

MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)

"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"



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BOSTON HALL CLOSED FOR PATRIOTS' DAY

The M.E.B.A. Boston Hall will be closed on Monday, April 16, 2018 for Patriots' Day. Patriots' Day is a state holiday in Massachusetts, Maine, and as of this year, Connecticut. It is observed on the third Monday in April in those states and commemorates the battles of Lexington and Concord. The Boston Marathon takes place every year on Patriots' Day. The observance should not be confused with Patriot Day, which is held on September 11 in remembrance of the terrorist attacks in 2001. All other M.E.B.A. offices and halls will be open during their normal operating hours on Monday.

IT'S TIME TO DECIDE IF THE U.S. IS A MARITIME NATION:

USTRANSCOM'S McDEW BRIEFS SENATORS ON LOGISTICS OBSTACLES

General Darren McDew, Commander of the U.S. Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM) spent Tuesday morning on Capitol Hill highlighting predicted obstacles that could disrupt U.S. capability to fluidly and quickly respond to a future crisis. USTRANSCOM is responsible for the global, joint movement of combat units and sustainment cargo.

General McDew was briefing the Senate Armed Services Committee about the posture of USTRANSCOM. The General well understands the military is dependent on the U.S. Merchant Marine to help project U.S. power overseas and reliably reminds Congressional Members of that fact during his frequent appearances on Capitol Hill. Each time he testifies about U.S. shipping, and Tuesday was no exception, he makes note that the mariner pool erosion, aging-out of the U.S. fleet and the decline of peacetime cargo is threatening the nation's strategic sealift capability and putting future operations at risk. He told the Committee that 90% of the nation's ability to go to war depends on the commercial industry. "I wish every American citizen could understand how much we rely on the nation's truck drivers, conductors, commercial pilots, mariners, stevedores and much much more to meet national defense requirements," he noted.

In 1950 there were 1,288 internationally trading U.S.-flag ships. Today, we're down to 81. In reasserting his unequivocal support for the Maritime Security Program, Gen. McDew pointed out that MSP ensures we maintain 60 such ships at an incredible savings compared to the cost to replicate that capacity "in-house." Sen. Angus King (I-ME) was struck by the value and utility of the MSP calling it "a kind of insurance policy" and wondered if we should be investing more heavily in the program.

General McDew has been extremely vocal that much greater gains must be made in the area of cyber warfare. "Cyber is the challenge of our time," he reiterated at multiple times during the hearing. He

pointed out that in every war game and military exercise, they assume “some level of cyber degradation” as a likely scenario. He said that we can no longer expect to continue future sealift support in uncontested environments as we have in the past. Future sealift efforts may well involve port disruptions, access issues, physical obstruction and attrition.

Several times during the hearing, Gen. McDew reasserted the need to build up the pool of qualified mariners that are critical for America’s ability to go to war. “We’re approximately a couple thousand mariners short” of the level we need, he told the committee. He called the labor pool “the true heroes of our national defense” and said they would be vital for the success of the next big conflict. Asked by Senator Roger Wicker (R-Miss.) how Congress can help, Gen. McDew noted that lawmakers can provide more incentive for young men and women to pursue careers at sea. “That’s the kind of help we need,” he said.

The General also discussed the recapitalization of the Ready Reserve Force and the desire to replace the RRF’s ancient ships, particularly the 26 steam vessels. Congress has already approved the funds to replace two older RRF ships with newer foreign-built ships. Lawmakers on the Committee indicated that additional RRF foreign ship purchases could be considered for the Fiscal Year 2019 spending cycle.

Asked if he supports the Jones Act and cargo preference laws as integral to national security, the General asserted his support of those statutes “for a number of different reasons.” He said his “primary focus is on national security and the capacity that I need to take this nation to war. It is our asymmetric advantage to deliver a decisive force in the maritime domain.” The Jones Act and cargo preference improve that balance, he said, by getting “more mariners to work [which] allows us to have the capacity we need to go to war.”

The General added that it is time that we have to decide as a nation – “is this country still a maritime nation?”

“I believe it is,” Gen. McDew noted. “However, we have a hard time right now finding the evidence in our policies and laws that would be able to convince us.”

REMEMBER TO BRING SHOT RECORDS ONBOARD

Mariners are reminded to keep their vaccination records with them when sailing – especially when shipping onboard MSC-contracted vessels. If unsure what is required, it is a good idea to check with an M.E.B.A. clinic.

FRC WRAPS UP WORK, FORWARDS REPORT

A six-person rank and file Financial Review Committee spent three days at M.E.B.A. Headquarters this week poring over the Union’s financial records for calendar year 2017. The FRC was created as a Democratic safeguard adopted by the M.E.B.A. in the mid-1990s to examine the Union’s finances from the previous year.

This year, the Committee was made up of the following six members: Marc Hoffman (Seattle - Chairman), Daniel Colon (Houston), Richard McNair (NY/NJ), Jack Menendez (Norfolk), Nicholas Cabral (Oakland) and Paul Lemoine (Tampa - Alternate).

The FRC members signed off on a report that will be made available at the halls and voted upon at the May membership meetings.

SPEAKERS PROMOTE U.S. SHIPPING AT SEA-AIR-SPACE FORUM

Several panel participants at the massive Sea-Air-Space Exposition on the outskirts of Washington D.C. advocated for U.S.-flag shipping as a matter of national security. The three-day Navy League-sponsored conference that took place at Maryland's National Harbor featured top speakers representing the Navy, Marines, Coast Guard and U.S. Merchant Marine. Maritime Administrator Rear Admiral Mark Buzby took part in a Sea Services Update panel and stressed the need to favor programs and legislation that increase sources of cargoes carried by U.S.-flag vessels. He pointed out the interwoven relationship between cargo, ships and mariners – all of which are critical to America's projection of power overseas. Admiral Buzby offered support for a piece of legislation that he believes would be a boon for cargo and U.S.-flag shipping. The bill authored by Rep. John Garamendi (D-CA), the "Energizing American Maritime Act," (H.R. 1240) would require 30% of U.S. strategic energy exports to be carried on U.S.-flagged ships.

A Jones Act panel on the third day of the Exposition proved to be an interesting discussion. Panelists including representatives from MarAd, the Coast Guard and Customs & Border Patrol agreed that weakening or repealing the Jones Act would prove disastrous for national security.

COULD BE ABOVE-AVERAGE HURRICANE SEASON IN THE ATLANTIC

Colorado State University hurricane researchers are predicting a slightly above-average Atlantic hurricane season in 2018, citing the relatively low likelihood of a significant El Niño as a primary factor. The CSU Tropical Meteorology Project team is predicting 14 named storms during the Atlantic hurricane season, which runs from June 1 to Nov. 30. Of those, researchers expect seven to become hurricanes and three to reach major hurricane strength with sustained winds of 111 miles per hour or greater.

The team bases forecasts on over 60 years of historical data that include Atlantic sea surface temperatures, sea level pressures, vertical wind shear levels (the change in wind direction and speed with height in the atmosphere), El Niño (warming of waters in the central and eastern tropical Pacific), and other factors. The CSU team will issue forecast updates on May 31, July 2 and Aug. 2.

RUNDOWN OF PIRACY HOTSPOTS

The International Chamber of Commerce's International Maritime Bureau (IMB) warns that a surge in armed attacks against ships around West Africa is pushing up global levels of piracy and armed robbery at sea. The Piracy Reporting Center recorded 66 incidents in the first quarter of 2018, up from 43 for the same period in 2017, and 37 in Q1 of 2016.

Worldwide in the first three months of 2018, 100 crew were taken hostage and 14 kidnapped from their vessels. A total of 39 vessels were boarded, 11 fired upon and four vessels hijacked. IMB received a further 12 reports of attempted attacks. The Gulf of Guinea accounts for 29 incidents in Q1 of 2018 - more than forty percent of the global total. Of the 114 seafarers captured worldwide, all but one were in this region. All four vessels hijackings were in the Gulf of Guinea, where no hijackings were reported in 2017.

Nigeria alone recorded 22 incidents. Of the 11 vessels fired upon worldwide, eight were off Nigeria – including a 300,000 MT deadweight VLCC tanker more than 40 nautical miles off Brass.

One incident was reported off Somalia, where a product tanker was fired upon and chased by two skiffs around 160nm SE of Hobyo. At the end of March, a 160,000 DWT tanker reported being fired upon in the Gulf of Aden, while transiting within the Maritime Security Transit Corridor. The distance from land, sighting of ladders and firing upon ships continues to illustrate that the Somali pirates retain the capability and intent to attack merchant shipping in the wider Indian Ocean.

Indonesia recorded nine low level attacks against anchored vessels. Five bulk carriers reported actual or attempted attacks at Muara Berau anchorage in Samarinda, while waiting to load coal cargoes.

SUPPORT THE 4MF – PURCHASE A RAFFLE TICKET!

Tickets for the raffle in support of the M.E.B.A. Merchant Marine Memorial Foundation (4MF) are available at each of the Union halls as well as Headquarters, M.E.B.A. Plans and at the Calhoon M.E.B.A. Engineering School (see Trish). POID members can contact April who has a block of tickets.

Members, applicants, retirees and everyone else are strongly encouraged to support the 4MF which provides upkeep and improvements to the Memorial Park located at the Calhoon M.E.B.A. Engineering School (CMES). The Memorial honors fallen mariners who helped blaze the proud tradition our members continue today. The winning raffle ticket (\$2 apiece) will be drawn on October 9, 2018 at the CMES during the monthly membership meeting. You do not need to be present to win. The grand winner will receive a princely sum - 50% of the proceeds from raffle sales – so plan to purchase a thick stack of tickets. Members are urged to keep M.E.B.A.'s Memorial in mind all year long and support it when they can.

REGULAR MONTHLY MEETINGS

Monday, May 7 – Boston@1200; Seattle (Fife)@1300;
Tuesday, May 8 – CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230;
Wednesday, May 9 – Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315;
Thursday, May 10 – L.A.@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300;
Friday, May 11 – Honolulu@1100.

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



The M.E.B.A. is the nation's oldest maritime labor union, established in 1875. M.E.B.A.'s expertise and proven 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. Visit us on Facebook. For publication and related inquiries contact Marco Cannistraro, M.E.B.A. Special Projects & Communications – marco@mebaunion.org