

# MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)



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

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

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### **CARMEL CONFIRMED AS MARITIME ADMINISTRATOR; LUNDAY AS CG COMMANDANT**

The full Senate confirmed the nomination of Stephen Carmel as the new Maritime Administrator tonight (Thursday 12/18). Carmel is a former ship captain and executive with Maersk Line. He most recently served as the President of U.S. Marine Management LLC (USMMI), which manages a fleet of U.S.-flag vessels. A 1979 Merchant Marine Academy graduate, he sailed with Maritime Overseas Corporation and the Military Sealift Command among other shipping jobs. He was nominated for the position in May. At his nomination hearing earlier this year, Carmel expressed his support for the Jones Act, Maritime Security Program and cargo preference and talked about the benefits of the proposed SHIPS Act that has garnered bipartisan support. He stressed how cargo is critical for American shipping and noted that we need more sources of freight for U.S.-flag vessels outside of military shipments.

Also confirmed, by unanimous consent, was Admiral Kevin Lunday as the new Coast Guard Commandant succeeding Admiral Linda Fagan. Adm. Lunday has a B.S. degree in marine engineering from the Coast Guard Academy ('87) and was previously Deputy for Materiel Readiness. He had served as Acting Commandant since January.

Another confirmation by the Senate was Laura DiBella who fills one of the two vacancies in the Federal Maritime Commission's five-person executive board. Commissioners Carl Bentzel had left in December 2024 and Louis Sola stepped down in June of this year. Other notables that were confirmed in the en bloc confirmation vote included Crystal Carey to be General Counsel of the National Labor Relations Board, Scott Mayer and James Murphy to be NLRB Board Members, Anthony D'Esposito as Labor Department Inspector General and Timothy Petty to be Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere. Congratulations all!

### **BLOCKADE OF SHADOW FLEET VESSELS NEAR VENEZUELA WIDENS**

The White House ordered a full blockade of all oil tankers under sanction entering or leaving Venezuela, a move that directly targets the country's vast "shadow fleet" and follows last week's seizure of the tanker SKIPPER. Industry trackers estimate Venezuela relies on nearly 400 active tankers to move its crude to buyers such as China, many of them operating with opaque ownership,

irregular flagging, and limited AIS use. Only about 40% of those vessels are currently sanctioned, leaving operators and insurers scrambling to assess which ships may now be at risk.

Shadow fleet ships are generally older, operate under murky ownership structures outside of regulatory rules and environmental standards, and lack the high-level insurance coverage required by major oil companies and many international ports. U.S. officials say the SKIPPER, previously sanctioned for trading oil with Iran, will be taken to a U.S. port for cargo seizure under formal legal proceedings. The Treasury Department has also sanctioned six additional supertankers that recently loaded crude in Venezuela, widening the net for owners, charterers, and ports tied to the trade.

The blockade comes alongside an expanded U.S. naval and Coast Guard presence in the southern Caribbean, officially tied to counter-narcotics missions but now carrying clear implications for commercial shipping. Legal experts note the action raises serious questions under international maritime law, particularly around freedom of navigation and enforcement beyond territorial waters.

For the global tanker market, the consequences could be significant. Any sustained disruption to Venezuelan exports would squeeze the Maduro government's main revenue stream while increasing risk premiums for voyages in the region. Caracas has accused Washington of using maritime enforcement as cover for regime change and the seizure of oil assets, underscoring the geopolitical stakes now confronting shipowners operating anywhere near Venezuelan waters.

## **ALTERNATE LOCATION TRAINING PROCEDURES**

Beginning in January of 2026, applications to attend alternate training locations must be emailed to [altloc@mebaschool.org](mailto:altloc@mebaschool.org)

Information regarding training at alternate locations is available on the Calhoon M.E.B.A. Engineering School's website including the form you need to fill out. You can follow [this link](#) to go there directly. The M.E.B.A. School will update the form on their site in the new year to reflect the change. As you may know, all Members wishing to attend training at an alternate location MUST be approved by the CMES Director prior to attending the training. Evidence of successful completion of the desired class must be submitted to CMES within 6 months of the completion of the course.

## **U.S. REVISES GULF OF GUINEA PIRACY ADVISORY, WARNS OF ONGOING KIDNAPPING THREAT**

U.S. maritime authorities have issued a revised security advisory warning that piracy, armed robbery, and kidnappings for ransom remain a serious risk in the Gulf of Guinea, canceling and replacing an earlier notice (Maritime Advisory 2025-008). The advisory says criminal groups continue to operate across a wide swath of West and Central African waters, including areas off Nigeria, Benin, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Ghana, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Togo.

These groups have fired on vessels during boardings and attempted boardings, with kidnappings for ransom still a primary tactic. According to U.S. officials, kidnappers typically target senior officers such as Masters and Chief Engineers, as well as Western or other foreign crew members. Victims are usually taken ashore in Nigeria's Niger Delta, where ransom demands are made.

Several kidnappings were reported in 2025, including the abduction of nine crew from the Portuguese-flagged LPG carrier CGAS SATURN in December and multiple incidents involving tankers, fishing vessels, and passenger craft earlier in the year. The revised advisory is effective through June 13, 2026, and applies to all vessels operating in or near the Gulf of Guinea.

### **NOAA CONTINUES EFFORT TO MODERNIZE FLEET**

Efforts continue to modernize the aging National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) fleet, as the agency celebrated the keel-laying of a new oceanographic-class research ship. M.E.B.A. represents engine officers aboard the 15 NOAA research vessels that conduct a variety of scientific missions.

M.E.B.A. is critical to NOAA's operational readiness and mariner supply. In addition to our Union encouraging mariners to have a career on NOAA vessels, the M.E.B.A. also provides Augmenting Engineers to NOAA through our contract with Keystone Ocean Services to ensure the agency's scientific missions can depart the dock when crewing difficulties arise at the organization.

NOAA celebrated the keel-laying for the NAVIGATOR, a new charting and mapping vessel being constructed for them by Thoma-Sea Marine Constructors, LLC., in Houma, Louisiana. It is anticipated it will join the NOAA fleet after completion in 2028. Its sister ship SURVEYOR is due for completion in 2027. During the ceremony, the initials of the ship's sponsor, NOAA Corps Rear Adm. Evelyn Fields (ret.), were welded onto a steel plate that will be incorporated into the ship during construction. The 244-foot vessel will support a wide variety of NOAA missions, to include exploring the deep sea, monitoring oceanographic conditions and studying marine life.

Two other newbuild NOAA vessels are also nearing completion. The OCEANOGRAPHER (to be homeported in Honolulu, HI) and the DISCOVERER (to be homeported in Newport, R.I.) are also being constructed at Thoma-Sea.

These new ships will operate with a 48-person crew (including scientists). Both ships are expected to be completed in 2026. They will incorporate the latest clean energy technologies, including vessel emission controls and high-efficiency diesel engines. The average age of NOAA's 15-ship fleet is older than 30 years. By 2030, six of those ships will likely reach the end of their service life.

### **AFGE PURSUES LEGAL CHALLENGE AFTER DHS RIPS UP TSA UNION CONTRACT**

Less than 24 hours after the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Protect America's Workforce Act to restore collective bargaining rights to more than one million federal workers, Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem announced the unilateral termination of the collective bargaining agreement between AFGE and the Transportation Security Administration covering 47,000 TSA officers. The decision follows a preliminary injunction issued by the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Washington in June that blocked the Government's March 7 attempt to terminate AFGE's union contract.

As the exclusive union representative for the TSA workforce, AFGE National President Everett Kelley vowed to see the administration in court. "TSA officers, many of whom are veterans, are patriotic individuals who swore an oath to protect the safety of the traveling public in our airports and in our skies, ensuring that another horrific attack like Sept. 11 never happens again. Secretary Noem's

decision to rip up the union contract for 47,000 TSA officers is an illegal act of retaliatory union-busting that should cause concern for every person who steps foot in an airport,” Kelley said. “AFGE will continue to challenge these illegal attacks on our members’ right to belong to a union, and we urge the Senate to pass the Protect America’s Workforce Act immediately.”

AFGE Council 100 President Hydrick Thomas said revoking TSA’s union contract could result in undoing much of the progress that has been made following the 2001 terrorist attacks to improve the work environment across the 400 airports where AFGE represents TSA employees. “Prior to having a union contract, many employees endured hostile work environments and workers felt like they didn’t have a voice on the job, which led to severe attrition rates and longer wait times for the traveling public. Since having a contract, we’ve seen a more stable workforce, and there has never been another aviation-related attack on our country.”

### **ITF CONDEMNS BLACK SEA SHIP ATTACKS**

The International Transport Workers’ Federation (ITF) has condemned the latest attack on vessels operating in the Black Sea, warning that seafarers must never be treated as targets in conflict and that their safety and rights must be protected at all times. Reports indicate that a tanker transiting Ukraine’s exclusive economic zone enroute to Novorossiysk was struck and disabled by Ukrainian sea drones, in what is believed to be the third such incident in recent weeks involving vessels described as part of Russia’s “shadow fleet.”

While the ships involved may be linked to sanctions evasion or wider geopolitical tensions, the ITF stressed that the civilian crews onboard are not participants in conflict. Many are multinational seafarers working under difficult conditions, often with poor pay and weak protections. None of that justifies exposing them to violence. Civilian seafarers must be protected at all times under international law.

“Seafarers are not a weapon of war,” said Mark Dickinson, Vice Chair of the ITF Seafarers’ Section and General Secretary of Nautilus International. “They are civilians simply doing their jobs, often in extremely difficult and precarious conditions. Under the Flag of Convenience system – where shipowners register vessels in countries without a genuine link and therefore weak oversight – many seafarers are recruited from nations where decent job opportunities are scarce. That leaves them with little real power to refuse dangerous voyages, and often without clear information about where a ship is bound or the risks involved. Regardless of the flag a vessel flies, the cargo it carries, or the politics surrounding a conflict, targeting seafarers or placing them in harm’s way is completely unacceptable.”

Since the start of the Russia–Ukraine war, the Black Sea has been transformed into an active danger zone for merchant shipping, where civilian seafarers face the real and ongoing threat of mines, drones, and missile strikes. The ITF reiterated its call on all parties to conflicts to uphold international humanitarian and maritime law, to de-escalate tensions, and to take all necessary steps to safeguard civilian seafarers.

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

Monday, January 5 – Boston@1200. Seattle (Fife)@1300.

Tuesday, January 6 – CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230.

Wednesday, January 7 – Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315; Online HQ “Town Hall” Meeting@1300 (No Voting) – Register by emailing [mebahq@mebaunion.org](mailto:mebahq@mebaunion.org)

Thursday, January 8 – L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300.

Friday, January 9 – Honolulu@1100

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***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). Website: [www.mebaunion.org](http://www.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. The Calhoon M.E.B.A. Engineering School can be contacted at (410) 822-9600 or [www.mebaschool.org](http://www.mebaschool.org). M.E.B.A. Plans is at (410) 547-9111 or [www.mebaplans.org](http://www.mebaplans.org)*