

MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)

"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"



M.E.B.A. TELEX TIMES

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LARGE-SCALE TURBO-ACTIVATION OF SEALIFT SHIPS WILL TEST AGING FLEET

This week, defense officials ordered a large-scale turbo activation of over 30 Maritime Administration Ready Reserve Force (RRF) and Military Sealift Command ships making this the most extensive deployment of surge sealift vessels since Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003. Vessel managers were informed late on Monday and ship officers began readying for action as additional crews were summoned to bring much of the RRF fleet into Full Operating Status (FOS).

The nation relies on 46 Ready Reserve Force vessels along with 15 Military Sealift Command ships for the initial surge of sealift capacity. As members know, the 46 vessels in the RRF are berthed at strategic locations around the country to help enable the rapid mass movement of Department of Defense (DOD) equipment and supplies in times of national and humanitarian emergencies. Each vessel in the fleet remains in a state of readiness so that the ship can sail within five days.

Officials insisted that the activation is an exercise and the decision to activate was independent of any real world operations. Currently, the vessels in the RRF fleet have an average age of 44 years. Defense officials believe this will be a good "stress test" to gauge the readiness of the aging fleet and its support network.

U.S. Transportation Command General Stephen Lyons and Maritime Administrator Rear Admiral Mark Buzby have made lawmakers aware about their sealift fleet concerns in past Congressional testimony. They have noted on multiple occasions that it is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain the required readiness due to the continued erosion of the U.S.-flag fleet, the weakening abilities of the aging sealift vessels and a smaller pool of current USCG qualified mariners than needed for an extensive campaign.

Once the activation call came in, M.E.B.A. officials and dispatchers rallied our members and worked the phones to get the additional billets filled on about a dozen RRF vessels managed by Patriot Contract Services (engine officers) and Keystone Shipping (deck and engine officers). The three Matson-managed RRF ships are predisposed and are not part of the activation. Several other RRF vessels are undergoing shipyard work and are not eligible for the exercise. There are also a few other vessels in the fleet that were already in FOS and serving on other missions.

The jobs were dispatched as 10-day assignments. The ships should be ready to sail toward the latter half of this weekend and crews will take the vessels out on sea trials before returning to their berths. Thanks to all the mariners who responded so quickly and helped the M.E.B.A. fulfill our obligations.

HOUSE PASSES WWII MARINER GOLD MEDAL BILL

A bill honoring World War II merchant mariners was passed by voice vote on the Floor today in the House of Representatives. Comparable legislation must still be addressed in the Senate before this long overdue tribute to our Fourth Arm of Defense becomes law.

Earlier today around 5 pm, Members on the House Floor took up H.R. 550, a bill sponsored by Rep. John Garamendi (D-CA) and Rep. Don Young (R-AK). The measure would authorize a gold medal of appropriate design to collectively honor World War II merchant mariners. The medal would be displayed in the American Merchant Marine Museum at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy in New York. Duplicates would then be struck and made available to the public.

The chances are still good that the gold medal bill could become law this year. The Senate has a companion bill (S. 133), which was introduced by Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK). Alternatively, the Senate could choose to take up the House-passed bill and send it to the Senate Floor for a vote. As mentioned in this space many times before, nothing should be taken for granted and readers are asked to continue efforts to highlight the importance of honoring our WWII merchant mariners.

You can visit this Navy League link that will let you send a ready-made letter to your Members of Congress urging support for the legislation honoring our Fourth Arm of Defense. Go to www.votervoice.net/NavyLeague/Campaigns/59995/Respond

UAW LOOKING FOR A FAIR SHAKE

46,000 General Motors' employees represented by United Auto Workers have been walking the picket line for almost a week after the sides failed to make sufficient progress on a successor agreement to replace the now-expired contract. UAW workers looking to get a fair shake from GM hail from 55 different GM facilities in 10 states.

As the workers prepared to go on strike at midnight on Sunday, the company finally presented its first substantive contract offer after months of attempting to force-feed one-sided proposals to the workers that failed to address lingering concerns. Along with a fair wage increase, UAW workers are looking for affordable healthcare, job security provisions and other issues including the treatment of temporary employees.

As GM rakes in record profits, its workers are looking to be treated as partners instead of just pawns. UAW was there for the company during the auto industry's darkest moments in the 2008-2010 auto industry crisis and agreed to major concessions that helped the company climb out of its self-dug hole. "We stood up for General Motors when they needed us most," said UAW Vice President Terry Dittes. "Now we are standing together in unity and solidarity for our members, their families and the communities where we work and live."

Indeed, company executives have made sacrifices as well. Last year, GM Chairman and CEO Mary Barra's compensation dipped below \$22 million.

UAW Local 652 Bargaining Committee Chair Ted Krumm said, “This is a decision we did not make lightly. We are committed to a strong contract at GM that recognizes our UAW members, who make some of the greatest products in the world and make GM so profitable.”

The Teamsters recently announced they will not transport GM vehicles during the length of the strike. AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka said the 12.5 million working people represented by the AFL-CIO are standing with – and marching alongside striking UAW workers. “We will have their backs every day until they win the respect and security that they deserve.”

A WEEK & A HALF LEFT TO VOTE IN WSF REFERENDUM

Members sailing in the Washington State Ferry fleet have just over ten days to make their voices heard on the ongoing Online Dues Equity Referendum. The 30-day referendum began on September 1 and continues until midnight on September 30th.

WSF members – not applicants – are deciding whether or not to support a fair and progressive dues increase proposal that would reinforce the Union’s ability to provide sustainable future representation. The proposal has been structured by the District Executive Committee (DEC) to provide for a more equitable dues structure, similar to comparable inland bargaining units that have voted to implement dues increases in recent years.

Members with additional questions should contact WSF Representative Eric Winge at (206) 310-5900 or ewinge@mebaunion.org or Marco Cannistraro, who can be reached at (202) 257-2825 or marco@mebaunion.org.

FUNDING FOR NEW SOO LOCK APPROVED IN SENATE

Senate appropriators have agreed to \$75.3 million for construction of a new lock at Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, mirroring a previously passed Soo Lock funding bill in the House. Four parallel locks on the St. Marys River make up the Soo Locks, which enable vessel traffic between Lake Superior and the lower Great Lakes.

Though the proposed funding is less than the \$89 million the Army Corps of Engineers requires for the project, the approved-amount is being celebrated as a victory by Great Lakes interests. An additional lock was authorized in both 1986 and 2007, but funding could not be secured. The MacArthur Lock is the youngest of the four Soo locks. It was built in 1946. The Poe Lock dates back to 1896.

The Senate bill goes to the Floor for its expected passage. Once approved, Senate and House conferees must agree on a final version before its ultimate journey to the President’s desk for signature. Funding would allow the construction of a new lock in about seven years.

CENTRAL GULF REBRANDS AS WATERMAN TRANSPORT

Central Gulf Lines is no more. The company will now be known as Waterman Transport Inc. and will operate with its sister company Waterman Steamship Corp. under the newly-created “Waterman Logistics” banner. Both are subsidiaries of Seacor Holdings which made the announcement earlier this week. Operations are unaffected by this rebranding.

The Waterman Transport-managed vessels (formerly Central Gulf) include the Pure Car/Truck Carriers (PCTCs) GREEN COVE, GREEN LAKE, GREEN POINT and GREEN RIDGE. Each are part of the Maritime Security Program.

Henry Nuzum, President of the Waterman businesses also stated that it would continue to expand its commercial business. “We have been a leading transporter of high and heavy cargo between the U.S. West Coast and the outlying U.S. territories, including Guam. We look forward to bringing this service to international destinations in Asia.”

RE-ISSUANCE OF MMCs DESTROYED BY DORIAN

The Coast Guard has issued a notice alerting mariners that free duplicate Merchant Mariner Credentials (MMCs) can be obtained by mariners affected by Hurricane Dorian or the subsequent flooding it caused.

Mariners requiring a duplicate were asked to provide basic information and a statement of loss to the National Maritime Center in order to receive an expedited replacement credential. You can visit the NMC website (www.uscg.mil/nmc) for details. Mariners can also pursue credential replacement through one of the Regional Examination Centers.

Questions or concerns can be answered on the NMC website, or by emailing the NMC Customer Service Center at IASKNMC@uscg.mil, by using the NMC online chat system, or by calling 1-888-IASKNMC (427-5662).

MARAD ANNOUNCES CARGO PREFERENCE TRAINING COURSES

The Maritime Administration (MarAd) announced the launch of newly-accredited, web-based training courses on cargo preference laws and regulations. They are intended to enhance comprehension of and compliance with cargo preference laws by other federal agencies, supporting contractors, and program participants, such as loan and grant recipients.

“Cargo is king in the shipping business and cargo preference laws help U.S.-flag operators remain competitive and put American workers first,” said Maritime Administrator Mark Buzby. The curricula begins with an introduction to maintaining a U.S.-flag merchant fleet. Additional courses provide further information regarding U.S.-flag vessel requirements pertaining to government cargo. These complimentary courses are available to the public and can be accessed at <https://www.dau.edu>.

MARINER MEDICAL MANUAL MADE AVAILABLE

The Coast Guard has made the Merchant Mariner Medical Manual available to better assist seafarers and others in the industry in evaluating a mariner applicant's physical and medical status to meet the requirements of the merchant mariner medical certificate. This Manual incorporates and consolidates prior guidance on the medical evaluation of merchant mariners contained in several Coast Guard documents. The Manual includes guidance on the medical certificate and related processes, including procedures for application, issuance, and cancellation of the medical certificate. It is available at www.uscg.mil/nmc.

REMINDER: APPLICANTS SEEKING MEMBERSHIP IN DECEMBER SHOULD FORWARD DOCUMENTATION

Qualified applicants trying to make membership should make sure they provide Headquarters with required documentation to ensure their inclusion on the next District Investigating Committee (DIC)

report. The DIC meets twice a year to review applicants for membership and will meet in November shortly before the release of their December report. 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 which may include an initiation fee and/or letters of recommendation.

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.

The DIC will meet in November and will review candidates for membership at that time. ***Applicants who have fulfilled the necessary requirements need to get their information into Headquarters so they can be included in the next DIC Report and make membership in early December.*** The DIC will put their report listing qualified applicants before the membership at the regular meetings in December. If the report is passed, listed applicants will be accepted into 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, fax, or mail or via your local Union hall. For further information you can visit your local Union hall or contact the HQ Membership Department at (202) 638-5355 or membership@mebaunion.org.

REGULAR MONTHLY MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

Monday, October 7 – Boston@1200; Seattle (Fife)@1300;
Tuesday, October 8 – CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230;
Wednesday, October 9 – Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315;
Thursday, October 10 – L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300;
Friday, October 11 – Honolulu@1100.

-----FINISHED WITH ENGINES-----



The M.E.B.A. is the nation's oldest maritime labor union, established in 1875. M.E.B.A.'s expertise and proven 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. Visit us on Facebook. For publication and related inquiries 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.