

# MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)

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



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

*The Official Union Newsletter – "The Word to the Wise"*  
Number 24 – June 14, 2018



In this issue//USNS TRENTON Rescues 40//MSP Fully Funded in Senate Bill//Trouble for Food Aid in Senate Farm Bill//Panama Canal Plans Further Tug Crew Reductions//Coast Guard Alert on Bunker Contamination/Survey Input Will Help Reduce Maritime Industry Gender Gap//Day of the Seafarer Focuses on Mariner Well-Being//Antarctic Ice Loss Spurs Sea Level Rise//AOTOS Honorees Announced//LIBERTY PEACE Résumés Continue to be Requested//

### **M.E.B.A.-CREWED MSC HIGH-SPEED FERRY INVOLVED IN MASSIVE RESCUE EFFORT AFTER MIGRANT SHIPWRECK**

Crewmembers from the Military Sealift Command expeditionary fast transport (EPF) vessel USNS TRENTON pulled at least 40 drowning African migrants to safety after their distressed vessel was compromised 20 nautical miles off the coast of Libya. The USNS TRENTON is crewed by expert civilian mariners from M.E.B.A., MM&P and SIU. The EPFs are 338-foot aluminum catamarans designed for speed, flexibility and maneuverability.

The TRENTON was conducting routine operations in the Mediterranean when it encountered the struggling migrants displaced from their vessel and fighting for their lives. At least 40 were plucked from a watery death though reports indicate that 12 more succumbed to the deep.

Survivors were taken aboard the TRENTON and were provided with food, water, and medical care. A spokesperson for the Navy's Sixth Fleet said that U.S. authorities are coordinating with international partners to determine the ultimate disposition of the surviving migrants. At press time, it was still not clear where the rescued migrants would be transported.

The incident comes as another wave of overcrowded vessels bearing fleeing African migrants is creating headaches for European nations. Italy's newly formed government is shedding its former policy of harboring desperate migrants/refugees and recently refused to give haven to over 600 exhausted migrants packed into the rescue ship AQUARIUS. Spain eventually accepted the vessel. Responding to France's criticism of his country's handling of the incident, Italy's Interior Minister Matteo Salvi said, "We have nothing to learn about generosity, voluntarism, welcoming, and solidarity from anyone."

Reports indicate that almost 25,000 migrants have died or disappeared worldwide since 2014.

The International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) issued a statement voicing concern with the Italian Government's new position saying it could have "serious implications for the safety and welfare of these distressed people, including children and pregnant women...Following the election of the new

Italian Government, the crisis now seems to be taking an ever more political direction.”

### **MSP FULLY FUNDED IN NDAA AS SENATE SUBCOMMITTEE ADVANCES BILL**

The Senate Subcommittee on Transportation Housing and Urban Development on the Senate Appropriations Committee approved a Defense bill that funds the Maritime Security Program at its fully authorized level (\$300 million) for Fiscal Year 2019.

It is expected the Senate will pass this legislation (the National Defense Authorization Act) which matches full funding for the MSP in its House counterpart.

### **TROUBLE FOR FOOD AID IN SENATE FARM BILL**

There's less than stellar news about Food Aid funding in the bipartisan Farm bill that sailed through the Senate Agriculture Committee on Wednesday. Although the Committee checked off on continued Food Aid funding levels, it also approved a number of provisions that could potentially diminish the amount of food aid carried by the U.S. Merchant Marine.

In addition, the Committee undercut U.S. shipping's contributions to Food for Progress by converting more funding into a cash-based program. Food for Progress helps provide U.S. agricultural commodities for developing countries and emerging democracies. It has served as an important source of cargo for U.S.-flag ships.

Finally, the bill amends the McGovern-Dole (MGD) International Food for Education and Child Nutrition program by ending the requirement that U.S.-sourced commodities be used for the program. MGD provides donations of U.S. agricultural products and financial and technical assistance for school feeding programs in the developing world.

Although the House version of the Farm bill stalled amid GOP infighting last month, it appears likely to be brought to the House Floor in the coming weeks. Leaders in both parties have expressed confidence that the bill – which is authorized every five years – will be finalized by the end of the summer.

### **PANAMA CANAL AUTHORITY PLANS FURTHER TUG CREW REDUCTIONS**

Already under criticism for favoring the bottom line over worker safety, the Panama Canal Commission (ACP) is reportedly planning further tug crew reductions. The decision follows the tug fleetwide removal of a (bow) deckhand in April 2018, a move that, according to the Union of Canal Tugboat Captains and Deck Officers (UCOC), could jeopardize the safety of the tugs and their crews because of risks associated with maneuvers inside the new locks. A protest by tugboat captains over safety concerns worsened by personnel shortages resulted in the leveling of ACP sanctions against workers involving warnings or removal. Workers are also wary about the excessive overtime required of tugboat Captains that they say exacerbates the fatigue factor. The same concerns were also raised by the National Transport Safety Board (NTSB) after they found that a recent collision was caused by fatigue stemming from excessive working hours.

Now, the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) has voiced their alarm after learning about the ACP's new plan, beginning on July 1, to reduce tug complements to the minimum manning by removing the additional captain – part of the forward tugs' crew. The ACP claims the move, together with other unspecified changes, will provide the captains with an improved working schedule

and potentially reduce the demand to perform overtime. The ITF has documented that overtime regularly exceeds normal working hours, with some captains forced to work more than 16 hours a day.

While the ACP acknowledges that the concerns highlighted by the UCOC, the ITF and its unions about extreme working conditions in the new locks are real, the ACP has failed to engage with the professionals represented by the UCOC. The ITF expressed concern that the ACP has not opened a dialogue, which would allow the UCOC's members to provide their expert advice on how to improve the transit operations, including respect of workers' rights.

Repeated offers by the ITF to help facilitate a dialogue between the ACP and the UCOC have so far been left unanswered.

### **COAST GUARD ALERT ON BUNKER CONTAMINATION**

The Coast Guard has issued a new Safety Alert (#10-18) raising awareness of an emerging problem in the U.S. Gulf Coast region concerning contaminated vessel fuel oil bunkers. It involves blended fuels oil such as Intermediate Fuel Oil (IFO 380) and has caused fouled fuel pump plungers, fuel pump seizures and other fuel system related failures. The fuel may increase sediment levels at separators and fuel filters and, in some cases, may completely clog filters. They say the standard fuel oil test methods found in the ISO 8217 specification will not detect these underlying problems. Fuel testing organizations found that phenolic compounds and long chain fatty acids were present in the fuel. The contamination is not limited to one fuel supplier. A definitive source has not been identified but it is presumed to be associated with the use of fuel oil cutter stocks.

This fuel oil contamination could lead to engine failures and associated losses of propulsion potentially having catastrophic and wide ranging consequences. The Coast Guard recommends that fuel oil system components be closely monitored and bunker suppliers and other technical service providers be consulted. Additional information can be found at [www.fobas.com/bulletin/109](http://www.fobas.com/bulletin/109) and <http://www.v-p-s.com/latest-news/>

### **SURVEY INPUT WILL HELP REDUCE GENDER GAP IN MARITIME INDUSTRY**

An international team of researchers is interested in receiving input from M.E.B.A. members, applicants and retirees for an ongoing study on "Gender Equality and Cultural Awareness in Maritime Education and Training" (GECAMET).

They have put together a questionnaire that aims to reduce the gender gap in the maritime sector and update the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) with gender requirements.

Your opinions will remain anonymous. Please fill it out then share the link with colleagues. You'll find the questionnaire at <https://goo.gl/forms/k5xLv8OVh9AVNoTe2>

### **UPCOMING DAY OF THE SEAFARER TO FOCUS ON MARINER WELL-BEING**

The International Maritime Organization once again will celebrate mariners in its annual "Day of the Seafarer" set for Monday, June 25. The official United Nations observance recognizes the unsung heroes of shipping and the industry "which underpins global trade on which we all rely to transport food, fuel, commodities, raw materials and goods around the world." The focus of this year's Day of the Seafarer campaign is Seafarer rights and quality of life at sea.

This year, the campaign includes a short survey aimed at collecting seafarers' feedback on whether they know their rights at sea and whether those rights are being implemented into their operational reality. The collected data will be fed back to IMO Member States creating a direct line of communication between seafarers and governments. So take the survey! And show your support online: #SupportSeafarersWellbeing IMO has also launched a photo competition, targeted at seafarers, to show the world what a #GoodDayAtSea looks like. They are inviting all interested seafarers to participate and submit photos. The competition is being run by IMO together with the International Seafarers Welfare and Assistance Network (ISWAN). The judging panel will select the entries they feel best capture the spirit of the 2018 Day of the Seafarer campaign and the inspirational role that seafarers play in everyone's everyday lives. For more information on this year's campaign visit the Day of the Seafarer webpage [www.imo.org/en/About/Events/dayoftheseafarer/Pages/Day-of-the-Seafarer-2018.aspx](http://www.imo.org/en/About/Events/dayoftheseafarer/Pages/Day-of-the-Seafarer-2018.aspx)

### **ANTARCTIC ICE LOSS SPEEDING SEA LEVEL RISE**

Ice losses from Antarctica have tripled since 2012, increasing global sea levels by 0.12 inches (3 millimeters) in that timeframe alone, according to a major new international climate assessment funded by NASA and the European Space Agency. According to the study, ice losses from Antarctica are causing sea levels to rise faster today than at any time in the past 25 years.

Antarctica's potential contribution to global sea level rise from its land-held ice is almost 7.5 times greater than all other sources of land-held ice in the world combined. The continent stores enough frozen water to raise global sea levels by 190 feet (58 meters), if it were to melt entirely. Knowing how much ice it is losing is key to understanding the impacts of climate change now and its pace in the future.

### **AOTOS HONOREES ANNOUNCED**

Congratulations to the three maritime industry advocates who will receive the Admiral of the Ocean Sea (AOTOS) statuette at a maritime gala later this year. The United Seamen's Service (USS) sponsors the event which will take place in New York City on November 2, 2018. This year's awards will be handed to Hapag-Lloyd USA President and CEO Salvador Bruno, American Maritime Officers President Paul Doell and ARC Group Chairman Raymond Fitzgerald In addition, during the event, as yet undetermined American seafarers will receive recognition for acts of bravery and heroism at sea.

### **LIBERTY PEACE RÉSUMÉS CONTINUE TO BE REQUESTED**

The Union is asking for résumés from members and applicants interested in employment on the LIBERTY PEACE to continue to be forwarded to the NY/NJ Union hall. Forward all résumés to M.E.B.A. Atlantic Coast VP Jason Callahan ([jcallahan@mebaunion.org](mailto:jcallahan@mebaunion.org)) or NY Patrolman Nico Sermoneta ([nsermoneta@mebaunion.org](mailto:nsermoneta@mebaunion.org)) at the NY/NJ M.E.B.A. Union hall so they can ensure the Company receives them.

### **PAYMENT PORTAL FOR DUES, P.A.F., G&W**

The payment portal accessed from M.E.B.A.'s homepage ([www.mebaunion.org](http://www.mebaunion.org)) allows members and applicants ease when making a dues or service charge payment and to assist the P.A.F. and Good & Welfare funds. Payments can be made by credit card, debit card or through a checking account. A recurring payment option is also available on the portal enabling automatic quarterly payments so members can "set it and forget it" and always stay current. You simply check the "Recurring Billing" box that appears at the top of the page when you're filling out your information to enable automatic

quarterly payments. This feature is also available to support the Good & Welfare and the Political Action Fund on a monthly basis. P.A.F. is crucial for keeping U.S. shipping and the Union's interests viable in the halls of Congress.

### **SIGN UP FOR M.E.B.A. VACATION PLAN DIRECT DEPOSIT**

Designed for convenience, M.E.B.A. members can help themselves by taking advantage of the Vacation Plan Direct Deposit that will help save them time and ease Plans processing costs. Authorization forms are available from the Plans Office, Plans Outport Offices and at the Plans' website – [www.mebaplans.org](http://www.mebaplans.org) (Forms & Documents, Vacation Plan Forms). Complete details are available on the Plans' site as well. Contact (800) 811-6322 or [vacation@mebaplans.org](mailto:vacation@mebaplans.org) for more info.

### **HOUSTON HALL CLOSED TUESDAY FOR JUNETEENTH**

M.E.B.A.'s Union hall in Houston will be closed on Tuesday, June 19 in honor of the Texas holiday known as Emancipation Day or "Juneteenth." The observance harkens back to 1865 when Major General Gordon Granger and his Union troops arrived in Galveston bringing (extremely late) word about the Emancipation Proclamation, which took place 2 ½ years earlier. Granger announced that "all persons held as slaves" in the rebellious States were "thenceforward, and forever free." Though it was cause for immediate celebration, the wheels turned slowly and many of the 250,000 slaves in the Lone Star State wouldn't enjoy their freedom until many months later. By the next year, the annual celebration of Juneteenth had begun. Over half of the states in the country have legislated Juneteenth-oriented observances of some sort and the U.S. Congress has designated June 19<sup>th</sup> as National Juneteenth Celebration Day, a day of great rejoicing.

### **REGULAR MONTHLY MEETINGS**

Monday, July 2 – Boston@1200; Seattle (Fife)@1300;

Tuesday, July 3 – CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230;

Wednesday, July 4 – *HALLS CLOSED*

Thursday, July 5 – Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300;

Friday, July 6 – Honolulu@1100; L.A.@1230;

-----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](mailto: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](mailto:marco@mebaunion.org)*