

DDCT Supports Bottlenose Dolphin Airlift

By Danny Kolb, DDCT Public Affairs

Over the years, the Defense Distribution Depot Corpus Christi, Texas (DDCT) has participated in hundreds of airlifts in support of military missions worldwide. While the DDCT crews routinely off-load and on-load helicopters and large aircraft components coming to and from maintenance programs at the Corpus Christi Army Depot (CCAD), they have also met unusual challenges such as NASA engines.

Just such a challenge—maybe the most unusual challenge ever—came this summer with a request from the Space and Naval Warfare Systems Center San Diego (SSC San Diego), located in San Diego, California.

SSC San Diego requested DDCT support for the airlift of four Bottlenose Dolphins to and from Naval Station Ingleside (NSI) for a warm water physiology study.

The Bottlenose Dolphins, traveling in specially designed transport containers, along with two aircraft pallets of support equipment arrived at NAS Corpus Christi on Sunday, August 18, aboard an Air Mobility Command C-130 aircraft.

The dolphins and their containers, weighing approximately 2,600 pounds each, required the use of the k-loader. They

were moved safely from the aircraft and loaded on a rental van for the one-hour trip to NSI.

On Tuesday, September 3, they were returned from NSI and on-loaded to a C-130 aircraft for the trip back to California. The dolphins were in good health and were completely undisturbed by their trip.

The Navy maintains a Marine Mammal Program to provide special capabilities of dolphins, sea lions and whales to support operational requirements, particularly in the areas of underwater surveillance for objection detection, location, marking and recovery.

The Navy currently has five operational systems: one employing California sea lions to recover objects of interest from the sea floor, one employing Bottlenose Dolphins in a “guard dog” role to provide swimmer defense against attacks on piers and ships at anchor by swimmers and divers, and three systems employing Bottlenose Dolphins to find and mark mines on the sea floor, tethered in the water column, or buried in the bottom in very shallow water.

DDCT is one of 22 distribution centers located around the world and is part of the Defense Distribution Center (DDC), which is the lead center for distribution for DLA.

Navy and DDCT personnel work quickly to move the Bottlenose Dolphins from plane to truck and back.

Photos by Mary Jane Geckle, DDCT.

