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Sealift Brings *MV Montauk* Under U.S. Registry, Adding Jobs for AMO Membership

AMO-Contracted Company Expands Fleet to Five with Acquisition of Multi-Purpose Vessel for U.S.-Flag Service

The *MV Montauk* is the latest addition to the U.S.-flag fleet and has entered operation under contract with American Maritime Officers.

Sealift LLC and the union recently arrived at terms for a new-work agreement covering the officers aboard the *Montauk*, adding jobs for the AMO membership. The ship was accreted into the union's existing CBA with Sealift.

Formerly the *MV Sjard*, the *Montauk* was reflagged into U.S. registry in late September with AMO members onboard and is entering U.S.-flag service in the Sealift fleet.

The company completed acquisition of the vessel in early September.

The *Montauk*, which was built in 2007, is the third deep-sea vessel added to the AMO-contracted fleet in recent months, building on the trend of new U.S.-flag tonnage consistently being trusted to AMO officers.

The *Montauk* becomes the fifth Sealift LLC vessel manned in all licensed positions by AMO. The other ships in the company's fleet are the *MV Captain David I. Lyon*, *MV Maj. Richard Winters*, *MV Sagamore* and *MV Maj. Bernard Fisher*.



AMO Crew Saves Three from Sinking Sailboat

Jones Act Tanker *Florida* Comes to the Rescue off the Coast of Oregon



What should have been a warm Welcome Home turned into a rescue mission after the occupants of a sinking sailboat needed the assistance of members of American Maritime Officers and the Seafarers International Union on the Jones Act tanker *Florida* off the coast of Oregon.

On September 2, AMO Captain Ben Hopkins and his crew on the Crowley-managed tanker saved three men and their three cats from the sailboat, ironically named *Welcome Home*, which was taking on water about 75 nautical miles off the Oregon coast.

The three young men — Gabriel Gonzalez, Gino Gonzalez and Gary Dixon — had been stranded at sea for five days as an unexpected cold front rolled in, causing rough seas that battered their 41-foot sailboat. The boat's battery had died and the bilge

Rescue at Sea — Page 3

Ballots Mailed for 2026 AMO Election

Ballots Returned by December 1 Cast by AMO Members in Good Standing Will Be Counted

Regardless of dues status, all members of American Maritime Officers, as well as all applicants for membership in AMO, were mailed a ballot package at the end of July by the independent third-party election administrator — TrueBallot, Inc.

As required under Article IV, Section 5 of the AMO National Constitution, AMO members and applicants are responsible for keeping their contact information, including current mailing address and email address, up to date with the union.

Each member and applicant can verify the address to which TrueBallot has mailed their ballot by sending an email (which must include full name and Mariner Reference Number) to: **duplicate2026@amo-union.org**.

If the address TrueBallot was provided by the union to mail your ballot is no longer valid, if your ballot is lost or damaged, or if you need a ballot mailed to you on a vessel, a request for a duplicate ballot (including full name and MRN) can be sent to the same email address. TrueBallot will mail a duplicate ballot package either to your current primary address or to an alternate address if so requested.

Only one ballot per member may be cast.

While all AMO members and AMO applicants were mailed a ballot package, only

ballots received by December 1 that are cast by AMO members who were AMO members in “good standing” as of November 30, 2026 will be counted in the tally. Ballots cast by AMO applicants who have not become full AMO members in good standing by November 30, 2026 will not be counted.

AMO members and applicants can check their dues status on the AMO website at **www.amo-union.org** by selecting the MEMBER LOGIN tab (LOGIN on mobile devices). A button to view your dues statement will load once you log into your account.

No publicity for candidates

So as not to give any candidate an undue advantage in the forthcoming election of AMO national officers, neither the names nor photographs of candidates, whether incumbent or not, will be published in articles in the union’s newspaper, *American Maritime Officer*, or the union’s online periodical, AMO Currents. In the case of news stories that involve an incumbent who is a candidate, only the candidate’s title may be mentioned.

- If an AMO member or applicant has not received their ballot package at the primary mailing address they have on file with the union, the address to which a ballot package was mailed can be verified by sending an email to **duplicate2026@amo-union.org**. The email must include the full name and Mariner Reference Number of the member or applicant.
- If the address TrueBallot was provided by the union to mail your ballot is no longer valid, if your ballot is lost or damaged, or if you need a ballot mailed to you on a vessel, a request for a duplicate ballot can be sent to the same email address. The email must include your full name and Mariner Reference Number. TrueBallot will mail a duplicate ballot package either to your current primary address or to an alternate address if so requested. Only one ballot per member may be cast.
- All AMO members and AMO applicants were mailed a ballot package. Only ballots received by December 1 that are cast by AMO members who were AMO members in good standing as of November 30, 2026 will be counted in the tally.
- Make sure to mail your ballot far enough in advance so it is received at the ballot repository by December 1.
- AMO members: Make sure your dues are paid in advance in full through the end of the fourth quarter of 2026 far enough ahead of November 30, 2026 to ensure all payments are processed in time to establish good standing.
- AMO applicants: Make sure you have completed the application process for membership under the requirements of the AMO National Constitution well in advance of November 30, 2026 and your dues are paid in advance in full through the end of the fourth quarter of 2026 far enough ahead of November 30 to ensure all payments are processed in time to establish your status as an AMO member in good standing.
- If you have questions regarding your dues or your dues statement, which is available in the member section of the AMO website (**www.amo-union.org**), please email AMO Member Services at **memberservices@amo-union.org** or call (800) 362-0513 extension 1050 during East Coast business hours.
- A published copy of the AMO National Constitution was mailed to AMO members and applicants with the January/February edition of the AMO newspaper. A link to the digital copy of the AMO National Constitution is available on the homepage of the AMO website and it can be viewed at: **www.amo-union.org/constitution**.

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:

October 7, November 4, December 2



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TOTE Services Assumes Operation of Ready Reserve Force Ship *Cape Hudson* with AMO Officers Onboard



In August, TOTE Services officially assumed operation of the Ready Reserve Force ship *Cape Hudson* for the U.S. Maritime Administration. Members of American Maritime Officers working aboard the *Cape Hudson*, here in San Francisco, to prepare the ship for regulatory inspection included Captain Douglas Garee, Chief Mate Sean Hall, Third Assistant Engineers Lucas Farmer and Michael Watson, Chief Mate Robert Wattam, and Third Mate Dexter Turija. With them are members of the unlicensed crew of the *Cape Hudson* and *Cape Horn* represented by the Seafarers International Union. AMO represents all licensed officers aboard the *Cape Hudson* and *Cape Horn*.

Rescue at Sea

From Page 1

pump proved ineffective as water started to fill the cabin. The men had recently been discharged from the U.S. Army and were headed to San Francisco from Tacoma, Washington to start their first semester of college, the trio told Captain Hopkins. They purchased the boat and planned to live on it to save money on rent, Hopkins said.

The *Florida* was on its routine Jones Act route from Tacoma to Martinez, California with a load of fuel and it was Captain Hopkins' last discharge before he was to be relieved and head home for a well-earned vacation.

Fate had different plans.

"It's the law of the sea and at the heart of being a mariner is to assist people in need — be it fellow shipmates or others in distress," Captain Hopkins said.

At about 10:20 a.m., the *Florida* received a distress relay from another vessel in the area and immediately responded. Realizing he was only 12 miles away from the foundering sailboat, Captain Hopkins immediately altered course and called his crew together to form an action plan.

Once on scene, the *Florida* crew fashioned a long tow line and tossed it to the men as Captain Hopkins maneuvered in very low visibility into position to protect the sailboat from the 60-knot winds gusting in the area. The sailboat was in rough shape, with the mast broken and laying across the deck. The waves had ripped away the dingy attached to the side of it.

After the vessel was brought alongside, the next challenge was bringing the weary men aboard safely.

One of the men had suffered a

concussion the night before caused by falling due to the choppy waves. Five *Florida* crewmembers used a line and rigged a scramble net as a precaution to safely hoist the injured sailor onto the tanker first. The other two men, who were severely seasick, were assisted up the pilot ladder by the deck crew — with three furry companions in tow.

Once onboard the *Florida*, the sailors were given a change of clothes, food, water, medicine and ride into San Francisco. Captain Hopkins said the rescue took about four hours. He believes the sailboat ultimately sank in the ocean.

AMO members onboard the *Florida* included Second Mate Brandon Locklin, Third Mates Megan Durrue and Caden White, Chief Engineer Jason Brown, First Assistant Engineer Cody Pirtle, Second A.E. Cherokee Johnson, Third A.E. Nalu Keahi Ho and PIC Observer Padric McGrath.

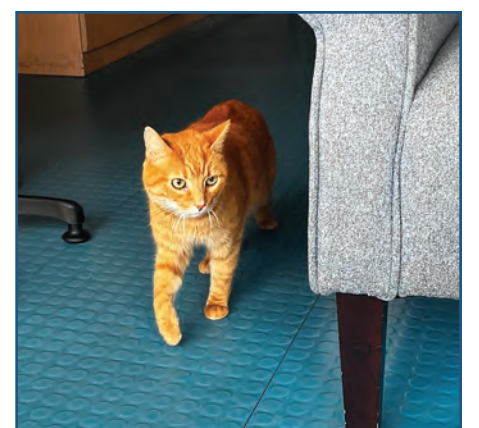
"This was my first rescue so I told the crew if anybody had better ideas, I was all for them," joked Hopkins. "They did a phenomenal job and we got them home safely."

Hopkins gave special praise to Chief Mate Zachary Jones and SIU Bosun Samuel Duah for coordinating the rescue on deck

and making sure everyone was safe in rough seas.

"It was an all-hands effort. The whole crew was out there," said Hopkins. "The crew performed with absolute professionalism. From expertly handling the heaving line in strong winds and bringing them alongside in challenging conditions. Everyone immediately jumped into action. It was super dynamic conditions."

It turned out to be a welcome home, after all, thanks to the heroic efforts of the officers and crew of the *Florida*, and the presence of the Jones Act tanker in regular domestic trade.



Changes to MSC Small Arms Training at STAR Center

Military Sealift Command is in the process of replacing the M9 Beretta pistol with the M18 Sig Sauer pistol and the M14 Springfield rifle with the M4 Colt rifle. The replacement process is taking significantly longer than planned. Whereas MSC has repeatedly stated that there is **NO** requirement for mariners to be qualified on both pistols and both rifles,

as there is only a need to be qualified in the weapon used to stand watch, the transition process is nevertheless causing a need for mariner qualification in all weapons.

STAR Center is aware that AMO contracted companies are using private providers to train AMO officers in all 5 weapons. Feedback received is that the training process of these providers is not ideal.

STAR Center has created a 5-weapon, 5-day schedule, submitted to and approved by MSC, that trains one (1) weapon each day, 0800 to 1600. To meet the requirement for Security Watchstander Advanced (SWA), which includes required Rules for the Use of Force (RUF), we will train for 2 to 3 hours per evening, Monday through Wednesday, from 1700 each day. It is recognized that this is not ideal, but it is the only way to meet the training requirement and to complete by 1600 Friday.

Until we have some experience, we are unsure of what time may be available to remediate and re-shoot for those who fail to qualify during their initial live fire attempt. We will do our best to assist whenever we can.

The new 5-weapon schedule will have its first offering 05 to 09 October and on the following dates (those enrolled in any of these dates will be notified and switched to the 5-day format):

■ October 12 to 16, November 30 to December 03, January 04 to 0-8, 2027, February 01 to 05, February 08 to 12, March 08 to 12, March 29 to April 02, April 12 to 16, April 26 to 30, May 17 to 21, May 24 to 28.

We will continue to offer 4-day Small Arms training as previously advertised for **EITHER** the legacy weapons (M9 Beretta pistol, M14 Springfield rifle and Shotgun) **OR** the new weapons (M18 Sig Sauer pistol, M4 Colt rifle and Shotgun) – with SWA on Fridays – on the following dates:

■ October 26 to 29, November 02 to 05, December 14 to 17, January 18 to 21, 2027, February 22 to 25, April 05 to 08, May 03 to 06

When the weapon switch onboard MSC contracted vessels is 100% complete, expected some time in 2027, STAR Center will revert to the 4-day schedule for the new weapons **only**.

Any questions regarding MSC Small Arms and SWS courses should be directed to Patrick Jones, Manager, Small Arms Training, at 800-942-3220 Ext. 7270 or via e-mail: pjones@star-center.com.

STAR Center's course schedule can be accessed with the QR code below or at www.star-center.com/schedule.html. Enrollment questions or applications should be directed to Student Services at 800-942-3220 Ext. 201 or via email: register@star-center.com.

TECH Program Graduate Gets Underway with AMO Aboard Jones Act Tanker *Evergreen State*

Etosha Chen-Lopez, a graduate of The Engineering Candidate Hawsepipe (TECH) Program Class 114, completed all exams for her Merchant Mariner Credential and started her sailing career with American Maritime Officers as Third Assistant Engineer aboard the Jones Act tanker *Evergreen State*.



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.

Jones Act an Asset to Affordable, Reliable Energy Supply

Ongoing Waiver Has Not Reduced Prices at the Pump at All, But Has Given American Work to Foreign Operators and Undermined U.S. National and Economic Security

Reaction throughout the United States maritime community was tempered yet direct after President Donald Trump opted to extend the already-historically long waiver of the Jones Act an additional 90 days from August 17.

Leaders from the commercial shipping, shipbuilding and maritime labor communities responded to the news with a similar message: continuing to waive the Jones Act is unnecessary and dangerous for the future of the U.S. Merchant Marine.

The American Maritime Partnership (AMP), the voice of the domestic maritime industry, issued the following statement in reaction to the White House's announcement to extend the Jones Act waiver another 90 days from August 17.

"President Trump's decision to require a case-by-case review before allowing foreign vessels to carry domestic maritime commerce is an improvement over the previous blanket Jones Act waiver, which took work from American mariners and shipbuilders and froze investment in the maritime industrial base. However, we are disappointed that the waiver has been extended when the public record is clear: the waiver has not lowered fuel prices for American consumers and has been used to increase oil traders' margins, not meet military needs. AMP urges the Trump Administration to conduct a rigorous review of the national defense justification for each and every waiver request and to carefully assess the availability of U.S. vessels before allowing a foreign vessel to move cargo between U.S. ports. AMP also

AMO's Response to 90-Day Jones Act Waiver Extension

The following statement was released August 14 by the National President of American Maritime Officers.

As the voice of the largest maritime labor union for U.S. Coast Guard licensed officers, American Maritime Officers vehemently disagrees with the Trump Administration's decision to extend the already-unprecedented waiver of the nation's chief cabotage law, the Jones Act.

The proud and professional men and women of the U.S. Merchant Marine have always answered the call to support this nation in peace and in war and for more than 100 years, the Jones Act has supported them, guaranteeing mariners will have cargo, ships and the opportunity to practice their vital craft that is pivotal to America's economic and national security. Make no mistake, any weakening of the Jones Act is hurting not only the merchant marine, but also the country's national security infrastructure and economic vitality.

At a time when the war for the world's economic power will be determined on the seas, taking away critical cargo that would normally go on U.S. bottoms diminishes our great nation's goals both domestically and abroad. We at AMO implore the Trump Administration to end this ineffective and unnecessary waiver and instead institute policies to increase cargo opportunities, incentivize commercial shippers to use the U.S.-flag fleet and enhance support for our U.S. Merchant Marine.

underscores the importance of ensuring that any foreign vessel granted a waiver to meet a genuine national defense need for which a U.S. vessel is not available complies fully with all other applicable U.S. law, including tax, immigration, labor, etc. This is essential to putting American workers and taxpayers first," said AMP President Jennifer Carpenter.

Despite pressure from the maritime community and members of Congress,

Trump granted the 90-day extension allowing foreign-flagged ships to transport oil and other commodities between U.S. ports.

The White House claims the extension is part of a strategy to keep gas prices down as the war with Iran rages and use of the Straits of Hormuz to get oil out of the region continues to be stained.

But recent studies have concluded transportation costs amount to less than a

penny of prices at the pump, so using foreign-flagged vessels provides little relief to motorists. But weakening the Jones Act could do irreparable harm the domestic maritime industry, experts said.

"Broad Jones Act waivers stifle the long-term capital investments essential to our commercial shipbuilding markets, maritime fleet, and domestic supply chains," said Matthew Paxton, president of the Shipbuilders Council of America. "As the U.S. shipyard industrial base works alongside the Trump Administration to spark a generational revitalization of our maritime sector, any future waivers during this 90-day period must be strictly justified on a national security basis to safeguard this historic progress."

More than 200 foreign-flagged voyages under the waiver have occurred in U.S. waters, taking away valuable opportunities for U.S. mariners.

"What the waiver has accomplished is the transfer of American jobs and domestic cargoes to foreign ships employing low-wage crews operating under Flags of Convenience. It has also created a wind-fall for refiners, oil traders, and foreign vessel operators, while sidelining American mariners and U.S.-flag vessels that stand ready and able to perform this work," wrote Seafarers international Union President David Heindel in a letter asking Trump to end the waiver.

"The Jones Act is not an obstacle to affordable energy. It is a cornerstone of our nation's economic and national security. It's time to end the waiver and put American workers first."

AMO Aboard Jones Act ATB OSG Vision on Delaware River



Members of American Maritime Officers working aboard the Jones Act ATB OSG Vision in May, here providing lightering service near Philadelphia, included (above) Second Mate Ken Pagliughi, Chief Engineer Robert Elwell, Second Assistant Engineer Matt White and Third Mate Colby Collings. At right is Second Mate Charles Sporing on deck.

AMO members working aboard the OSG Vision in May included (above) Chief Mate Robert Carlstad, Second Assistant Engineer Forbes Henry and TECH Program Apprentice Engineer Evan Campbell.

U.S. Maritime Administrator Stephen Carmel Addresses AMO Members, Tours STAR Center Training Facilities

U.S. Maritime Administrator Stephen Carmel made a surprise visit with members of American Maritime Officers during the Crowley Maritime Officers' Conference being held at STAR Center in Dania Beach in August and had a candid conversation about the recent Jones Act waiver extension and future plans to improve the domestic fleet.

During his visit, he also met with STAR Center directors and staff and toured the simulation training facilities on campus. He also reviewed the AMO-STAR Center TECH Program and met with apprentice engineers training in Dania Beach.

Invited by the AMO National President to speak to the gathering of more than 150 AMO members attending the Crowley Officers' Conference, Maritime Administrator Carmel did not shy away from the topic on everyone's mind: What is next for the Jones Act?

Carmel said the Maritime Administration had already reviewed nine new waiver requests submitted to the Department of War since the extension was announced last week, but his office had identified U.S. flag vessels that could accommodate 66 percent of those requests. The Department of War does not have to follow MARAD's recommendations to use the domestic fleet, but Carmel said he

intends to make it as difficult as possible for decision makers not to.

"We are doing everything we can to make this as transparent and visible as we possibly can [for cargo to go on U.S.-flag ships]," Carmel said. "The short version is to make it harder to ignore us."

Carmel, a former AMO captain and previous president of U.S. Marine Management, also discussed the recently submitted Maritime Action Plan, which included MARAD's push for cargo preference enforcement to increase cargo and his intentions to move the future of shoreside and ship propulsion toward nuclear power. Last month, MARAD signed an agreement with the Port of Long Beach to develop

safety standards to use small nuclear generators called small modular reactors (SMR) to produce shoreside power at the docks.

"One of the biggest things we have going here is returning the merchant marine to nuclear power. This is not some technology fantasy. This is a very real thing happening right now," Carmel said. "We're focused very hard on public acceptance, acceptance of cargo owners and interests — all the things that surround regulations and safety ... This will change the way all mariners operate in your lifetime."

After speaking briefly with AMO members and answering questions, Carmel toured STAR Center and came away impressed with the number of offerings at the training facility, including the bridge and engine simulators, fire fields and gun range. In 2024, STAR Center was recognized as a Center of Excellence for Domestic Maritime Workforce Training and Education by MARAD.

This is the first time STAR Center has hosted the Maritime Administrator since 2019 when retired Rear Adm. Mark Buzby toured the campus.

Maritime Administrator Carmel met with STAR Center Director of Operations Graeme Holman and Director of Training Jerry Pannell, and with the AMO National President.



Invited by the AMO National President to speak to American Maritime Officers members attending the Crowley Maritime Officers' Conference at STAR Center in August, Maritime Administrator Stephen Carmel discussed the situation with the ongoing Jones Act waiver, the Maritime Action Plan, the Maritime Administration's focused emphasis on key elements of U.S. maritime policy, such as cargo preference enforcement, and the need for innovative shifts toward modern nuclear power solutions for shipping.



During his tour of the STAR Center training facilities in Dania Beach, Maritime Administrator Carmel met with TECH Program Apprentice Engineers Northcliff Fries, Evan Campbell, Allison DiFilippo, Emilie Whitlow, Jesse Moses and Sokoya McDuffie, as well as STAR Center directors and staff in several departments. The AMO Safety and Education Plan's STAR Center is a Maritime Administration Center of Excellence for Domestic Maritime Workforce Training and Education.

MARAD Presents Captain of *Maersk Yorktown* with U.S. Merchant Marine Meritorious Service Medal

American Maritime Officers member Captain Michael Zarycki received one of the highest honors a merchant mariner can receive when the U.S. Maritime Administration awarded the *Maersk Yorktown* master with the United States Merchant Marine Meritorious Service Medal in September in Washington, D.C.

Zarycki was honored for his exemplary leadership in support of Operation Epic Fury — proving once again the dedication and value of the U.S. Merchant Marine in peace and in war.

As a military conflict over control of the Straits of Hormuz broke out with Iran in February, the *Maersk Yorktown* quickly

pivoted from its commercial assignment in the Middle East to answering the call of MARAD as part of the Maritime Security Program, a fleet of commercial vessels that can be called upon by the Department of War for military use.

And for two months, *Maersk Yorktown* ferried important military assets

and cargo within the region, oftentimes under threat of enemy fire in an active contested area. Under Zarycki’s leadership in conjunction with Department of War objectives, *Maersk Yorktown* was able to successfully complete missions assigned to it and ensure the entire crew returned home safely.



Captain Michael Zarycki receives the United States Merchant Marine Meritorious Service Medal from MARAD Deputy Administrator Mark Johnson.



Captain Zarycki is congratulated by American Maritime Officers National Vice President, Government Relations, Christian Spain.

American Roll-On Roll-Off Carrier Awarded FEMA Disaster Response Contract

American Roll-On/Roll-Off Carrier Group Inc. (ARC Group) reported in August the company was awarded an indefinite-delivery/indefinite-quantity contract by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to provide national “cross-dock” and incident base support during emergen-

cies and disaster response operations. Under the contract, ARC will provide logistics capabilities to help FEMA position and rapidly deliver critical, life-sustaining resources where they are needed

ARC — Page 12

U.S. Maritime Administrator Visits RRF Ship *Cape Island*



U.S. Maritime Administrator Stephen Carmel visited the Ready Reserve Force ship *Cape Island* in Long Beach, California in September as a part of a tour of the Port of Long Beach, where the Maritime Administration wants to explore the use of nuclear power to provide energy to the area and to vessels. The *Cape Island*, which is operated by Ocean Duchess, is part of MARAD’s RRF fleet and is manned in all licensed positions by members of American Maritime Officers. AMO members aboard the vessel during the visit included Chief Mate William McDonald, Third Mate Isabelle Baker, Chief Engineer Christopher Davis, First Assistant Engineer Jose Deoferio, Second A.E. John Farina, Second A.E. William Plemitscher and Third A.E. Timothy McDaniel. Earlier this year, the *Cape Island* completed an extended deployment overseas for Cobra Gold 2026, delivering military equipment and cargo for onward transportation to exercise sites throughout Thailand.

AMO Officers Return Safely to U.S. Following Heroic Efforts, Responsible Leadership Aboard *SLNC York*

American Maritime Officers members aboard the *SLNC York* have safely returned home to the United States after a catastrophic mechanical failure on the vessel in the middle of the Pacific Ocean forced the crew to take heroic efforts to mitigate engine room flooding before escaping the ship unscathed on August 18.

After abandoning ship, the crew was transported to South Korea by a foreign-flagged vessel that responded to the *York's* distress call. There, they were greeted by the AMO National President, AMO West Coast Boarding Representative Alex Butler and executives from Schuyler Line Navigation Company, the ship's owner.

The AMO National Vice President, Deep Sea, was in constant contact with the vessel during the ordeal and continued supporting the crew after they arrived on land.

Once settled on land, each crew member met with United States Coast Guard and National Transportation Safety Board investigators to detail the incident — a process that took several days — before being cleared to head back stateside. Through the entire process, AMO officials provided support along with representation from AMO Coast Guard Legal Aid Program Counsel Michael Reny.



The cause of the mechanical failure is still under investigation. The *SLNC York* has been towed to a shipyard for examination.

AMO members aboard the *SLNC York* included Captain Hasan Erkal, Chief Mate Charles Zinni, Second Mate Clayton Russell, Third Mate Antonio Duran, Chief Engineer Andrew Gray, First Assistant Engineer Orion Milazzo, Second A.E. Samuel Franke and

Third A.E. Alexander Alfonso.

"Our crew, under the leadership of Captain Hasan Erkal, did an excellent job responding to an evolving emergency situation, from mitigating unexpected engine room flooding to staying calm, cool and collected while preparing tow wires and abandoning ship as they were losing light in the middle of the Pacific — all while a typhoon was approaching.

Captain Erkal did a great job keeping the crew focused and gave decisive instructions while coordinating the crew's eventual disembarking. Everyone from the captain to the steward department deserves kudos for their bravery and professionalism in the most difficult of circumstances — and their safe return home is a testament to that fact," said the AMO National President.

AMO Membership Assistance Program Relief Benefits Available to Aid Members Hit by Severe Storms, Natural Disasters

The American Maritime Officers Membership Assistance Program (MAP) is a voluntary disaster relief fund established to aid current AMO members and applicants for membership who suffer damage to their property as the result of severe storms and natural disasters, such as Hurricanes Fausto and Lala, which hit Hawaii.

Benefits from the Membership Assistance Program are paid in varying amounts determined exclusively by need.

The application for relief benefits under MAP is available on the AMO website at: www.amo-union.org/amo-membership-assistance-program-relief-benefits-application.

The Membership Assistance Program is a permanent, independent, tax-exempt and voluntary disaster relief fund established by the AMO National Executive Board. AMO

made an initial contribution to the fund at its inception, and the fund is now sustained by individual voluntary tax-deductible contributions.

AMO members can make tax-deductible voluntary contributions to the AMO Membership Assistance Program via authorized vacation deductions. The form is available online at: www.amoplans.com/forms/vacation/mapdeduction.pdf.

Contributions can also be made by sending checks or money orders to:

AMO Membership Assistance Program
601 S. Federal Highway
Dania Beach, FL 33004-4109



AMO Aboard Tug *Aura* in the E.N. Bisso & Son Tampa Bay Fleet

Members of American Maritime Officers working aboard the E.N. Bisso & Son tug *Aura* in July, here in Tampa, Florida, included Captain Jake Weston, Mate Kyle Kaman and Chief Engineer Devin Kissel. AMO represents the crews onboard the company's tugs operating from Tampa and other Florida ports.

Infrastructure Work Critical to Great Lakes Shipping Continues on Pace

Toledo is moving the most mud on the Lakes this year. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Buffalo District and Michigan-based Ryba Marine Construction are taking about 750,000 cubic yards out of the Maumee River from September through December. It is the largest single Great Lakes dredging job of the season. Toledo Harbor handled 11 million tons of cargo in 2023, more than half of it iron ore.

"Maintaining the operation of ports like Toledo is a core part of our mission and essential to more than \$1 billion in annual economic impact," said Lt. Col. Aaron Anderson, Buffalo District commander. "As the largest single dredging operation on the Great Lakes, our work here does more than just clear a navigation channel — it sustains people's livelihoods, supports their communities, and powers the regional and national economy."

The same logic is running east and north at the same time. At Conneaut Harbor, Walsh Service Solutions holds a \$4.1 million contract to mechanically dredge about 75,000 cubic yards from the entrance up to the Canadian National docks. Conneaut moved 3.7 million tons in 2023, almost all iron ore. Multiple AMO ships unload there routinely.

Those harbors only matter if the boats can still drop from Superior to the



In this photo posted in September by the Army Corps of Engineers, Detroit District, the *Burns Harbor* transits the Poe Lock. Work continues on a second large lock to accommodate thousand-footers on the former site of the Sabin Lock — a project crucial to maritime commerce and U.S. manufacturing.

lower lakes. That drop still happens at Sault Ste. Marie, and it still depends too much on one chamber. The Poe Lock is the only lock that fits the 1,000-foot class. The Corps' Detroit District is building a second lock to the same dimensions. The lock is being constructed to be 1,200 feet long, 110 feet wide, 32 feet deep.

Phase 1 deepened the upstream approach and finished in 2022. Phase 2 rebuilt the upstream approach walls and finished in 2024. Phase 3 is the chamber. Kokosing-Alberici-Traylor is working on the project, which has grown with options for downstream work, mooring, and

operating systems.

Sabin Lock is coming out. Davis Lock has been filled. Bedrock is coming out for the new footprint. Concrete monoliths are starting to look like walls. Senior Project Manager Mollie Mahoney has described exactly that: demolition continuing, excavation advancing, a lock beginning to take shape.

This critical project to install a second lock the size of the Poe received special attention in September as James H.I. Weakley, president of the Great Lakes Maritime Task Force and president of the Lake Carriers' Association, was inducted into the Great Lakes Marine Hall of Fame.

AMO was a sponsor of the event and attended the dinner and ceremony the next day honoring Weakley on-site at the Soo Locks.

Weakley spent years speaking for U.S.-flag operating companies. Industry pressure helped keep a second chamber from dying as a line item in the federal budget. The work itself is Corps concrete, federal money, and the crews who will lock through when the gates work.

The Detroit District signed another Great Lakes decision on August 12. Enbridge received a Corps permit for in-water work on a tunnel under about four miles of the Straits of Mackinac lakebed to house a replacement segment of Line 5, the pipeline that now crosses the Straits on the bottom. The Corps said the review ran NEPA, Clean Water Act Section 404, Rivers and Harbors Act Section 10, the Endangered Species Act, historic preservation, and Tribal trust duties.

"This has been a very carefully weighed decision," said Detroit District Commander Lt. Col. Donald K. Lew. "The approval of the Enbridge Line 5 tunnel permit application is the culmination of a robust and thorough evaluation process."

Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works Adam Telle called the permit part of a faster civil-works process and "a testament to President Trump's vision to ensure our nation's energy dominance."

The permit lets Enbridge work in federally regulated waters. It does not regulate what the line carries or how the pipe is run. Despite this progress, state fights are not over and federal approval is not a finished tunnel.

AMO Aboard *MV Indiana Harbor* on the Great Lakes



Members of American Maritime Officers working aboard the ASC thousand-footer *Indiana Harbor* in September included Captain Todd Tittel.



Second Assistant Engineer Jeremy Baldwin, Chief Engineer Ralph Biggs, First Mate Jaber Jaber and Third A.E. Jackson Fakler aboard the *Indiana Harbor*



First Assistant Engineer Adam Salem



Third Mate Kyle Leakfeldt



Second Mate Jeremy Rabbit

New Coast Guard Digital System for Mariner Credentialing, Navita™, Now Accessible Through the NMC Home Page

The following bulletin was posted September 11 by the U.S. Coast Guard's National Maritime Center. To receive bulletins such as this directly by email from the National Maritime Center, scan the QR code included here.



Navita™ is the Coast Guard's new digital system for mariner credentialing. It represents a significant modernization of the mariner credentialing process and is designed to provide mariners with a more intuitive, guided application experience. The system will help applicants identify applicable requirements, provide required information and documentation, and submit more complete applications. These improvements are expected to reduce delays associated with incomplete submissions and streamline application processing over time.

Navita™ launched on September 14, 2026.

Beginning September 14, mariners will submit applications electronically through Navita™, which will provide guided workflows intended to simplify the application process and help mariners submit complete applications. To prepare for the launch, the National Maritime Center (NMC) is taking several steps to facilitate applications processing.

Key Information:

- **Navita™ User Guide:** A system user guide will be available on the NMC website homepage to aid in the use of Navita™.
- **Application Submission and Additional Information Portal (ASAP):** The Application Submission and Additional Information Portal (ASAP) will be discontinued and will no longer be available.
- **IASKNMC@uscg.mil email:** The IASKNMC e-mail address will be discontinued for submitting inquiries to the NMC. Mariners and other stakeholders will submit inquiries to the NMC directly through Navita™ using the Case function. This transition will provide a centralized method for submitting and managing inquiries and will ensure correspondence is associated with the appropriate applicant or application.
- **Paper Application Submission:** Although paper applications will still be accepted, the Coast Guard intends to phase out this submission method within the next 12

months. Mariners are strongly encouraged to submit credential applications via Navita™ to ensure they receive timely, first-in, first-out processing and status of their application. Paper applications, whether submitted by mail or in-person, will take significantly longer to process.

• **REC assistance with applications for submission:** REC personnel will continue to review application documents presented during an appointment for completeness; however, applicants are encouraged to submit through Navita™ after the review. REC personnel may assist with questions pertaining to the use of Navita™ and submissions, but computers or internet access at the RECs for mariner use will not be provided.

While Navita™ will improve the application and credentialing process, its launch will not immediately reduce current processing timelines. Applications received prior to 14 September, as well as applications submitted through Navita™, will continue to be processed on a first-in, first-out basis. Applications should not be submitted through Navita™ if previously submitted to the NMC. Duplicate submissions will delay application processing times. Requests for expedited processing will be considered only for applications demonstrating a clear and documented nexus to national defense.

Mariners should continue to apply early using Navita™. Renewal applications may be submitted up to 8 months before expiration and may be postdated up to 8 months, allowing mariners to apply early without losing validity on their existing credential.

Mariners and maritime employers should continue to plan accordingly and submit applications early to avoid potential disruptions to employment or vessel operations.

For ongoing updates, sign up for the NMC list server by scanning the QR code above. For questions, contact the National Maritime Center Customer Service Center via the NMC online chat system on the NMC website (www.dco.uscg.mil/national_maritime_center), or by calling 1-888-IASKNMC (427-5662).

James B. Suffern
Captain, U.S. Coast Guard
Officer in Charge, Marine Inspections

Mark A. Befort: 1951-2026

Mark "CHENG" Andrew Befort, 75, of Boaz, Alabama, passed away peacefully on August 4, 2026. He was born on January 9, 1951, in Albertville, Alabama, to J.J. "Red" Befort and Myra Jo Jordan Befort.

Mark was a merchant mariner and proudly spent much of his career at sea, serving as a Chief Engineer as part of American Maritime Officers, and affectionately known as "CHENG," aboard U.S. Naval (USNS) ships. Though he was not military, his years at sea took him around the world and brought him into contact with countless people and many faces he never forgot. After retiring from his career at sea, Mark continued sharing his knowledge and experience as an instructor at STAR Center in Dania Beach, Florida, where he taught and mentored the next generation of marine engineers.

While his career took him around the world, Mark's greatest joy in later years was being Pappy. He loved his grandchildren

dearly and treasured his time with Kaleigh, Kason, Jackson, and Ryder. He also had a deep love for his animals, especially his faithful dog, Duke.

Mark was a no-nonsense kind of man. He said what he meant and meant what he said, but beneath that straightforward exterior was a man who believed in giving everybody a chance. He made an impression on the many people whose paths crossed his throughout his life.

He enjoyed motorcycles, Alabama football, and, perhaps most importantly, a good meal from Waffle House. His usual order was a double order of hash-browns: "scattered well, all the way, hold the gravy."

Mark is survived by his children, Matthew Befort, Bryan Tate, and Taylor Prickett (Jonathon "Scooter" Prickett); his grandchildren, Kaleigh Tate, Kason Tate, Jackson Prickett, and Ryder Prickett; his brother, Jordan (Helen) Befort; and a host of nieces,



nephews, extended family, friends, and the many people around the world whose lives he touched.

He was preceded in death by his parents, J.J. "Red" Befort and Myra Jo Jordan Befort; his brother, Gary (Dean) Befort; and his sister, Gail (Mike) Leggett.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that donations be made in Mark's honor to

2nd Chance Shelter 130 County Road 398 Boaz, Alabama, an organization supporting animals in need.

Mark lived life on his own terms, traveled farther than most, taught what he knew, loved his family, and left behind more stories than could ever fit in an obituary.

He will be deeply missed, but never forgotten.



Mark Befort was a key instructor for the TECH Program at STAR Center, teaching for TECH Classes 105 through 114 and helping to train a new generation of AMO engineering officers.



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Voyage of *Liberty Grace* Heralds Relaunch of Food for Peace

Members of American Maritime Officers joined the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the United Nations World Food Program and representatives of the U.S. Wheat and U.S. Rice industries as part of the relaunch of the Food for Peace program at the Port of New Orleans on August 5.

The AMO-led crew of the bulk carrier *MV Liberty Grace* loaded more than 48,000 metric tons of U.S.-grown rice and wheat for Kenya in the first shipment of Food for Peace cargo in 2026.

Food for Peace was once administered by the now-defunct USAID, but has been temporarily transferred to USDA as government officials determine the long-term future of the program.

"Food for Peace cannot be viewed as an isolated program operating in a bubble. It is one vital part of a much larger system of American strength," said the AMO National President, who was a guest speaker at the rally. "It strengthens American agriculture. It sustains American shipping. It preserves highly skilled maritime jobs. It supports sealift readiness. And it demonstrates American leadership to people around the world."

Speakers at the event thanked the U.S. merchant mariners and Liberty Maritime, which owns *Liberty Grace*, for safely



Members of American Maritime Officers working aboard the *Liberty Grace* as the ship prepared to depart New Orleans carrying the first Food for Peace cargo in 2026 included First Assistant Engineer Gallal Albaneh, Chief Mate James Burke and Captain Pieter Sheridan. AMO represents all licensed officers aboard the Liberty Maritime U.S.-flagged bulk carrier.

and strategically delivering the food cargo where it is needed most. Liberty Maritime operates a fleet of bulk carriers under the U.S. flag that primarily deliver food aid cargo around the world.

"The world needs our help, and with our resources and generosity as Americans, we can do that," said Liberty Maritime Exec-

utive Vice President of Operations William Campbell. "Our long-term partnership with Food for Peace has given us the opportunity to see just how much good American farmers bring to the world. We are honored to help make food aid shipments abroad possible, helping millions of people suffering from food insecurity through

the unmatched partnership of American farmers and the U.S.-flagged fleet."

The 48,000 metric tons of food is estimated to feed at least one million starving Kenyans for a year as the country suffers through one of the longest food shortages in its history.

With the combined support of the U.S. farmers and U.S. maritime industry, officials hope Food for Peace will find a consistent and permanent home with USDA. Discussions have already begun about including a long-term solution in the annual farm bill in Congress.

"The shipment we're sending to help those in dire need around the world is a testament not only to the abundance of U.S. agriculture, but more importantly, to the generosity of the American farmer and the bounty they produce," said Michelle Bekkering, USDA Deputy Under Secretary for Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs. "This massive shipment also showcases the strength of our historic partnership with U.S. commodity groups, our friends at our merchant marine workforce, and the World Food Program. Together, we're helping those in need today and fostering true self-reliance tomorrow. Through our suite of USDA food assistance programs, we're not just saving lives, we're changing them."

ARC

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following a disaster.

At the core of the contract is a logistics process known as cross-docking, in which incoming disaster relief supplies, including water, generators, life support supplies, and other essential resources, are transferred directly from inbound trailers onto a dedicated, GPS-tracked fleet,

often within hours of arrival. ARC's cross-dock sites will enable transfers that move critical supplies toward affected communities faster than traditional warehousing.

"Effective disaster response depends on the ability to rapidly coordinate people, trucks, facilities and supplies across difficult operating environments," said Chris Benoit, general manager of ARC. "ARC has extensive experience coordinating complex logistics operations under demanding conditions across the world.

We are prepared to bring that expertise to FEMA's mission and the communities it serves at the speed the American people depend on."

ARC brings more than three decades of experience managing end-to-end logistics for both the U.S. government and private sector clients. The FEMA award expands ARC's role in coordinating mission-critical logistics systems that must operate reliably in demanding environments. ARC's approach aims to deliver

the kind of accountable, efficient performance taxpayers expect from federal disaster response.

The award covers a one-year base period beginning September 21, with two additional one-year option periods. Other services covered under the contract include empty trailer yard management, incident support base operations, transportation, facility and yard support, management services and personnel support.

AMO Aboard *Shenandoah Trader* in Tanker Security Program Fleet



American Maritime Officers members working aboard the *MT Shenandoah Trader*, here in the Mediterranean Sea in August, included Third Mates Trevor Quigley and Vinny Riccardi, Chief Mate Peter Maes, Captain Chaz West, Chief Engineer Max Neubelt, First Assistant Engineer Joseph Basile, Second A.E. Charles Bragg and Third A.E. Connor Beaulieu. The *Shenandoah Trader* is owned and operated by U.S. Marine Management and is manned in all licensed positions by AMO in the Tanker Security Program fleet.