

MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)



"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"
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MARINER KILLED, CAPTAIN ARRESTED IN DEADLY ALLISION WITH U.S.-FLAG TANKER

One of the 14 crewmembers onboard a Portugal-flagged cargo ship is presumed dead after the vessel smashed into a U.S.-flag tanker carrying jet fuel on Monday. The 59-year old Russian captain of the SOLONG was taken into custody by authorities on Tuesday on suspicion of manslaughter by gross negligence after his vessel plowed into the STENA IMMACULATE, a Crowley/Stena vessel that had been anchored 10 miles off the coast of England near Hull in the North Sea. The U.S.-flag tanker was crewed by AMO and SIU with one M.E.B.A. engineer working aboard the vessel via the passthrough with AMO. The American vessel is part of the Tanker Security Program, a fleet of commercial U.S.-flag petroleum product tankers that support our nation's long-term strategic defense needs.

The allision ruptured two of the IMMACULATE's 18 cargo tanks filled with Jet-A1 fuel triggering multiple explosions and leading to extensive fire damage. All members of the U.S. crew evacuated and were safe. Environmental concerns have eased, as reports indicate that the response was immediate, and reports allege there has been no further pollution from the fuel loss in the days since the initial incident on Monday.

The cause of the allision remains unknown though questions have now arisen whether the cargo ship, crewed with Russian and Filipino nationals, had proper manning and whether they were employing a 3-watch system, as per international requirements. International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) General Secretary Stephen Cotton said: "There are crucial questions that remain unanswered in the wake of this tragedy, and these must be addressed through a full and transparent internationally coordinated investigations, with the full cooperation of all the jurisdictions involved and all relevant national and international maritime authorities. It's of vital importance that we understand the working conditions faced by the crew, and that investigating authorities ensure fair treatment for all crew members in line with international guidelines and safeguards." The UK's Marine Accident Investigation Branch will lead the safety investigation while Portugal and the U.S. will act as "interested states."

M.E.B.A. is extremely grateful that all 23 American mariners survived the harrowing experience and safely evacuated following the horrific explosion and fires that followed. The Union is involved in

making sure the crew is successfully repatriated back to the U.S. and continues to press forward on the issue of mariner safety.

INDUSTRY SUPPORTING NEW BILL TO RAISE CARGO PREFERENCE LEVEL

The M.E.B.A., AMC and other U.S.-flag shipping interests are hailing the introduction of a bipartisan bill that would increase cargo preference for all U.S. Department of Transportation cargoes to 100 percent. The “American Cargo for American Ships Act” was introduced by Reps. Salud Carbajal (D-CA-24) and Rep. Mike Ezell (R-MS-04), a bill aimed at reversing the continued erosion of the U.S.-flag fleet. The Cargo Preference Act of 1954 requires that 50% of civilian agency cargo and agricultural cargo be carried on U.S.-flag vessels. The Maritime Administration is the lead federal agency that manages cargo preference activities and compliance.

“For too long, federal agencies have evaded compliance with cargo preference laws, undermining a key tenet of our “Ship American” policy,” M.E.B.A. President Adam Vokac declared. “By mandating that all government-required cargo be transported on U.S.-flagged vessels, we can prevent misuse of the waiver process.”

There are currently only 87 internationally trading U.S.-flag vessels. President Vokac noted, “Adhering to cargo preference laws supports our U.S. fleet and job opportunities for American mariners at this critical time.”

American Maritime Congress President Fair Kim said that, “Our great nation was founded on the principles of self-determination and self-reliance. Since the earliest days of our Republic, the enabling of our merchant ships to carry the goods and materials that fuel economic prosperity was a priority. The American Cargo for American Ships Act once again allows our country to self-determine that we will not be beholden to foreign flags-of-convenience in our supply chain; Americans will once again rely on our own U.S. Merchant Marine to maintain the nation’s economic and national security. Build American, Buy American, Ship American.”

Besides M.E.B.A. and AMC, organizations that initially put forward their support for the legislation include AMO, AMOS, ARC, MM&P, MIRAID, SUP, SIU, TI, U.S. Ocean, Waterman, Hapag Lloyd and American President Lines.

M.E.B.A. JOBS WITH PADGETT SWANN

Shoreside job opportunities are available to M.E.B.A. engineers through our agreement with Tampa, Florida-based Padgett Swann Machinery. The Marine and Industrial Repair company performs repair work on all types of vessels around the country and expects multiple job openings for qualified members as soon as this week.

Through the contract, which runs through 2026, M.E.B.A. provides licensed marine engineers to Padgett Swann Machinery on an “as-needed” temporary basis. In addition to M.E.B.A. Pension and MPB, the employer also contributes to Medical, Drug Testing, Training and JEC.

The Wage Sheet and Memorandum of Understanding utilizing M.E.B.A.-contracted Keystone Ocean Services is available for review at the Union halls. Anyone interested in these short to medium length surge opportunities should contact Adam Smith Gulf Coast Vice President at asmith@mebaunion.org. The Union’s District Executive Committee has made it a priority to continue

to find and secure professional work opportunities that deliver plenty of options for mariners at all stages of their careers and lives.

CHAVEZ-DeREMÉR CONFIRMED AS DOL SECRETARY

On Monday, the Senate confirmed Lori Chavez-DeRemer as the new head of the Labor Department in a 67-32 vote. Her confirmation drew bipartisan support, with over a dozen Democrats siding with Republicans to approve the former House lawmaker. Notably, Chavez-DeRemer gained backing from both business groups and labor unions, including the M.E.B.A.

M.E.B.A. signed on to a letter sent to Members of Congress last month urging them to confirm her to the DOL post. The letter noted that, “During her time in Congress, Ms. Chavez-DeRemer has shown a commitment to the American worker. She advocated for policies that strengthen labor protections, expand fair wages, ensure safe working conditions, promote registered apprenticeship programs, and support the overall growth of the American industrial base and its workforce. Her leadership, pragmatic approach to workers' issues, and ability to work across party lines make her the right candidate to lead the Department of Labor during this critical time.”

She steps into the role at a pivotal moment, as the Trump administration pushes for sweeping regulatory rollbacks across federal agencies, including the Department of Labor. The White House is betting these cutbacks will stimulate economic growth. Chavez-DeRemer’s confirmation process proved more contentious than expected. As one of the few House Republicans who endorsed the PRO Act—a set of union-backed labor law reforms—she faced skepticism from some conservatives, including Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.), during her hearing. Additionally, President Trump’s ongoing clashes with the civil service workforce alienated some Democratic senators who might have otherwise supported her nomination.

FRC ELECTED

Members at the regular March meetings elected a six-person rank-and-file Financial Review Committee to examine Union finances in April. The FRC is a democratic safeguard adopted by the M.E.B.A. in the mid-1990s to ensure transparency. The Committee, which meets annually, will assemble at M.E.B.A. Headquarters on April 22 to spend three days reviewing last year’s Union finances (2024 calendar year). This year, Committee members will include Brandon Stewart (Houston), Joseph Ajar (NY/NJ), Matthew Haskell (Norfolk), John Fountas (Oakland), Steve Walker (Seattle) and Sergio Gratta (Tampa).

Committee members will travel to M.E.B.A. Headquarters in Washington D.C. on Monday, April 21, 2025. They will begin their work at 9:00 a.m. on Tuesday, April 22, 2025 in the Conference Room at M.E.B.A. Headquarters. It is anticipated that the business of the FRC will be completed by Thursday, April 24 with travel home scheduled for Friday, April 25. Their report will be reviewed and voted upon by members at the May membership meetings.

WSF COMMITTED TO IMPROVE WSF WORKFORCE ISSUES; BOOST SUMMER SERVICE

Washington Governor Bob Ferguson announced there will be a delay of the hybrid-electric conversion for two of the state’s largest ferries (TACOMA & PUYALLUP) until after soccer’s World Cup (hosted by the U.S. in June & July of 2026), putting Washington on the path to restoring full domestic ferry service by this summer. As a result of this plan, Washington State Ferries will have 18

operating vessels in the water for the first time since 2019. The plan is aided by the return of the WENATCHEE in late spring of 2025 after it completes its hybrid conversion. Since the pandemic, Washington State Ferries has operated on a reduced schedule, significantly impacting Washingtonians who rely on ferry service.

Gov. Ferguson said he is committed to building new electric ferries. The procurement process to acquire as many as five new electric ferries is in process. WSF will open bids from prospective shipbuilders in early April and aims to sign a contract with at least one successful bidder by late May.

In addition to this delay, Washington State Ferries is exploring other ways to improve ferry service, which has also been affected by insufficient crews available to operate the vessels. A WSF statement said that the system is prioritizing workforce recruitment, retention and training efforts to help stabilize the system. The statement said that Ferguson is committed to honoring and supporting the compensation increases in the state's collective bargaining agreements to address the workforce challenges. The collective bargaining agreements provide a total of more than \$26 million for ferry worker compensation. Those agreements are with the Legislature. Ferguson has been clear that including those agreements in the final budget is essential. Ferguson also announced that he is exploring innovative options for procuring new electric vessels after the state receives the next set of up to five vessels. After the new electric vessels are procured, WSF will need to replace an additional 11 vessels before 2040 to keep the fleet modern and operating at full capacity.

CONTINUED TRANSCOM PUSH TO BOOST SEALIFT WITH FOREIGN BOUGHT SHIPS

The head of U.S. Transportation Command has urged lawmakers to grant authority for acquiring 10 additional used cargo ships to strengthen the nation's ability to deploy forces overseas. Speaking before the Subcommittee on Readiness and Management Support (part of the Senate Armed Services Committee) last week, Air Force Gen. Randall Reed warned that by 2032, more than half of the government-owned sealift vessels will have reached the end of their service life. He emphasized that since 85% of U.S. combat forces are based domestically, efficient sealift and airlift capabilities are essential for global operations. Reed underscored the urgency of acquiring vessels by any means necessary, referencing President Donald Trump's push for revitalizing the U.S. shipbuilding industry to compete with China. Given the lengthy process of constructing new ships, purchasing used but modern vessels offers the fastest way to sustain sealift operations. His goal is to buy at least four ships per year, though he considers acquiring two annually the bare minimum.

In his prepared remarks, Reed detailed recent progress, noting that U.S. Transportation Command, in collaboration with the Maritime Administration (MarAd), has already purchased seven used ships and expects to acquire two more in fiscal year 2025. While Congress recently increased the statutory limit to 10 used ships in the FY25 National Defense Authorization Act, the need remains pressing, as 30 aging vessels are slated for retirement between 2026 and 2034. Reed urged lawmakers for greater flexibility in procurement, allowing the military to purchase and refurbish these vessels in U.S. shipyards before deploying them. He estimated that retrofitting each ship to meet U.S. standards would take between nine and 14 months.

The issue of crew management is also a concern. Military Sealift Command (MSC), which operates the Navy's logistics and support vessels, recently deactivated 17 ships to ensure a more sustainable deployment model for its mariners.

HOUSE MEMBERS SLAM EUROPEAN UNION FOR ANTI-JONES ACT SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN

Bipartisan leaders from the House Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) Committee criticized the European Union (E.U.) for attempting to weaken the Jones Act through unconventional lobbying tactics. In a letter to E.U. Ambassador Jovita Neliupsiene, lawmakers raised concerns over a Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) filing revealing that the E.U. funded a U.S. firm to produce social media “TikTok-like videos” attacking the Jones Act.

T&I Committee Chairman Sam Graves (R-MO), Ranking Member Rick Larsen (D-WA), and the Chair and Ranking Member of the Coast Guard & Maritime Transportation Subcommittee Mike Ezell (R-Miss.) and Salud Carbajal (D-CA) argued that the EU’s use of social media influencers and undisclosed organizations to shape U.S. policy bypasses formal diplomatic channels and undermines public trust. The letter reads, “...it appears, that the E.U. is seeking to influence United States policy on the Jones Act not through diplomatic means, but instead through an advocacy campaign, including collaboration with previously undisclosed United States organizations and social media influencers.”

AFGE FUMING AFTER WHITE HOUSE ENDS TSA COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

The American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) is livid after the Department of Homeland Security announced it would end collective bargaining for 47,000 security officers at the Transportation Security Administration (TSA). AFGE National President Everett Kelley claimed the move is retaliation against the union that has been fighting against the administration’s ongoing firings of federal workers. “This is merely a pretext for attacking the rights of regular working Americans across the country because they happen to belong to a union,” he said. “Let’s be clear,” he declared, “this is the beginning, not the end, of the fight for Americans’ fundamental rights to join a union. AFGE will not rest until the basic dignity and rights of the workers at TSA are acknowledged by the government once again.”

The AFL-CIO’s Transportation Trades Department (TTD) worried that the move creates additional aviation security System risks. A TTD statement noted that. “This maneuver is also a betrayal of the seven-year bargaining agreement that TSA just signed last year with the union to provide some of these hard-fought employee benefits. It will assuredly drive away employees as air travel and airport security screenings are at an all-time high, adding significant delays to an already strained system if we do not have the workforce to meet the demand.”

FIRED NLRB BOARD MEMBER BACK AT WORK

The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) has a quorum again, at least temporarily, after a U.S. DC District Court ruled that Board member Gwynne Wilcox was illegally fired in late January. Wilcox, a Democrat, had been set to continue her term until August 2028. The court affirmed that her position was not subject to at-will dismissal for political reasons though the Trump administration filed an emergency motion to stay the court order.

GULF, EAST HALLS HONOR TEDDY GLEASON DAY ON MONDAY

M.E.B.A. East Coast and Gulf Coast Union halls and offices (not including Headquarters) will be closed on Monday, March 17th in observance of Teddy Gleason Day. Thomas William Gleason was the President of the International Longshoremens' Association from 1963 to 1987. Gleason’s organizing skills and political acumen led to big gains for the union but he also presided over a

contraction of the ranks as containerization dramatically altered the industry. He was most proud of the guaranteed annual income he won for dockworkers. "We got everything we fought for," Gleason said summing up his ILA service at the time of his 1987 retirement. He was succeeded by John Bowers. Gleason died on Christmas Eve in 1992 at the age of 92. Gleason Day was originally celebrated by the ILA for years on November 8, but because the day was too close to Veterans Day and Election Day, his commemoration day was switched. Teddy Gleason had overtly celebrated his Irish heritage and was even named grand marshal of the New York St. Patrick's Day parade in 1984. As a result, St. Patty's Day was selected as the day to honor the life and legacy of one of our greatest trade unionists – Teddy Gleason.

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

Monday, April 7 – **Boston@1200; Seattle (Fife)@1300.**

Tuesday, April 8 – **CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230.**

Wednesday, April 9 – **Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315; Online HQ "Town Hall" Meeting@1300 (No Voting) – Register by emailing mebahq@mebaunion.org**

Thursday, April 10 – **L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300.**

Friday, April 11 – **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. Website: 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 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. M.E.B.A. Plans is at (410) 547-9111 or www.mebaplans.org