *NavSource*, Accessed on June 7, 2024, <https://www.navsource.org/archives/09/54/540294.htm>

<sup>7</sup> “*Antares (AKR-294)*,” *Vessel History Database*, Accessed on June 7, 2024, <https://vesselhistory.marad.dot.gov/ShipHistory/Detail/6443>.

<sup>8</sup> “Navy Buys Six SL-7 Sea-Land Containerships in 207.5 Million Contract,” *Maritime Reporter*, September 1981, p. 7.

<sup>9</sup> “Navy Buys Six SL-7 Sea-Land Containerships in 207.5 Million Contract,” *Maritime Reporter*, September 1981, p. 7.

*Sea-Land Galloway* was part of the initial SL-7 order. MSC officially acquired *Sea-Land Galloway* on April 16, 1982. Now part of the *Algol* class, the ship was renamed USNS *Antares* (T-AK-294), for the brightest star in the constellation Scorpio. On September 13, 1982, the Navy sent *Antares* to Avondale Shipyard, in Westwego, Louisiana for a substantial conversion from containership to Ro/Ro cargo ship. Conversion included the addition of interior ramps for Ro/Ro capability, the addition of four cranes (two midships capable of lifting 35 tons and two aft, capable of lifting 50 tons), starboard and port side exterior ramps, and a top deck capable of carrying tanks and supporting helicopters.<sup>10</sup> They completed work on the vessel and delivered it to Military Sealift Command (MSC) on July 12, 1984.<sup>11</sup>

On completion, *Antares*, and the rest of the FSSs, were the fastest cargo vessels in the world, and with their diverse loading capabilities, incredibly versatile.<sup>12</sup> Unlike traditional container ships, they required very little port infrastructure to load and unload. All FSS could carry more than 700 mechanized vehicles, including M-1 Abrahams tanks, armored fighting vehicles, and the fuel trucks necessary to support them in theater.<sup>13</sup> Initially, *Antares* and its sister ship *Capella* were berthed at Sealift Terminals, Inc. in Jacksonville, Florida.<sup>14</sup> Sea-Land Services, Inc. provided the initial manning, operation, and maintenance of the FSS ships, keeping them in a four-day ready-for-sea status.<sup>15</sup>

*Antares'* first military mission was in the Exercise REFORGER in 1985. REFORGER was an annual exercise dealing with the rapid reinforcement of U.S. troops in Europe. The ship was loaded in Savannah, Georgia with Army M-60 tanks, armored vehicles, tracked, wheeled, and containerized items as well as gamma-goats from the 197<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade (Mechanized) of Fort Benning, Georgia, the 109<sup>th</sup> Armored Brigade of the Tennessee National Guard, and the 519<sup>th</sup> Military Police Battalion of Fort Meade, Maryland. En route to Amsterdam,

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<sup>10</sup> "T-AKR 287 Algol SL-7 Type Fast Sealift Ships," Globalsecurity.org, accessed on June 21, 2024, <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/systems/ship/takr-287.htm>.

<sup>11</sup> The eight SL& Fast Sealift Vessels were: *Algol* (ex-*Sea-Land Exchange*); *Bellatrix* (Ex-*Sea-Land Trade*); *Denebola* (Ex-*Sea-Land Resource*); *Pollux* (*Sea-Land Market*); *Altair* (Ex-*Sea-Land Finance*); *Regulus* (Ex-*Sea-Land Commerce*); *Capella* (Ex-*Sea-Land McLean*); and *Antares* (Ex-*Sea-Land Galloway*)

<sup>12</sup> "A Look at McLean's Clipper Ships – the Fastest Cargo Ships in the world," The Old Salt Blog, Published September 24, 2019, <https://www.oldsaltblog.com/2019/09/a-look-at-mcleans-clipper-ships-the-fastest-cargo-ships-in-the-world/>.

<sup>13</sup> "T-AKR 287 Algol SL-7 Type Fast Sealift Ships," Globalsecurity.org, accessed on June 21, 2024, <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/systems/ship/takr-287.htm>.

<sup>14</sup> "First of Three Fast Sealift Ships Delivered," *Maritime Reporter*, August 1984, 14.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

for the exercise, *Antares* encountered rough seas and suffered propulsion problems as a result. During the ordeal, *Antares'* radio officer Gilbert Moncreif was washed overboard, sparking a lengthy search which was sadly unsuccessful.<sup>16</sup> *Antares* arrived in Amsterdam on 14 January where all equipment was offloaded within 36 hours, upon which *Antares* proceeded to its next port.<sup>17</sup> *Antares* participated in Exercise REFORGER 1986 with the 32<sup>nd</sup> Separate Infantry Brigade (Mechanized), Wisconsin Army National Guard but that exercise was less eventful.<sup>18</sup>

During Operation DESERT SHIELD/STORM seven of the FSS moved thirteen percent of all the cargo transported between the US and Saudi Arabia during and after the Persian Gulf War.<sup>19</sup> *Antares*, however, proved the odd man out. Though scheduled for an overhaul after participating in the exercise TEAM SPIRIT, the emergent needs of the operation caused MSC and USTRANSCOM to accept a degree of risk in using the vessel, and it was activated on 8 August 1990. After departing from its berth in Jacksonville, Florida on 20 August 1990 following a 157-hour breakout time (the required was 96 hours) due to engine and boiler issues, *Antares* finally proceeded to its Seaport of Embarkation, Savannah, GA, where it loaded equipment for the 24th Infantry Division (Mechanized) while still undergoing emergency repairs. Five days after departing, *Antares* suffered catastrophic mechanical failure off the coast of North Carolina. Sitting dead in the water at approximately 35°48' N and 68°55' W, *Antares* was taken under tow by the MSC ocean tug *Apache* (T-ATF 172), and taken to Rota, Spain where MSC had diverted *Altair* to take on some of *Antares'* cargo. Priority cargo was airlifted to Saudi Arabia, but the bulk of the cargo from *Antares* arrived in country three weeks later.<sup>20</sup> Unable to have the ship repaired at Rota, MSC towed *Antares* to Royal Naval Station Gibraltar where it would spend the rest of the operation under repairs.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> "Harsh European winter provides tough test for American troops," *Birmingham Post-Herald*, Birmingham, AL, 19 February 1985, 20.

<sup>17</sup> "Antares Involved in Reforger," *Navy Times*, 11 February 1985, 37.

<sup>18</sup> NARA and DVIDS Public Domain Archive <https://nara.getarchive.net/media/an-m113-armored-personnel-carrier-is-driven-into-a-holding-area-after-being-b1bef6> Accessed on 10 September 2024.

<sup>19</sup> "T-AKR 287 Algal SL-7 Type Fast Sealift Ships," *Globalsecurity.org*, accessed on June 21, 2024, <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/systems/ship/takr-287.htm>.

<sup>20</sup> James K. Matthews and Cora J. Holt, *So Many, So Much, So Far, So Fast: United States Transportation Command and Strategic Deployment for Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm*, (Washington, DC: Joint History Office, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Research Center, U.S. Transportation Command, 1992), 120; "T-AKR 287 Algal SL-7 Type Fast Sealift Ships," *Globalsecurity.org*, accessed on June 21, 2024, <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/systems/ship/takr-287.htm>.

<sup>21</sup> *So Many, So Much, So Far, So Fast*, 121.

In December 1992, *Antares* and five other SL-7s participated in Operation RESTORE HOPE in Somalia, supporting the multinational effort to provide humanitarian relief to the war-torn nation. The FSS ships supported the second phase of MSC's "Trident of Sea Power" plan in which they would surge the heavy equipment and supplies needed to support the first wave of ships and troops.<sup>22</sup>

In September 1994, *Antares* loaded equipment in support of Operation SAFE HAVEN and proceeded to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The operation was in response to the massive interdiction of Haitian and Cuban refugees at sea requiring Coast Guard rescue. Refugees were initially placed at the U.S. Naval Base at Guantanamo Bay, which was stretched nearly to capacity. Exacerbating matters, Cuban President Fidel Castro, responding to anti-government demonstrations, ordered the Cuban military not to interfere with any Cubans seeking to leave the country. The ensuing mass migration, known as the *Balseros*, strained the facilities at Guantanamo further. SAFE HAVEN was stood up in response and between September 1994 and March 1995, over 8,000 Cuban refugees were transported to camps in Panama. Haitians held at Guantanamo were repatriated beginning in October 1994 and Cuban refugees in Panama were eventually brought back.<sup>23</sup>

In January 1996, *Antares* and sister ship *Capella* shifted their berths from Jacksonville, Florida to Baltimore, Maryland.<sup>24</sup> The Military Sealift Command invited the public to tour *Antares* on the last weekend in March.<sup>25</sup> In May of the same year, *Antares* traveled to Norfolk Naval Base to participate in Exercise DRAGON TEAM, an intermodal exercise stretching from Fort Campbell, Kentucky to the Hampton Roads area of Virginia.<sup>26</sup> *Antares* performed similar duties during Exercise BRIGHT STAR in 1997.<sup>27</sup>

In February of 1999, *Antares* departed for Rijeka, Croatia in support of Operation JOINT GUARD. The ship carried combat and combat support equipment from

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<sup>22</sup> Dennis P. Mroczkowski, Col (ret.) USMCR, *Restoring Hope: In Somalia with the Unified Task Force, 1992–1993* Washington, DC: History Division United States Marine Corps, 2005), 29.

<sup>23</sup> "Operation Safe Haven - Collection Finding Aid," Clinton Digital Library, accessed September 10, 2024, <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/36265>. Accessed 10 September 2024.

<sup>24</sup> "Two 'floating cities' shifting their home port to Baltimore," *The Baltimore Sun*, 15 January 1996, 7-9C.

<sup>25</sup> "2 Navy ships to be open for tours on weekend," *The Baltimore Sun*, 25 March 1996, 7B.

<sup>26</sup> "1,600 participate in annual army sea-readiness exercise," *The Virginian-Pilot*, 4 May 1996, B5.

<sup>27</sup> Robert J. Schneller, Jr., *Anchor of Resolve: A History of U.S. Naval Forces Central Command/Fifth Fleet*, (Washington, DC: Naval Historical Center, 2007), 9.

the U.S. Army's 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division from Fort Hood, Texas. Initially loading in Beaumont, *Antares* called at Wilmington, North Carolina to receive the final load. In all, there were more than 225 shipping containers, 40 Army helicopters, 63 vehicles, and other general cargo aboard. The voyage to Croatia took eighteen days. *Antares* was thought to be only the second U.S. Navy ship to put in to Rijeka.<sup>28</sup> *Antares* returned to Texas to offload cargo in April 1999.<sup>29</sup>

In January 2003, *Antares* began loading 2,000 pieces of equipment for the First Marine Expeditionary Force in San Diego, California in support of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. The load included shrink-wrapped helicopters, armored vehicles, battle tanks, military trucks, extra ammunition and good supplies.<sup>30</sup> Following its trip to the Middle East, *Antares* was taken out of service on 3 May and placed in Reduced Operating Status (ROS) in Baltimore on 3 May 2003.<sup>31</sup> The ship was reactivated on 30 January 2004 to transport material to Iraq. After a brief period of ROS, the ship was reactivated on 29 May. During Operation IRAQI FREEDOM the ship took on 138,000 square feet of cargo for the U.S. Army's 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division, delivering it to Iraq and returning to Norfolk, Virginia, where it once again was placed in ROS on 18 August 2004.<sup>32</sup>

## Maritime Administration

On 1 October 2007, the Military Sealift Command transferred custody of *Antares* and administration of its operating contract to MARAD. MARAD received full title to the vessel on 1 October 2008. During its time with MARAD, *Antares* participated in multiple No Notice Turbo Activations, but the ship's age was beginning to show as it failed half of the activations.<sup>33</sup> The ship was overhauled in 2013 and remained in MARAD's Ready Reserve Force until 2020 when it was downgraded to the National Defense Reserve Fleet.<sup>34</sup> *Antares* was one of four

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<sup>28</sup> "USNS *Antares* Bound for Croatia," Military Sealift Command Press Release MSC PAO 99-07, 25 February 1999.

<sup>29</sup> "*Antares* Arrival," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, 17 April 1999, B5.

<sup>30</sup> "Loaded for bear: Cargo ships haul Mariners' gear to war zone," North Country Times, Oceanside, CA, 27 January 2003 1-2B.

<sup>31</sup> "Transitions," *Navy Times*, 1 September 2003, 43.

<sup>32</sup> "Transitions," *Navy Times*, 20 September 2004, 43.

<sup>33</sup> Bradley Martin, Roland J. Yardley, *Approaches to Strategic Sealift Readiness*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2019), 12.

<sup>34</sup> *Antares (AKR-294)* Ship File, Ship Manager Executive Working Group, MARAD 05.05 NDRF Ship Files, HQ office, December 2012.

Strategic Sealift ships to be trapped in Baltimore Harbor following the Key Bridge collapse in March 2024.<sup>35</sup>

*Antares* transited from Baltimore to Beaumont, Texas where it arrived on 20 August 2024 and was placed in the Beaumont Reserve Fleet in good condition. The ship is slated to retire and be sold in FY 2025.<sup>36</sup>

### **Description/Characteristics of Vessel Type**

The converted Fast Sealift Ship *Antares* has an overall length of 947', maximum beam of 106' and a 34' 10" draft. It is 48,632 gross tons and has a total cargo capacity of 199,362 sq. ft.

FSS's have six cargo decks including the lightdeck midship, three midship compartments and two sideports with a hinged ramp from the flight deck to A deck. The aft cargo holds (5-8) are configured for shipping containers with cell guides. One roll-on/roll off (Ro/Ro) light vehicle deck (main deck) aft accommodates jeeps and light trucks. The A, B, C, and D deck levels are designed to accommodate wheeled and tracked vehicles up to the weight of an M-1 tank. The ships can travel from the U.S. East Coast to Europe in just six days and to the Persian Gulf, via the Suez Canal in 18 days, thus ensuring rapid delivery of military equipment in a crisis. Combined, the eight FSS's can carry nearly all the equipment needed to outfit a full Army mechanized division. Although all the FSS's have slightly different configurations, they are all able to load wheeled and tracked vehicles.

For propulsion, *Antares* features two Foster-Wheeler boilers and two General Electric MST-19 steam turbine engines located beneath the aft quart house between the number six hold and the number four hold. These engines drive twin propellers, and the vessel is capable of speeds of 33 knots.

The conversion in the 1980s turned the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Holds into five decks of Ro/Ro ready cargo space. Open ports are located on both the starboard and port sides with retractable decking. Holds 5 through 8 also underwent conversion. Five and six can store 35 ft containers. The seven hold is split by the crane shaft and has one hull area forward limited to 20 ft containers and one aft capable of

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<sup>35</sup> Mike Schuler, "These Are the Ships Stuck Behind the Baltimore Key Bridge," *gCaptain*, 28 March 2024 <https://gcaptain.com/these-are-the-ships-stuck-behind-the-baltimore-key-bridge/>

<sup>36</sup> *Antares (AKR-294)* Ship File, Ship Condition Report MARAD 05.05 NDRF Ship Files, HQ office, 21 August 2024.

35 ft containers. The eight hold is uninterrupted and capable of two rows of 35 ft containers.

A flight deck was also added. Two crane pedestals with two cranes each were added to the ship's deck. The first set of cranes is behind the bridge. The second is just aft of the aft quarter house. The two cranes behind the bridge are capable of 35 light tons individually and 70 light tons in tandem. Each of the aft cranes can lift 50 tons, and 100 tons in tandem.

**MARAD Type:** SL-7 (Fast Sealift Ship)

**Official Number:** 542200

**Previous name:** *Sea-Land Galloway* (1972-1984)

**Builder:** A.G. Weser

**Year:** 1973

**Location:** Bremen, West Germany

**Length:** 946'

**Beam:** 106'

**Draft:** 34' 10"

**Displacement, summer:** 54,909 tons

**Displacement, lightweight:** 26,692 tons

**Gross Tonnage:** 48,632 tons

**Cargo Capacity:** 199,362 sq. ft.

**Cranes:** Four cranes.

**Speed:** 33 knots

**Propellers:** 2

**Shaft Horsepower:** 120,000 shp<sup>37</sup>

## Awards

According to MARAD records, *Antares* received the Military Sea Lift Command's Admiral of the Ocean Sea Mariner's Plaque for the rescue of a Mexican fisherman in 2007. No other details are available.<sup>38</sup>

## Historical Integrity

*Antares* underwent considerable renovation from its original containerized configuration to its current state as a Fast Sealift Ship and retains very little

<sup>37</sup> “*Antares* (AKR-294), MARAD Historic Vessel Database, <https://vesselhistory.marad.dot.gov/ShipHistory/Detail/6443>. Accessed 10 September 2024.

<sup>38</sup> *Antares* (AKR-294) Ship File, Stack Unveiling Ceremony Welcome Aboard pamphlet, MARAD 05.05 NDRF Ship Files, HQ office, 1 October 2008.

interior integrity from its original design. When transferred to MARAD, the ship was part of the Ready Reserve Force until 2020, when MARAD downgraded it to the National Defense Reserve Fleet where it served as a source for spare parts and equipment for more active crane ships. The current vessel holds little resemblance to the original configuration.

### **Statement of Significance**

When the ship was first built as a container vessel for Sea-Land Industries in 1972, it and its sister ships showed great promise. But rising oil costs coupled with growing standardization in the shipping industry limited the impact of these ships and they had short and largely uneventful careers before being sold to the U.S. Navy. In 1984, it became one of eight Fast Sealift Ships for the Military Sealift Command. These ships were heavily renovated for use in logistics support in event of national emergency, but in its time with the U.S. Navy and later with the Maritime Administration, *Antares* itself did not see wide use in any conflict or emergency of national significance.

### **National Register Eligibility Statement**

While over 50 years old, *Antares* does not possess sufficient historical integrity or importance that would merit listing on the National Register of Historic Places. It was one of eight SL-7 container ships, which did not see wide use in their original configuration. While it took part in DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM, Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, and Operation IRAQI FREEDOM after its conversion, its service does not rise the caliber of exceptional. As one of the Sea-Land cargo ships, it is associated with Malcom McLean who is largely considered the father of containerization. However it's current configuration has stripped away any direct associations with its time at Sea-Land and it is not the last of its kind. Recently, the vessel has been subject to stripping to support the operations of other vessels and while listed in good condition upon its assignment to the Beaumont Reserve Fleet in August 2024, it does show signs of light corrosion.<sup>39</sup> While the ship and its crew performed vital work in the private and public sectors, overall it does not rise to the level of being placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

**Date:** 27 September 2024

**Determination:** NOT ELIGIBLE

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<sup>39</sup> *Antares (AKR-294)* Ship File, Ship Condition Report MARAD 05.05 NDRF Ship Files, HQ office, 21 August 2024.

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