

# MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)



*"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"*  
**M.E.B.A. TELEX TIMES**  
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## **MARINERS KILLED AFTER HOUTHİ ATTACK IN GULF OF ADEN**

Three mariners were killed on Wednesday after a Houthi missile ripped into a Barbados-flagged, Liberian-owned bulk carrier sailing in the Gulf of Aden. The anti-ship ballistic missile (ASBM) was launched around 11:30 am local time from an area in Yemen known to be controlled by Iranian-backed Houthis. The M/V TRUE CONFIDENCE absorbed the missile about 50 nautical miles southwest of the Port of Aden while the ship was transiting from China on its way to Jeddah and Aqaba.

The Greek operated vessel has a largely Filipino crew and had armed guards aboard. Two Filipinos and one Vietnamese crewmember were killed in the onslaught with at least four more reported injuries. The crew abandoned ship and coalition warships responded. Crew were brought to Djibouti by an Indian warship and the injured were transferred to a local hospital.

These are believed to be the first civilian fatalities since the Houthis declared war on commercial shipping in November following the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas War. A Houthi spokesman claimed his group was responsible for the attack and initially erroneously described the bulker as an American vessel.

Earlier in the week, the cargo ship RUBYMAR finally sank in the Red Sea three weeks after a Houthi missile attack in the Bab al-Mandeb Strait. The Belize-flagged, Lebanese-operated vessel went down to Davy Jones' Locker with over 21,000 metric tons of ammonium phosphate sulphate fertilizer threatening an eco-disaster to marine life.

Since Tuesday, the U.S. Central Command shot down multiple anti-ship ballistic missiles and conducted a series of self-defense strikes against unmanned aerial systems in Yemen.

## **M.E.B.A./AMC TAKE PART IN WOMEN ON THE WATER CONFERENCE**

This past weekend, Massachusetts Maritime Academy hosted the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Women on the Water (WOW) Conference, attended by representatives of both M.E.B.A. and the American Maritime Congress.

Over the weekend, WOW offered exciting panel discussions and activities, including an excursion to the New Bedford Harbor showcasing the cutting-edge offshore wind industry. From discussions on mariner work-life balance, the local offshore wind developments, maritime law, and personal testimonies from trailblazing women, the conference was full of energy and excitement. Cadets from all seven maritime academies were in attendance and were given the unique experience to network and learn about the different roles they could play in the industry. Encouraging and empowering the next generation of female mariners is crucial to the continued growth and success of the maritime industry.

### **MINIBUS AVERTS PARTIAL SHUTDOWN, FUNDS MARITIME PROGRAMS**

Congress has approved a \$460 billion “minibus” comprised of six spending bills that is expected to keep the Government running past the latest March 8 deadline and funds key maritime programs. The minibus includes federal dollars for the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce & Justice, Energy, Transportation & Housing and Urban Development (T-HUD), Interior, and Veterans Affairs as well as several other agencies including the EPA.

The Senate is expected to pass the bill followed by the President’s signature before Friday’s midnight deadline. Department appropriations passed in the minibus will keep those agencies funded until the end of the fiscal year (September 30). The remaining appropriations bills not addressed in the deal between House and Senate negotiators will need to be resolved before March 22 to avoid a partial Government shutdown.

T-HUD and Agriculture contain numerous important maritime provisions at the approved funding levels through September 30 including:

#### **T-HUD FY '24 Appropriations**

- Maritime Security Program: \$318 million (authorized full amount).
- Tanker Security Program - \$60 million (full amount) (also includes the \$2.5 million/ship mariner training provision (up to \$25M total) that M.E.B.A./OSG initially lobbied for in the summer of 2022.
- Title XI (MARAD Federal Ship Financing Program) - \$50.586 million in new loan guarantee authority. (Note: This is the largest appropriation for this program in decades as Title XI does not receive annual funding each year.
- \$120 million for the Port Infrastructure Development Program – down from \$212M appropriated in FY23.

#### **Department of Agriculture FY '24 Appropriations:**

- Food for Peace: \$1.6 billion with a cut of \$62,416,627 from the final estimated appropriation of \$1.75B in FY23.
- McGovern-Dole Food for Education program: \$240 million, a \$5 million cut relative to FY23.

## **SEN. WICKER DEFENDS JONES ACT AFTER WSJ OP-ED CALLS FOR REPEAL**

Maritime champion Roger Wicker, Republican Senator from Mississippi, has fired off a scathing letter to the editor following a *Wall Street Journal* op-ed calling for the repeal of the Jones Act.

Sen. Wicker, the leading Republican on the Senate Armed Services Committee, staunchly defended the Jones Act, citing national security concerns as paramount. He argued that throughout history, the expansion of commercial shipbuilding and the growth of the naval battle fleet have been interdependent and emphasized that altering the Jones Act at this juncture would be ill-advised, especially considering the escalating shipbuilding capacity of China juxtaposed with the diminishing margin of American naval superiority.

He noted, “For hundreds of years, Congress has entrusted domestic maritime commerce to American companies, ships and mariners for a simple reason: It works. The law helps stabilize the nation’s maritime industry. It facilitates some 650,000 jobs across our vast system of shipyards, ports and waterways and adds \$150 billion annually to our economy. Ending the policy would hit the wallets of skilled American workers.”

“Opponents of the law value our economy and security, but their proposals risk both. We should dispense with the idea that repealing the Jones Act would save Americans money. Even if we allowed foreign vessels into our domestic sea trade, they would still sail under our wage, immigration and trade fees. These costs would get passed on to consumers. Critics rightly recognize our diminished shipbuilding capacity, but that isn’t the fault of the Jones Act. Nor would repealing it reignite freedom’s forge. It would weaken our maritime workforce when we need it most.”

“Naval strategists have noted that American sea power creates a self-reinforcing system: Growth in commercial shipbuilding facilitates growth in the battle fleet, and vice versa. This is not a time to stress-test this historical truth. China put 30 warships to sea last year, and it boasts the world’s most merchant vessels. Meanwhile, the U.S. naval fleet shrank, and we now rank 70<sup>th</sup> in commercial shipping inventory. Repealing the Jones Act would narrow the already shrinking margin of American naval superiority.”

## **MARAD RECRUITMENT, RETENTION PLAN ISSUED**

The Maritime Administration (MarAd) has released a strategic plan outlining six key goals to grow nation’s mariner workforce through recruitment, training, and retention over the next five years. The Mariner Workforce Strategic Plan for fiscal years 2023–2027 also addresses demonstration and research priorities that could be implemented to further improve mariner recruitment, training, and retention.

The plan was developed through input from government, industry, maritime academia and training, maritime labor, and other stakeholders. The Strategic Plan can be viewed [here](#).

## **IMO/ILO LOOK TO COMBAT HARASSMENT & ASSAULT IN GLOBAL MARITIME INDUSTRY**

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) are working jointly to combat violence and harassment, including sexual harassment, bullying and sexual assault, in the maritime industry.

Globally, there has been an increasing awareness of violence and harassment occurring on ships, including sexual harassment, bullying and sexual assault, which compound the already challenging working conditions.

A meeting of the Joint ILO/IMO Tripartite Working Group, which includes representation from governments, shipowners and seafarers, was held in late February at IMO Headquarters in London. They discussed future steps to prevent and address this serious issue, including by means of legislation, mechanisms and policies as well as enhanced training.

### **UNION PLUS STUDENT SWEEPSTAKES**

The ongoing Union Plus “Student Success Sweepstakes” will result in prizes for three lucky winners. The Grand Prize is a “Student Success Kit” that includes a laptop, wireless earbuds, and a gift card of an unspecified amount. First Prize is a \$500 gift card. Second Prize is a \$250 gift card. The contest began last week and concludes on March 11.

To enter the Union Plus Student Success Sweepstakes, you must be:

- A union member or retired union member in good standing of a union that participates in the [Union Plus College Program](#) (M.E.B.A. participates).
- A family member (spouse, child, grandchild, financial dependent, sibling or parent) of the above.

You can enter at [unionplus.org/studentsuccess](https://unionplus.org/studentsuccess)

### **GREATEST GENERATION COMMEMORATIVE COINS NOW AVAILABLE FROM U.S. MINT**

As of last week, the U.S. Mint is accepting orders for Greatest Generation Commemorative Coins that honor the service and sacrifice of WWII soldiers and civilians, including the U.S. Merchant Marine. Orders are expected to begin shipping in early April.

A silver dollar coin, produced as part of the new release, includes a tribute to WWII merchant mariners. You can check it out at <https://tinyurl.com/wwiicoi>

Introductory sales prices are in effect until March 29, 2024, at 3:00 pm EST, after which regular pricing will take effect.

“These coins honor the unwavering commitment, achievements, and sacrifices of all Americans who served during World War II,” said Mint Director Ventris Gibson

As a reminder, commemorative Merchant Mariners of World War II Bronze Medals are still available from the mint. These are duplicates of the Congressional Gold Medal awarded to WWII merchant mariners in 2022. Those duplicates are available in 1.5” size (\$20) and 3” size (\$160). Visit this link for more info and to order: <https://tinyurl.com/usmmcoi>

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

Friday, March 8 – Honolulu@1100

Monday, April 8 – Boston@1200; Seattle (Fife)@1300.

Tuesday, April 9 – CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230.

Wednesday, April 10 – Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315; Online HQ “Town Hall” Meeting@1300 (No Voting) – Register by emailing [mebahq@mebaunion.org](mailto:mebahq@mebaunion.org)

Thursday, April 11 – L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300.

Friday, April 12 – Honolulu@1100

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***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.*