

# MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)

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



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

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### **TALKS WITH LIBERTY MARITIME**

The Union met with Liberty Maritime on Wednesday June 12 in New York City to continue negotiations on a new agreement for four Pure Car/Truck Carriers (PC/TCs). Our current agreement with the company runs until June 15, 2019 and covers the LIBERTY PRIDE, LIBERTY PROMISE, LIBERTY PASSION and LIBERTY PEACE.

The parties tentatively agreed to a subsequent meeting at M.E.B.A. Headquarters on Monday, June 17.

The M.E.B.A. negotiating team is led by Atlantic Coast V.P. Jason Callahan and included President Marshall Ainley, Secretary-Treasurer Bill Van Loo Contracts Rep. Mark Gallagher and M.E.B.A. in-house counsel Nils Djusberg. Rank and file members Craig LaChance (C/E on the LIBERTY PROMISE) and Mark Bostick (Captain on the LIBERTY PRIDE) supplemented the M.E.B.A. team.

### **TWO MORE TANKER ATTACKS NEAR OMAN/IRAN**

Officials are investigating two more vessel attacks off the coast of Oman near the Strait of Hormuz after crews on a pair of tankers battled shipboard fires caused by "some sort of shell." The KOKUKA COURAGEOUS, a Japanese-owned Panamanian-flagged chemical tanker carrying methanol, was reportedly attacked twice, three hours apart. The first strike was said to have occurred on the starboard side of the vessel causing an engine room fire that the crew was able to extinguish. The second attack prompted the evacuation of the crew. The U.S. guided missile destroyer USS BAINBRIDGE received a pair of distress calls and was deployed to the area to render assistance.

Reports indicate that all 21 crewmembers are safe, though one may be injured. State-run Iran news said that the Iranian Navy "rescued" the crew. However, later reports revealed that a tug had actually come to the rescue and transferred the crew to the BAINBRIDGE. The stricken ship's cargo was not compromised and the vessel is no danger of sinking. Though no link was immediately established, the attack of the Japanese-owned tanker took place as Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was engaged in meetings with Iran and its Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Another incident in the vicinity on Thursday morning that took place within 45 minutes of the first attack, rocked the Bermuda-based Norwegian-owned Marshall Islands-flagged FRONT ALTAIR, an oil tanker carrying naphtha. The vessel's 23 person crew escaped the ship following a reported

explosion. Photos later in the day showed the ship still aflame. Iran again took credit for “rescuing” the crew but it appears that a South Korean vessel initially brought them aboard before transferring the crew to an Iranian naval vessel. Though the incidents are still being investigated, U.S. authorities announced that an unexploded mine had been located on one of the vessels and alleged Iranian involvement. News media reported that senior officials are considering whether military escorts should be assigned to merchant ships transiting those waters.

Today’s incident follows four attacks that occurred last month when Saudi oil tankers AL-MARZOQAH and AMJAD sustained structural damage in early morning explosions on May 12<sup>th</sup>. Norwegian tanker ANDREA VICTORY and the UAE-flagged bunkering barge A MICHEL were also apparently struck by some type of weapon on that day. There were no crew casualties in those incidents and no oil spillage was reported. U.S. officials accused Iran of carrying out those attacks as well. An Iranian spokesperson dismissed the accusations as “ridiculous.”

The Strait of Hormuz, located between Iran and the UAE/Oman, separates the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman. 30% of global waterborne crude is carried through that strategically important chokepoint.

### **CG EASES RADAR RECERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS**

The Coast Guard has revised its merchant mariner credentialing regulations to remove obsolete portions of radar observer requirements and harmonize the radar observer endorsement with the merchant mariner credential. The revisions will reduce an unnecessary financial burden on mariners who are required to hold a radar observer endorsement. It affects mariners who have served on radar-equipped vessels, in a position that routinely uses radar for 1 year in the previous 5 years for navigation and collision avoidance purposes, as well as instructors who have taught a Coast Guard-approved or accepted radar course at least twice within the past 5 years. Such mariners will no longer be required to complete a Coast Guard-approved or accepted radar refresher or recertification course in order to renew their radar observer endorsements.

Existing requirements for mariners seeking an original radar observer endorsement will not change. The requirements also remain the same for mariners who do not have 1 year of routine relevant sea service on board radar-equipped vessels in the previous 5 years or have not taught a Coast Guard-approved or accepted radar course at least twice within the past 5 years. The rule is effective on July 22, 2019. For further information please contact the Coast Guard’s Davis Breyer at (202) 372–1445, or email him at [davis.j.breyer@uscg.mil](mailto:davis.j.breyer@uscg.mil).

### **LURLINE SET FOR CHRISTENING & LAUNCH**

This weekend, Matson Navigation will welcome the first of two Kanaloa-class combination container and roll-on/roll-off (Con-Ro) vessels being built at San Diego’s NASSCO shipyard. A Christening and Launch ceremony will take place on Saturday for the new LURLINE at the yard.

NASSCO is working on a second Con-Ro that will be named MATSONIA and join the Matson fleet in the second quarter of 2020. Both ships will transport containers, automobiles and rolling stock between the West Coast of the United States and Hawaii.

### **ITF HELPS REPATRIATE STRANDED MARINERS**

After being left adrift, abandoned off the Tunisian coast without wages, food and fuel, 12 seafarers on board the QAASWA have been sent home after 13 months marooned off the Port of Sfax,

southeast of Tunis. ITF said the UAE-flagged crew was abandoned by Alco Shipping Services, a serial offender as described by the Federation. The crew of 12 from India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Myanmar flew home on May 31<sup>st</sup> each with thousands of dollars in unpaid wages for the eight months that they were owed.

“Alco Shipping Services’ practices have no place in a modern maritime industry. No seafarer should have to go through the experience that the crews aboard the QAASWA have endured,” ITF Inspector Mohamed Arrachedi said. “We vow to remain vigilant, to remain alert to cases like this. The abandonment of seafarers is a cancer on the maritime industry that all actors in the industry must work together to eradicate.”

The ITF helps battle against substandard shipping and looks to raise the wages and conditions of mariners worldwide. M.E.B.A. is part of the ITF which represents 18.5 million workers around the globe.

### **MSC HOSPITAL SHIP POISED FOR FIVE-MONTH SOUTHERN RELIEF MISSION**

The Military Sealift Command hospital ship USNS COMFORT is set to depart Norfolk tomorrow morning on a five-month deployment in which they will provide medical assistance to our southern neighbors. Venezuela, in the throes of a political and economic crisis, will be one of the higher profiles stops. The vessel will also make visits to Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, Panama, Saint Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis, and Trinidad and Tobago. M.E.B.A. represents the engineers in MSC’s Civilian Mariner fleet.

This marks the hospital ship’s seventh deployment to the region since 2007, second deployment to the Western Hemisphere in the last six months, and reflects the United States’ enduring promise of friendship, partnership, and solidarity with the people of the Americas. The USNS COMFORT operation is part of the Caribbean 2020 Strategy to increase the security, prosperity and well-being of the people of the U.S. and the Caribbean.

### **COAST GUARD CONCLUDES OPEN LIFEBOAT INSPECTION CAMPAIGN**

The Coast Guard recently wrapped up a year-long concentrated inspection campaign of open lifeboats throughout the U.S. commercial fleet. The campaign was initiated in the aftermath of the 2015 EL FARO sinking that has prompted more scrutiny of safety standards and enforcement.

During this campaign, Coast Guard Marine Inspectors visited 45 U.S. flag vessels and inspected 122 open lifeboats. The campaign primarily focused on recordkeeping, crew proficiency and the material condition of the lifeboats. Inspectors identified 68 deficiencies on 35 open lifeboats. Examples of the identified material deficiencies included visible cracks on the hull, wastage on davits, delamination and cracking on various components, inoperable winches, and oil leaks. The Coast Guard will monitor the material condition of the open lifeboats through annual inspections. Additionally, the Coast Guard will continue to evaluate the crew’s proficiency and the company maintenance programs to ensure lifeboats are ready for immediate use.

### **M.E.B.A. DIAGNOSTIC CENTERS, ALTERNATE SITES**

Members, applicants and retirees should be aware, and make use of the M.E.B.A. Diagnostic Centers or alternate clinic sites available on the Pacific, Atlantic and Gulf coasts. These sites can be relied upon for important wellness and ship certifications including annual physicals, completion of required Coast Guard and MSC forms, Benzene and other certifications and required school forms for dependent

children. Be aware that transportation reimbursements vary depending on whether an M.E.B.A. Center or alternate site is used. M.E.B.A.'s Travel Coordinator Carly Marafioti can be contacted at (877) 324-6322 or [ectravel@mebaplans.org](mailto:ectravel@mebaplans.org) for further information about your travel plans to an M.E.B.A. clinic or alternate site.

***M.E.B.A. Clinics – Pacific & Atlantic***

M.E.B.A. Diagnostic Center  
1005 Eastern Avenue  
Baltimore, MD 21202  
410-547-9111

M.E.B.A. Diagnostic Center  
548 Thomas L. Berkley Way  
Oakland, CA 94611  
510-663-6810

***Alternate Gulf Coast Clinic Sites***

American Family Care Urgent Care-Houston  
5568 Wesleyan Street  
Houston, TX 77005  
713-666-7050

American Family Care Urgent Care-Tampa  
6182 Gunn Hwy  
Tampa, FL 33625  
813-960-1100

West Jefferson Industrial Medicine, LLC  
107 Wall Blvd, Suite A  
Gretna, LA 70058  
504-433-5070

**REGULAR MONTHLY MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS**

Monday, July 8 – **Boston@1200; Seattle (Fife)@1300;**  
Tuesday, July 9 – **CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230;**  
Wednesday, July 10 – **Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315;**  
Thursday, July 11 – **L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300;**  
Friday, July 12 – **Honolulu@1100.**

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

