

New U.S.-Flag Ship Celebrated at Beaumont Ceremony

U.S. Department of Transportation officials including Secretary Elaine Chao welcomed the newest entrant into the Maritime Security Program (MSP) as the LIBERTY PASSION staged a naming ceremony in Beaumont, TX. M.E.B.A.'s Gulf Coast V.P. Erin Bertram took part and thanked the M.E.B.A. deck and engine officers aboard, including Captain Jim Myers and Chief Engineer Mike Tinkel, for getting the vessel off to a great start.

The newbuild Pure Car/Truck Carrier (PC/TC) has the capacity to transport up to approximately 6,500 cars on 12 decks, as well as military wheeled and containerized equipment such as M-ATVs, HUMVEEs, MRAPs, armored personnel carriers, tanks, helicopters and unit equipment.

Beaumont Mayor Becky Ames served as the ship sponsor for the ceremony. Secretary Chao was a guest of honor and also spoke at the event. She noted, "Today we are celebrating a public-private partnership that is strengthening America's Merchant Marine, as well as America's Armed Forces. U.S.-flagged vessels are a critical component in our domestic commerce, moving \$467 billion worth of goods between ports in the U.S. In addition to these robust economic contributions, a healthy U.S. maritime industry crewed by American merchant mariners is also a vital part of our national security at ready call to support the Armed Forces and carry military equipment and supplies to the frontlines."



The crew of the LIBERTY PASSION along with M.E.B.A., Liberty and SIU officials.



Secretary Chao toured the CAPE TRINITY and met some of the CAPE T crews in Beaumont.

Several reliefs came aboard the vessel as the PASSION readied to sail off toward its regular trade route. The latest M.E.B.A. crew of the ship includes Chief Engineer Dzermal "Jimmy" Smirba, 1st A/E Alton Swinney, 2nd A/E David Bick and 3rd A/E Edward Albrecht. On deck are Captain Rick Danahy, Chief Mate Kevin Bennett, Second Mate Tim Harley and Third Mate Dominique Dertien.

While in Beaumont, Secretary Chao also visited the M.E.B.A.-crewed Ready Reserve Force vessel CAPE TRINITY managed by Patriot Contract Services. The MarAd vessel is berthed in Beaumont along with the CAPE TEXAS and CAPE TAYLOR.