

MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)



"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"
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ARMY CONSIDERING ENDING PRE-PO SHIP PROGRAM

As discussed in a communication during the M.E.B.A. June membership meetings, the Department of Defense is considering a plan to retire the Army's prepositioned supply ships stationed worldwide, citing cost savings as a driving concern. However, the proposal is meeting rigid opposition from the M.E.B.A. and key concerned Members of Congress who are requesting further details and explanation. The House Armed Services Committee's draft of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) requires the Army and Indo-Pacific Command to submit a report outlining their plans for the Army Prepositioned Stock 3 (Afloat), or APS-3, vessels. The Army proposal requires final approval by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Office of the Secretary of Defense by June 2024, in order to effect a proposed October 2025 drawdown timeline.

APS-3 consists of seven ships deployed globally, functioning as floating warehouses stocked with essential military supplies, including ammunition, tanks, medical equipment, and spare parts. These floating resources complement the land-based supplies stored in the United States, Europe, South Korea, and the Middle East. Five of these vessels are managed by M.E.B.A.-contracted Patriot and include the LMSRs USNS RED CLOUD, USNS CHARLTON, USNS WATKINS, USNS POMEROY and USNS SODERMAN. The other two are the AMO-manned Ammunition ships MV LTC JOHN UD PAGE and MV SSG EDWARD A. CARTER JR.

Specifically, the Army is proposing to decommission APS-3 by relocating the stock ashore and transferring operational control of the LMSRs to DOT/MarAd to be homeported stateside in Reduced Operating Status (ROS). In an ROS status, these ships will carry no cargo, be minimally crewed and maintained, and will be subject to a five-day activation standard. Additionally, the drawdown plan calls for moving the APS-3 ammunition stock ashore, and cancellation of the contract for the two commercial ammunition vessels. If APS-3 is successfully decommissioned, the Army will no longer have ready-to-sail vessels in standby status in the Indo-Pac Area of Responsibility (AoR) and will instead rely on MarAd to activate ROS vessels in the continental U.S. by mustering a fully volunteer crew to deploy, transiting the ships to upload the APS stock from shore-based warehouses, and then deploying them once again to the theater of operations. This operational delay in providing ground forces with critical warfighting equipment and supplies

constitutes a significant operational risk in the highly volatile and geographically expansive Indo-Pac AoR.

Reiterating comments made to news agency *Politico*, which covered the situation in an article last week, M.E.B.A. Secretary-Treasurer Roland Rexha noted, “It’s almost like we’re waving the white flag at the front line, saying here’s the pathway to take Taiwan...It would go from a four-day transit time to anywhere from six to eight weeks,” he said. “China is becoming more aggressive in the area, and the Army is taking a less aggressive stance, all it does is escalate the situation more.”

WSF BEGINS CONTRACTING PROCESS FOR HYBRID-ELECTRIC FERRIES

After years of delays and escalating costs, the Washington State Ferry system announced that it has initiated a national bidding process for the construction of five new hybrid-electric ferries. WSF said that under the new schedule, two vessels could be delivered in 2028, two more in 2029 and the final ferry in 2030 (subject to final bid prices and available funding). These boats are expected to support the Mukilteo/Clinton and Seattle/Bremerton routes.

WSF’s diesel vessels are one of the state’s largest emitters of climate pollution, burning nearly 19 million gallons of diesel fuel each year. The hybrid-electric ferries have been in design for over a year. They say the new ferries would save approximately 240 million gallons of diesel over their 60-year lifespan and emissions would be reduced from the current 180,000 metric tons to 45,000 metric tons annually systemwide.

The electrification program is estimated to cost \$4 billion. So far, WSF has secured \$1.68 billion in funding including \$599 million from the Climate Commitment Act (CCA) (passed in 2021), and \$1.03 billion from Move Ahead Washington (passed in 2022).

SPACE AVAILABLE FOR CMES COURSES

The Calhoun M.E.B.A. Engineering School announced that there are still spots available for the following two upcoming courses:

- BST Revalidation – July 29-31
- Programmable Logic Controllers – August 5-9

Applications should be submitted as normal and should be sent via the CMES website (www.mebaschool.org), faxed to (410) 822-7220, or emailed to applications@mebaschool.org

80th ANNIVERSARY OF D-DAY; UTAH BEACH MONUMENT UNVEILED

Representatives of the American Merchant Marine Veterans (AMMV) were on hand in Normandy, France this week as a long overdue monument to the U.S. Merchant Marine was unveiled on Utah Beach. The new monument, near the Lone Sailor and the Higgins Boat memorials, honors the valor and sacrifice of U.S. merchant mariners whose actions supported military operations on D-Day that took place 80 years ago today on June 6, 1944.

On D-Day, the Allies’ armada and invasion forces landing in Normandy represented the largest amphibious assault operation in the history of the world. The Allies’ D-Day armada had about 7,000 ships, including 200 U.S. merchant ships that were operated by U.S. merchant mariners and U.S.

Naval Armed Guard crews. The monument, enshrined on Utah Beach where U.S. troops landed, displays a May 8, 1945 quote from General Dwight D. Eisenhower, inscribed for all visitors to see:

“Every man in this Allied command is quick to express his admiration for the loyalty, courage, and fortitude of the officers and men of the merchant marine. We count upon their efficiency and their utter devotion to duty as we do our own; they have never failed us yet and in all the struggles yet to come we know that they will never be deterred by any danger, hardship, or privation. When final victory is ours there is no organization that will share its credit more deservedly than the Merchant Marine.”

Participants at the unveiling ceremony included AMMV President Dru DiMattia and WWII merchant mariner Dave Yoho among others.

MARINER WORK-LIFE BALANCE SYMPOSIUM NOW AVAILABLE TO VIEW

An interesting April 16 Department of Transportation symposium exploring the mariner work-life balance featuring the M.E.B.A. perspective is now available to view.

The U.S. Maritime Administration (MarAd) along with the U.S. Committee on the Marine Transportation System sponsored the symposium that offered interesting panel discussions and breakout sessions with an array of industry stalwarts, academics and seasoned mariners. M.E.B.A. President Adam Vokac and Executive V.P. Claudia Cimini represented the Union and both took part in panel discussions during the morning segment. You can check it out at www.maritime.dot.gov/newsroom/mariner-work-life-balance-symposium-0 Topics of discussion included mariner career progression, training paradigms, attrition factors, onboard lifestyle dynamics, mariner mental well-being, and lack of differential for seagoing jobs versus shoreside work.

Using this M.E.B.A. cheat sheet, you can dial up EVP Cimini’s contributions at the 1:05.05 mark (why she chose maritime); 1:21.10 (what gives mariners staying power); 1:33.15 (importance of these discussions); and 1:46.26 (what needs to change). For a greater dose of President Vokac, cozy up to 2:37.50 (intro); 2:51.26 (how we got here, how we fix it); 3:04.33 (what companies can do); and 3:15.26 (what has improved). Besides those listed times, there are a few other Adam and Claudia clips peppered throughout.

BALTIMORE PORT REOPENING

The Port of Baltimore could be fully operational as soon as this weekend, following almost 11 weeks of efforts to clear debris from the channel around the collapsed Francis Scott Key Bridge. The entire channel is expected to reopen by Monday, according to the Unified Command. This development comes after the final piece of steel bridge, which had been blocking the channel since its collapse in March, was successfully removed. The channel has been cleared to a width of 400 feet and depth of 50 feet, allowing deep-draft commercial vessels to access the Port of Baltimore.

ITF INSPECTORS RECOVERED RECORD AMOUNT OF UNPAID SEAFARER WAGES LAST YEAR

2023 was the worst year ever seen for seafarer abandonment (unpaid for at least two months), and ITF inspectors, including M.E.B.A. ITF Inspector Eric White, recovered a record amount of unpaid wages. The ITF’s global network of inspectors recovered a shocking \$57,161,779 in unpaid wages for seafarers in 2023, as the ITF also recorded the highest level it has ever seen of abandoned vessels

(129) and abandoned seafarers (1,983). The inspectors completed a total of 9,530 ship inspections and worked on 1,188 cases – instances where an inspector assisted a seafarer without boarding a vessel - during the year, spanning every region of the world.

There has been an uptick of ship and seafarer abandonments in the past few years. Numerous vessels eventually abandoned are scarcely seaworthy, often navigating less lucrative routes that the major global container lines find unappealing. These Flag of Convenience ships belong to fleets of smaller firms that operate on the fringes of legality, where even a slight financial setback can trigger a series of unexpected issues. Consequently, owners may determine that it is more cost-effective to abandon a ship and the seafarers aboard. M.E.B.A.'s ITF Inspector Eric White noted that, these abandoned vessels are often so decrepit that “even the scrap guys lose money stripping it of anything of value.”

Regarding seafarer abandonment, ITF Inspectorate Coordinator Steve Trowsdale said, “The number of cases and amount of backpay is worrying, but we couldn’t be prouder of the work undertaken by our inspectors every day, all around the world. They’re an emergency service for seafarers, always ready to do what they can to stand up for seafarers’ rights and hold exploitative shipowners to account. But the sad reality is that the increasing amount of work our inspectors are doing demonstrates just how much workers’ rights are under attack on ships right now.”

Inspectors are trained to look for exploitation, overwork, and signs of forced labor and modern slavery. On many vessels, they have the right to examine wage accounts, employment contracts, and to review recorded hours of work and rest.

MEMBERS URGED TO KEEP CURRENT

Members are strongly urged to ensure their dues status is secured through the end of the year to guarantee their participation in important Union business, including this year’s officers’ election. Only members in good standing are permitted a voice at the monthly membership meetings. The By-Laws state that no member shall be entitled to any benefits of the Union or be considered in good standing unless his or her dues are paid in full for the current calendar quarter or paid in accordance with the dues check-off (DCO) system. In addition, when members who pay by DCO take vacation or (in the case of the Government fleet) Leave without Pay (LWOP), there are lapses in payroll where dues aren’t automatically submitted.

M.E.B.A.’s online Member Payment and Update Portal (PUP) allows the membership the ease of making online monetary transactions and gives them the opportunity to verify their credentials and contact information on file, as well as submitted sea time. Members and applicants can use the Member PUP to pay their dues or service charges by credit card, debit card or through their checking account. They can also set up a recurring payment schedule to automatically keep them current. The site also allows users to view their transaction history online in a secure manner.

Visit www.mebaunion.org where you can click on the Member PUP banner to get started. In addition, the PUP allows members, applicants and retirees to make contributions to the M.E.B.A.’s Good & Welfare and Political Action Funds that support so many members. Contributions to the Good & Welfare Fund are tax deductible. This fund has provided essential assistance to members and retirees in their time of need. The PAF keeps M.E.B.A. jobs afloat by affording us a crucial lifeline to policymakers who help determine the fate of the U.S. Merchant Marine.

You'll find the online Portal to be the most efficient and advantageous manner to remain in good standing and extend a needed monetary infusion to vital Union programs.

MAKE SURE YOUR CONTACT INFO IS ON FILE WITH HQ

The membership should make sure that M.E.B.A. Headquarters has your contact information on file including mailing and email address. If you haven't filled out an M.E.B.A. Database Update Form – or if your information has changed – grab the form off the M.E.B.A. website (www.mebaunion.org) located in the “Documents & Member Notices” section. Update Forms should be sent to the HQ Membership Dept. by e-mail membership@mebaunion.org or even regular mail.

The HQ database is NOT LINKED to the databases at the M.E.B.A. Plans office in Baltimore OR the Calhoon M.E.B.A. Engineering School. To update your information with Plans, you can find the “M.E.B.A. Address Change Form” on the Plans website (www.mebaplans.org) under “Forms, Documents & Notices” then “Medical Plan Forms.”

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

Friday, June 7 – **Honolulu@1100**

Monday, July 8 – **Boston@1200; Seattle (Fife)@1300.**

Tuesday, July 9 – **CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230.**

Wednesday, July 10 – **Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315; Online HQ “Town Hall” Meeting@1300 (No Voting) – Register by emailing mebahq@mebaunion.org**

Thursday, July 11 – **L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300.**

Friday, July 12 – **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. 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 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) 8322-9600