

MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)



"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"
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USTRANSCOM COMMANDER CONCERNS ON SEALIFT

Sealift is a top readiness concern for the U.S. Transportation Command, TRANSCOM Gen. Jacqueline Van Ovost told the Senate Armed Services Committee recently. She called sealift the "backbone" of the force but noted that the age of the fleet "is dragging readiness to alarming levels." 17 of the 47 Ready Reserve Force ships are at least 50 years old.

The Command will need to address the readiness concerns that come up due to the planned retirement of 27 ships in the next eight years. "We must add younger ships to the fleet," she said. "USTRANSCOM supports the Navy strategy to acquire used vessels from the commercial market and further requests to provide the secretary of defense [with] discretionary authority to purchase foreign built, used ships under favorable market conditions without restrictions."

She also noted the Congress has the intention to build sealift ships domestically to recapitalize the RRF. TRANSCOM is working with the Navy and Maritime Administration "to create an acquisition strategy for new construction that will complement the 'buy used' program," she said.

She noted that maritime stakeholders "have been experiencing challenges with recruiting and retaining qualified mariners, and we support MarAd and industry efforts to identify strategies that address the mariner shortage and ensure their readiness."

USTRANSCOM is already dealing with the Iranian-backed Houthis seeking to close the sea line of communication in the Red Sea. TRANSCOM also deals with Chinese efforts to restrict peaceful passage in the South China Sea and East China Sea and must defend against cyberattacks.

"The fiscal year 2025 budget request continues to make strides in closing gaps in our mobility areas as we prepare for global operations in a contested environment," Gen. Van Ovost said. "A contested environment is the reality of today, whether in the homeland or abroad, we cannot presume freedom of maneuver to execute our operations with full access to our lines of communication. Our organic fleets, coupled with the vital capacity provided by our commercial transportation partners, must continue to present credible capacity, meaning we must modernize our mobility capabilities to include cyber resiliency and digital modernization."

BALTIMORE COUNTERS DALI OWNER'S ATTEMPT TO LIMIT LIABILITY

The City of Baltimore has lodged a claim in U.S. District Court against the owner and manager of the ill-fated DALI, the ship that destroyed the Francis Scott Key Bridge. Challenging the limitation of liability petition put forth by Grace Ocean Private Ltd. and Synergy Management, (which limits their responsibility to \$43.6 million), the City asserts that the collision with the Key Bridge was not merely an unfortunate accident, but rather the direct result of the owner and manager's alleged "carelessness, negligence, gross negligence, and recklessness, and as a result of the unseaworthiness of the vessel."

The City alleges that the owner and manager put the foreign crew in an untenable situation by failing to properly ensure proper training, policies, procedures and equipment aboard the vessel which would have allowed allowing for its safe operation. The filing notes, "None of this should have happened. Reporting has indicated that, even before leaving port, alarms showing an inconsistent power supply on the DALI had sounded. The DALI left port anyway, despite its clearly unseaworthy condition."

Investigators from the National Transportation Safety Board and the U.S. Coast Guard continue to investigate the incident. Meanwhile, the FBI has initiated a criminal investigation into the circumstances surrounding the accident. It may be a considerable length of time before these investigative bodies unveil their findings to the public.

PROGRESS ON RESTORING BALTIMORE CHANNEL

With the removal of a 560-ton section of structural steel this week, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) has cleared enough wreckage from a 35-foot-deep Limited Access Channel to make it functional. That channel had been blocked since the March 26 collapse of Baltimore's Francis Scott Key Bridge.

The newly excavated 35-foot depth marks a significant advancement compared to the three temporary channels established recently. Officials announced that five out of the seven cargo ships stranded in Baltimore's harbor can navigate through this new channel, including a fully loaded car carrier. Additionally, plans are in place for other vessels to enter the port, which typically handles a high volume of automobiles and agricultural machinery. The primary channel, boasting a depth of 50 feet, is slated to reopen next month once additional hazards are removed, effectively reinstating normal marine traffic flow.

M.E.B.A.-CREWED VESSEL AIDS OVERCROWDED BOAT OF MIGRANTS

The crew of the M.E.B.A.-contracted MAERSK KINLOSS came to the aid of a packed 20-foot rigid inflatable boat of migrants about 100 miles off the coast of Morocco last Friday, April 19. Responding swiftly to a distress call from the Las Palmas Marine Rescue Coordination Center originally relayed from a fishing trawler, the MAERSK KINLOSS sprang into action at 5:30 a.m. local time. The vessel crew discovered the craft with about 58 distressed migrants including several mothers with children. The crew of the KINLOSS immediately provided essential aid, including food, water, and blankets, to the individuals who claimed they had been drifting for several days, though the vessel still had fuel. As several of the migrants were quite raucous, the Maersk vessel crew declined to bring the migrants onboard but remained by their side for nearly seven hours until the arrival of a Moroccan search and rescue vessel. The KINLOSS helped oversee the migrants' successful transfer to the rescue boat and the distressed vessel was left adrift.

Maersk Line, Ltd. spokesperson Kevin Doell applauded the “exceptional seamanship and unwavering duty of care demonstrated by the American officers and crew of the MAERSK KINLOSS during their timely assistance.”

M.E.B.A. officers onboard the KINLOSS included C/E Michael Rugarber, 1st A/E Joe Jacovino, 2nd A/E Ron Forte and 3rd A/E Andrew Pellechia.

SPACE AVAILABLE IN UPCOMING SMALL ARMS COURSE

The Calhoun M.E.B.A. Engineering School has announced that there is still room for those who wish to join the May 6-9 Small Arms course. Those interested should take advantage now. Applications can be sent via the CMES website (www.mebaschool.org) or emailed to applications@mebaschool.org

NEW RULE EXTENDS OVERTIME PAY TO MILLIONS

The Department of Labor has finalized a rule that expands overtime protections for millions of the nation’s lower-paid salaried workers. The rule increases salary thresholds required to exempt a salaried bona fide executive, administrative or professional employee from federal overtime pay requirements.

Effective July 1, 2024, the salary threshold will increase to the equivalent of an annual salary of \$43,888 and increase to \$58,656 on Jan. 1, 2025. The July 1 increase updates the present annual salary threshold of \$35,568 based on the methodology used by the prior administration in the 2019 overtime rule update. On Jan. 1, 2025, the rule’s new methodology takes effect, resulting in the additional increase. In addition, the rule will adjust the threshold for highly compensated employees. Starting July 1, 2027, salary thresholds will update every three years, by applying up-to-date wage data to determine new salary levels.

Acting Labor Secretary Julie Su said, “This rule will restore the promise to workers that if you work more than 40 hours in a week, you should be paid more for that time. Too often, lower-paid salaried workers are doing the same job as their hourly counterparts but are spending more time away from their families for no additional pay. That is unacceptable.”

AFL-CIO REPORT ILLUSTRATES HIGH COST OF UNSAFE JOBS

Ahead of Workers Memorial Day on Sunday (April 28), the AFL-CIO issued its annual “Death on the Job: The Toll of Neglect” report cataloging the enormous cost of job injuries and illness on our society.

The report is based on Department of Labor injury and fatality data – for which 2022 is the latest available year. The report says that 344 workers died each day from hazardous working conditions in that year with 5,486 workers killed on the job in the U.S. An estimated 120,000 workers died from occupational diseases and the job fatality rate increased again to 3.7 per 100,000 workers. Employers reported nearly 3.5 million work-related injuries and illnesses, an increase from the previous year. Among the report’s startling data are the disproportionate rates of Latino and Black workers at risk of dying on the job. Black workers are facing the highest job fatality rates in nearly 15 years and Latino workers continue to face the greatest risk of dying on the job, compared to all other workers.

“Despite workers’ hard-won safety and health rights, this report shows the fight is far from over,” said AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler. “Too many workers face retaliation for reporting unsafe working conditions or injuries, while low penalties fail to deter employers from following the law. As we honor those who have fallen this Workers Memorial Day, we remain committed to holding corporations accountable so that all jobs are safe jobs — where every worker can return home safely at the end of the day.”

NAVIGATING THE FUTURE: CMES PROGRAM READIES CADETS FOR SHIPPING CAREER

This summer, the Calhoun M.E.B.A. Engineering School (CMES) is getting ready to welcome up to 80 aspiring mariners for its highly sought-after Licensed Cadet Internship program. Scheduled from July 8 to July 26, this annual program is a beacon for bright maritime academy cadets nationwide, offering them a valuable head start in their shipping careers within a professional and engaging learning environment.

During the three-week session, maritime academy cadets can immerse themselves in a wealth of knowledge and essential skills without committing to the Union. However, by participating, they gain insights into the excellent career opportunities available through the M.E.B.A.

The summer curriculum, currently being finalized by program leaders, promises an array of training courses tailored to equip cadets with vital industry expertise. Among the anticipated offerings are courses covering LNG as a Fuel, the MSC CONMAR package, High Voltage Safety, as well as condensed versions of Diesel Engineering, Welding, and Machine Shop. CMES encourages members to direct interested cadets in their Junior or Senior year, as well as recent graduates, to reach out and seize the opportunity by contacting the School directly.

As the maritime industry evolves, the M.E.B.A. remains dedicated to nurturing the next generation of maritime professionals, empowering them to navigate the complexities of the sea with confidence and skill.

MEMBERS URGED TO STAY CURRENT

Members are strongly urged to ensure their dues status is secured through the end of the year to guarantee their participation in important Union business. Only members in good standing are permitted a voice at the monthly membership meetings. The By-Laws state that no member shall be entitled to any benefits of the Union or be considered in good standing unless his or her dues are paid in full for the current calendar quarter or paid in accordance with the dues check-off (DCO) system. In addition, when members who pay by DCO take vacation or (in the case of the Government fleet) Leave without Pay (LWOP), there are lapses in payroll where dues aren’t automatically submitted.

M.E.B.A.’s online Member Payment and Update Portal (PUP) allows the membership the ease of making online monetary transactions and gives them the opportunity to verify their credentials and contact information on file, as well as submitted sea time. Members and applicants can use the Member PUP to pay their dues or service charges by credit card, debit card or through their checking account. They can also set up a recurring payment schedule to automatically keep them current. The site also allows users to view their transaction history online in a secure manner.

Visit www.mebaunion.org where you can click on the Member PUP banner to get started. In addition, the PUP allows members, applicants and retirees to make contributions to the M.E.B.A.'s Good & Welfare and Political Action Funds that support so many members. Contributions to the Good & Welfare Fund are tax deductible. This fund has provided essential assistance to members and retirees in their time of need. The PAF keeps M.E.B.A. jobs afloat by affording us a crucial lifeline to policymakers who help determine the fate of the U.S. Merchant Marine.

You'll find the online Portal to be the most efficient and advantageous manner to remain in good standing and extend a needed monetary infusion to vital Union programs.

MEMBERS NEED TO ENSURE CONTACT INFO IS ON FILE WITH HQ

The membership should make sure that M.E.B.A. Headquarters has your contact information on file including mailing and email address. If you haven't filled out an M.E.B.A. Database Update Form – or if your information has changed – grab the form off the M.E.B.A. website (www.mebaunion.org) located in the “Documents & Member Notices” section. Update Forms should be sent to the HQ Membership Dept. by e-mail membership@mebaunion.org or even regular mail.

The HQ database is NOT LINKED to the databases at the M.E.B.A. Plans office in Baltimore OR the Calhoun M.E.B.A. Engineering School. To update your information with Plans, you can find the “M.E.B.A. Address Change Form” on the Plans website (www.mebaplans.org) under “Forms, Documents & Notices” then “Medical Plan Forms.”

NEXT MONTHLY MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS *(All times are local)*

Monday, May 6 – **Boston@1200; Seattle (Fife)@1300.**

Tuesday, May 7 – **CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230.**

Wednesday, May 8 – **Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315; Online HQ “Town Hall” Meeting@1300 (No Voting) – Register by emailing mebahq@mebaunion.org**

Thursday, May 9 – **L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300.**

Friday, May 10 – **Honolulu@1100**

-----FINISHED WITH ENGINES-----



***M.E.B.A. does not tolerate assault, or harassment of any kind.
If you see something, say something – The M.E.B.A. Emergency Hotline
can be reached at 1-888-519-0018.***

The M.E.B.A. is the nation's oldest maritime labor union, established in 1875. M.E.B.A.'s expertise and demonstrated track record of readiness, safety, and loyalty in answering America's call to action in times of both peace and war is unrivaled in the world. M.E.B.A. HQ – Phone: (202) 638-5355; mebahq@mebaunion.org. For publication and related inquiries (and to send photos & hot news tips) contact Marco Cannistraro, M.E.B.A. Special Projects & Communications – marco@mebaunion.org Visit us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter and check us out on Instagram.