

NATIONAL REGISTER ELIGIBILITY ASSESSMENT VESSEL: M/V CAPE LOBOS



M/V Cape Lobos (foreground) and M/V Cape Lambert (background) docked in the Cape Fear River at Wilmington, North Carolina. Maritime Administration photograph, date unknown,

Vessel History

The M/V *Cape Lobos* is a roll-on, roll-off carrier¹ built in 1971–72 for the Burnett Steamship Company, Ltd., of Newcastle, England. The ship was originally built as the *Laurentian Forest*, the first of two identical ships ordered by Burnett (a subsidiary of Federal Commerce & Navigation, Ltd., Montreal [Fednav]) from Port Weller Dry Docks, Ltd., in St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada. The ship made its first sea trial on Lake Ontario on September 27, 1972. *Laurentian Forest* was delivered to its owners in November 1972.² The ship passed through a succession of British and American owners before the Maritime Administration (MARAD) purchased the ship in 1987 for use in its National Defense Reserve Fleet (NDRF).

Cape Lobos and its identical sister ship, *Avon Forest* (now *Cape Lambert*), were designed by Knud E. Hansen I/S of Copenhagen, Denmark, specifically to carry Canadian newsprint to Europe and European cars to Canada. Harrison's (Clyde) Ltd. of Glasgow, Scotland, managed the ships' design and construction. Their design included a number of features intended to allow

¹ Sometimes called Ro/Ro, which describes how wheeled-vehicular cargo is loaded and unloaded.

² "M.V. Laurentian Forest," n.p.; Tim Colton, "Port Weller Dry Docks," *Shipbuilding History*, <http://shipbuildinghistory.com/history/canada/portweller.htm>.

them to serve ports on the St. Lawrence River year round: their hulls were strengthened to the standards of Lloyd's Ice Class 1; their propulsion machinery was fitted with shock-resistant clutches; their mooring equipment was sheltered at both bow and stern; and their side cargo doors were fitted with electrical heating systems to prevent ice buildup.³

The Burnett Steamship Company chartered *Laurentian Forest* to Seatrade, Ltd., of Bermuda, which used the ship on westbound transatlantic voyages to transport up to 1,900 British and Continental automobiles to Halifax and Montreal. Eastbound, Seatrade chartered the ship to International Navigation, Ltd., of Nassau, a subsidiary of the International Paper Corporation of New York, for the transport of up to 14,000 tons of Canadian newsprint to Avonmouth, England. The ship was managed by Harrison's (Clyde) Ltd.⁴

After three years in this service, Burnett leased the ship in January 1976 to Marine Transport Service, Inc., for service between the U.S. and Red Sea, Arabian Gulf, and Persian Gulf ports. About 1980, Burnett sold the ship the Carlton Steamship Company, Ltd. It was reregistered in Panama under a new name, *Grand Encounter*. It was sold again in 1985 to Blackwall Shipping Corporation, at which time its name reverted to *Laurentian Forest*. Harrison's continued to manage the ship under both of these owners.⁵

During this period, *Laurentian Forest* played a small part in recovery efforts after the bombing of Air-India Flight 182, which crashed off the Irish coast on June 23, 1985. The ship was the first vessel to arrive at the crash site, and carried the bodies of 20 victims into Dublin.⁶

In 1985, Piute Energy & Transportation Company of Seattle purchased *Avon Forest*, *Laurentian Forest*'s sister ship, on behalf of Fednav Lakes Services of Detroit, a U.S. subsidiary of Fednav Ltd. (Montreal). Fednav managed and operated the vessel renaming it *Federal Lakes* and reregistered it in the United States in order to start a monthly cargo service for the U.S. Department of Defense between Toledo, Ohio and Europe. Later that year, Fednav acquired (again through Piute Energy) *Laurentian Forest*. Renamed *Federal Seaway*, reflagged U.S., and overhauled at Charleston, South Carolina for \$3 million, the ship allowed Fednav to run a biweekly service transporting military vehicles to Europe and returning military families' household goods and cars to the U.S. In September 1986, the Department of Defense decided to ship more than 200 M-1A1 tanks to Germany through Toledo instead of through Bayonne, New Jersey. *Federal Seaway* could carry about thirty tanks at a time, but it carried only twelve for the first shipment in October.⁷

³ "The MV Avon Forest," *Marine Reporter and Engineering News*, November 15, 1973, 46, 49; "M.V. Laurentian Forest," *Scanner* (December 1972), <http://www.maritimehistoryofthegreatlakes.ca/Documents/scanner/05/03/default.asp?ID=c004>.

⁴ "The MV Avon Forest," 46.

⁵ Joseph S. Helewicz, "2 form shipping line to serve Mideast ports," *Baltimore Sun*, January 6, 1976, A9; name and registration details from various editions of *Lloyd's Register of Ships*.

⁶ Karen DeYoung, "All aboard 747 from Canada feared dead," *Washington Post*, June 24, 1985, A1, A21; Barnaby J. Feder, "Recorders hunted in Air-India crash," *New York Times*, June 25, 1985, A1.

⁷ Dave Murray, "Ports on lakes to get Pentagon overflow cargo," *Toledo Blade*, April 25, 1985, 1; "A welcome ship," *Toledo Blade*, November 8, 1985, 14; "New flag ship to sail Great Lakes in spring," *Ludington Daily News*, November 27, 1985, 2; "Lakes shipping firm using 2 east coast ports," *Toledo Blade*, January 30, 1986, 29; Hand Harvey, "Tanks through Port of

Fednav's cargo service did not make money. Short of cash, the company offered *Federal Seaway* and *Federal Lakes* to the United States government in the summer of 1986 for \$29 million. A reporter noted that company officials felt the ships were "old" and that they "saw a chance to sell them for a profit." The government accepted the company's offer and purchased both ships in the summer of 1987. MARAD delayed taking possession of *Federal Seaway* until the spring of 1988 in order to allow the ship to complete the 1987 shipping season on the Great Lakes.⁸

Maritime Administration

On March 12, 1988 *Federal Seaway* was assigned to MARAD's Ready Reserve Fleet⁹ a subset of the NDRF, and was renamed *Cape Lobos*. The NDRF was established under Section XI of the Merchant Ship Sales Act of 1946 to serve as a reserve of ships for national defense and national emergencies. A RRF component was established in 1976. RRF vessels can be activated on short notice to provide rapid deployment of military equipment during an emergency. When activated, operational control of the ships is transferred from MARAD to the Navy's Military Sealift Command (MSC).

Prior to RRF operations, NDRF vessels supported emergency shipping requirements in seven wars and crises. During the Korean War, 540 vessels were activated to support military forces. A worldwide tonnage shortfall from 1951 to 1953 required over 600 ship activations to lift coal to Northern Europe and grain to India. Another tonnage shortfall following the Suez Canal closing in 1956 activated 223 cargo ships and 29 tankers from the NDRF. From 1955 through 1964, another 698 ships stored grain for the Department of Agriculture. During the Berlin crisis of 1961, 18 vessels were activated and remained in service until 1970. During the Vietnam War 172 vessels were activated.

Cape Lobos arrived in the RRF too late to operate in those crises, but performed valuable service in the *Desert Shield/Desert Storm* international military operations to stop Iraqi military expansion in the Persian Gulf area and subsequently to liberate occupied Kuwait.

Operations *Desert Shield/Desert Storm*

In August 1990, the RRF consisted of 96 ships, 78 of which were activated to support Operations *Desert Shield/Desert Storm*. This was the first large-scale activation and employment of the RRF since it was separated from the NDRF. The vessels involved were roll-on/roll-off vessels, break-bulk cargo ships, tankers and barge carriers.

Toledo," *Toledo Blade*, September 29, 1986, 1; "Tanks ready for shipment, but vessel is delayed," *Toledo Blade*, October 17, 1986, 13.

⁸ "Delay sought in sale of vessel used for military shipments," *Toledo Blade*, June 19, 1987, 15; "Navy delay lets Fednav ship overseas," *Toledo Blade*, July 30, 1987, 35; "2 ex-Toledo ships join Persian Gulf fleet," *Toledo Blade*, September 28, 1990, 22; vessel status cards for *Cape Lobos* ex-*Laurentian Forest*, MARAD Vessel History Database, <http://www.marad.dot.gov/sh/ShipHistory/769>; Polmar, *Naval Institute Guide*, 315.

⁹ The Ready Reserve Fleet later became known as the Ready Reserve Force.

More than seventy-five percent of the RRF provided sealift to support the U.S. effort's in the Persian Gulf between August 1990 and April 1991. The ships transported 750,000 short tons of dry cargo, which was one-fifth of the total dry cargo sealifted during the conflict. The Ro-Ros proved to be the most effective vessels and they delivered nearly twenty percent of Central Command's material and other support during the first phase of the operations. Unfortunately, there is very little published on MARAD's role during the Gulf War. Locating information that details individual ship operations has proved difficult. One of the better books published on the subject is, *Shield and Sword: The United States Navy and the Persian Gulf War*, by Edward J. Marolda and Robert J. Schneller. While this book does not discuss details of a specific ship's operations, it does provide an excellent overview of the logistical build-up to the war and the RRF's role. Several of the topics that the book discusses include the difficulties encountered during the vessels' activation into the Navy's Military Sealift Command, their successes, and the amount and kind of material they carried.

Cape Lobos was one of first 18 RRF vessels activated for service in the First Persian Gulf War. MSC ordered its activation on August 10, 1990, three days after the start of Operation *Desert Shield*. MARAD planned to tender the ship to MSC for cargo operations within a five-day window; however, an initial towing delay from its layberth to Newport News Shipbuilding in Newport News, Virginia, and assorted minor mechanical problems delayed the ship's tender until August 17. MSC then delayed accepting the tender until August 18.¹⁰ The ship made three cargo voyages during Operation *Desert Shield* and one during Operation *Desert Storm*:

- Arrived Jacksonville, Florida, August 19, 1990; departed August 21; arrived Ad Dammam, Saudi Arabia, September 16.
- Arrived Bayonne, New Jersey, October 17, 1990; departed October 19; arrived Ad Dammam November 14.
- Arrived Bremerhaven, Germany, December 9; departed December 13; arrived Ad Dammam January 4, 1991.
- Arrived Bayonne February 3, 1991; departed February 5; arrival date at Ad Dammam not available.¹¹

The ship made additional voyages during Operation *Desert Sortie*, the effort to reposition military assets after the war. It returned on March 10, 1992. Engine overhaul, maintenance and deactivation were undertaken between about August 1992 and March 1993 at Houston Ship Repair in Texas.¹² In 1994, *Cape Lobos* and *Cape Lambert* were outported to Wilmington, North Carolina. American Overseas Marine Corp., a subsidiary of General Dynamics, maintained them with ten-man crews aboard. Later that year, MSC activated *Cape Lobos* to transport armored personnel carriers and medical supplies to Haiti during the U.S. intervention there.¹³

¹⁰ "RRF Activation Summary (Desert Shield / Desert Storm)," Maritime Administration files.

¹¹ Ronald F. Rost, John F. Addams, and John J. Nelson, *Sealift in Operation Desert Shield / Desert Storm: 7 August 1990 to 17 February 1991*, Report CRM 91-109 (Alexandria, Va.: Center for Naval Analyses, May 1991), B3, B6.

¹² "RRF Activation Summary (Desert Shield / Desert Storm)"; vessel status cards for *Cape Lobos*; MARAD Division of Ship Maintenance and Repair, Office of Ship Operations, *Readiness Assessment of the RRF*, August 28, 1992, Maritime Administration files.

¹³ Gareth McGrath, "Navy Reserve switches ships in Wilmington," *Wilmington Morning Star*, September 24, 1999, B1.

Topside repairs were made to the ship at Norfolk Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Corporation, Norfolk, Virginia, in February and March 1997.¹⁴ In March 1999, general contractor Holmes Brothers Enterprises of Suffolk, Virginia, was hired to remodel crew quarters on three levels in the deck house. Both this firm and its subcontractor, Arcon Inc. of Norfolk, were later found to have taken inadequate precautions to control dust when removing asbestos-containing wall panels. State health officials “found asbestos materials settled like dust throughout the ship,” and OSHA fined the Holmes Brothers \$44,750 and Arcon \$108,500.¹⁵

The ship was downgraded to Ready Reserve ten-day activation status at the end of September 1999. It was towed to the James River Reserve Fleet at the end of November and maintained there without a standing crew. Beginning in spring 2000, the ship was managed by Crowley Liner Services under contract to MARAD.¹⁶

The ship was activated again in February 2003 to support Operation *Enduring Freedom*. Details of its service in this operation have not been found. It was later outported to Wilmington, North Carolina, on May 19, 2003, but was towed to Tampa Ship Building in Tampa, Florida, in September 2003 for drydocking, repainting, and repairs. The ship returned to Wilmington December 3, 2003.¹⁷ In May 2005 and again in May 2006, *Cape Lobos* was shifted from its normal berth just south of the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge to the North Carolina State Pier in order to participate in National Maritime Day events. In July 2006, the ship was downgraded from RRF to NDRF status. It departed Wilmington July 14 for the Beaumont Reserve Fleet in Texas, where it arrived July 28.¹⁸

Initially retained as “militarily useful” (“reserved for future military or strategic use”), the ship was downgraded to “emergency sealift” status in February 2009. On September 30, 2013, the ship was downgraded again to non-retention status.

¹⁴ “*Cape Lobos* Milestones,” MARAD Vessel History Database, <http://www.marad.dot.gov/sh/ShipHistory/Detail/769>.

¹⁵ Brian Feagans, “Companies fined after asbestos exposure,” *Wilmington Morning Star*, September 2, 1999, 1A, 4A.

¹⁶ Gareth McGrath, “Navy Reserve switches ships in Wilmington”; “*Cape Lobos* Milestones,” MARAD Vessel History Database; “Ready Reserve Force (RRF) Ship Manager,” *Global Security* Web site, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/agency/dot/rrf-sm.htm>.

¹⁷ “Tugged into place,” *Wilmington Star-News*, May 20, 2003, 2B; Trista Talton, “Reserve ships back home,” *Wilmington Star-News*, December 31, 2003, 2B; “*Cape Lobos* Milestones,” MARAD Vessel History Database.

¹⁸ “*Cape Lobos* pulls out of port,” WECT News, July 14, 2006, <http://www.wect.com/story/5152461/cape-lobos-pulls-out-of-port>; “*Cape Lobos* Milestones,” MARAD Vessel History Database.

Description/Characteristics of Vessel Type

Vessel Name:	<i>Cape Lobos</i>
Former Names:	<i>Laurentian Forest</i> (1972–80 and 1985-86) <i>Grand Encounter</i> (1980–85)
Dates of Construction:	Completed November 1972
Type of Craft:	Roll-on, roll-off vehicle cargo ship
MARAD Design No.:	Dsl/Canada
Builder's Hull No.:	55
Official No.:	694202
Navy Designation:	T-AKR 5078
Designer:	Knud E. Hansen I/S, Copenhagen, Denmark
Builder:	Port Weller Dry Docks, Ltd., St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada
Length (bp):	621'-6"
Length (oa):	683'-0"
Breadth (molded):	75'-0"
Breadth (extreme):	75'-10"
Depth (molded):	58'-0"
Draft (molded):	30'-0"
Draft (summer):	30'-6"
Displacement (light ship):	10,557 long tons
Displacement (full load):	30,360 long tons
Deadweight (summer):	19,857 long tons (originally 20,545)
Gross tonnage:	22,999 (originally 16,380, later 15,005)
Net tonnage:	10,164 (originally 9,916)
Propulsion:	Diesel engines
Maximum shaft horsepower:	18,000 bhp
Normal shaft horsepower:	17,000 bhp
Service speed:	18 knots
Cruising radius:	6,000 nautical miles at 17.5 knots
Crew:	27 ¹⁹

Cape Lobos has a welded steel hull with three decks, a sharply raking stem with a bulbous bow, and a flat stern. The hull is subdivided by seven bulkheads (six extending to the Second Deck plus a collision bulkhead forward extending to the Upper Deck) into four holds, an aft machinery compartment, and fore and after peaks. A single deck house aft contains crew accommodations and ship's navigation spaces on five decks. The accommodations are fully air conditioned, and each stateroom is fitted with private toilet and shower. The compartments in the deck house are disposed as follows:

- Navigating Bridge Deck: wheelhouse, chartroom;
- Bridge Deck: sea cabin, four cadets' staterooms, master's stateroom, chief engineer's stateroom, radio officer's stateroom;
- Boat Deck: staterooms for other officers;
- Poop Deck: Officers' mess, crew mess, galley, hospital, additional staterooms, officers' laundry;

¹⁹ Crowley Liner Services, *M/V Cape Lobos Activation Specifications*, March 2002, 6, https://voa.marad.dot.gov/docs/Library/ship_manager/docs/Group 02/Cape L Activation Specification.pdf; Norman Polmar, *The Naval Institute Guide to the Ships and Aircraft of the U.S. Fleet*, 18th ed. (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2005), 315; *American Bureau of Shipping Record*, various years.

- Upper Deck: recreation room, crew cabins, crew laundry.²⁰

The machinery compartment is located aft. Because of the location of the aft cargo ramp, the engine room has unusually low headroom. It contains two Pielstick 18 PC 2V direct-reversing diesel engines made by Crossley Premier Engines, Ltd. Maximum output of each engine is 9,000 bhp, while normal output is 8,500 bhp at 520 rpm. The engines drive two four-bladed, controllable-pitch propellers of 17'-4" diameter at 110 rpm via single-helical reduction gears specially designed and manufactured by the Philadelphia Gear Corporation to provide Lloyd's Ice Class 1 horsepower capacity within the engine room's confined space. The Wichita Marine clutches that connect the gearboxes to the propeller shafts are specially fitted to withstand propeller shock loading in case of contact with ice. The engine room is fully automated.²¹

The ship has a 1,000-bhp bow thruster. The steering gear is of rotary-vane type and was made by A/S Frydenbo, Bergen, Norway.

The ship is fitted with a special ballasting system to allow the ship to engage in ro-ro cargo operations in the extreme tidal changes encountered at certain Canadian ports. The system can handle up to 2,400 tons of water per hour when making adjustments to the ship's draft. The ship also has tank-type stabilizers.²²

Ship's electrical service is provided by three 845 kW diesel generators powered by Caterpillar engines. A Perkins Diesel generator provides emergency electrical supply.²³

Roll-on, roll-off cargo loading is accomplished through two shell doors located forward and aft on the ship's starboard side. Thirty-ton-capacity vehicle ramps serve each cargo door and can adjust to differences in dock height of up to 24'. The ship contains 189,937 square feet of vehicle space in four holds. Moveable decks in addition to the fixed decks provide seven levels of vehicle stowage, connected by internal ramps. Internal elevators of 23 ton capacity transfer cargo between the 'tween decks and the lower holds. The cargo holds are thoroughly ventilated. Cargo can also be secured on the Main Deck and on a portion of the forecastle. A ramp connects the forecastle to the Main Deck. The shell doors, vehicle ramps, car decks, and cargo lifts were designed and furnished by Cargospeed Ltd. of Glasgow, Scotland.²⁴

The ship carries two lifeboats and three Viking inflatable life rafts. The port boat is rated for 36 passengers, the starboard boat for 39. The life rafts are variously rated for 6, 16, and 20 persons.²⁵

²⁰ Crowley Liner Services, *M/V Cape Lobos Activation Specifications*, 6, 49–54.

²¹ Philadelphia Gear advertisement, *Marine Engineering / Log* (January 1973), 23; Wichita Clutches advertisement, *Marine Reporter and Engineering News*, November 15, 1973, 47; "The MV Avon Forest," 49; Crowley Liner Services, *M/V Cape Lobos Activation Specifications*, 6, 43–44.

²² "The MV Avon Forest," 46, 49.

²³ Crowley Liner Services, *M/V Cape Lobos Activation Specifications*, 44, 62.

²⁴ "The MV Avon Forest," 46; Polmar, *Naval Institute Guide*, 315.

²⁵ Crowley Liner Services, *M/V Cape Lobos Activation Specifications*, 61–62.

Statement of Significance

The activation of *Cape Lobos* during the build-up for Operations *Desert Shield/Desert Storm* was the RRF's first large-scale activation since its creation in 1976. *Cape Lobos* delivered cargoes of military supplies and ammunition without incident and provided desperately needed services in a time of national need. It was activated during *Desert Sortie* in 1990–92 and during the 1994 U.S. intervention in Haiti. It was also briefly activated for Operation *Enduring Freedom* in 2003. Subsequent crises involving MARAD's role of assisting the military during national emergencies have generally utilized more efficient ship types more in keeping with modern logistics operations.

Historical Integrity

The overall condition of the *Cape Lambert* is good; it has experienced only normal wear and aging for a vessel of its age, and routine upgrades to navigation and communications systems. The hull, machinery, passenger and crew accommodations are largely intact.

National Register Eligibility Statement

Cape Lobos is not 50-years-old and does not possess the extraordinary historical significance in any category necessary to be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. While it did participate in Operations *Desert Shield/Desert Storm*, it was one of 78 RRF vessels activated by the U.S. Navy to support those operations and its role was not significant enough to qualify under Criteria A, particularly considering the recent nature of those operations.

Date: 26 September 2014

Determination: NOT ELIGIBLE

SOURCES

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M/V *Cape Lobos*. Maritime Administration photograph, date unknown.



M/V *Federal Seaway* ex-*Laurentian Forest* upbound in the Welland Canal at Thorold, Ontario, November 2, 1986. Photograph by frtfred@comcast.net.



M/V *Cape Lobos*, starboard quarter view showing after shell cargo door open and vehicle ramp extended. Maritime Administration photograph, date unknown.