

# MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)



*"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"*

## M.E.B.A. TELEX TIMES

*The Official Union Newsletter – "The Word to the Wise"*

Number 27 – July 6, 2023



*In this issue//Navy Prevents Tanker Seizures//Reopener Talks with OSG//Cadet Internship Program Kicking Off//MTD Warns about Danger of Chinese Technology on Shipping//Unions Power America Contest & Sweepstakes//Ship Safety Awards//Webinar on Criminalization Issues//*

### **NAVY PREVENTS POSSIBLE TANKER SEIZURES BY IRANIAN NAVY**

On Wednesday, U.S. forces prevented two attempted commercial tanker seizures in international waters near the coast of Oman by the Iranian Navy, with one incident involving gunfire.

At 1 a.m. local time, an Iranian naval vessel began closing in on the Marshall Islands-flagged oil tanker TRF MOSS. But the quick response of the U.S. Navy guided-missile destroyer USS McFAUL along with maritime patrol aircraft helped dissuade the Iranian vessel's approach and it quickly fled the scene.

Approximately three hours later, the U.S. Navy received a distress call from Bahamian-flagged oil tanker RICHMOND VOYAGER while the ship was more than 20 miles off the coast of Muscat, Oman, and transiting international waters toward the Arabian Sea. Another Iranian naval vessel had closed within one mile of the tanker while hailing the commercial tanker to stop.

McFAUL directed course toward the scene at maximum speed as the merchant tanker continued its transit. Prior to McFAUL's arrival on scene, Iranian personnel fired multiple, long bursts from both small arms and crew-served weapons. RICHMOND VOYAGER sustained no casualties or significant damage, however, several rounds hit the ship's hull near crew living spaces. The Iranian navy vessel departed when McFAUL arrived.

In May, the United States increased the rotation of ships and aircraft patrolling the Strait of Hormuz with partners following an uptick in Iranian merchant vessel seizures. Since 2021, Iran has harassed, attacked or seized nearly 20 internationally flagged merchant vessels, presenting a clear threat to regional maritime security and the global economy.

### **REOPENER TALKS WITH OSG**

M.E.B.A. negotiators, including rank and file, have begun reopener talks with Overseas Ship Management (OSG) for new economic terms. The contract covers 13 vessels in the OSG U.S.-flag fleet. Our agreement with the company runs until June 15, 2026.

Reopener talks are led by Gulf Coast V.P. Adam Smith and include Tampa Branch Agent Nicole Greenway and Headquarters Contracts Rep. Mark S. Gallagher. Rank and file member Vinny

Quinones took part in the first round of talks which were held in Houston on June 27-29. The next round of talks takes place in Tampa scheduled from July 25-27.

### **THREE-WEEK M.E.B.A. CADET INTERNSHIP PROGRAM STARTS NEXT WEEK**

About 40 Cadets from maritime academies across the country will take part in the Union's Licensed Cadet Internship program running from July 10-28 at the Calhoon M.E.B.A. Engineering School. The program helps mold the next generation of mariners and eases their way toward a shipping career with the Union, if they so choose.

Among other things during their three weeks, program participants will take advantage of a series of training courses including Welding, Diesel, High Voltage Safety, Electrical Systems, and MSC CONMAR that will help prepare these next-generation mariners.

Cadet Internship promotional tri-folds have been mailed out to the academies and the M.E.B.A. Union halls. Cadets can take part in the program without making a commitment to the Union, but while they attend, they will learn more about the excellent career opportunities that the M.E.B.A. presents.

### **MTD, OTHERS WARN THAT CHINESE TECHNOLOGY COULD DISRUPT SHIPPING**

The Maritime Trades Department (AFL-CIO) sounded off this week about concerns that a state-owned Chinese logistics platform as well as the country's control of software that could be used to affect crane operations could create mayhem if utilized for malicious purposes.

MTD cited a recent report issued by the non-partisan thinktank The Baker Institute that surmised that China's command of the data management system LOGINK that helps them access global shipping data puts them on the precipice of "creating a new and highly valuable asymmetric dependency that it could exploit for strategic gain." According to the Baker Institute, LOGINK has the ability to collect and funnel global transportation and logistics information. The report notes that, "LOGINK offers Beijing a means to monitor and shape the international logistics market, increase foreign strategic dependency on China, and exploit the vulnerabilities of LOGINK users for economic and geostrategic purposes."

MTD pointed out that another risk stems from China's dominance in building and supplying cranes used to load and offload cargo. They said, "The software used to run these cranes can be remotely accessed and, as Chinese companies must follow the orders of the Chinese Communist Party, could be used to disable these cranes, thus stopping any loading or offloading." They note that this scenario has actually occurred at several foreign ports in 2019, as reported by *Forbes* and two years ago in Houston, as reported by *CNN*. MTD notes that Chinese-built cranes operate in the U.S. ports of Los Angeles, Long Beach, Oakland, Seattle, Charleston, Baltimore, Boston and Norfolk.

Certain Members of Congress harbor suspicions that China could use its technology for nefarious purposes. Congressman Dusty Johnson (R-SD) has included an amendment to prohibit LOGINK from U.S. ports as part of the 2024 National Defense Authorization Act.

MTD President Dave Heindel noted that, "For U.S. mariners, being tracked by a foreign country brings visions of the First and Second World Wars when German U-Boats indiscriminately sunk our

vessels. These logistics systems could allow for precise targets. Congress must act appropriately and swiftly to address this potential threat.”

### **UNIONS POWER AMERICA – CONTEST & SWEEPSTAKES STARTS TODAY**

Union Plus has launched its third annual “Unions Power America” contest and sweepstakes in which they will be awarding over \$236,000 in prizes to union members through August 17<sup>th</sup>. Grand prize winners will receive as much as \$40,000. You can enter at [unionplus.org/laborday](http://unionplus.org/laborday)

The Contest runs from July 6–26. To enter, submit a story about how you or a union member you admire powers America. Union Plus is awarding \$140,000 total in cash prizes.

The Sweepstakes runs from July 27 to August 17. It only takes a moment to enter, but if you complete quick online activities, you’ll earn additional entries. They’re awarding \$80,000 total in cash prizes. Winners will be announced on Labor Day - September 4.

Union Plus programs, which are available to M.E.B.A. members, applicants, retirees and our affiliates, provide a vast range of money-saving benefits and services. The M.E.B.A. is enrolled in dozens of moneysaving U.P. programs ranging from life insurance to auto services discounts.

Visit [unionplus.org/laborday](http://unionplus.org/laborday) to access the entry form and for more details.

### **MARINERS, SHIPPING COMPANIES HONORED AT SAFETY AWARDS**

The industry publicly recognized merchant mariners responsible for safe ship operations at the Annual Safety Awards Luncheon held late last month in New Orleans. 1242 vessels with 8224 cumulative years of accident-free operation were honored including many M.E.B.A.-contracted vessels. OSG, Keystone and Pasha-Hawaii were among the companies honored for their exceptional safety records.

Since 1958, the Chamber of Shipping of America (CSA) has sponsored the Safety Achievement Award program which recognizes outstanding feats of safety that contribute to saving a life, a ship or other property.

In addition, a Citation of Merit was presented to the OSG vessel OVERSEAS LONG BEACH for the rescue of twelve Cuban migrants who were at sea for twelve days with little food or fresh water. Crew members acted as translators and caretakers providing medical aid, food, supplies and compassion for several days until the survivors disembarked off Key West;

CSA President Kathy Metcalf said, “CSA’s members are committed to safe operations and CSA’s involvement in safety is longstanding with our ongoing commitment to represent the industry, domestically and internationally, on safety issues encompassing every facet of ship operations. It is only fitting that an industry so focused on safety, publicly recognizes the skills and dedication of the women and men who have enabled these many years of safe operations and who are responsible for actions in keeping with the highest traditions of the sea – aid to those in peril.”

## **“CAUGHT BETWEEN THE DEVIL & THE DEEP BLUE SEA” – WEBINAR EXPLORES CRIMINALIZATION ISSUES**

The critical position that global seafarers find themselves in when balancing maritime operations with marine protection was emphasized in a webinar presentation last week as part of the Maritime Authority of Jamaica’s “Day of the Seafarer” events.

“Seafarers are basically ‘caught between the devil and the deep blue sea’,” said Dr Carolyn Graham, a senior lecturer at the Caribbean Maritime University demonstrating in detail how seafarers can be unfairly criminalized for the actions in the event of an environmental incident even when marine investigators confirm they have correctly followed international maritime procedures. Seafarers are expected to be the custodians of regulations but are not always properly supported in their role, she explained.

Pointing to a 2019 survey by Nautilus International, which found criminalization to be one of the greatest fears of seafarers, Dr Graham said seafarers can be seen as “easy targets” when countries demand for “heads to roll”. She urged seafarers to “know your rights”, know where to find help, and to ensure they work for “reputable companies.”

“Seafarers play a critical role as the guardians of our oceans,” noted Jamaican trade and development specialist Patricia Francis.

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

Friday, July 7 – **Honolulu@1100.**

Monday, August 7 – **Boston@1200; Seattle (Fife)@1300.**

Tuesday, August 8 – **CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230;**

Wednesday, August 9 – **Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315; Online HQ “Town Hall” Meeting@1300 (No Voting) – Register by emailing mebahq@mebaunion.org**

Thursday, August 10 – **L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300.**

Friday, August 11 – **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](mailto: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](mailto:marco@mebaunion.org) Visit us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter and check us out on Instagram.*