



July 29, 2020

RADM Michael A. Wettlaufer
Commander
Military Sealift Command
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NAVSTA Norfolk, VA 23511
Email: Michael.A.Wettlaufer@navy.mil

Dear Admiral Wettlaufer:

We are writing to you today to communicate our ongoing and increasingly grave concerns regarding the mental health and well-being of MSC's CIVMARS. Many of the CIVMARS are members of our respective Unions and they share their thoughts and concerns with us on a regular basis. There is growing anger, frustration and despair throughout the fleet. People have a breaking point and many of these crewmembers are nearing it.

The recent tragedy aboard the USNS AMELIA EARHART speaks for itself. The actual cause of this mariner's actions may never be known, however, the ongoing and selective "Gangways Up" restrictions may have, in some part, contributed to this unnecessary and senseless act. We are genuinely worried that if restrictions are not eased, the likelihood of shipboard emotional instability will increase. Further, the stress-related fatigue caused by the "Gangways Up" restrictions could lead to safety and mission degradation and operational mishaps.

Couple the disparate nature of the Gangways-Up policy with the continuing crisis of overdue reliefs and you have potentially worse disasters waiting to happen on MSC-vessels all over the world. Waiting in-excess of 90 days for relief in some cases is contributing to the escalating anxiety and tensions aboard ships. The current situation is taking a terrible toll on the families of these mariners as well. The CIVMARS feel unsupported and abandoned.

Admiral, we acknowledge and applaud the fortitude of the CIVMARS, and, we know you share our concern for their health and safety. But, right now, they are in dire need of your direct intervention and assistance. We are asking you to reevaluate the "Gangways-Up" order and adopt a more appropriate and reasonable leave and liberty policy.

Respectfully,

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