

MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)



"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"

M.E.B.A. TELEX TIMES

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PORT FEES ON CHINA SUSPENDED AMID ONGOING MARITIME DISPUTE

The United States and China have agreed to suspend reciprocal port fees on each other's vessels for one year following trade talks this week during President Trump's Asian tour. The fees, introduced earlier this month as part of a U.S. effort to challenge China's shipbuilding dominance, had been viewed by some as a long-overdue step toward leveling the playing field for U.S.-flag operators competing against heavily subsidized Chinese fleets.

Under the agreement, the U.S. will pause special fees on China-linked ships calling at U.S. ports, measures that took effect October 14 as part of a broader U.S. investigation into China's dominance in global shipbuilding. In response, China said it would also suspend its own retaliatory port charges on American vessels for the same period. The reciprocal fees had disrupted international shipping and driven up freight costs in recent months, becoming a flashpoint in the two nations' trade and industrial rivalry. U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer confirmed the move during a press briefing aboard Air Force One, emphasizing that the U.S. remains focused on rebuilding its domestic shipbuilding capacity.

The suspension comes against the backdrop of a broader struggle for maritime and industrial dominance. Washington's Section 301 trade investigation has accused Beijing of unfairly supporting its shipbuilding industry, which now accounts for more than half of the world's new vessel construction. The U.S. has recently sought closer cooperation with allies Japan and South Korea to revitalize its own shipbuilding base, signing new collaboration agreements with both nations this week. China, meanwhile, had retaliated with its own measures. Earlier this month, Beijing sanctioned the U.S. subsidiaries of South Korean shipbuilder Hanwha Ocean Co., accusing them of assisting Washington's probe into Chinese maritime practices. The sanctions prohibited Chinese companies from conducting business with five Hanwha units, including Hanwha Shipping LLC and Hanwha Philly Shipyard. China's Commerce Ministry also said it had launched an investigation into Washington's Section 301 actions, calling the U.S. probe a threat to China's national security and maritime industry.

While the one-year suspension of port fees offers a temporary reprieve for the global shipping sector, the underlying tensions over shipbuilding, trade policy, and industrial dominance remain unresolved.

Both Washington and Beijing signaled that the pause could be revisited depending on future progress in broader trade negotiations.

CONGRESS FOCUSES ON SHIPBUILDING, U.S.-FLAG SHIPPING DURING SENATE HEARING THIS WEEK

U.S.-flag shipping advocates welcomed renewed attention on American commercial shipping and shipbuilding during the Senate Commerce Committee's Coast Guard, Maritime, and Fisheries Subcommittee hearing this week. The hearing comes at a pivotal moment for U.S. shipyards, the U.S.-flag merchant fleet, and American mariners. At the hearing, lawmakers from both sides of the aisle and industry leaders agreed that reviving shipbuilding and promoting the U.S.-flag fleet is not only an economic necessity but a matter of national security.

In a statement submitted for the record, M.E.B.A. pointed to China's state-backed shipbuilding dominance and foreign "flags of convenience" as key threats to U.S. economic and security interests. "America's dependency on foreign-flagged ocean carriers poses not only an economic risk, but a clear threat to our national security," the statement warned, citing the COVID-era supply chain disruptions as proof of America's vulnerability. "The consequences of this decline are profound as each lost ship means fewer skilled mariners, diminished shipyard capacity, and weakened national readiness," the statement said. The Union endorsed a "Ship American" tax deduction as a powerful tool to close the competitiveness gap between U.S.-flag and foreign-flag carriers.

While the hearing focused heavily on shipyard capability, funding, and workforce development, maritime advocates emphasized that shipbuilding cannot succeed without cargo to carry. M.E.B.A. pointed out, "Without policies that foster access to commercially imported and exported cargoes made available for U.S.-flag carriers, we may build as many ships as possible, but we would still have no cargo for them to move." This sentiment was echoed by Dr. Sal Mercogliano, who told senators that without cargo incentives, new ships will remain idle. He called for tariff and tax strategies to make it more attractive to ship American.

At the hearing, the bipartisan SHIPS for America Act, sponsored by Sens. Mark Kelly (D-Ariz.), Todd Young (R-Ind.), and Dan Sullivan (R-Alaska), was widely praised as a critical step toward rebuilding domestic shipbuilding capacity.

In a statement submitted for the record, the American Maritime Congress called for a comprehensive national approach linking shipbuilding, mariner training, port infrastructure - and critically - policies that generate cargo for U.S.-flag ships. The organization strongly endorsed the SHIPS Act, praising its provisions to expand U.S. shipyard and fleet capacity, including Subtitle B, which would create incentives to move more U.S. cargo on American vessels. AMC also backed a "Ship American" tax deduction, based on a PricewaterhouseCoopers analysis showing it could nearly eliminate the cost gap between U.S.-flag and foreign-flag shipping and increase demand for U.S.-flag vessels by about 20 percent. Reviving shipbuilding and expanding the U.S.-flag fleet, AMC concluded, are not only industrial imperatives but strategic necessities vital to America's economic independence and national defense.

MARITIME LEADERS, SEAFARING HEROISM HIGHLIGHTED AT AOTOS AWARDS

The United Seamen's Service (USS) celebrated the enduring strength of America's maritime community at its 56th Annual Admiral of the Ocean Sea (AOTOS) Awards, held last week in New York City. The evening honored three industry leaders whose vision and dedication reflect the best of the U.S. Merchant Marine tradition: AMO President Captain Willie Barrere, Maersk Line, Ltd. COO Ed Hanley and Vincent Marino, CEO of an intermodal logistics group. M.E.B.A. President Adam Vokac, who was honored with the AOTOS statuette in 2023, was in attendance on Friday along with a strong M.E.B.A. contingent.

The AOTOS Awards, hosted by the United Seamen's Service (USS), are among the most prestigious recognitions in the U.S. maritime industry, presented annually to individuals who demonstrate exceptional leadership, commitment to mariners, and service to the broader maritime community. In addition to the primary honorees, the USS presented its Special Recognition Plaque to Ed Morgan, who served as USS President for more than two decades. The evening also featured remarks by Congressman Thomas Suozzi (D-NY), who spoke on the theme, "Now is the Time for All Americans to Work Together." Former U.S. Secretary of Transportation Elaine Chao, a 2019 AOTOS honoree, presented the Mariners' Honors — awards recognizing acts of heroism and selfless service at sea.

The Chief Engineer of the Washington State Ferry SAMISH, M.E.B.A.'s Alex Zecha, accepted an AOTOS Mariner's Plaque on behalf of his crew at the ceremony for their role in the rescue of six boaters (and two dogs) in Puget Sound last year. A devastating wave shattered the windshield of a 37-foot cabin cruiser resulting in injuries to several occupants and causing water ingress. The WSF vessel intervened and deployed its rescue boat to aid the distressed craft. The SAMISH immediately rescued four individuals from the cruiser vessel and maneuvered the ferry to shield the remaining occupants of the foundering craft from the heavy wind and seas. A Coast Guard response boat arrived on scene and took the two remaining passengers as well as their dogs "Buster" and "Belle" onboard. They were able to drive the cabin cruiser to safe harbor in Anacortes while the SAMISH continued to provide a shield from the wind throughout the journey.

Also recognized at the AOTOS ceremony was the crew of the STENA IMMACULATE which included an M.E.B.A. officer among the AMO and SIU crew. The Crowley/Stena vessel was anchored 10 miles off the coast of England near Hull in the North Sea when the Portugal-flagged SOLONG blindly plowed into the U.S. ship, rupturing the IMMACULATE fuel tanks full of jet fuel and causing a massive explosion. Somehow, all members of the U.S. crew evacuated safely though a Filipino mariner from the SOLONG was killed. Also honored at the ceremony was the crew of the EL COQUI, who helped rescue the four-person crew of a 41-foot sailboat. A Special Mariner's Rosette was presented to Medical Services Officer Ralph Zastrow, serving aboard the M.E.B.A.-represented MSC vessel USNS AMELIA EARHART for his lifesaving efforts of a stricken crewmember with a medical condition. Congratulations all!

APL PHOENIX ON THE WAY TO INDIA

M.E.B.A. finished crewing up the Engineering Officer positions aboard the recently reflagged APL PHOENIX on Tuesday, before the vessel departed from Charleston on its India America Express (INDAMEX) service connecting the U.S. East Coast to South Asia.

The vessel's first M.E.B.A. Engine crew includes C/E Femi Olukanmi, 1st A/E Alex Semendyayev, 2nd A/E Philip Steinberg, and 3rd A/E Kervin Claude. Hours before the ship sailed, the company called for an emergency 3rd A/E for refrigeration maintenance and repair which was filled by member Marshall Cho. Atlantic Coast V.P. Jason Callahan and Charleston Rep. Giancarlo Mahalik were on hand on Tuesday to greet the crew mere hours before the vessel left on its run.

The Neo-Panamax PHOENIX is the largest ever U.S. commercial containership at approximately 1,079 feet long and 151 feet wide, with a gross tonnage of 110,000 Gross Tons and a deadweight capacity of about 130,000 tons. It is powered by a MAN B&W 10S90ME-C9 two-stroke diesel engine.

In March, CMA CGM Group, owner of M.E.B.A.-contracted American President Lines (APL), announced it would invest \$20 billion in the U.S. domestic supply chain over the next four years and bring in a number of U.S.-flag ships commensurate with the Administration's push to fuel American shipbuilding and the U.S.-flag fleet. However, there are no imminent plans to expand the initiative beyond the one ship, and the company's continued operation of the PHOENIX and the prospective future ships are likely contingent on many factors, perhaps most notably upon the Government's ability to follow through with tangible policies and regulations that ensure the vessels improve overall economics for CMA CGM while flying the U.S.-flag.

MLL, M-SHIPS, E-SHIPS RATIFICATION VOTE AT UPCOMING MEETINGS

There will be a ratification vote next week on a recently reached tentative agreement with Maersk Line Ltd. covering three contracts (MLL, M-Ships and E-Ships) after the parties wrapped up negotiations earlier this week. The agreements, covering 19 vessels, failed to win ratification at Union hall votes during the September membership meetings. The parties went back to the bargaining table and hammered out an improved agreement better tailored to member input. The revised tentative agreement has been sent to M.E.B.A. officers sailing under the contract for their review.

As always, members are strongly urged to attend one of the thirteen membership meetings taking place this coming week (November 3-7) at the M.E.B.A. Union halls. Those who cannot attend in person have the option of signing up for the Online HQ Informational meeting on Wednesday (11/5) at 1300 [Eastern] conducted on the Teams platform.

APPLICANTS LOOKING FOR MEMBER STATUS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR FULFILLING REQUIREMENTS

Applicants should know that 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. M.E.B.A. Headquarters does not, and cannot, update an Applicant's record with sailing time/years of service unless that Applicant submits the required paperwork, i.e. discharges, sea service letters, documentation of employment, to HQ, by e-mail, mail or via your local Union hall.

Qualified applicants trying to make membership should provide Headquarters with required documentation to ensure their inclusion on the next M.E.B.A. District Investigating Committee (DIC) report. The report, which will be voted on at the December membership meetings, compiles a list of those who have fulfilled the requirements of their application. 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 that may include an initiation fee and/or letters of recommendation. The M.E.B.A. Membership Department can be contacted by applicants who are qualified to make membership and want to ensure their inclusion on the DIC's December Report. For further information, you can visit your local Union hall or contact the HQ Membership Department at (202) 638-5355 or membership@mebaunion.org.

SLIGHT UPTICK IN PIRACY SINCE LAST REPORT

The ICC International Maritime Bureau (IMB) has revealed a slight increase in reported incidents of maritime piracy and armed robbery in the first nine months of 2025, with the highest recorded number since 1991 in the Singapore Straits. Despite the rise, IMB and its Piracy Reporting Centre (PRC) highlighted a continued overall reduction in global incident levels, with no significant attacks recorded.

IMB reported 116 incidents for the period of January-September 2025, up from 79 in the same period last year, the highest reported nine-month figures since 2021. The report reveals that 102 vessels were boarded, nine faced attempted boardings, four were hijacked and one was fired upon. In 91% of incidents, perpetrators successfully gained access to the vessel with most boarding incidents occurring at night. The threat of violence against crew remains a concern, with weapons identified in 55% of reported incidents in the first nine months of 2025. Guns were visibly carried in 33% of cases – the highest level since 2017. During this period, 43 crew members were taken hostage, 16 kidnapped, seven threatened, three assaulted and three injured. The Singapore Straits and Gulf of Guinea are the primary hot pots for piracy currently but caution is urged for mariners traversing the Gulf of Aden and near the coast of Somalia.

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

Monday, November 3 – Boston@1200. Seattle (Fife)@1300.

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

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

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

Friday, November 7 – 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 Calhoun 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