



Dear family, friends & supporters,



When we last left you, we were in Texas preparing to travel to the *Global Mercy*. That journey passed off uneventfully and we arrived excited, if exhausted, at the ship on a warm Sunday afternoon at the end of July. She was berthed in Santa Cruz de Tenerife, in the Canary Islands, coming to the end of a six week annual maintenance period (basically getting a service and MOT).

The previous Chief Officer had already left the ship so for Ian there was no time for a gentle familiarisation - it was straight to work as maintenance projects were finished and the ship made ready for the voyage back to West Africa.

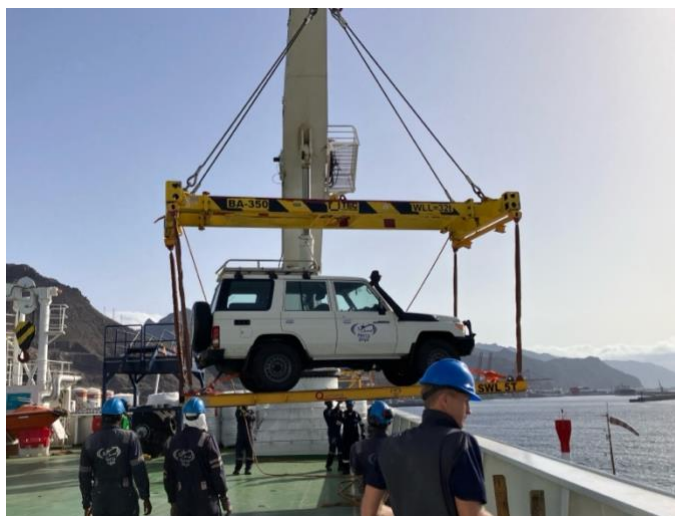
The family cabins are generous (by ship standards, at any rate) 6 person suites with a living area, double master bedroom and two bunk bed rooms, see a video tour here...

https://youtu.be/x3pt5l9mFso?si=cfVHDxqOPO0x_Vqd

The first 10 days onboard were a busy time – meeting new ship mates, figuring out how the daily routine works, overcoming jet lag and heading ashore to stock up on essentials. Tenerife boasts, amongst other attractions, a branch of Ikea – which gave a chance to equip the cabin for the year ahead.

As departure day approached, the ship began loading the stores, provisions and equipment needed for the 10 months of mission work ahead. That includes a fleet of 28 vehicles including ambulances and 4x4's which transport patients to the ship and allow the crew to do outreach work.

Prior to leaving there was chance for one final stroll ashore for dinner in Santa Cruz while the *Global Mercy* took onboard the 1.4 million litres of diesel needed to get ship to Sierra Leone and power the generators for the whole field service.



We left Tenerife at lunchtime on Thurs 8th August and headed south. The voyage to Freetown, Sierra Leone covered 1700 nautical miles and, to conserve fuel, was undertaken at a leisurely 10 knots. With a following sea and a warm breeze, the ship rolled gently but comfortably as we headed south into the tropics.

The days at sea were filled with a mixture of activities – cooking in the crew galley, lego (lots of lego), burning off energy on the play area on deck 11, movie nights with new friends and Sunday church service on the open deck. There were also quiet moments watching for wildlife in the ocean and some more unusual activities, including sock golf (throwing a rolled up pair of socks around a course inside the ship).



The penultimate day of the voyage, Tuesday 13th August, marked the first day of the school term. After much anticipation, once the day arrived both children were nervously excited to be starting their new school. This was a particularly significant moment for Piran as he had his first day of school on a ship at sea in the Atlantic Ocean.



The children being in school allowed Elizma to answer a call for volunteers from various departments, working shifts in both the dining room and housekeeping.



On 15th August the Global Mercy arrived off Freetown to heavy skies and thundery showers. It's the rainy season in this part of the world and the arrival into port, a much heralded occasion with great fanfare both on the ship and shore – took place in driving rain and howling winds. For those readers of a nautical persuasion, the Pilot launch probably isn't one to be heading to the Nab in on a dark night.



Once berthed, the gangways were rigged and preparations for the 2024/25 field service commenced - we'll share more in the next episode.

As ever, thank you again for your love, support & prayers.

Ian, Elizma, Abigail & Piran