

# 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 47 – November 23, 2023



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## **HOUTHIS SEIZE FOC PCTC OVER ISRAELI TIE**

The GALAXY LEADER, a British-owned Pure Car/Truck Carrier registered under the Bahamas flag and chartered by Japan's NYK Lines, was hijacked this last weekend by Houthi militia who have been targeting Israeli ships in the Red Sea and the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait. The vessel was diverted to Yemen and the 25 crewmembers aboard are now being held hostage.

Galaxy Maritime, the vessel's registered owner located in Britain's Isle of Man, is affiliated with car carrier leasing company Ray Car Carriers which is controlled by Israeli businessman Abraham "Rami" Ungar.

Since 2014, the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels have been embroiled in a civil war in Yemen. Despite a truce reached about 18 months ago that temporarily eased the conflict, tensions were reignited with the Israel-Hamas war. The Houthis have openly expressed their support for Hamas and vowed to launch attacks on Israeli territory and ships. Houthi militia referred to the GALAXY LEADER as "an Israeli vessel" citing the action as a response to what they termed "heinous acts against our Palestinian brothers in Gaza and the West Bank."

According to reports from *AlJazeera* and *NBC News*, the hijacking occurred around 1 p.m. local time on Sunday when a helicopter approached the GALAXY LEADER. Armed individuals descended onto the ship's deck then subsequently took control of the vessel.

NYK Lines issued a statement on the incident, confirming that they were notified by Galaxy Maritime Ltd., based in the U.K., on the evening of November 19 in Tokyo. The PCTC had just offloaded its cargo in Turkey and was seized 50 miles west of Hodeida, Yemen, enroute to India. The statement emphasized the safety of the 25 crew members as the top priority, and NYK Lines established a crisis management center to gather information and address the situation.

Nautilus International, representing 20,000 global maritime industry workers, issued a statement saying, "we are saddened to note that maritime professionals are yet again suffering the consequences of geopolitical instability whilst simply attempting to do their job." They called for the immediate and unconditional release of the vessel and crew.

The Israeli Prime Minister's office strongly condemned the attack, clarifying that the ship, owned by a British company and operated by a Japanese firm, was hijacked with Iranian guidance by the Yemenite Houthi militia. The statement highlighted the international crew composition, including Ukrainian, Bulgarian, Filipino, and Mexican members, with no Israelis on board. The country of Israel characterized the incident as an act of Iranian terrorism and a significant escalation in Iran's aggression against the global community, impacting the security of international shipping lanes.

Iran, however, denied any involvement in the hijacking. Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kana'ani asserted that resistance groups in the region acted independently and spontaneously based on their interests and those of their people.

### **MARAD ADVISORY ISSUED FOLLOWING HIJACKING**

The Maritime Administration has issued a Maritime Security Communication with Industry (MSCI) (No. 2023-005A) after the Red Sea hijacking of the GALAXY LEADER.

They urged caution when transiting that region. U.S. commercial vessels operating in that area are advised to review U.S. Maritime Advisory 2023-011 (Threats to Commercial Vessels – Persian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz, Gulf of Oman, Arabian Sea, Gulf of Aden, Bab al Mandeb Strait, Red Sea, and Somali Basin) for amplifying information and points of contact. Maritime industry questions regarding the alert should be directed to [GMCC@uscg.mil](mailto:GMCC@uscg.mil)

### **LAST CHANCE FOR QUALIFIED APPLICANTS SEEKING MEMBERSHIP TO FORWARD DOCS**

Qualified applicants seeking membership before the end of the year must provide Headquarters with required documentation to ensure their inclusion on the upcoming District Investigating Committee (DIC) report. The DIC meets only twice a year to review applicants for membership and will issue a report in late November to be voted upon by members during the regular December membership meetings (December 4-8).

To make membership, an applicant needs the required sailing days or specified years of employment with a particular bargaining unit, must be current with service charges and must complete other necessary requirements which may include an initiation fee and/or letters of recommendation. Applicants should know they are responsible for providing their local Union hall/Headquarters with the documentation demonstrating their fulfillment of the application requirements.

Once they submit the requisite amount of sea time (or documented years of service) to Headquarters and have otherwise fulfilled the needed requirements as stated in the application packet they signed, they may be eligible for membership. Applicants who have fulfilled the necessary requirements should forward their information to Headquarters.

Applicants were mailed letters from HQ referencing the missing requirements needed for that applicant to make membership. Referenced documents must be submitted to HQ no later than 11/30 if you wish to be considered for membership during this review period. If you have questions about your status, you can contact the Membership Department at [membership@mebaunion.org](mailto:membership@mebaunion.org). All questions about service charge payments should be directed to the M.E.B.A. Accounting Department at [accounting@mebaunion.org](mailto:accounting@mebaunion.org). Qualified applicants who fail to make the deadline will have to wait another six months – until the June 2024 report – to make membership.

## **NEW POLICIES ON SEXUAL ASSAULT/HARASSMENT PREVENTION & RESPONSE**

The James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2023 introduced important updates to various laws within Title 46 of the United States Code to enhance crew safety and address sexual assault and sexual harassment. Key changes include mandated surveillance systems, crew training, reporting procedures, and master key controls on select vessels. The U.S. Coast Guard has released four policy documents to provide guidance for compliance. These changes underscore the commitment to fostering a safer and more respectful maritime environment through the elimination of sexual assault and sexual harassment from the workplace.

For more information, refer to Maritime Safety Information Bulletin (MSIB) 13-23. Also, see MSIB 1-23 for further information on reporting sexual misconduct on U.S. vessels. You can view those documents on the M.E.B.A. website in the Documents & Member Notices section. Questions can be directed to [cgcvc@uscg.mil](mailto:cgcvc@uscg.mil)

## **UAW CONTRACT RATIFICATION LOCKS IN HISTORIC GAINS**

UAW members at Ford, General Motors and Stellantis ratified agreements reached last month, locking in record gains at the Big Three automakers. Across the three companies, 64% of voting members voted in favor of the agreements.

“The members have spoken. After years of cutbacks, months of our Stand Up campaign, and weeks on the picket line, we have turned the tide for the American autoworker,” said UAW President Shawn Fain. “The Stand Up Strike was just the beginning. The UAW is back to setting the standard. Now, we take our strike muscle and our fighting spirit to the rest of the industries we represent, and to millions of non-union workers ready to Stand Up and fight for a better way of life.”

The 150,000 UAW autoworkers at the Big Three won back major provisions that were sacrificed during the recession, from cost-of-living adjustments (COLA), to annual bonuses for retirees, to the elimination of wage tiers. The agreements include substantial wage increases for all Big Three members, life-changing raises for tens of thousands of members, and tens of billions of dollars in product and investment commitments from the companies. UAW noted that after decades of deindustrialization and working-class decline, the new contracts pave the way for a future of reindustrialization and working-class power.

## **VACATION BENEFITS – 2023 YEAR-END CLOSING**

Apply for Vacation and Port Relief Benefits early to avoid the year-end rush.

- **FILING DEADLINE:** The deadline for issuing checks dated in 2023 in the Outports *and* the Plan Office is Monday, December 18, 2023.
- **DIRECT DEPOSIT:** The final Direct Deposit Transfer for 2023 will be made on 12/19/2023 and the funds will be deposited into bank accounts on 12/21/2023.
- Any requests for Port Relief and Vacation checks received after 12/18/23 at 12:00 PM EST will be paid in the order received beginning 1/2/2024.

Any member who requires that his/her check be dated in 2023 must file before this deadline. Remember, Monday, December 25, 2023 and Monday, January 1, 2024 are holidays and the Outposts and the Plan Office will be closed. It is always wise to plan ahead, so you should verify the specific holiday schedule with the Plan Office Representative.

### ***Split Your Vacation Payments between 2023 and 2024***

You can submit an Application for Vacation Pay prior to the end of the year and request that the payment of your vacation benefits be split. Two checks will be issued to you, one in 2023 and a second in 2024. The 12/18/2023 deadline applies to split claims also. The vacation benefits paid in this manner MUST be a **continuous vacation period**.

Please contact the Vacation Plan staff in Baltimore at 800-811-6322 or 410-547-9111 if you have any questions.

### **SEAFARER SURVEY SAYS WORLDWIDE MARINER SALARIES HAVE RISEN**

Mariner salaries have risen by at least 10% in the last two years as the crew employment market tips in the favor of seafarers, Danica Crewing Specialists announced following the release of its 2023 Seafarers' Survey.

Across senior officer ranks, salaries have increased some 10-15%, regardless of nationality, the survey shows, compared to its 2021 results. Salary figures are particularly strong for the top four ranks on dry cargo vessels. Salary rise is the most common reason for seafarers switching shipping companies, the survey indicates. Some 35% of crew who changed employers recently did so for a higher salary, although 26% moved for a more suitable joining time. And 98% of respondents said they check vacancies while on home leave.

Henrik Jensen, CEO of Danica Crewing Specialists, said, "These are all indications that the crew employment market has tipped to be in the seafarers' favor. We are witnessing a wage spiral like we saw leading up to the previous financial crisis. The root cause for these wage increases is the combination of a general shortage of very competent seafarers and a better financial situation for most vessel owners which is making employers more generous with remuneration," he explained. "And, with a surplus of job offers, seafarers can be afford to be picky."

Seafarers remain largely satisfied with their careers at sea with 80% saying they would recommend their employer to a friend, while 50% would recommend seafaring to their children. But the lure of a shore position is also strong with 70% of respondents saying they would be interested in working ashore.

### **THANKSGIVING CLOSINGS**

All Union halls and offices are closed today for Thanksgiving Day and remain shuttered tomorrow, Friday, November 24. All halls and offices are back to the normal schedule on Monday.

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

Monday, December 4 – **Boston@1200; Seattle (Fife)@1300.**

Tuesday, December 5 – **CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230.**

Wednesday, December 6 – Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315; Online HQ “Town Hall” Meeting@1300 (No Voting) – Register by emailing [mebahq@mebaunion.org](mailto:mebahq@mebaunion.org)  
Thursday, December 7 – L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300.  
Friday, December 8 – Honolulu@1100

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



*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.*