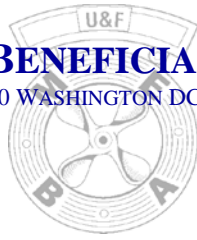


MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)

444 NORTH CAPITOL STREET, NW, SUITE 800 WASHINGTON DC 20001 PH: (202) 638-5355 FAX: (202) 638-5369

H. MARSHALL AINLEY
PRESIDENT



BILL VAN LOO
SECRETARY-TREASURER

Mission Success! Civilian-Crewed U.S. Merchant Vessel Eradicates Syrian Weapon Components

American mariners working aboard a Government-owned merchant vessel returned to Portsmouth, VA recently to a hero's welcome after doing their part to eradicate Syria's declared stockpile of chemical weapon agents.

A high-level showdown between the U.S. and Syria last year after the rogue Assad regime gassed thousands of its own people had given way to an international agreement to prevent such massacres. The CAPE RAY, a Maritime Administration-owned container ship berthed in Portsmouth, VA, was outfitted with two Field Deployable Hydrolysis System units on its main deck capable of at-sea neutralization of up to 25 metric tons of chemicals per day.

Logistics of the operation involved 14 countries which made significant contributions toward its success, but it was U.S. civilian sailors and a key team of American specialists that took the lion's share of the responsibility. The 34-member crew on board, working for vessel manager Keystone Shipping, consisted of expert Deck and Engineering officers represented by the Marine Engineers' Beneficial Association (M.E.B.A.) and an unlicensed crew of Seafarers International Union mariners.

600 tons of chemical agents – key ingredients in the manufacturing of deadly sarin and mustard gas – were loaded onto the CAPE RAY in late June in the Italian port of Gioia Tauro. The RAY then sailed into the middle of the Mediterranean to process the components and render them inert. The 1.5 million gallons of effluents were then delivered to Finland and Germany for ultimate disposal.

M.E.B.A. President Marshall Ainley remarked, "The professionalism of the men and women who volunteered to crew the CAPE RAY for the mission should not be taken for granted. The CAPE RAY mission should serve as a stern reminder of the need for both a viable US Merchant fleet and an active pool of mariners with the experience necessary to fulfill missions such as these. This mission is just another example of how our country depends on the US Merchant Marine whether in time of peace or war."

Not a single drop of the hazardous chemicals escaped during the neutralization, no mechanical failures prevented any aspect of the ship's assignment, and no one was harmed during the entirety of the mission. Following the vessel's epic 233 days of operation, the CAPE RAY crew was hailed by President Obama and DOD Secretary Chuck Hagel. Everyone whose faith in American readiness, versatility and pure know-how was rewarded with the success of this mission.

Reminded repeatedly by upper level Government principals that this high-profile operation demanded perfection, the ship's crew headed up by Captain Rick Jordan and Chief Engineer Chris Myers, delivered in spades – a fact that didn't surprise their unions or U.S. shipping observers. The U.S. Merchant Marine has been delivering the goods for this country with the highest professionalism and expertise– in both peace and in war – since 1775.