

# MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)



*"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"*  
**M.E.B.A. TELEX TIMES**  
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## **HOUTHIS SAY THEY'LL RESTRICT ATTACKS TO ISRAELI-LINKED VESSELS; GALAXY LEADER CREW RELEASED**

In the wake of the Gaza ceasefire, Yemen's Houthi movement announced it would limit its attacks on commercial vessels to Israeli-linked ships. The Humanitarian Operations Coordination Center (HOCC), aligned with the Houthi military, declared the suspension of actions against ships owned by U.S. or British entities or flying their flags. This development signals a pause in what the HOCC referred to as "sanctions" on certain vessels. The announcement also indicates a halt to targeting ships bound for Israel or partially operated by Israeli interests, suggesting a broader de-escalation effort amid the ongoing ceasefire.

The ceasefire agreement outlines a 42-day initial phase aimed at reducing hostilities, facilitating Israeli military withdrawal, and increasing humanitarian aid delivery. However, the truce remains fragile. Analysts warn that renewed UK or U.S. airstrikes in Yemen or a breakdown in the Gaza ceasefire could reignite Houthi attacks on commercial shipping.

The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) called on Yemen's Houthis to halt attacks on all on commercial ships in the Red Sea and to release seafarers who continue to be held hostage.

"For too long, seafarers operating in these waters have been forced to endure unacceptable risks," said Stephen Cotton, ITF General Secretary. We call on the Houthis to immediately end all hostilities, to release all crews currently being held captive and provide concrete guarantees that no other seafarer will suffer the same fate. Until that happens, shipping companies and charterers must take every possible step to avoid putting seafarers' lives at risk in this region."

That began happening this week. After 430 days in Houthi captivity, the 25 crew members of the car carrier GALAXY LEADER were released and relocated to Oman. Their ordeal began in November 2023 when the vessel was seized in the Red Sea. The GALAXY LEADER, hijacked on November 19, 2023, quickly became a prominent example of the Houthi campaign targeting commercial shipping in the Red Sea, which led to numerous attacks, significant vessel damage, and tragic loss of life.

However, going forward, many in the industry warn that the Red Sea trade route remains “too risky” for the foreseeable future. The ITF urged shipping companies and charterers to divert vessels away from the danger zone until seafarers’ security can be assured.

### **LABOR WARY OF NEW FEDERAL WORKER DIRECTIVES**

New presidential directives were issued this week that water down protections for federal employees. President Donald Trump signed an Executive Order to alter the structure of the federal workforce by removing civil service protections for a large segment of federal employees. The move re-establishes the “Schedule F” employment category that affects as many as 50,000 federal workers.

Trump described the action as a step toward enhancing “accountability” within the federal workforce. The order notes that federal workers don't need to be in lockstep with the current president politically, but “are required to faithfully implement administration policies to the best of their ability...Failure to do so is grounds for dismissal.”

M.E.B.A. affiliate PASS (Professional Aviation Safety Specialists) said that reassigning employees as Schedule F makes those workers “functionally at-will employees and therefore far easier to fire. Further, Schedule F defies merit principles and instead would require political loyalty to a president.” PASS represents more than 11,000 Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and Defense Department workers throughout the air traffic control system.

AFGE National President Everett Kelley said, the order “is a blatant attempt to corrupt the federal government by eliminating employees’ due process rights so they can be fired for political reasons. It will remove hundreds of thousands of federal jobs from the nonpartisan, professional civil service and make them answerable to the will of one man. This unprecedented assertion of executive power will create an army of sycophants beholden only to Donald Trump, not the Constitution or the American people. The integrity of the entire federal government could be irreparably harmed if this is not stopped.”

AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler echoed the concern saying, “He is setting the table to clear out the hundreds of thousands of hardworking Americans who make our government actually work and replace them with political loyalists who will do his bidding.”

Similarly, they were unenthused by another Trump directive that would end remote work arrangements for federal employees.

Kelley noted, “This directive turns back the clock to before 2010 when Congress required federal agencies to expand telework by law. Congress took this action a full decade before the pandemic, recognizing telework as an important tool for agencies’ operational efficiency...Hybrid work has been so successful that many agencies have been working to consolidate unused office space and sell off properties that are costly to maintain -- meaning there may no longer be enough office space to accommodate an influx of on-site workers.”

President Trump also ordered a federal agency hiring freeze despite a Government Accountability Office report that concluded that such blanket exacerbate workforce shortages or change the scope of what government must, by law, deliver for the public.

Kelley noted, “There is no legitimate rationale for slashing the size of the federal workforce. The number of federal workers has grown by roughly 6% over the past 50 years, while the U.S. population served by the federal government has increased by 57%. Meanwhile, spending on the vast shadow workforce of federal contractors has ballooned to account for 11.4% of the federal budget – nearly \$760 billion annually – while just 4.3% of the budget goes to pay federal employees.”

### **COAST GUARD COMMANDANT REMOVED**

Coast Guard Commandant Admiral Linda Fagan, the first uniformed woman to lead a branch of the armed forces, was removed from her post on Tuesday. The ouster was attributed to “leadership deficiencies, operational failures, and inability to advance the strategic objectives of the U.S. Coast Guard,” as characterized by a Department of Homeland Security official, but it was pointed out that her focus on diversity, equity and inclusion policies presaged her doom with the new administration. Adm. Fagan had led efforts to battle sexual misconduct within the service, upped recruitment efforts and called for an increased Coast Guard budget to enable full mission strength.

Vice Commandant Adm. Kevin Lunday takes over as acting Commandant until a permanent replacement is installed.

### **OMSA VIEWS HALT TO OFFSHORE WIND PROJECTS AS AN OPPORTUNITY**

On his first day in office, President Donald Trump issued a sweeping executive order to immediately suspend all offshore wind development on the U.S. Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) and initiate a comprehensive review of existing wind energy projects. The directive, effective January 21, 2025, withdraws all OCS areas from wind energy leasing indefinitely, pending future revocation. While the order does not impact existing lease rights, it requires a detailed review of current wind energy leases to determine whether they should be amended or terminated. The decision represents a stark departure from the prior administration’s aggressive offshore wind objectives, which aimed to achieve 30 gigawatts of offshore wind capacity by 2030 and 15 gigawatts of floating offshore wind by 2035.

The M.E.B.A. has long called for offshore wind developers to work with maritime labor for on-ramp and continuing investments in the U.S. maritime supply chain to ensure that the deployment of turbines maximizes use of U.S. crews and U.S.-built ships to meet these long-term clean energy goals.

While offshore wind offers tremendous potential for economic growth and job creation in the U.S., the Offshore Marine Service Association (OMSA) sees the directive as an opportunity to recalibrate the development of this burgeoning industry in this country to better benefit U.S. job growth. Aaron Smith, President of OMSA, noted that over-reliance on foreign renewable energy companies, foreign vessels, and foreign mariners to build American offshore wind farms “is deeply problematic.”

He said, “We continue to believe that offshore wind can be an incredible economic driver, creating thousands of good-paying American jobs—yet many high-quality jobs are being outsourced to foreign mariners on vessels built overseas, in countries like China, while American vessels and workers are overlooked...We view this pause in offshore wind development as a critical moment to reset the industry’s priorities,” said Smith. “By addressing these systemic issues, we have an opportunity to ensure that offshore wind is delivering on its promise by creating jobs for American mariners, supporting U.S. shipyards, and reinvesting in the American economy.”

## **M.E.B.A. APPOINTED TO MTSNAC**

M.E.B.A. has been tapped for another two-year term to help represent maritime labor on a panel that advises the Department of Transportation on matters related to marine transportation. The Maritime Transportation System National Advisory Committee (MTSNAC) helps develop recommendations to increase transportation efficiency, improve the environment and grow the economy. Among many other items, the MTSNAC has worked on establishing new marine highway services and port infrastructure development.

M.E.B.A. President Adam Vokac will represent the Union at the high-level Washington D.C. meetings.

## **APPLY FOR UNION PLUS SCHOLARSHIPS**

M.E.B.A. families have until January 31, 2025 to apply for college education assistance money through Union Plus. Union Plus is doling out one-time cash awards of \$500 to \$4,000 for study beginning in the Fall of 2025.

Visit [www.unionplus.org/scholarship](http://www.unionplus.org/scholarship) for details. Families of M.E.B.A. members or affiliated members are among past scholarship money recipients. Union Plus Scholarship are granted to students attending a two-year college, four-year college, graduate school or a recognized technical or trade school. Recipients are selected based on academic ability, social awareness, financial need and appreciation of labor.

Applications can be submitted up until Friday, January 31, 2025, at noon (EST). Applications arriving after the deadline will not be considered. The award date is May 31, 2025. During the first week of June 2025, award recipients will be notified.

Current and retired members of unions participating in any Union Plus program, their spouses and their dependent children (as defined by IRS regulations) are eligible. Grandchildren are not eligible unless a legal dependent (as defined by IRS regulations).

At least one year of continuous union membership by the applicant, applicant's spouse or parent (if applicant is a dependent). The one-year membership minimum must be satisfied by May 31, 2026. Members of participating unions from the U.S., Puerto Rico, Guam, U.S. Virgin Islands and Canada are eligible. The applicant must be accepted into a U.S. accredited college, university, community college, technical or trade school at the time awards are issued. Awards must be used for the 2025 - 2026 school year. Undergraduate and graduate students are eligible to apply.

Get the official application and all the details including eligibility criteria by visiting [unionplus.org/scholarship](http://unionplus.org/scholarship)

## **1-888-519-0018; M.E.B.A. HOTLINE FOR EMERGENCIES**

Since 2011, M.E.B.A. has maintained an emergency hotline set up for members with urgent needs and crisis situations requiring immediate attention. In most cases, either calling your M.E.B.A. Union hall or office during normal business hours or sending an e-mail is enough to get your concern resolved. *The Hotline should become an option only if the weight of the issue demands that it be addressed immediately and at the highest priority.*

Those who call the line should be prepared to fully brief the Hotline responder with extensive details of their issue as well as their contact information. Please leave a comprehensive message in the rare event that the official is away from their phone at the time of your call. The official fielding the call will route the concern to the appropriate M.E.B.A. contact taking into account the issue's magnitude. Please keep the number on hand if the need ever arises: 1-888-519-0018.

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

Monday, February 3 – **Boston@1200; Seattle (Fife)@1300.**

Tuesday, February 4 – **CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230.**

Wednesday, February 5 – **Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315; Online HQ “Town Hall” Meeting@1300 (No Voting) – Register by emailing [mebahq@mebaunion.org](mailto:mebahq@mebaunion.org)**

Thursday, February 6 – **L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300.**

Friday, February 7 – **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). 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)*