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New Jobs for AMO on the *M/V SL Midway*

Schuyler Line Navigation Company has reflagged the general cargo vessel *M/V SL Midway* into U.S. registry, bringing new job opportunities to the members of American Maritime Officers.

The *SL Midway* recently passed U.S. Coast Guard inspection in Texas and is expected to operate in international trade, potentially delivering military cargo under charter with the Defense Department. The 450-foot-long vessel boasts a load capacity of 9,700 tons.

Through an agreement with Argent Marine, AMO will represent all licensed positions on the seven-year-old ship. AMO also represents the officers on two other Schuyler Line vessels, the *SLNC Severn* and the *SLNC York*.

The *SL Midway* adds to the increasing number of new vessels under the AMO umbrella in recent months, including heavy-lift vessels, cargo ships and tankers.

"AMO is proud to join Argent in welcoming *SL Midway* to the U.S.-flag fleet. This ship provides AMO members with new



Members of American Maritime Officers working aboard the *M/V SL Midway* as the vessel was reflagged into U.S. registry, here in Houston in February, included Master Michael Wallace, Chief Engineer Matthew Fuss, Second Assistant Engineer Chester Brown, Second Mate Christopher Cudney, Third Mate Eric Gerow and Third A.E. Dawson Jones. Not in the picture were Chief Mate Cameron Dyer and First A.E. Richard Sachar. With them is AMO National President Willie Barrere and AMO Deep Sea Vice President Jeff Richards.

SL Midway – Page 2

AMO Officers Operating New ESB *USS Simanek*



The U.S. Navy's Military Sealift Command and Ocean Ships, Inc. entered into an agreement for the operation of the latest expeditionary sea base, *USS Robert E. Simanek* (ESB 7), providing new jobs for members of American Maritime Officers.

The *USS Simanek* was delivered to the Navy in September and recently left General Dynamics NASSCO's shipyard in San Diego for its new home berth.

ESBs are optimized to support a variety of maritime based missions, including Airborne Mine Counter Measures, Crisis Response Force Sea Basing, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance and Unmanned Aviation Systems. The ESBs, which include a four spot V-22 sized flight deck, mission deck and hangar, are designed around four core capabilities: aviation

USS Simanek – Page 3

Page 8: Jones Act Cargo Ship *El Coquí* Rescues Four at Sea

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What's New

By Willie Barrere
National President

It has been a little more than a year since I took the helm at AMO. It's been fascinating — a tremendous amount to learn, both inside and out. We continue moving forward and in a positive direction.

There are several new developments and I'll cover some of them here. There is more new in the making and we are working closely with operating companies, elected officials, and others to achieve outcomes before making announcements.

We have new ships. AMO officers are onboard the *SL Midway* — a replacement vessel for the *Magothy* that was reflagged in February.

AMO is also onboard the *American Energy* — Crowley's Jones Act LNG tanker, which will operate between the U.S. mainland and Puerto Rico. We are expecting an official announcement in March.

AMO is onboard the *Charybdis* — a wind turbine installation vessel nearing completion in Texas. Vessel crewing is being done by Atlas, a relatively new company for AMO.

AMO is onboard two new VAM ships in Norfolk that were purchased for service in the Ready Reserve Force — the *Cape San Roman* and the *Cape Suarez Point*.

AMO officers are onboard the newly reflagged vessel *Allied Brooklyn*, which is operated by a new AMO-contracted company, Federated Maritime.

In Oregon, AMO officers are preparing to move the *USS Simanek* to the East Coast. AMO officers began manning this vessel last fall with OSI as the operator.

In April, we expect to officer-up another Tanker Security Program ship in the fleet. This one will be operated by Argent.

An expansion of the TSP has been authorized by law. The program currently numbers 10 ships. We expect our contracted companies to be competing for slots when funding for the expansion of the fleet is appropriated at some point in the future.

AMO-contracted company TOTE is the construction manager for the NSMV school ships and also has an operating contract for three of them. When they are deployed for special missions, AMO officers man them.

We have a new agreement with American Steamship Company for winter work as covered employment during layup on the Great Lakes and AMO members are working on the company's thousand-footers this winter in various rotations.

We continue to work with our contracted companies on bidding for new projects and new opportunities in various markets.

On the downside, we lost a few vessels last year, and we will lose Sealift's *SSG Edward A. Carter* in March as the APS3 military program is eliminated.

AMO and Sealift Inc. worked with other unions and companies to fight this approach to military downsizing in DC, but the U.S. Army is looking to save money to put into future projects as the military focuses on new and evolving missions. This new direction by the military initially brought on the development of the Tanker Security Program, along with a lot of successful work by AMO and AMOS on Capitol Hill.

As you know, there is a new President and a new administration and a lot of change happening very quickly in DC.

For the U.S. Merchant Marine, this brought about the suspension of U.S. food-aid shipments, followed almost as quickly by a waiver for emergency food aid. AMO, AMOS, and other maritime interests, as well as U.S. farmers, have been involved in intense discussions with Congress and the administration from day one. As of now, all Food for Peace shipments that have already been contracted and placed at terminals or loaded on vessels can be completed but no new contracts will be approved through US-AID. In Congress, we are actively supporting Republican-sponsored bills that would transfer the Food for Peace and Food for Progress programs to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Contributing to the AMO Voluntary Political Action Fund on a regular basis is an excellent way for our members to participate in support of the Jones Act and various maritime laws. There are programs we need to help make sure survive this transformative time in our nation, and there are opportunities for new work and expansion for American mariners. We need to support the lawmakers who support the U.S. Merchant Marine in these and other regards and we need your help to do it.

In February, AMO hired a new dispatcher, Shawn Stone, to augment our

Dispatch team as we continue to increase our job totals. We will be bringing in our new East Coast representative — Marrisca Capp — in March. She is currently sailing as chief engineer and is due off her ship soon.

Across the street, the STAR Center recently bought the equipment and course material for a new GWO training class so we can train our officers locally for the wind farm industry. This will start up later in the year.

STAR Center will also be increasing the class enrollment for the TECH and OICEW programs.

We are continuing to work with MEBA and MMP on our pass-throughs in order to keep our vessels moving and we are all filling in billets as needed.

AMO is bringing in new staff to assist with our social media outreach. You can follow us on Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn. These social media sites are a start in helping us raise awareness of our industry. With more new jobs, we need more new officers.

So far this year, we have reduced the jobs sitting open on the board by about 75 percent. We are continuing to make much needed improvements to the internal dispatching system we inherited from the past administration. And we are expanding the recruiting efforts that were launched by members of this NEB. We must connect more members and applicants with jobs on AMO-contracted vessels.

I am really pleased to report numerous AMO officers are reaching out to get material for high school presentations. We are developing Power Point slides for future presentations by our members and have a huge project underway for bringing in a new generation of mariners working with high school guidance counselors from across the nation. It will be our second year of participation and the first year most of the rest of the maritime industry will be joining us, thanks to the work of AMO and STAR Center.

We have more members, new ships, new companies, more recruiting, and new outreach. With our newly negotiated contracts, there is more money being paid to our members than this time last year. The AMO Executive Board continues working to improve our union operations with the goal of being the number one choice for licensed mariners. Thank you all for your continued support.



American Maritime Officers members attending meetings of the AMO National Executive Board and AMO Plans Board of Trustees in January included Chief Mate Brian McCormick, Chief Engineer Keith Montpas, Captain Nick Haines, First Mate Ryan Miller and Second Assistant Engineer Alexander Georgiadis.

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SL Midway

Continued from Page 1

job options and the DOD with a versatile platform for sealift cargo," said AMO National President Willie Barrere. "We look forward to expanding the partnership between Argent and AMO throughout this year and beyond."

Schuyler Line CEO and Argent President Dion Nicely said: "We are pleased to bring the SL MIDWAY to the U.S.-flag fleet. She is the most modern and fuel-efficient Multi-Purpose Vessel in the U.S.-flag fleet today and we look forward to supporting DOD, USG, and other global partners through our worldwide logistics network. We value



our longstanding partnership with AMO and look forward to continuing to grow the SLNC fleet in the near future."



Above: "AMO officers and crew aboard the *Robert E. Simanek* successfully navigated the ship from NASSCO in San Diego to Vigor in Portland, Oregon for Military Sealift Command this December. Teamwork and dedication at sea!" wrote Captain Carrie Stewart, master on the *USS Simanek*.

Members of American Maritime Officers working aboard the *USS Robert E. Simanek* as the ship traveled from San Diego, Calif. to Portland, Ore. in December included (front) Third Mate Colin Adler, Captain Carrie Stewart, Second Assistant Engineer Brandon Joest, Third A.E. Zachary Nicholas, Chief Engineer Gregg Daley, (back) Second Mate James Deckert, Third A.E. Hamid Megahed, Third A.E. Shane Sterling, Chief Mate Andrew Wellman, EO William Staton and First A.E. Robert Mussler.



USS Simanek

Continued from Page 1

facilities, berthing, equipment staging support, and command and control assets.

The ship is named for Private First Class Robert Ernest Simanek, who was awarded the Medal of Honor for shielding fellow Marines from a grenade at the Battle of Bunker Hill during the Korean War.

The two original ships in the class were built in 2012 and initially called mobile landing platforms – the *John Glenn* and *Montford Point*. Both ships are currently manned by AMO. The Navy reclassified the next five ships ESBs.

"ESB ships are mobile sea-based as-



AMO members working aboard the *USS Simanek* in December, here in Oregon, included Third Assistant Engineer Hamid Megahed, First A.E. Brandon Joest, Chief Engineer Robert Mussler and Captain Ron Bunch.

sets and are a part of the critical access infrastructure that supports the deployment of forces, equipment, supplies and warfighting capability," said Tim Roberts, Strategic and Theater Sealift program manager, Program Executive Office Ships.

Follow-on ESB, the *USS Hector A. Cafferata Jr.* (ESB 8), is currently under construction at NASSCO.

"American Maritime Officers is proud to work with our partner Ocean Ships Inc. on this important assignment. Our officers are well trained and suited to carry out this task," said AMO National President Willie Barrere. "We look forward to continuing our relationship and assistance with Military Sealift Command and the U.S. Navy in the future."

Custom AMO Logo-Wear Available Online for Purchase

A website through which American Maritime Officers members and applicants can purchase a wide variety of AMO logo-wear was launched in 2024. An "Apparel & More" link is available on the AMO home page (www.amo-union.org) at the top of the page in full-screen view and in the mobile menu when viewed on a phone. The apparel store can be accessed directly at:

<https://stores.crsapparel.com/AMOApparel/shop/home>

American Maritime Officers does not and cannot profit from the apparel store website. The website access and setup was free to the union. All AMO members and applicants are encouraged to have a look.



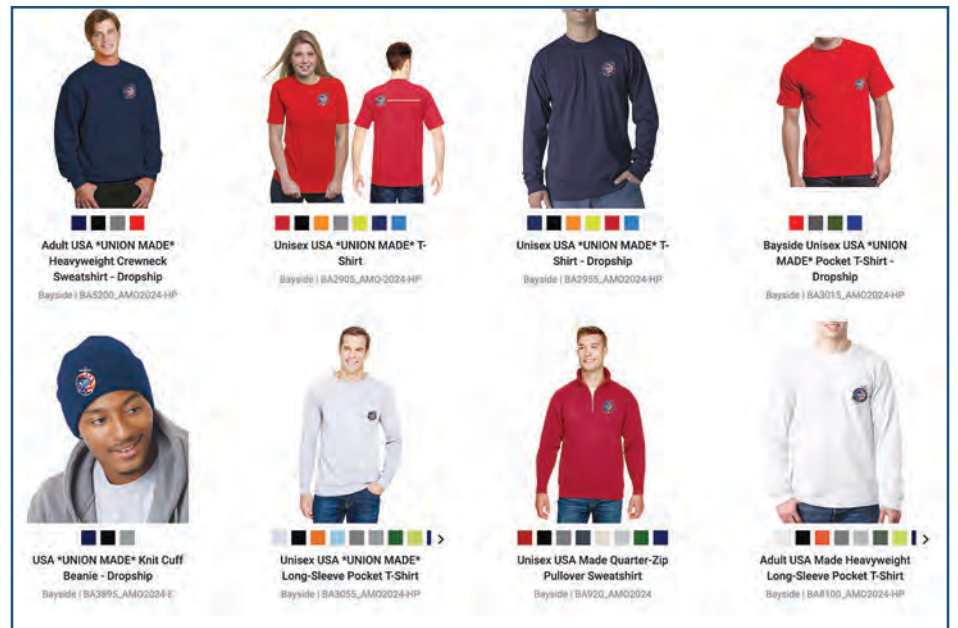
The apparel website is desktop, tablet and phone friendly. Not all items available are shown on the home page. You can click on "Products" and select "View All Products" to see a full selection of options available. Items range from work, leisure, and professional gear to luggage, hats, and travel accessories. The website will maintain many staple items, but the selection of other options may vary depending on factors such as the season.

When choosing a "decoration" (AMO logo option) for each item when applicable, a drop-down menu is provided on the individual item page. Please note that as you toggle through the options on the drop-down menu, the image will not change to reflect your selection. To view all decoration options, please scroll through the home page as each option is displayed on various items there.

As you click on each item, you will notice an Item Number/Code under the bold title name. At the end of this code you will notice a "HP" or an "E." This will signify if the decoration on that particular item is Heat Pressed or Embroidered.

Items in the "Pro Shop" category do not show any logos in the pictures. However, they will include the AMO logo and the item code will tell you the same information as above.

Please note that in most cases the prices are above retail. This is so that the company



can acquire, customize, and quickly ship each item on an individual basis, thus getting to its destination faster.

Most companies require a minimum order of each item before being able to acquire and customize, leading to immense shipping delays and/or the need for multiple shipments. The "one off" method we've chosen also eliminates the need for over-ordering and paying storage fees of stocked items.

Shipping is only available within the United States. However, if you need to ship overseas, please contact Alaina Basciano, Assistant VP of Government Relations, by email: abasciano@amo-union.org. Please make the email subject line: AMO Swag Site-Overseas Shipping.

AMO Onboard as *USNS Able* Completes Shipyard Period



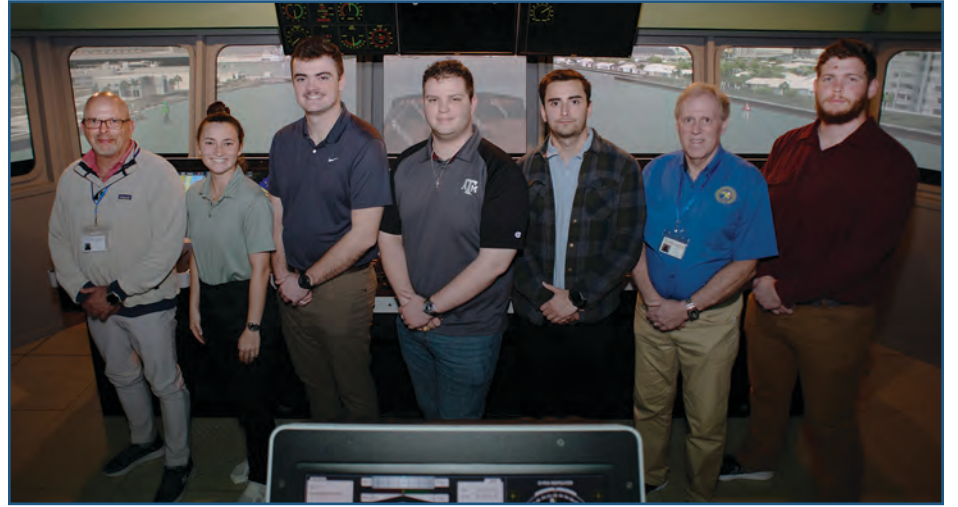
The *USNS Able*, which is owned by the Department of the Navy and operated under contract by Crowley Government Services, is part of the Military Sealift Command's Special Mission Ships Program and is manned in all licensed positions by members of American Maritime Officers. AMO members working aboard the *USNS Able* in December, here in Japan, included Captain Kyle A. Dupuis, Chief Mate Jeffrey Chicklas, Second Mate Fred Sinclair, Third Mate Alicia Plunkett, Chief Engineer Bruce Zarobell, First Assistant Engineer Edwin Jay Alcos, Second Assistant Engineer Lauren Harrison and Third Assistant Engineer Sassan Mansourzadeh.



AMO Members, Applicants Train at STAR Center



AMO members participating in MSC Force Protection training in January at STAR Center included (in no particular order): Instructors Patrick Jones and Eric Augustus, Jake Daly, Jonathan Doucot, Greg Sutton, Kevin Kirk, Kaleb Cunningham, Keith Baily, Tom Doherty, Asher Spalding, Scott Andersen, Stetson Lail and Michelle Danhof.



AMO members participating in Advanced Shiphandling for Third Mates training at STAR Center in January included (left to right): Karl Carr (auditing in an instructor role), Jenna Pearce, Peter Shelton, Ryan Nelson, David Rodriguez, Lead Instructor Bruce Cumings, and Philip Panzera.

TECH Program Graduate Earns Third Engineer's License

Welcome aboard, Timothy McDonald, who graduated from STAR Center's TECH Program in January. McDonald passed his Third Assistant Engineer's license exam and started work on the *MT Magnolia State* in February.

The TECH Program, a one-of-its-kind pathway that started in 2014, provides selected candidates with the opportunity to proceed on a marine engineering career path and help fill the shortage of marine engineers.

The program targets those with an interest in the Merchant Marine and mentors them during intense training onboard ship and ashore.

The TECH program takes approximately two years to complete and alternates between classroom training and sea phases. Upon successful completion of the program, the individual commences career employment as a marine engineer with AMO.



Current Course Schedule Available on the **STAR Center Website**



The current STAR Center course schedule is available on the STAR Center website at the address below. The STAR Center schedule will no longer be printed in the AMO newspaper. The STAR Center course schedule is also sent by email each month to AMO-contracted vessels and to AMO members and applicants at the email address each has on file with the union.

www.star-center.com/schedule.html

AMO Members and Applicants Can **Register Online** for STAR Center Courses

STAR Center is no longer accepting paper course registration applications by FAX, nor scanned paper applications by email. AMO members and applicants will need to register for courses on the STAR Center website. With a phone, scan the QR code to open a link to the online course registration form, or in the address bar of a Web browser, enter the following URL:

www.star-center.com/forms/reg.mbr.live.html



AMO Members and Applicants Are Asked to Register for Courses As Far in Advance As Possible, and To Submit a Course Application Even if the Preferred Course/Start Date Has a Wait List

AMO members and applicants are asked to submit an application for course registration as far in advance of the course's start date as possible for all courses. Applications received less than 60 days in advance of a course's start date are more difficult to accommodate. AMO members and applicants are also asked to submit an application for their preferred course and start date even if there is a wait list. STAR Center is sometimes able to accommodate those who are on a course wait list.

The Battle for Survival of a Program Vital to National Security, the U.S. Merchant Marine and American Farmers

The vital roles of U.S. food-aid programs in national and economic security rapidly rose to front and center after an executive order was signed by the President January 20 implementing a 90-day suspension of U.S. foreign assistance programs.

The executive order was followed by a waiver applying to existing U.S. food-aid cargoes, among other things, allowing commodities that had already been contracted for, transferred to shipping terminals or loaded on vessels to be delivered. Under the waiver, only existing contracts can be fulfilled and no new tenders will be forthcoming from USAID.

American Maritime Officers and American Maritime Officers Service directly engaged on this development on Capitol Hill when the executive order was signed, working with maritime and agricultural interests to elevate awareness of the importance of U.S. food-aid programs.

Recognizing the threat to these programs that are critical to national interests, and to their constituents in particular, lawmakers have introduced companion legislation in the Senate and House of Representatives to remove U.S. food aid from the jurisdiction of USAID. The bills are sponsored by Senator Jerry Moran (R-KS) and Representative Tracey Mann (R-KS) — S. 525 and H.R. 1207, respectively — and would “transfer the functions, duties, responsibilities, assets, liabilities, orders, determinations, rules, regulations, permits, grants, loans, contracts, agreements, certificates, licenses, and privileges of the United States Agency for International Development relating to implementing and administering

the Food for Peace Act to the Department of Agriculture.”

U.S. food-aid programs, including Food for Peace and Food for Progress, place commodities grown by American farmers on trucks and trains within the U.S. to be transported to our ports. Much of this food is loaded on U.S.-flagged merchant vessels of several types and delivered to nations in need around the world. In addition to relief for famine and emergency food shortages of all sorts, U.S. food-aid programs provide global markets for American farmers and cargoes for U.S. domestic ground transportation providers, as well as for American vessels manned by U.S. merchant mariners. American mariners are needed to operate active and reserve military support vessels in regular sealift operations and in times of contingency and conflict.

In signing the Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance Act of 1954, Republican President Dwight D. Eisenhower stated: “It will lay the basis for a permanent expansion of our exports of agricultural products, with lasting benefits to ourselves and peoples in other lands.”

Under the Cargo Preference Act of 1954, “at least 50 percent of any equipment, materials or commodities procured, contracted for or otherwise obtained with funds granted, guaranteed, loaned, or advanced by the U.S. Government under this agreement, and which may be transported by ocean vessel, shall be transported on privately owned United States-flag commercial vessels, if available.”

These cargoes, including those generated by American farmers through Food

for Peace Title II and Food for Progress, help ensure U.S. merchant vessels remain in active service and American merchant mariners remain actively employed and current on their skills and certifications.

Testifying February 5, 2025 during a hearing of the House Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Subcommittee, Chairman of the industry-labor coalition USA Maritime Brian Schoeneman stated: “Let me be clear — there is no more ‘America First’ set of foreign aid programs out there than the Title II PL 480 Food for Peace program and the Food for Progress program. These are programs, which have been around for more than 70 years, where American food is purchased and shipped on American ships to help feed hungry people and expand demand for American commodities. These programs are some of our best diplomatic tools, and they work. The Philippines were long one of America’s main recipients of Food for Peace shipments, and today they are our third largest market for American wheat. When these programs work, they are not simply giveaways to foreign countries — they are programs that support American farmers and merchant mariners, and they should be continued, regardless of what happens to USAID.”

Addressing witnesses during a Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee hearing February 6, Sen. Moran — sponsor of the Senate bill that would transfer U.S. food-aid programs to the Department of Agriculture — said: “While there is certainly a moral component to food aid, I thought it might be

valuable for you to remind me if there’s a value to farmers.”

Responses from farming industry representatives during the hearing emphasized this and other valuable aspects of U.S. food-aid programs.

“The food aid programs that do buy American commodities are critically important and we want to make sure those continue to function. Unfortunately, we have seen a temporary pause on programs like Food for Progress that is stopping more than 200,000 metric tons of wheat valued at over \$65 million to our producers from being purchased from this country,” said National Association of Wheat Growers President Keefe Felty.

“Our members certainly recognize both the humanitarian need for that food aid but also the impact that it can have in terms of bringing stability to our own markets. And particularly now with a lot of pressure on a lot of those commodities, some of those commodities are at risk should there be major disruptions here from falling even further,” said National Farmers Union President Rob Larew.

President of the American Farm Bureau Federation Zippy Duvall described a conversation he had with a retired military officer relating to U.S. food aid. “We also got to think about the stability of our world,” Duvall said, adding the retired general told him: “what you do brings more stability to this world than anything else because when people get hungry, they get mean and mad and they get jealous of our country that has everything available to them because of the food system.”



The *Sea-Based X-Band Radar* platform (SBX-1) provides ballistic missile tracking and object discrimination information for the U.S. Missile Defense Agency. The vessel is operated for Military Sealift Command by TOTE Services, Inc. and is manned in all licensed positions by American Maritime Officers.



AMO Aboard the *SBX-1*



American Maritime Officers members working aboard the SBX-1 in January, here in Pearl Harbor, included Captain David Baker, Third Mate Chris Gabrielson, Second Mate Geri Villan, Chief Mate Erick Amiscosa and Third Mate Dan Bridgeman. With them is AMO West Coast Representative Alex Butler.

At left: Second Mate Geri Villan leads a pre-departure meeting with the deck officers as the SBX-1 prepares for its next mission.

U.S. Shipping Companies Invest \$150 Million in Critical Vessel Maintenance this Winter in the Great Lakes Region

The following article was released by the Lake Carriers' Association.

With winter in full swing, the U.S.-flagged fleet of lakers are tied up in ports across the Great Lakes region to perform critical maintenance before the navigational locks in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan reopen on March 25. Hundreds of skilled shipyard workers will flock to the area to support the nearly \$150 million maintenance investment being made on these massive ships. The state receiving the largest amount of work is Ohio with \$51.5

million, followed closely by Wisconsin at \$51 million, Pennsylvania at \$25 million, Minnesota and Michigan both getting \$9 million, and another \$3 million will go to facilities in New York and Illinois.

"This level of investment is a testament to the strength of the U.S. shipping industry on the Great Lakes. Domestically produced steel will be installed on many ships by U.S. welders and electronic equipment will be upgraded by American electricians. It is good for the ships, good for local jobs, and great for the Great

Lakes region," stated Jim Weakley, president of the Lake Carriers' Association.

After nine and a half months of continuous operations loading and unloading various bulk cargo, the ships get a short rest period. Most of the crew that sailed will get a prolonged vacation while engineers and other support staff work over the winter to make sure the vessels are in top shape when the season begins again in March. Propulsion equipment will be tuned and, in some cases, replaced, steel hull plating and welds will get re-

freshed, and crew comforts will be added or upgraded.

Since most lakers in the U.S.-flag fleet are too large to exit the Great Lakes due to the limiting size of the Seaway locks, they will remain comfortably accommodated at some of the world's best ship repair facilities right here in Great Lakes states.

Investment in the current Great Lakes ships is an investment in the future of the North American economy and the continued strength of our nation.

AMO Onboard the *Indiana Harbor* for Winter Lay-Up



The M/V *Indiana Harbor* chills at its lay up dock in Ashtabula, Ohio in January. American Maritime Officers recently reached an agreement with American Steamship Company for winter lay-up work as covered employment.

Above right: American Maritime Officers member Chief Engineer John Norick (left) meets with AMO National President Willie Barrere aboard the M/V *Indiana Harbor* during lay-up in Ohio.

At right: Second Assistant Engineer Zachery Harris talks with AMO National President Willie Barrere in the engine room of *Indiana Harbor*.



U.S.-Flag Great Lakes Cargo Movement Down 3.9 Percent in 2024

The following report was released by the Lake Carriers' Association.

U.S.-flagged Great Lakes freighters (lakers) moved 78.2 million tons of cargo in 2024, a decrease of 3.9 percent compared to 2023. The 2024 float was 2.1 percent below the fleet's five-year average.

Compared to 2023, salt shipments increased by 5.8 percent while sand shipments increased by 15.2 percent. Iron ore shipments totaled 43.9 million tons, a 3.6 percent increase from the prior year. Grain cargoes decreased by less than one percent to 312,345 tons. Coal cargoes were down 12.7 percent to 7.3 million tons. Limestone shipments declined by 14.5 percent to 21.1 million tons and cement shipments dipped by 6.3 percent to 3.5 million tons.

(Net Tons) Commodity	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Average 2019-2023
Iron Ore							
Direct Shipments	46,004,805	33,422,404	37,960,232	35,370,648	39,008,635	41,041,726	38,353,345
Transshipments	3,678,669	3,637,614	3,690,957	2,017,176	3,375,654	2,876,166	3,280,014
Total - Iron Ore	49,683,474	37,060,018	41,651,189	37,387,824	42,384,289	43,917,892	41,633,359
Coal							
Lake Superior	7,952,133	4,930,728	7,268,985	6,160,250	5,367,531	5,173,375	6,335,925
Lake Michigan	723,841	560,057	827,962	878,467	803,237	842,896	758,713
Lake Erie	2,642,972	1,764,650	2,255,738	2,262,121	2,230,065	1,318,754	2,231,109
Total - Coal	11,318,946	7,255,435	10,352,685	9,300,838	8,400,833	7,335,025	9,325,747
Limestone	24,086,722	20,694,823	24,141,410	23,704,683	24,631,568	21,062,713	23,451,841
Cement	3,288,509	3,441,467	3,612,012	3,748,705	3,732,534	3,497,443	3,564,645
Salt	923,476	866,354	1,162,396	1,230,538	1,158,665	1,225,424	1,068,286
Sand	413,040	411,165	500,055	653,695	734,591	846,102	542,509
Grain	289,728	314,849	366,154	356,503	314,513	312,345	328,349
Totals	90,003,895	70,044,110	81,785,901	76,382,786	81,356,993	78,196,944	79,914,737

The crew of the Crowley cargo ship *M/V El Coquí*, a United States Coast Guard aircrew, and local fishermen rescued four U.S. citizens from a life raft in the Atlantic Ocean's Silver Bank waters north of the Dominican Republic on January 21.

According to the Coast Guard, around 8 a.m., David Potts, 63; John Potts, 62; Andrew Cullar, 26; and Russel Case, 67, were forced to abandon their sailing vessel *Mariposa* after the 41-foot boat reportedly struck a submerged rock and was then overtaken by a wave which caused the vessel to roll.

The boat struck another rock, which breached the hull, and started taking on water while additional waves flooded the vessel before sinking it in less than ten minutes. The four men had recently purchased the sailboat and were scheduled to travel from St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands to Portofino, Texas, with an anticipated stop in Key West, Fla.

Coast Guard Sector San Juan Command Center watchstanders received an unregistered 406 Emergency Positioning Radio Beacon signal alerting of a possible distress approximately 180 miles northwest of Puerto Rico. Coast Guard watchstanders directed the launch of an Air Station Miami HC-144 Ocean Sentry aircraft out of Air Station Borinquen in Aguadilla, Puerto Rico, to search for any signs of a possible distress or survivors.

El Coquí, a Jones Act vessel that was traveling its normal shipping route from San Juan, Puerto Rico to Jacksonville, received the Enhanced Group Calling (EGC) and an Automated Mutual-Assistance Vessel Rescue (AMVER) from the Coast Guard around 9:20 a.m., notifying the crew to be on the lookout for a possible vessel in distress. *El Coquí* is manned in all licensed positions by American Maritime Officers.

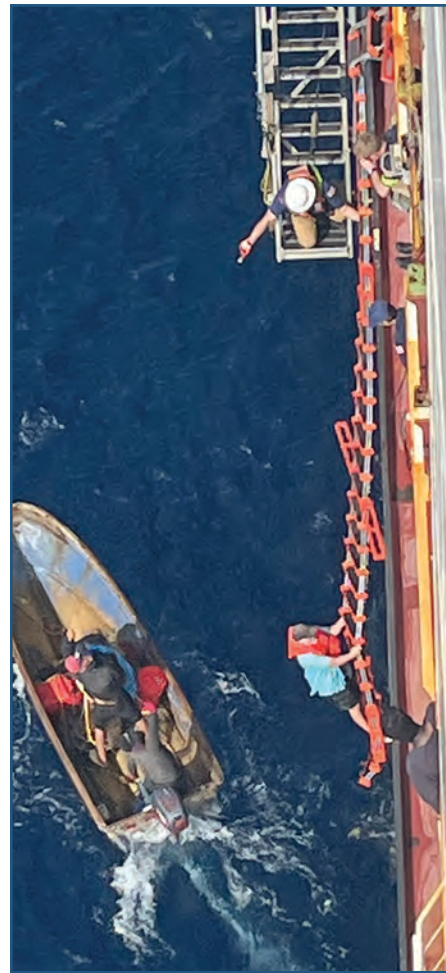
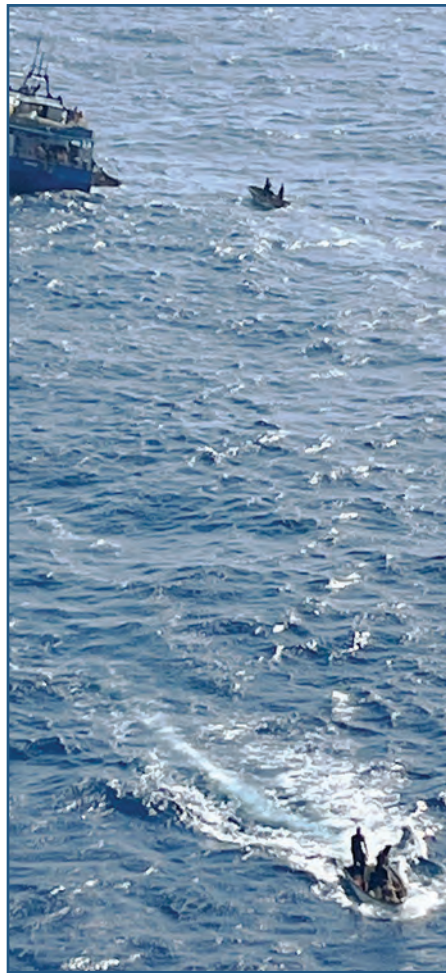
El Coquí Captain Kurt Breitfeller said the ship was about 16 nautical miles from the area when he decided to search for the cause of the signal. Once the vessel arrived, the *El Coquí* crew spotted the four men in a life raft in a very rocky area, but the large containership could not maneuver closer than three miles away.

Luckily, several small boats were fishing in waters near the area and the

Jones Act Ship *El Coquí* Rescues Four Men Stranded Near Dominican Republic



The sailors rescued near the Dominican Republic – David Potts, John Potts, Russell Case and Andrew Cullar – gather for a photo with Captain Kurt Breitfeller, master on the Jones Act combination container and roll-on/roll-off ship *El Coquí*.



Coast Guard fixed-wing aircraft was able to get their attention, which led to the small boats picking up the men from the raft and transferring them to *El Coquí*.

Because of the terrain and tumultuous weather conditions, it took four hours for the fishing vessel to rendezvous with *El Coquí* and to get the men safely aboard the vessel, Breitfeller said.

"I told them they were just in the wrong place at the wrong time, but we were in the right place at the right time to render aid," he said. "I always believe that things happen for a reason and the timing of us being in that area to help could not have been more perfect."

Once onboard, the four waterlogged men were given fresh clothes, shoes and toiletries donated by the *El Coquí* crew, and were given food and water and rooms in which to sleep. No medical treatment was necessary, but the ordeal had taken a toll.

"They were exhausted both mentally and physically. We literally had to drag them up the ladder because they could barely make it," Breitfeller said. "You could tell they were mentally spent. They even said they couldn't sleep because they kept having nightmares about what happened."

El Coquí arrived in Jacksonville on Thursday, where the men disembarked, thankful to be on dry land. As for the ship's crew, being able to perform a rescue at sea that resulted in the possible saving of lives was a unifying and educational experience for all, Breitfeller said.

"In my 36 years, this is my first rescue and it's one of the best feelings as master for things to go so well because at the end of the day, we want everyone to get home to their families and those men will be with their families soon," he said. "The crew really came together and performed with incredible professionalism, and that comes from constant practice, drills and training. I'm really proud of them."

At left: The four men were safely transported to Jacksonville, Fla. thanks to the efforts of *El Coquí's* crewmembers, including Third Mate Gavin Cooper.



New Work for AMO on Heavy-Lift Ship *Allied Brooklyn*

American Maritime Officers organized the officers, and in January, signed an agreement covering the heavy-lift ship *M/V Allied Brooklyn*.

AMO had received pledge cards from the ship's officers and was able to finalize the terms for a five-year agreement with Federated Crewing on January 17. The *Allied Brooklyn* operates in international trade and is expected to participate in short- and long-term government charters.

Federated acquired and reflagged the *Allied Brooklyn* into U.S. registry in 2024. Construction of the ship was completed in 2012.

"I am very pleased we have signed with Federated — a new company to AMO — providing new work for our membership," said AMO National President Willie Barrere. "Our contracts team did an excellent job and we look forward to working with the company on the *Allied Brooklyn*, and on new opportunities for our members."



The officers and crew of the *Allied Brooklyn* commemorated the vessel's first voyage after being reflagged into U.S. registry. In the picture are Jerry Gilligan, Angelica Corcia, Ken Zuniga, Andrew Graham, Preston Hass, Andrzej Weglarczyk, Blake Callihan, Maximillian Warncke, Robbie Tolbert, Nicolas Bruen and David Ellsworth.



AMO in the Express Marine Fleet



American Maritime Officers members working aboard the Express Marine tug *Freedom* in January, here unloading coal at Duke Energy in Crystal River, Fla., included Second Assistant Engineer Mark O'Neal and Third A.E. Terry Popperwill, Jr. With them is AMO National Vice President, Inland Waters, Joe Brown.



AMO members working aboard the Express Marine tug *Honor* in January, here loading limestone at Duke Energy in Crystal River, Fla., included Second Assistant Engineer Charles Gryb, Third A.E. Todd Potter, Third A.E. Aaron Hannah and Chief Engineer Jackie Pruitt. With them is AMO Inland Waters Vice President Joe Brown.

AMO Welcomes New Deep Sea Dispatcher Shawn Stone

American Maritime Officers is proud to welcome Shawn Stone aboard as a new dispatcher. Ms. Stone may be familiar to some AMO members as she previously spent eight years at TOTE Services, Inc. in several capacities, including claims specialist and crewing supervisor.

She joins the Deep Sea Dispatch Department at the perfect time, where she will work with Brendan Keller and Roy Emrick to serve the growing AMO membership and connect members and applicants with the union's increasing number of job opportunities on new vessels. Along with her wealth of knowledge from working in the maritime industry, Stone also sailed during her time in the U.S. Navy, where she served the nation for over nine years.

Shawn Stone can be reached via e-mail: ssstone@amo-union.org, via phone at (954) 367-1037 or mobile phone at (728) 205-0861.



Critical to National and Economic Security, Construction of New Large Lock at Sault Ste. Marie Enters Next Phase

The Soo Locks are vital to national security and keeping our economy strong. Approximately 75 million tons of cargo pass through the Soo Locks annually. Moving the cargo with Great Lakes freighters saves approximately \$3.9 billion over truck or train transportation.

According to a 2015 Department of Homeland Security Study, "an unanticipated closure of the Poe Lock, the only lock large enough at the Soo Locks to allow passage of the thousand-foot Lakers carrying iron ore, would be catastrophic for the nation. A six-month Poe Lock closure would temporarily reduce the U.S. gross domestic product (GDP) by \$1.1 trillion, resulting in the loss of 11 million jobs: approximately 75 percent of the U.S. integrated steel production would cease within two to six weeks after a closure of the Poe Lock; approximately 80 percent of iron ore mining operations would shut down; and nearly 100 percent of North American appliances, automobile, construction equipment, and farm equipment, mining equipment and rail-car production would shut down."

Currently, the locks are being replaced and refitted in order to keep them operating smoothly and a new lock is being built to accommodate the growing needs of the region.

The new lock, which will be named at a later date by the U.S. Congress, is being constructed in the footprint of the old



Sabin Lock built back in 1919, said Carrie Fox, spokeswoman for the Army Corps of Engineers.

"The reason the Soo Locks have been so reliable over the years is due to the recurring construction of new locks every two or three decades. Up until now, the biggest gap was 24 years from the opening of the Sabin Lock to the MacArthur Lock," Fox said.

The new lock will be completed by 2030 and will provide a 1,200-foot-long lock to accompany the aging 1,200-foot Poe Lock and the 800-foot MacArthur Lock that provide access between Lake Superior and the lower Great Lakes. When the New Lock is completed, it will be a state-of-the-art lock, which will have a service life of decades, Fox said.

The Army Corps recently completed

the second phase of the project in September, which involved rehabilitating the approach walls to guide vessels into the new lock. During the initial phase of the project, completed in August 2022, construction crews removed 300,000 cubic yards of bedrock to deepen the northern channel.

The final phase of the project involves demolishing the Sabin Lock, filling another older lock — the Davis Lock — constructing a new pump well, and building the new lock's chamber. This new lock will introduce modern features such as hands-free mooring units, Fox said.

Much like the vast and varying impact the Great Lakes locks system has on the nation's economy, the number of different agencies involved in the construction project has been immense and a boost to the local economy.

More than 30 engineers have been needed to oversee the design and construction of the New Lock, as well as a design team of over 100 professionals led by the Inland Navigation Design Center and made up of Army Corps of Engineers employees across seven districts, including Louisville, Nashville, Pittsburgh, Detroit, Buffalo, St. Louis and Huntington, Fox said.

"The Detroit District team works long hours in extreme cold and snowy conditions to complete a significant amount of maintenance during this time," she said. "The work they perform is unique, especially given the harsh northern Michigan conditions they work in."

At the height of construction, the New Lock project created around 600 direct jobs a year between the Army Corps of Engineers and contractors directly working on the project, and an additional 210 indirect jobs and 430 induced jobs.

And much of the material used to build the new structure has been provided by the Great Lakes region — over one million tons of limestone and granite, 110,000 tons of American-made cement and 25,000 tons of American-made steel.

Soon after completion of the new lock, the 62-year-old Poe Lock will be shut down to be refurbished and rebuilt so that Great Lakes shipping can be capable and equipped to handle a growing and modern shipping industry.



Rendering of new large lock at Sault Ste. Marie upon completion



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Transition to John Hancock as AMO Plans Recordkeeper for Retirement Accounts

As reported, American Maritime Officers Plans is in the process of transitioning from Newport to John Hancock as the Recordkeeper for AMO Plans 401(k), Defined Contribution and Money Purchase Benefit retirement accounts.

- AMO Plans has established a dedicated email box for questions regarding the John Hancock transition. If you have questions or need assistance regarding the transition, please contact: amoretirement@amoplans.com.
- John Hancock will be mailing information to all eligible participants in the coming weeks. Once received, no action is required. The notices will be for informational purposes only and will provide a timeline of important dates and resources.

One of the most frequently asked questions so far has been: Why is AMO Plans making the transition to a new Recordkeeper in what seems to be a short time frame?

The current AMO Plans Recordkeeper, Newport, informed the Board of Trustees late last year the company would no longer be administering any Taft-Hartley (union) benefit plans. The AMO Plans Trustees interviewed and evaluated proposals from Recordkeepers that were able to assume administration of the AMO Plans retirement benefit funds by the deadline presented by Newport of March 31, 2025. Based on these evaluations, John Hancock was selected by the Board of Trustees as the best option for AMO Plans participants.

The following is a point of clarification in response to conversations with some AMO Plans participants regarding the role of a Recordkeeper versus the role of a Financial Advisor.

A **Recordkeeper** handles the administrative functions of a retirement benefit plan, such as tracking contributions, processing transactions, maintaining records, and ensuring compliance, but generally does not provide investment advice.

A **Financial Advisor**, often acting as a fiduciary, offers strategic guidance on investment selection, risk management, and plan optimization to help sponsors make informed financial decisions.

John Hancock will become the new Recordkeeper; the AMO Plans Financial Advisor is Merrill Lynch.

Important Reminders:

1. There will be a blackout period from March 25 until April 18 during which distributions cannot be requested and retirement investments cannot be adjusted or reallocated. Deposits will continue to be made into accounts and deposits will continue to be invested in the market, but your investment strategy cannot be altered during this period.

2. This transition will include a change regarding investments in model portfolios (aggressive, moderate aggressive, moderate, conservative). The model portfolios were last rebalanced January 1, 2025 and will not be rebalanced again with the transition to John Hancock taking place April 1, 2025.

The underlying funds in the model portfolios will continue to be available after the transition. Members and applicants who are invested in the model portfolios will continue

to have future contributions added to the funds at the current percentages slated by the models unless they take individual action to reallocate their investments. Members and applicants who choose to remain in a model's underlying funds should rebalance them periodically on their own.

For more detailed information about these two points (Model Portfolios and Transition Period), please see the excerpts from The Benefits Connection newsletter included at the end of this article.

Future email bulletins regarding this transition will include information on registering an online account with John Hancock. The Go-Live Date to establish your online account will be April 18, 2025. Once an online account is established, you will be able to monitor and manage your retirement fund investments.

Until the blackout period for the transition to John Hancock begins, AMO Plans participants can continue to monitor their retirement benefit funds online on the Newport website at www.newportgroup.com.

AMO Plans has provided additional information regarding the transition via electronic communication and in the January 2025 edition of The Benefits Connection. This and additional information has also been mailed to participants by John Hancock.

Summary of Fund Exchanges Prior to the Transition:

Current -- New

- Dodge and Cox Stock I -- **Dodge and Cox Stock X**
- American Funds Europacific Growth F3 -- **American Funds Europacific Growth R6**
- TCW MetWest Total Return Bd Plan P -- **JHancock R6**
- Allspring Core Plus -- **JHancock Bond R6**

Model Portfolios:

The transition to John Hancock will include a change regarding the various model portfolios that have been in place (Aggressive, Moderate Aggressive, Moderate and Conservative).

The underlying investment funds in which the models are invested will transfer to John Hancock in kind ("as is"), and at the same asset allocation percentages currently in place. Future contributions will also continue at the same asset allocation unless a participant takes individual action to reallocate the investments.

The change that will take place after the transition is that the model portfolios will no longer be referenced as "models". This means that the asset allocations within these portfolios should be monitored at your own discretion based on your individual financial goals, your risk tolerance and your time horizon.

In addition, these portfolios will no longer be automatically rebalanced for you as they had previously been with Newport. So, if you are currently invested in any one of the four model portfolios and you want to remain in that portfolio's designated asset allocation, you should rebalance periodically on your own after the transition. In any portfolio, rebalancing is a way to keep your investments aligned with the desired asset allocation that you have chosen.

As a participant with John Hancock, you will have access to the "Morningstar Retirement Manager" tool at no additional cost to you. This offers a step-by-step action plan for selecting your investments, calculating how much to save, deciding when to retire and withdrawing your money in retirement. This tool provides recommendations based on your goals and the options available in the AMO retirement plans, while you maintain control over your investment decisions. You will receive further instructions on how to access this tool once we go live with John Hancock.

Transition Period:

Deposits will continue to be made into accounts and deposits will continue to be invested in the market, but your investment strategy cannot be altered during this transition.

The transition will take place from March 25 until April 18 during which time distributions and loans cannot be requested and retirement investments cannot be adjusted or reallocated. This time frame is referred to as the "blackout period." The Go-Live Date to establish your online account is April 18, 2025. Once an online account is established, you will be able to monitor and manage your retirement fund investments.

MONTHLY AMO MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

Regular monthly membership meetings for American Maritime Officers will be held on the first Wednesday of every month except in the months of January, June, July and September, when the membership meeting will be held on the second Wednesday. Meetings will be held at AMO National Headquarters and will begin at 1 p.m. local time. The next meetings are scheduled to take place on the following dates:

March 5, April 2, May 7



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