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# MARIN WORLD

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**Globe Maritime Training Center**

## **GEARED FOR NEW NORMAL**



**WORLD OF SEAFARERS ■**  
**ON CRUISE FATE ■**  
**CREW CHANGE DILEMMA ■**  
**SURVIVAL/REINTEGRATION ■**



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*On the MS Noordam stuck at the Manila Bay*

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## ABOUT THE COVER

People may fret and fault on having to face major changes and hard realities. Not the team behind Globe Maritime (GMTC). It finds opportunities in the “New

Normal” to prove education and training can be cheaper. There’s even no transition as it pumps back to the faculty and facility earnings, profits to charity.

# MARINO WORLD

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## PUBLISHER NOTE

# AWAITING GOVERNMENTS' CALL

World shipping now faces a humanitarian crisis amid the Covid-19 pandemic – more dangerous than the newly-identified virus.

Seafarers are held hostages, gripped by physical risks, mental health stress, uncertainties of grasping for facts and over-thinking.

Being unprecedented, Governments reacted to what is at hand: close territories, restrict travels, issued local protocols in haste or late.

A collateral damage is crew changes. For global trade and the supply chain to continue, the shipowners need crew changes to maintain safe operations of ships. Without the change over, seafarers are stressed to the limit of panic, depression and mental agony.

Each government should rethink impositions that disallow crew changes. In the overall scheme of

things, this could cut the logistics change and imperil world economy further.

In a joint statement, the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) and the International Air Transport Association (IATA) are calling on all governments to designate a specific and limited number of crew change airports for the safe movement and repatriation of crew. This would achieve critical mass for the resumption of crew change flights, keeping supply chains open.

ICS Secretary General Guy Platten declares, “Our seafarers are doing an amazing job out there keeping the world supplied with food, fuel, medical equipment and other vital goods. There are over 1.2 million at sea at any one time and many of them are having their time onboard extended due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the virtual impossibility of getting crew changes.

At the moment we estimate over 150,000 are due to go home to their families but can't and these number will only get bigger. Fatigue and mental health issues will undoubtedly rise and we are working hard at the ICS with others to come up with solutions.”

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) has now issued to Member States Circular Letter No.4204/Add.14, urging their implementation by Governments and their relevant national authorities. IMO appeals them to promote this framework of protocols, especially with Governments and their health, customs, immigration, border control, seaport and aviation authorities, in order to start getting crew changes done.

The three basic reactions to panic is fight, flight or freeze.

But how about trying common sense? Please.

# Amid Viral Pandemic

# THE WORLD OF SEAFARERS

by Ligaya Caban

*Worldometer* reports the coronavirus COVID-19 affects 213 countries and territories and two international conveyances, recording 7,145,189 cases worldwide, causing 407,390 deaths, with 3,485,299 recoveries from January 22 to June 8, 2020.

This pandemic is unique experience for everybody, then and now. Thus, protocols and guidelines are a hodge-podge of estimates and proto-expertise. And as Government seeks the right mix, seafarers are on the edges screaming, begging, taunting...

The prevalent mood is fear; the prevailing mode is stigma and rejection. Many seafarers are stuck like prisoners at sea. Whether they like it or not, they have to extend their contracts because they are not allowed to

disembark or crew change not allowed.

### **Just dumped.**

For those repatriated, they are forced into more quarantines --- on ports along the route they dock, before disembarkation at any home port, and quarantined once more in their homes, with wary family and belligerent neighbours.

Before these, are gnawing nights of waiting: for the results of rapid testing takes a month or over. Even those with results already are stuck forgotten. On top, they wrestle with uncertainties on pay like overtime, hazard and full contract payment.

Some were stranded on land due to policy lockdowns: no income with

more expenses; they want to work but can't.

Some were denied emergency medical care due to national or local restrictions. While some issues were minor, others are serious, even life-threatening requiring immediate medical attention. Some died of the virus, of suicide.

### **Concerns.**

International organizations have called on Governments to raise concerns for the welfare of the seafarers, egging governments of each nation to act.

On May 28th, a joint letter of about seven international associations poked on U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and U.S. Secretary of Defense



*Anchored at Machong Guangdong China*

*Photo by E.J.Baliguat*

Mark T. Esper:

“It is inconceivable that the United States – the wealthiest and most powerful nation on earth, with military bases, planes and facilities all over the globe – cannot relieve its own mariners who are stranded at sea... Scores of U.S. mariners are presently trapped aboard cargo ships, unable to take leave or return home due to extreme COVID-19 lockdown measures imposed by foreign governments.”

The International Federation of Shipmasters Associations (IFSMA) underscores the pandemic is not *force majeure*,”... shipmasters and their crews remain subject to normal contractual conditions and in accordance with the ILO’s Maritime Labour Convention.” Shipmasters have

been forced to remain at sea for the safety of their crew.

However, it is that very pressure and fatigue that increases the risk of an accident, increases the risk of them being criminalized by the courts ashore and the loss of their livelihoods.

**Facilitate.**

UN’s maritime arm, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) issued *Circular Letter No.4204/Add.14*, May 5, which calls ports **to allow crew changes**, provided shipping companies submit to requirements of local authorities on the pandemic (and airports and air carriers).

The Joint Negotiating Group (JNG), representing 215 seafarers unions

and a million members, underscored lack of crew change can no longer continue being detrimental to the health and wellbeing of the seafarers. As a compromise, contracts will not be extended as Governments are expected:

1. To support a transition period for governments and employers to implement the IMO issued framework of protocols, allowing up to 30 days starting from 15 May 2020 to ensure safe facilitation of crew changes takes place;
2. Those companies will consider, if financially viable and possible, to financially acknowledge every seafarer whose employment contract has expired, but who has continued to work;



*IMEC Ahmed*



*BIMCO Kaptanoglu*



*MARINA Empedrad*

3. Those companies will consider, if financially viable and possible, to provide seafarers waiting to be deployed an advance salary payment;

4. Those companies will, where possible, provide seafarers with extra bandwidth and internet access to be able to communicate with home; and

5. That, when crew change commences, those seafarers who have been on-board the longest will be prioritised and repatriated first regardless of rank.

**Bitter better.**

At the Maritime Standard 2nd Covid 19-A Leadership Perspective Webinar on May 20th COO John Ramage, International Registries of Marshall Islands, says “Under the ‘new normal’ seafarers are not going to be able to be replaced everywhere. So, we have to work with governments to identify areas around the work where reliefs can take place safely and that will require a lot of planning as well as forbearance by crew.”

**Context.**

*Marino World* believes it is very important to help place the problem in proper context: unknown really, the world united in combating the spread,

and there would be departures on what are the better and best doable solutions.

“Positive” is not a dirty word in relation to the pandemic. It’s even a key to survival when we all see the brighter side. Stop the corrosive paralysis by analysis. See the efforts, not the struggles; the hope than the fear --- the faith, not the over-thinking.

**Mass movement.**

Each month, about 150,000 seafarers need to be changed over, to and from the ships they operate, to ensure international maritime regulations for safety, crew health and welfare, and preventing fatigue are complied with.

The IMO currently has 174 Member States and three Associate Members. As countries issue guidelines on crew changes and travel aligned with the IMO recommended framework of protocols, successful crew changes are reported in India, China, Philippines, Singapore.

As we approach the **Day of the Seafarer on June 25**, there may be more rays of hope.

**Heavyweights.**

Intl Maritime Employers Council Chairman Belal Ahmed believes

Governments “... need to show real care for the ‘invisible’ soldiers who are keeping the global supply chain open. There is no more time in hand, before we have a breakdown on the system.”

At the webinar SMM Advance Press Conference, Baltic and International Maritime Council (BIMCO) President Sadan Kaptanoglu has called on governments not to abandon ship owners and their crews at sea and on land.

MARINA Administrator VAdm Robert A. Empedrad, Philippines, cannot overemphasize the role of the shipping industry as ships are quietly transporting cargoes of basic commodities such as grain, coal, oil and, most importantly, medical supplies.

Empedrad estimates around 100,000 ships carry almost 95% of the world trade, operated by close to 1.5 million seafarers; 378,000 of which are Filipinos. Like doctors and nurses, seafarers have continued to work day and night while combatting fear, anxiety and great risk to their own health to keep the world trade afloat.



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A photograph of a rainbow over the ocean. The rainbow is a double rainbow, with the primary rainbow being much brighter and more visible. The sky is a mix of blue and white clouds. In the foreground, a hand is reaching out from the left side, palm facing the rainbow. The ocean is a deep blue color.

Government Must Not Just Cruise  
**REFLECTIONS ON CRUISE FATE**

by Coca H. Strobar

*Photo by Al-John Garrovillas Belediano*



Pres. Duterte

When readership was getting jaded on Covid-19 news, cruise ship worker Mariah Jocson was found dead inside cabin, apparently of suicide. Once more, bad news sells good --- this, opens Pandora's box or ushers a new realization, an epiphany.

Avior Marine Director Joost Mes, President of the Dutch Chamber of Commerce in the Phils, recalls overseas workers making sacrifices and bringing back hard-earned foreign currency to the country and their extended families.

When cruise ship owners bring the stranded 'Heroes' back home, the country turns less welcoming. Despite arriving with a 14-day quarantine and negative Covid tests, it can take weeks before they are allowed to travel home. Then, local government units (LGUs) insist on repeating the process of quarantine and testing and waiting for results before they face stigma from the community.

Mes feels "More must be possible with common sense, mutual trust between local government units and applying a bit of humanity."

Ruth Emmerink, Consul General at the Consulate General of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Miami agrees "It is heart-breaking, indeed." Netherlands

is in the lead creating a safe corridor for seafarers and others now following suit.

#### Resilience.

Foreign Affairs Secretary Teddy Locsin, Jr. tweeted 28-year old Mariah Jocson took her life onboard *Harmony of the Seas*, docked in Barbados, where crew detained awaiting PH repeatedly rescinded repatriation. Locsin underscored Filipino resilience is no excuse to stretch them to breaking point, *Di sila goma; tao sila*. (They are not rubber; they are persons).

Locsin explains the deliberate confusion is that they thought 14 day quarantine starts from the time ships dock. It was clear at IATF that it starts from their clearance in foreign port + sea voyage. "Some people are just dead set to make them move into quarantine ashore."

Of the eight Covid-19 free cruise ships in Manila bay, their Filipino crews were quarantined in the sea voyage. IATF unanimously adopted the 3-point resolution addressing this situation—"a halfwit reduced it to one paragraph which explains why the BI is confused".

Sec. Locsin blames the Board of Quarantine over overstaying tens of

thousands of overseas Filipinos long ago tested negative "... in suspiciously picked motels and hotels."

#### Surprised.

Government is caught pants down on the huge volume of repatriated because of lull in compilation of statistics on seabased workers. The latest from the Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) is only for the first semester of 2018; for Top Ten Types of Vessels, data is only for 2013 and 2014. Passenger vessels are always in second place; these figures may help in protocols on repatriations.

The convenient excuse we are on a confrontation with a novel but deadly disease, on protocols yet experimental as data and experience are insufficiently collected, collated, checked and cross-checked.

#### Protocol.

Filipino seafarers leaving a cruise ship in a Phil seaport must comply:

\* **Pre-disembarkation:** LMA/ Shipping Representative to identify the seafarers who will be signing off vessels and submit list to PPA; PPA to issue travel clearance for docking in Philippine seaport; LMA/Shipping Representative, OWWA to arrange for

the commercial or chartered flights and/or land transport of seafarers to their point of hire pursuant to MLC 2006 in coordination with OWWA.

**\* Arrival in Philippines Seaports:** BOQ/PCG to conduct RT-PCR Testing for COVID-19 of seafarers; Seafarer to wait for test results onboard; PCG to distribute results and BOQ



DFA Locsin

clearance to seafarers; LMA/Shipping Representative, OWWA to disembark and proceed to point of destination if results are negative; if positive, proceed for treatment. Transportation requirements must be pre-arranged by the LMAs and OWWA.

**Hope.**

Pres. Duterte banged the table to rush the release of Covid-19 test results of over 24,000 returning OFWs languishing in quarantine facilities for them to reunite with their families, goading DOLE, OWWA and DOH to process the documents of OFWs and seafarers who are stuck in Metro Manila as they await for the release of their test results and certification.

Duterte allowed the IATF to use government funds and all modes of transportation to bring home the OFWs to their hometowns, even aircraft and vessels of the Armed Forces.

**Practical.**

Presidential Adviser on Peace Process and NTF Covid 19 Chief Implementer Carlito Galvez Jr. is cautious with

27,000 already in Manila and 42,000 arriving shortly (by May and June).

Defense Secretary Lorenzana, Transport Secretary Tugade, the MARINA and OWWA are asked to pitch in. Some 30,000 were tested, the Red Cross (PRC) issued 22,432 results where 465 are positive with the virus. LGUs neither have the expertise nor facilities to care for the 465.

But those tested negatives are slowly being transported home like the 20,000 DOLE claims to have facilitated back to their home towns. Some cruise lines are amenable to dock at local ports other than Manila, nearer final destinations of the repatriated.

**Online community.**

The Crew Center was organized by veteran seafarers to be informed and heard, to secure resources or relief for challenged mariners. It reacts against the over 20 ships floating on Manila Bay for days and months, crews eager to join their families while their families are so agitated why they cannot, yet.

Other nationalities are also stranded by the snail pace of the Philippine Government, embarrassing Filipinos with their peers in communal misery.

Indians on the *Marella Explorer* are bitter with repatriation flights getting cancelled one after the other as they wait off the coast of Southampton. They have been stuck for three months on good care of the company but on insistent refusal of the Indian Government to admit them.

Asks a crew: should a seafarer can no longer take the stress and commits suicide, who shall take the blame? The Government, the company or the family?

Costa Cruises Indian crew members (of *Costa Venezia*) face the same repatriation problems.

They have been waiting since April as management changes plans every three days. The latest was dividing them by batches, the first to transit to China where there is no connection to India.

Pullmantur crew received the “Sign On Employment Addendum” for the crew onboard which reads: “This notice will confirm that due to a change in the operation of your vessel, the employment contract will change from Pullmantur Ship Management Ltd. to Celebrity Cruises Inc. effective immediately upon your agreement and signature.” Do it or do it now.

**Colors.**

Australian crew from Royal Caribbean have arrived home and are completing 14-day isolation in a hotel. Even with the “very long 80+ days quarantine,” they compliment Royal Caribbean have been “fantastic” with its onboard management teams. 60 Australians that were sent home in two batches, from Barbados via Heathrow.

30 Hondurans, 32 Salvadorans and about 10 Dominicans have had three uneventful meetings with the Ship Captain while Argentinians, their peers, are repatriated back from Miami to Argentina. Desperate, these blacks from the Caribbean offered to pay their



DCCP Mes

own air tickets, with Panama, Mexico and Miami open for direct flights to Honduras.

Two of them have hallucinations, ugly nightmares, and violet impulses to destroy things on the ship. Just wait, patiently says the MSC company.

**Morale booster.**

242 Indonesian crew of the *Mein*

*Schiff 3, Mein Schiff 4, Mein Schiff 5, and Mein Schiff 6* cruise ships left from Hamburg to the Ngurah Rai Intl Airport at Bali, landing on the resort island on Thursday, 14:07 local time. Indonesian Ambassador to Germany, Arif Havas Oegroseno, said this is the last repatriation and all tested negative --- *Alhamdulillah* (thanks to God).

As of May 19, 2020, the Indonesian Government has facilitated the return of 99,543 Indonesian citizens from abroad, migrant workers in Malaysia and Indonesian sailors on cruise ships.

### **Devil and blue sea.**

President Duterte: Filipinos are citizens with Constitutional rights to travel, abroad or anywhere, and return home after working there.

Some LGUs are so zealous, they protest the re-entry of those coming from abroad to guard against infection of the community --- also cater to the hysteria and stigma spewed by voters.

Duterte placed in a compromise: they undergo another 14-day quarantine period and pass the Covid test. Then, LGUs refusing OFW reintegration to the home community will be dealt with the full force of the national government.

The President also harped on *utang na loob* (debt of gratitude), reminding all on the major impact of their remittances to the national economy, their sacrifices to build or rebuild families to better status in life --- while they struggle alone and lonesome abroad.

### **Cruises reposition.**

Due to cruise terminal closures in Copenhagen, local government mandates and consultations with CLIA & the CAC, *Celebrity Cruise* extended its global suspension for select sailings. Canada also restricted cruise ships carrying over 100 guests until Oct. 31. *Celebrity's* 2020 sailings to Canada and Alaska, Canada/New England, Hawaii and a few

repositioning cruises were cancelled to return to service about August 1.

With travel and port restrictions, *Holland America Line* is extending its pause of cruise operations and cancelling additional departures from the port of Vancouver, British



Columbia, Canada, in 2020, as well as select Hawaii itineraries for early 2021.

### **Domestic trend.**

Local cruise is emerging in Scandinavia. While Norway continues to restrict international travellers, *SeaDream Yacht Club* and *Hurtigruten*, have announced they will resume sailing in June for Norway and broader Scandinavian communities depending on travel restrictions.

*SeaDream* suspended its Mediterranean voyages through the end of August. One yacht has been relocated to Norway to sail on June 20th and the other yacht on June 27th to cater to the high demand.

*Hurtigruten*, by mid-June, it will gradually restart operations on the scheduled Bergen-Kirkenes-Bergen voyages along the Norwegian coast.

### **Fringe benefit.**

Cruise ships bottled up on Manila Bay do have foreigners interested to experience the charm and wow of Boracay, Palawan resorts and

thousands of virginal beaches. Super-imposed is Miss Universe 2018, Catriona Gray, who earned the crown with amazing answers over contestants from 93 countries.

“I work a lot in the slums of Tondo, Manila and the life there is poor and it’s very sad. And I have always taught myself to look for beauty in the faces of the children and to be grateful... we can have an amazing world where negativity cannot grow and prosper, and children will have smiles on their faces.”

### **Cuba takes risks.**

She is planning to welcome tourists with Covid-19 tests and limit their contact with locals and confining tourists at well-established coastal resorts. Havana and the rest of the country are reserved for local tourism.

President Miguel Diaz-Canel will gradually open up the economy in the next weeks, with focus on recovering tourism dollars, the lifeblood of Cuba’s economy earning US\$3.3-billion in 2018.

The island is just over 11 million, registered its first cases of Covid 19 from three Italian tourists in March. So far, Cuba has reported 2,219 COVID-19 cases, with 84 deaths.

### **Family trips.**

Domestic road trips may be the key to the recovery of Philippine tourism, starting with short-distance road trips, with families and travellers of the same preferences of destinations, believes Tourism Undersecretary Benito Bengzon.

The tourism industry is among the worst hit sectors by the coronavirus pandemic due to travel bans and restrictions on leisure activities. For the first 3 months of the year, Bengzon said revenue from foreign tourist arrivals dropped by 35%, with just PhP85-billion generated.

# Covid-19 and the Crew

## THE HUMAN COST

Belinda Ward\*



While many countries now assess themselves as past the peak of daily Covid-19 death and new case counts, any return to normality for societal behaviour appears postponed until further notice.

Shipping's 'post-Covid' new normal is also proving hard to predict, although the consequences of coronavirus will likely involve complex charterparty disputes and high-profile cruise sector insurance claims.

For now, these remain matters for tomorrow, as industry priorities rightly focus on the here and now, including the welfare of the estimated 1.6 million people working at sea.

In the face of an 'invisible enemy', a seafarer would be justified in experiencing Covid-19 anxiety should a colleague develop respiratory problems. On the other hand, an individual may conclude – not unreasonably - that observing social distancing on board a ship populated by broadly healthy individuals is less risky than returning to their home land.

In line with its commitment to allow Members to trade with confidence, North P&I Club and its worldwide network of correspondents have been advising on, interpreting, and responding to rapidly changing

circumstances and updated country/port regulations. We have also been working tirelessly with local officials on behalf of seafarers and, where necessary, facilitating telemedicine services, where medical assistance ashore is being delayed or even denied.

In April, the International Group launched a new Tracking Tool developed by North, which is updated daily to provide the latest location-specific global virus advice for Members.

### Realities.

Some of the many and varied types of crew-related claims that can be expected to result from Covid-19 have begun to crystallise: to date, most of the day to day challenges have arisen not from coronavirus itself, but from the preventative actions taken by nation States in order to protect their nationals.

In recent weeks, our experience of disembarkation restrictions has included a heart attack victim having to wait 10 days for an assessment ashore, a broken leg that went untreated until the seafarer returned to his home country and a hand injury that became infected due to delay and lack of antibiotics.

For seafarers this is no less distressing than potentially being exposed to coronavirus. Even disembarking those who have sadly died on board, irrespective of how, has become extremely complicated. Recently, after authorities working under Covid-19 restrictions refused to take ashore the body of a seafarer, we became involved in arranging the first burial at sea of my career.

Together with its IG colleagues, North is currently contributing to a dossier of such cases for International Maritime Organization (IMO) consideration.

### Guidelines.

An IMO Circular and an April 14 European Commission notice of '*Guidelines on protection of health, repatriation and travel arrangements for seafarers, passengers and other persons on board ships*' have strong points to make on related topic but both lack the bite of regulation.

Another well-documented consequence of Covid-19 has been the need for seafarers to extend their contracts by at least a month. Whilst this does not affect their Seafarer Employment Agreement (SEA) rights and their protection under the MLC, under which the owner is responsible for repatriating the seafarer with pay due

until arrival home, it can nonetheless be extremely stressful for both the crew and their families at home.

Some crew remaining on board beyond their initial contract period may also find that their enhanced PEME (pre-employment medical examination) has expired. However, at North we are continually in consultation with our clinics to find solutions where possible in liaison with our retained doctor.

Concerns over the well-being of seafarers have nonetheless rightly gained traction in the maritime press and beyond, with colleagues ashore experiencing a supercharged empathy as they get their own taste of what it means to 'work remotely'.

### Testy times.

One common area of concern for

those ashore and at sea has been the lack of a robust testing regime, especially at a time when fraudster phishing scams have turned to PPE. Although there is no doubt that special consideration is due to those working at sea, even should testing be available, privately obtained kits are often unreliable and test results have sometimes taken over two weeks to obtain, and although most now take 2-3 days, this remains a very anxious time for crew as well as causing a delay to the vessel.

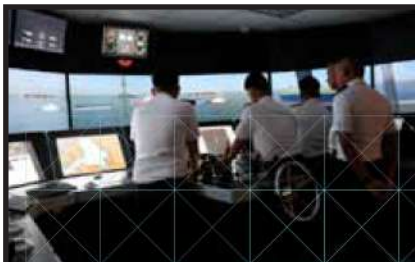
### Other issues.

Whilst The EC guidelines published late last month go so far as to recommend crews should be tested for disease before they embark, as noted this is not mandatory. Members may therefore have to rely on securing answers to verbal questions before crew leave home and checking their

temperature at embarkation as well as having a strictly adhered to quarantine policy for anyone who later displays Covid-19 symptoms.

These and many other issues are currently the focus of the Covid-19 Working Group set up by the 13-member International Group. Although there are slight variations between each Club's own Rules, we are working together for solutions to provide meaningful advice to Members in these strange and unprecedented times.

*\*Director Belinda Ward heads North P&I Club Personal Injury claims team; also sits on the International Group Covid-19 Working Group, in the committees 'IG Qualification', 'Occupational Diseases' and 'Amicus Briefs'. She reads Economics at Newcastle University and have completed a part-time law degree.*



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# Globe Maritime Training Center GEARED FOR NEW NORMAL



*Following protocols*

Globe Maritime Training Center (GMTC) has launched its *Online Training for In-House Courses*, a quick and effective response to changes triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The computer-based training (CBT) or distance learning is GMTC's answer to the industry's call for unhampered deployment of Filipino seafarers in the international shipping amidst major challenges.

Getting quality training within the safety and comforts of your home is now possible through GMTC online classes, ensuring the same training caliber you get during face-to-face sessions. You will receive your Certificate of Completion without fuss, delivered at your door.

GMTC President Gilbert Milana with his IT team conceptualized and made operational the offering using advanced zoom video conferencing with classroom set-up, instructors using white board and leading active discussions.

These experts are all from the state Polytechnic University (PUP) where Milana earned his degree in BS Mechanical Engineering.

The positive and high response was a bit surprising but a good indication our seamen are seeking self-improvement, not wasting time while idle, stranded or quarantined.

Milana is a seafarer himself, and feels what is best for fellow mariners. The online format is a lot cheaper than the face-to-face norm and gives more time to be with their family.

Helping is the main motivation for Milana; happy he could help more now that costs to teach are lesser than before. Proof of this, he was pilloried by competitors for the much lower costs of his course offerings.

But, he will continue to reduce costs with better results because his intent is to help, not to exploit hapless mariners.

The cost reduction is feasible as Opex (operational expense) is smaller with less staff, less rentals on offices and classrooms. But, it also led to unemployment for some GMTC staff.

## **Lower cost.**

Milana sees the economical cost as a realization of his advocacy that seafarers' income must go to their families, not on training fees. GMTC is open

for teaming with other training centers which also believe in reasonable costs for seafarers.

GMTC is among the first training centers which submitted *Post-Enhanced Community Quarantine Operation Plan* in compliance to MARINA Advisory 2020-36 to be able to conduct again official MARINA STCW courses.

The shift by the Government to the K-12 curriculum resulted to less enrollees, no business and atrophy, forcing many training centers to close. For those which survived, they now have to face the global dislocation caused by the deadly virus.

## **Sail on!**

Milana just won't give up. He would seek a good mix of protocols to the MARINA circulars and comply with DOLE and DOH memoranda like limited trainees, more space, disinfectants, and other precautions even if these may cost more to do.

GMTC incorporated MARINA guidelines in its Quality Standard System to observe dutifully as the new normal including general requirements on facilities, enrolment, conduct of training and management responsibilities.

## **The New Normal.**

GMTC strictly adheres even on the basics: staff, trainees, visitors must all pass thermal scanning, footbath before entry. The clinic staff is provided with medical-grade PPEs, face masks, goggles/face shields, sterile gloves in an isolation area (with adequate medical supply for any emergency).



*C/E Milana leads on rapid tests*



To help in any tracking, all must accomplish the *Health Symptoms Questionnaire (HSQ)* with: names, contact numbers, address, persons to notify, travel history within the last six months, a certification of completed quarantine or tested as COVID-19 free when returning from areas documented as high risk.

Within GMTC premises, sanitizers are handy, backed by signage promoting hand-washing, physical distancing, disposal of tissues and wastes, good nutrition to boost the immune system. Soap and water are available, as washrooms and toilets are kept impeccably clean.

**MARINA's MTI.**

Classrooms must, at least, be 6m x 7m for MC 2013-01 for maximum 12 trainees, 16 if 56 square meters (8m x 7m) for proper social distancing.

The same precautions are undertaken at the GMTC-Valenzuela as site for the practical:

- The swimming pool is regularly disinfected.
- Shuttle vehicle travel at half its capacity for social distancing and cough etiquette.
- Same protocols are insisted like the HSQ, thermal scans, disinfection

before entry, etc.

- Face masks mandatory for all at all times, except when swimming.

**Enrolment.**

Only by appointment, and contactless payments. Trainees' personal belonging admitted into GMTC premises is only one small bag, no companion allowed.

**Training and Practical Assessment.**

Responsibilities of trainees and instructors for the issuance of STCW Certificates:

- Face shields, not facemasks, shall be worn by the instructor, more so when with trainees of impaired hearing. Facemasks are worn during assessment.
- Instructors/Assessors shall use their own personal lavalier/lapel microphone. GMTC shall provide sanitized megaphones.
- Limit role playing activities; reduce to 4 members in any activity.
- Man:Machine ratio: 1:1 for Simulator workstation/Min Bridge and Tabletop Computer; 1:4 for Full Mission Simulator.

**Management.**

Prolonged face-to-face interaction is

discouraged; online systems are highly encouraged like Videoconferencing, more so for prolonged discussions.

GMTC may implement alternative work arrangements such as working-hour shifts or work from home (WFH) on a rotation basis. Detail the deliverables but no diminution in wages/ benefits.

1. Where feasible, GMTC shuttle services and/or decent accommodation on near-site location should be provided to lessen travel and people movement.
2. WFH shall be assigned to vulnerable groups (60 years old, those with co-morbidities such as hypertension, diabetes, cancer, or with immune-compromised health.
3. GMTC shall put up a COVID-19 hotline for employees to report if symptomatic; MITs may test employees with kits procured by GMTC.
4. GMTC premises shall be decontaminated before and after training sessions.

By September of the 2020, GMTC celebrates its **8th Anniversary**, of which Chief Engineer Milana prays to be years of being able to help, to enlighten, and continue to help.



*Relief for GMTC neighbors at Valenzuela and stranded seafarers with contributions from 2019 JBLFMU Doctoral candidates where Milana is class president.*



LPG Hellas Sparta among those bottled at the Bay

Photo by: Capt. Patrick Gil

# DILEMMA IN CREW CHANGE

by Coca H. Strobar

The Association of Licensed Manning Agencies (ALMA) was organized in the crucible of the pandemic to protect crews of small Licensed Manning Agencies (LMAs) which cannot obtain quarantine and transportation slots for their crews automatically given to major LMAs.

This is predictable: Government feels great in addressing repatriates in major numbers than the piecemeal crew of marginal LMAs. Besides, established professional associations as the Joint Manning Group (JMG) and the Filipino Association for Mariners Employment (FAME) must be listened to first, plus the volume of seafarers PTC hires, and Magsaysay hold on the hospitality staff of global cruise liners.

Such is the crux of the irony: the large volume has overwhelmed Government capability (the pandemic being unique and responses are both inadequate and proto-expertise); the small volume of seafarers set aside is replete with human sadness, mass media feasting on the shortfalls and personal trajectories.

The problem is exacerbated with the truism bad news sells good.

## David and Goliath.

ALMA claims JMG and FAME large organizations predictably slower to react than ALMA's membership who may chat and act at once. Some observers may find merit in the claim. Others insist JMG and FAME can see the whole forest and not just the trees ALMA cuddles to --- what then: overview or micro-manage?

An LMA claims an Indian ship captain cannot believe a mentally-stressed Filipino crew cannot disembark in Leyte, a part of his country. A Filipino crew from Brazil is suspected of mental disorder because he does not have a reliever. LMAs cannot do anything because of restrictions on crew change. Personalizing a solution is touching. But, is it the proper regimen for a global problem?

LMAs become the "fall guy" as seafarers wrestle with the mandates (and inadequacies) of quarantine, RT-PCR results, expenses, loss of income. What is the win-win solution mutually beneficial to Government and the LMAs? And the Principals and seafarers?

## Surely, now.

There is a belief LMAs are not persuasive enough for crew change. This is dead wrong. Businesswise, LMAs earn on this requirement. But the problems do not commensurate to the earnings. Crew change has even generated a combined appeal of ALL major professional maritime associations --- local and global--- so as not to disrupt the global logistic chain that move some 90% of world cargo, at least.

But Port Administrations are unwilling to relax sovereignty and fear of infection.

Principals are not of much empathy as they decide on the basis of business. LMAs are on the grid to follow, or lose the account. Fact is, requirements between ports are near impossible to

fulfil within time demanded.

## Protocol.

The Department of Transport (DOTr) on May 29th released through the MARINA the *Protocol on Crew Change and Repatriation of Seafarers*. DOTr-MARINA outlines procedures on ship crew changes, repatriation of seafarers amid the coronavirus crisis.

Prior to this, the MARINA Board issued a resolution on 23 April 2020 which recognizes seafarers as "key workers" alongside the other essential workers during the pandemic.

The Inter-Agency Task force for the Management of Emerging and Infectious Diseases (IATF-MEID) issued a resolution on 13 May 2020 directing government agencies to fast-track the processing of employment documents, facilitate deployment.

The Philippine government has responded to the request of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) to keep shipping and supply chains open and grant special travel exemptions to seafarers in response to the pandemic.

## IMO explains.

Professional seafarers and marine personnel should be granted exemptions from national travel or movement restrictions to allow them to join or leave ships, and that governments should permit professional seafarers and marine personnel to disembark ships in port and transit through their territory

(i.e. to an airport) to allow crews to be changed and seafarers to be repatriated.

The MARINA was quick to support with its Circular 4204/Add.14 dated 5 May 2020; earlier assuring procedures on crew changes and on the repatriation of seafarers are in compliance with safety and health protocols set by the Department of Health (DOH). Bureau of Quarantine (BOQ) and the DOTr.

The *Protocol* was revised for the 10th time last June 8th but LMAs appeal to revert to them choosing whether to undertake Rapid Test or RT-PCR Test (as China and other nations may differ from the Philippine choice), noting:

1. Principals would not require COVID Test prior joining ship as these are costly and no guarantee seafarers would remain negative until joining vessel;

2. IMO 4204 says test recommendatory, not mandatory;



*Wearing required PPE, Atty Baguilat welcomes crew, June 12; flight home an initiative of Peter Döhle Schiffahrts-KG from Hamburg; and, Menzell & Doehle Group with Döhle Seafront Crewing-Manila. Her firm picked the big tab, voluntarily and without fuss.*

3. Many countries are not requiring test as a pre-condition of entry;

4. While RT-PCR test is the standard, it is by no means 100% accurate. There is also no assurance that a person tested negative would not get infected while travelling to the country of destination;

5. Shortage of RT-PCR Test Kits is a recurring issue, resulting into crew change cancellations and/or delays;

6. Not all DOH Accredited Laboratories accept walk-ins; those accepting charge so high – making the Philippines the most expensive RT-PCR in the world;

7. Processing and issuance of test results are very unpredictable, going as far as 21 days.

8. Quarantine facilities are heavily congested. Where would those tested negative stay to remain Covid-free until departure?

#### **June 8 Protocol.**

1. LMAs or Principals are responsible that all necessary documents and clearances are complete and coordinated with concerned agencies and Local Government Units;

2. With the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), the LMAs or Principals shall provide the transportation of seafarers from point of hire to their destination for crew changes and repatriation, pursuant to the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006;

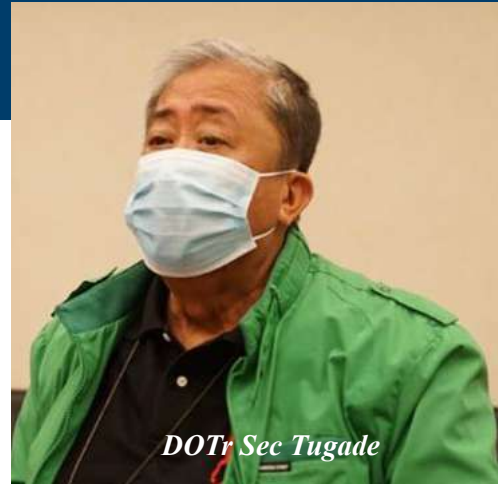
3. LMAs or Principals shall arrange for COVID-19 Testing of the seafarers as recommended by DOH and the issuance of medical clearance;

4. Only DOH-accredited testing laboratories, medical practitioners and quarantine facilities shall be recognized in this *Protocol*;

5. OWWA shall assist seafarers not affiliated with any LMA;

6. Concerned Government shall: (a) Ensure assistance is provided for the safe and orderly crew change; (b) Facilitate the processing and release of any document required.

7. All must wear appropriate personal



*DOTr Sec Tugade*

protective equipment (PPE), observe proper hygiene and health protocols.

#### **Pray tell.**

LMA can't still understand why our Government insist on the test and isolation (2—3 days before departure) when this is the look-out of Owners/ Principals and the host country.

Here is another heckle to such policy that is more Popish than the Pope: in a crew of 12 tested before leaving Manila to Japan, one was found positive on arrival to Japan. The 11 found negative were admitted and stayed 14 days quarantined. The one found positive was isolated, tested three times and found negative. All 12 now are at work.

The lessons: (a) No test is 100% accurate and may drastically vary on the time and circumstance conducted (b) ease up requirements as Principals /LMAs are willing to take full the risk and responsibility should seafarers be afflicted.

#### **More concerns.**

Atty. Irish Baguilat, President - Dohle Seafront Crewing Manila, warns MARINA Administrator Empedrad into believing a message from a crew that, "Their LMA has no plan of repatriating their overdue crew onboard."

Baguilat takes strong exception as the sweeping claim is "generally due to lack of information to appreciate and discern the real constraints LMAs and Shipowners are facing to relieve them."

#### **Quick facts.**

A crew claims as unattended coming from China. Fake. China does not allow crew change for Filipinos in any

## DILEMMA IN CREW CHANGE

Chinese port. Change of such policy is actively lobbied by LMAs.

Singapore is another “Highly Not Possible” zone. The mandatory 14 days notification or application for crewchange is too short alongside unpredictable flight bookings for Onsigners and Offsigners (in turn, due to our IATF cap on flight arrivals).

This creates a huge bottleneck. An LMA was forced to book a 180-seater from Air Asia for SIN/MNL offsigners because PAL cancelled its connecting KL/MNL leg without prior notice.

### The clear side.

In fairness, PAL and many other airlines are compelled to cancel scheduled flights due to the limitation of arriving passengers imposed at NAAA.

This is an urgent issue that need to be resolved. Sans domestic flights or land-sea modes, seafarers cannot be mobilized --- and when lucky, must wait on the roulette of available flights

for international destinations.

LMAs disagree on IATF ruling of not allowing crewchanges in our domestic ports. If this is science-driven, this is certainly a mind-set as confined as a viral slide.

### Dare to sail.

Situation is not hopeless though, LMAs may take blows back and center, from regulators and implementation. But for how long, that's the survival question.

An LMA president does a simple math for a medium size agency deploying 500/month:

RT-PCR 500 x 6,200= P3.1-million;  
Min 3 day hotel x 2000 x 500 = P3-million;  
Food 3 x 1000 x 500 = P1.5-million;  
Monthly total, P7.6-million;  
Annual total, P91.2-million extra expense.

Survival hangs on being allowed to choose between RT-PCR and RAPID TEST. If not granted, there is a great

probability of collapse, taking with it livelihood and family dislocation.

Certainly, these remittances from sea-based OFWs of the *Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas* (central bank) may have drastic downward spills: 2017 - \$5.9B; 2018 - \$6.1B; 2019 - \$6.5B.

### Numbers.

There are some 300 LMAs, a good number facing bankruptcy.

As of June 12, the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) has repatriated a total of 40,930 OFWs since it began bringing back Filipinos affected by Covid-19 in February.

Of this, 58 % (23,714 OFs) are sea-based; 42% (17,216 OFs) are land-based.

The Department of Labor and Employment projects 151,107 OFWs may be repatriated from July to December 2021, 40% of them are seabased and job displacement at 1,005,031.

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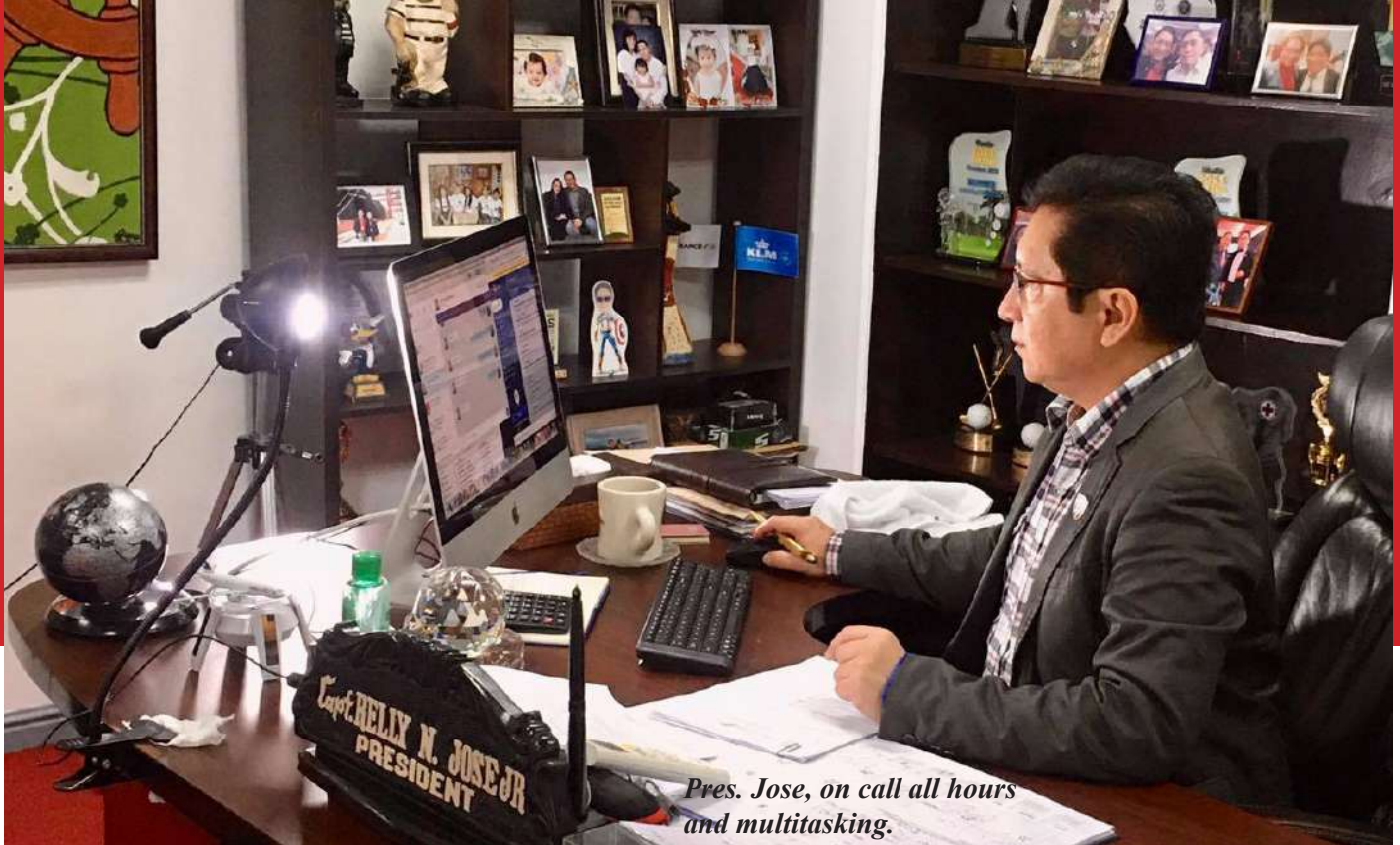
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*Pres. Jose, on call all hours and multitasking.*

## GMM Global Maritime Manila OPPORTUNITIES AMID THE PANDEMIC

Maximize downtime while in quarantine or lockdown --- apply online now at GMM Global Maritime Manila, Inc. It remains active in recruitment, even transferred to bigger facilities in Intramuros due the surge of applicants on documentations, briefings, in-house trainings.

In the last quarter of 2019, it confirmed agreements with new principals for more ships to be manned by Filipino officers and crew, which includes and not limited to fishing vessels, LPG carrier, product tankers, general cargo, VLGCs, AHTSS, offshore vessels and self propelled barge.

President and CEO Capt. Rely Jose, Jr. leads the firm with 25 years of shipboard experience; expertise in shipbuilding, and also a class toponotch at John B. Lacson Foundation

Maritime University (JBLFMU).

### Act now.

Capt. Jose advises all applicants and candidates to use the quarantine period or lockdown during the ECQ and GCQ in checking and updating all documents to board ocean going vessels of its principals.

To apply, send recent resume, inclusive of “experiences with

different types of vessels.” Scanned copies of these may be helpful: Seaman’s book, Passport, COP or COC certificates.

Email all pertaining documents to [gmmanila.jobs@gmail.com](mailto:gmmanila.jobs@gmail.com) or [manila.crewing@gmmgroup.asia](mailto:manila.crewing@gmmgroup.asia).

Visit GMM Global Maritime Manila at the 3rd Floor of Casa Maritima, 651 General Luna Street, Intramuros, Manila.



*The captain and wife Barbara Rhodora are parents to cadets.*

*Home soon, if not postponed. Again.*



# SURVIVAL AND REINTEGRATION

by Coca H. Strobar

Filipino seafarer employment is under threat not because we are less competitive but because of the difficulty in crew repatriation and the tremendous cost charged to shipowners.

For one, there's a tab of about US\$2100/crew to process repatriated crew upon arrival in Manila. This is based on PhP2000/day for official quarantine hotel accommodation which may last up to 21 days. Plus the cost of swab tests, all these charged to shipowners.

They are now complaining and shop to employ other nationalities to replace Filipinos. If this continues, majority will lost employment before the pandemic is over.

“Let us not kill the goose that lays the golden eggs,” so to speak.

But the decline is not just due to the pandemic. POEA records a decline (officers and ratings) due to shortfalls discovered by the audit of the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) of the European Union. Rumors even circulated EU will no longer recognize Philippine maritime certifications which may ban Filipino seafarers from working on EU vessels.

The artificial rise in numbers in the past years were due to crew in cruise ships. Now that cruises are stopping

operations, decline will be exponential which might cripple us.

## Wake-up call.

Pres. Duterte received a joint letter (dated May 9) by maritime stakeholders, in a tone as if Government is ignorant of the situation:

\* Stranded in Manila since March 2020, thousands of seafarers are still unable to go back to their provinces. When crew change opens, 135,000 seafarers will return (June to August) which require 45,000 quarantine rooms per month.

\* DOLE Order 211 of 2020, mandates lodging/meals/domestic transport cost to the provinces are responsibilities of the Overseas workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), both land and seabased. Fund source is OWWA's Emergency Repatriation Fund (ERF).

\* But POEA disagreed and issued MC No. 9, S. 2020 mandating the PRAs (landbased) and LMAs (seabased) to be responsible instead of OWWA.

\* POEA's Seafarers Employment Contract and CBAs, state contract is terminated on arrival at the point of hire (Manila). Thus, Principals strongly object and refuse to pay quarantine costs; LMAs cannot pay if Principals don't.

\* OWWA, quoting POEA MC 9 as basis, required LMAs to shoulder the cost except if seafarers are “abandoned”. Instead of a 14-day quarantine, LMA obligation has extended to more than 50 days since March 2020. The RT PCR Test at P4,500/head is also charged to LMAs --- but OWWA pays for PRAs of landbased OFWs.

LMAs appeal to DOLE to allocate funds for the seabased industry in the Supplemental Budget of the *Bayanihan to Heal as One Act* to cover:

- RT PCR Test for Returning and Joining Crew (about 135,000 returning, and 135,000 joining crew from June to August 2020).
- Quarantine costs for returning seafarers for 4 days to conduct RT PCR Test, await results and arrange transport to the province.
- Refund of quarantine costs from March until stranded crew are dispatched.
- Pay transport costs for the stranded/repatriated from Manila to provinces.
- Pay transport cost of joining seafarers from the provinces to Manila.

For the five items, budget requested for

the seabased Industry is about P3.5-billion.

#### Sources.

DOLE advised its AKAP program gave some 23,000 seafarers P10,000.00 each cash assistance; that PHILHEALTH will pay or subsidize the cost of RT PCR Covid test, without mention of quarantine nor domestic transport cost.

If neither Congress nor DOLE do not act, LMAs strongly request OWWA to utilize the funds contributed by Principals estimated now at Php6-billion.

#### Full force.

The joint appeal is from the Filipino Shipowners' Association (FSA); Associated Marine Officers' & Seamen's Union of the Phils (AMOSUP); Filipino Association for Mariners' Employment (FAME); Phil Seafarers Union (PSU); Phil Association of Manning Agencies and Ship Managers (PAMAS), Intl Maritime Association of the Phil (INTERMAP)

Mariners' & Allied Transport Employees Union (MATEU); Phil-Japan Manning Consultative Council (PJMCC); Association of Licensed Manning Agencies (ALMA); United Filipino Seafarers (UFS); Society of Filipino Ship Captains (FILSCAPTS); Masters and Mates Association of the Phil (MMAP) and Integrated Seafarers of the Phil (ISP).

#### No way.

OWWA is not helping LMAs on the cost (other than transport) because "LMAs have primary responsibility to bear the cost of food and accommodation of arriving seafarers per POEA M.C. No. 9," insists OWWA Administrator Cacdac.

Cacdac says while he will love a legal debate, he will make it "short and sweet." COA has audited OWWA and has set parameters on how and what to spend on the Php6-billion private trust fund for seafarers.

DO 211 is not a regulatory issuance. It was meant to implement an IATF

Resolution during the first week of ECQ, to provide a governmental solution to the possibility of OFWs being stranded at the airport. It was not meant to negate the primary responsibility of a PRA to provide food and accommodation to returning workers.

LMAs shot back neither does DO 211 speak of a licensed recruitment agency's primary obligation to provide food and accommodation to returning workers.

Cacdac makes his final point: Because for land-based workers, 80% are returning workers or *balik-manggagawa*. They have no PRAs. PRAs of OFWs who are not *balik-manggagawa* and never even tried to help their workers will have a day of reckoning. We will run after them before the POEA when all is said and done.

He then excuses himself claiming to have worked 10 hours at the office and field for seven days a week throughout the ECQ. Now, he wishes "to spend time with my wife and 8 year-old daughter."

#### War chest.

At the May 29 hearings, Cacdac sought Php7.5-billion, Php6.4billion for hotel and accommodation, food and transport, for 2020 to 2021 repatriates.

He clarifies the remaining Php18.8-billion OWWA Fund (from the Php19.6-billion) is to fund reintegration and subsidies direct to OWWA members. He notes a 4% decrease on our growth rate, reviewing the numbers as these relate to sustainability.

LMAs reaction was deadpan: *Aanhin pa ang damo kung patay na ang kabayo* (What's the use of grass when the horse is dead).

The Joint Manning Group (JMG) and the Association of Licensed Manning Agencies (ALMA) expounded sentiments at the hearings of May 22 and May 29.

They seek "immediate action" as it will be most unfortunate if the Philippines, a major crewing nation, is unable to take advantage of this unique opportunity.

#### Questions.

DOLE issued *Amendatory and Supplemental* provisions to its Order 211-2020 signed May27th to be aligned with the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Disease (IATF-EID) and the International Labour Organization (ILO).

DOLE's Order 211-2020, Paragraph



*OWWA Cacdac*

III.3, was amended:

c. The Philippine Manning Agency of the ship owners they represent shall cover the board and lodging of their deployed seafarers during their quarantine period per Standard A4 2.1, paragraph 1 (a) of the Maritime Labor Convention, 2006.

d. The responsibility of providing for the board and lodging in III.3.b. and c. among Philippine recruitment and manning agencies shall apply whether during the implementation of the

community quarantine or under the new normal.

### **Inaccurate.**

In the May 29th legislative hearings, ALMA spokesman Julius Yano claims DOLE's application of the MLC 2006 is "inaccurate." The maritime lawyer points it "... merely refers to the liabilities of the employer in respect of medical conditions sustained by the seafarer in the course of her/his employment aboard.."

Further, Yano posits "...that is recognised and already embedded in the POEA Standard Employment Contract." Yet, he recognizes the MLC 2006 "does not provide for instances" (such as the pandemic) like many legal instruments.

His main thesis is that imposing additional obligations and costs on LMAs "beyond the agreed tripartite agreement" will make Filipino seafarers less competitive in the global market, a sea-based industry pivotal to the national economy.

### **Apprehensive.**

While appealing before legislators, ALMA reaches out to the MARINA, the regulatory agency on maritime matters, the sole Port Administration of the country.

On June 12th, ALMA sent its concern to Administrator Robert A. Empedrad on the MARINA's *Protocol of the Philippines on Crew Change and Repatriation of Seafarers* dated June 8th.

ALMA is "extremely apprehensive" the MARINA's Protocol "... will have the unintended effect of killing the manning industry."

### **Downturns.**

POEA Administrator Olalia reported at the Lower House Committee on Overseas Migrant Workers Affairs last May 22 that both new hires and rehires, have decreased by over 99%, on both land and sea-based workers.

Major reasons are travel restrictions,

like the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) which prevented crew change, explains Olalia.

As for sea-based workers, only 32,419 rehires were deployed in January this year or 30% lower than 46,749 recorded



in the same period last year.

In February this year, the number of rehired seafarers deployed reached 30,747— still lower than February 2019's record of 39,515.

This was further reduced in March with only 16,260 rehired sea-based workers deployed abroad—a figure 63% lower than March 2019's 44,854.

Only 392 rehired sea-based workers were deployed this April against 40,597 in April of 2019.

### **Pitch.**

After the two hearings, TUCP Partylist Rep. Raymond Democrito C. Mendoza delivered June 5th a privilege speech, *Saving the Seafaring Industry*.

Mendoza warned of the impending collapse of the Philippine seafaring industry, with 400,000 practitioners (nearly 25% of the global total)

and brings in US\$7-billion in remittances.

He says nearly all were affected, some unable to fulfil contracts because they could not be deployed and some were left to extend contracts indefinitely onboard ships because no one was coming to take over.

For two and a half months, so many of our seafarers were left stranded in foreign ports, far from their loved ones; upon returning, were placed under mandatory quarantine unable to go home. To make matters worse, the costs for their board and lodging while under quarantine were being charged local LMAs and shipping agencies.

### **The issue.**

Facilitate their redeployment, bearing an extra tag of US\$700 for deployment.

The Government must invest in the seafaring industry. It should take on the costs of the quarantine before the discussion on who should pay as this causes workers to lose contracts.

Our workers must now compete with Myanmar, Vietnam, China, and those in Eastern Europe, all at an advantage as their governments foot the bill for board and lodging, none allowed to be stranded for over two months in their points of origin.

Their Governments are subsidizing the seafaring industry to survive, Mendoza claims.

Filipinos are considered the best but we could price ourselves out of the market. While competitors subsidize, we impose more restrictions.

Mendoza believes we should also subsidize to compete on even keel. He even diverts to tap the Philippine Economic Stimulus Act (PESA) that gives first-priority access for loans to micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs).

Retrenched OFWs should also be prioritized to start-up enterprises.





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# AMAZING CAPT. KATE MCCUE

by Ligaya Caban



Again, her *tiktok* of the Fightsong earned hordes of reactions, more at the official Captain Kate McCue Fan Club on FaceBook. She documents her story onboard on Instagram, with her cat Bug Naked which she takes on every sailing (defying an old taboo of mariners).

And she's not all image: Skilled in Navigation, GMDSS, Maritime Safety, STCW, international shipping Management and tested in Operations. She holds a degree in Business Administration (B.B.A.) with major in Marine Transportation from the California Maritime Academy.

She worked as Master in Celebrity Cruises and officer in other major cruise lines, as Intermodal Manager of Maersk Line two decades back.

## Endorsement.

*Bruce Davis* and companions are cruisers for years and they think she is "the best Captain we have encountered." She had an ever presence on the voyage and on the gangway saying farewell to every passenger.

*Mary-Jane Parker:* The cruise world needs more captains like Kate! The sour, uber "professional," unapproachable captains make me skip the Captain's Parties and their photo ops. Captain Kate was all over the ship and always had time to stop and chat when she was out walking. She joined us at Cruise Critic Meet & Greets, and was a riot.

*Helene Zebrowski:* I have sailed with

Captain Kate and Bugnaked on the Equinox and on the Edge. The first time I met her I said I only wanted to be on her ship. What an amazing person.

*Kristine Klaver-Olewinski:* Same! She is amazing and I only want to sail on her ship!

*DonJoyce Major:* Leadership... absolutely. What a fantastic moral booster for the many hardworking staff members. Way to go Captain Kate.

*Joyce Verderosa:* I so enjoyed watching you perform the wedding. Although it was from the walking track, I could see you absolutely having a great time too. You holding the bride's train as she walk and jumping into a photo was priceless.



### Womanpower.

Celebrity Cruises made history last March 8, 2020, when *Celebrity Edge* sailed with an all-female bridge and officer team, led by Captain Kate McCue, the first American female cruise ship captain with 27 women from 17 nationalities, notably Second Officer Nicholine Tifuh Azirh, the first West African women to work on the bridge of a cruise ship. Noteworthy also are Senior Doctor Jennifer Bernardo and Financial Controller Teresa de Guzman, both from the Philippines.

### Like guests.

When Covid 19 snarled, all 1075

crew of the *Celebrity Edge* continued after disembarking the guests and sailed on #HopeFloats. While they wait for their home countries to open and travel restrictions lifted, they stayed safe and healthy onboard, the closest thing to family.

Capt Kate says each crew drew a card at random, all with guaranteed balconies for fresh air, tons of vitamin SEA, making them feel like the true celebrities with full use of staterooms in addition to their crew rooms.

### Livin' La Villa Loca.

On board are two of 2019 Employees of the Year (Cleaner Genife Catinggan & Assistant Shore Excursions Manager Alexandra Ordonez. They were surprised with a week in the Exclusive Edge Villas: only two-story residences in the fleet, private terrace with plunge pool, lounge furniture; floor-to-ceiling windows, two bathrooms, a bedroom with Exclusive eXhale® bedding, a king-sized cashmere mattress, marble master bathroom with whirlpool tub.

She and other officers prepare and deliver the food to quarantined crew using "Deep Sleep" magnet systems for indicating lunch & dinner meal preferences (i.e. the black side, usually red meat & the white side, fish, chicken, or vegetarian), making room service delivery efficient.

### #HopeFloats.

Capt. Kate organized the **12-Ship Sunset Salute** when on March 20, ships of different companies were in the "neighbourhood." To declare solidarity, each shall give a horn salute at 7:30 every evening forward to let the crew and world know they are strong, safe, and healthy on board, also assuring their families.

As soon as Capt. McCue sounded the horn, captains from other Celebrity Cruises, Royal Caribbean and Holland America ships, tooted back.

Noting masks in high demand, Capt. Kate inspired the *Edge's* Housekeeping, Guest Relations & Engine team to step on two sewing machines, cut a stack of pillow cases and produce 250+ masks per day for the crew and donate to others in need.

### Always on guard.

With all the add-ons, the weekly crew

training in emergency response continues. Yet, the *Celebrity Edge* made waves in celebrating Earth Day last April 22, Earth's Day, with strict protocols: disinfect before boarding, all in personal protective equipment (PPE).

On May One (International Workers Day, Labor Day or May Day), Capt. Kate was there to sound the horn honouring the Heroes and Sheroes of the maritime industry, some 1.6 million toiling unsung against the elements and the environment to move 90% of global goods.

### Heads up.

The pessimistic trend does not shake Capt. Kate's optimism. She is excited on the changing of the crew of the *Edge*, now 1152 strong and hopefully "more tomorrow." They are *provided Care Packs* of essentials like masks, gloves, sanitizing wipes and snacks.

She is aware repatriation is a world-wide problem with hundreds of thousands requiring crew changes. Travel restrictions/bans and individual country requirements make this all the more difficult, amplified since Celebrity employs over 75 nationalities. Each country has a different set of rules, requirements and expectations for their returning citizens.

Shoreside office and ships have been working round the clock to find a way or make a way to get crew home, something that does not happens in an instant. She assures "our crew have been in the safest of places during this pandemic & we will not stop looking after their welfare until they are standing at their front doors & reunited with their families."

### 30th Anniversary.

Celebrity is a poster firm for gender equality, led by Ms. Lutoff-Perlo, a rarity in cruise lines being a female CEO (and, Celebrity the first firm of the big cruise lines to hire a female captain.) Fleetwide, 22 % of the line's bridge team are women – which the lady CEO would like to grow but for the slow entry of women in careers at sea.

Last May 26th, it celebrated its 30th birthday, gearing forward to global seas with officers, crew and hospitality staff in their best for the grand experience of the guests.



*MMAI partners  
with the Red  
Cross*

# MMAI SPEARHEADS CSR

Again, the Marsaman Manning Agency (MMAI) is on the lead, providing essential services for the staff and the public.

On May 21, MMAI Pres. Antonieta Mabelo-Acenas herself was with her workers for the Covid-19 Rapid Test to detect early any threat of the deadly virus.

Following day, MMAI partnered with the Red Cross (PRC) for blood-letting on the theme, *“Not Just a Blood Donor, but a COVID-19 Life-Saver.”*

Participation was bigger, with officers and staff, cadets and seafarers, conducted at the main offices at T.M. Kalaw Center, Kalaw street, Ermita district, Manila.

### And more.

On the side, MMAI assisted Signing Off crew arriving at the airport in coordination with the Coast Guard (PCG). The returnees were assigned the hotel for the 14-day mandatory quarantine. MMAI’s communication facilities and liaison officers were in

full crank, time immaterial but for the completion of the task.

Both Off-signers and Stranded crew were duly provided with food, hotel or boarding house whichever was available and practical. These gestures are aligned with the government’s Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) imposed in Luzon to combat the further spread of the deadly disease.

The company works tightly with local and national health care agencies, on guidelines from the departments of Trade and Industry (DTI) and Labor and Employment (DOLE) with protocols from the Dept. of Health (DOH). The situation is monitored daily, to ensure safety of workers.

### Double-tasking.

Aside from caution, MMAI also prioritizes career. Vacancies are posted on its FB page, recruitment simplified and quick.

Anyone who wishes to join the MARSAMAN FAMILY may call the

Recruitment Team (02-5318-1888) and look for Ms. Hazel (for Bulk), Ms. Jessica (for Tanker) or call/text C/M Diapo (RO), 0917-533-8525.

Send your resume at [marsamanmanning@gmail.com](mailto:marsamanmanning@gmail.com); or fill-up the online resume through the MARSAMAN SEAMAN JOBSITE portal.

Absolutely no fees in any form. Beware of illegal recruiters and human traffickers.

You may visit the MMAI office to sample the New Norm recruitment process: bring your documents --- hiring is based on interview, no more tests nor tedious paper works.

If one hurries, there could be time to celebrate as MMAI marks 31st year on June 28th.

It serves Marmaras Navigation and Delta Tankers, enabling MMAI to deploy so many seafarers for the 33 bulks and 32 tankers, plus being DNV ISO 9001-2015 certified.



*Heart of her team:  
Pres. Acenas*

# THE DEADLY STOWAWAY

By 3rd Engr Mao Tze M. Bayotas



A new threat in the maritime industry is emerging, becoming more serious by the day and destroying society, even the noble trade of shipping.

There has been alarming illegal drugs smuggled through commercial vessels plying through international routes. This has been a nuisance to both ship owners and seafarers. A profession of honest earning after arduous toil has been tainted.

For awareness on drug smuggling, let me share a tragic experience last year in my previous vessel but still etched fresh in my mind.

## **Routine.**

In last half of my contract, our vessel was chartered in a liner route across the Pacific. During our first visit in a country in South America, our crew did not notice anything suspicious in our stay and loading operations of iron ore for Asia.

We conducted the usual pre-departure routine such as stowaway and drug searches, using police dogs in the quarters and engine room. Nothing illegal was detected and we were cleared to sail off. We successfully delivered our cargo to two different ports in our discharging country before going to drydock in the same country.

## **Unwelcomed visits.**

Yet, in the in a midnight of our drydock, a group of men boarded our vessel. They confronted the

Duty on the gangway if the men they have met on the bar outside were crew of our ship. The Duty denied the accusations but they still forced themselves to the accommodation deck with violence. The Duty hurriedly informed the Captain and the Chief Officer of the commotion.

But, the gang had left before the two officers could come to the rescue.

The local police, again, searched our vessel before our departure. Nothing was found after three hours of intense inspection, including empty manholes and rudder trunk.

## **Gotcha!**

We visited the loading port again; as usual loading operations proceeded smoothly and no anomalies were found. Stowaway and drug searches also yielded negative, allowing us to set sail to the same discharging country.

Discharging operations were running smoothly when a squad of local police boarded our vessel. The crew were ordered to stay in the mess room while senior officers assist the police in the inspection. All areas were declared cleared---except the rudder trunk which contained a package suspected to contain illegal drugs.

## **Dear God.**

We were frantic hearing the news as we are in a country where illegal drug traffic is meted with death. We

are also so defenceless, at the mercy of the local authorities.

Our vessel was barred from departing and we were summoned one by one to the precinct for investigation. I have never experienced going to a police precinct because I am a law-abiding.

But, here I was sitting before the police for my statement as a suspect of a heinous crime. The longest hour of my life, an hour of desperation, confusion and worries. What if the translator mistranslate my statements? What if they find me suspicious because I am nervous? What if one of my fellow crew would be jailed? An endless “what-ifs” occupied me as I sat waiting for the police to escort us back to the vessel.

## **The grind.**

The investigation went through for a month as we waited in the anchorage area for the final judgment. Water supply were running low, forcing us to have water discipline. No supply barge were allowed to replenish our water tanks as we were under close surveillance.

We just want to go home at that time and be in the solace of our loved ones. Morale was running low among crew. We sought for help from our manning agency and our principal company. We clung to anything for hope amidst the turmoil we were trapped in.

-- Continued on Page 30

# SEA OF UNCERTAINTY

By Pam Kern, MS, LMSW  
Founder, Happiness At Sea



Humans like certainty. When things are uncertain, we may experience stress, anxiety or helplessness when things seem out of control. Seafarers have little to no control over their environment; limited personal freedoms and choices ranging from food, communication access and places to spend the little time they have off.

The current Coronavirus pandemic has caused disruptions in everyday life further limiting personal freedoms. For the seafarer, these disruptions further take away control and cause uncertainty; denied shore leave, delayed vacation or deployment disruptions, quarantined and being ethnically stigmatized.

Moreover, how to pay the bills if work stops? Then add the existing challenge of separation from family and loved ones. These have considerable negative effects on

seafarer mental well-being that can reduce the ability to cope and lower resilience.

I have been working with crew providing programs to help break the cycle of these negative psychological effects as well as working on prevention with the companies for continuity of care. These range from small nudges of behavior change with big impact to evidence-based practices. What I find vital is to provide best practices looking at the whole person and how their environment affect seafarers.

As a former seafarer, wife of a seafarer and mental health professional with experience in employee assistance programs, I have a unique capacity of understanding how systems influence seafarer behavior and relationships.

*Ms. Kern helps all maritime sectors achieve improved crew resilience, stress-vulnerabilities and retention by using maritime specific prevention and intervention programs. She believes the largest living asset on ships is the human capital.*

*She had delivered the how to of reduction of occupational burnout, resilience building and improve stress vulnerabilities in the maritime industry. Results yield sustainable long term solutions-improved retention and job satisfaction (the bottom line).*

*Prevention and intervention programs can be customized to fit needs or use stand alone programs such as Happiness at Sea, Burnout at Sea or Sea of Uncertainty (COVID-19).*

*Evaluations are conducted using data analytics to measure evidence impact.*

## THE DEADLY STOWAWAY

*From Page 29*

We are innocent and honourable seafarers just doing our jobs, sacrificing ourselves for the sake of our loved ones. Why are we in this difficult situation?

### **Cleared.**

Despite, we overcame the obstacle and evolved into a stronger person. There was no involvement of the crew and we were cleared to depart. We learned, though, a valuable lesson: we should be more vigilant of our surroundings and follow company procedures on security, especially when calling at ports with high threats like drug trafficking.

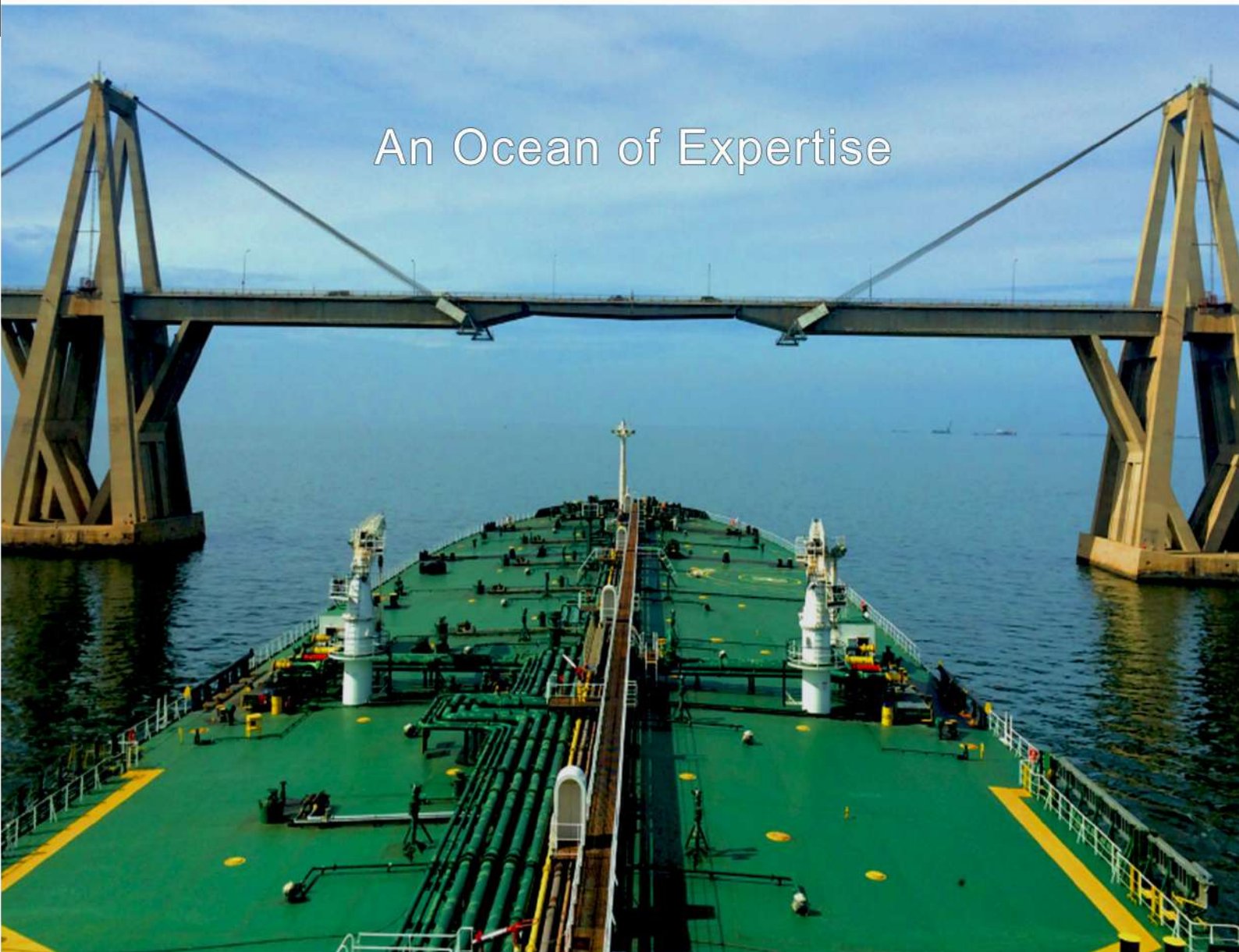
Ships nowadays have become mode of transport in international drug trade. The sad part is that seafarers just doing their jobs are the ones facing consequences of the criminal acts.

*Already, they defy the anger of the wind and the seas, uncertainties on waters infested by pirates and brigands, in the crossfire of political conflicts --- separation from loved ones and exclusion from family moments.*

*Do we have to suffer from the new, deadly stowaway as illicit drug trafficking?*



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