

## Press Release

For Immediate Release

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## FIVE VESSELS AND TWO INDIVIDUAL MARINERS RECOGNIZED FOR COURAGEOUS ACTS AT SEA AT THE 49<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL USS ADMIRAL OF THE OCEAN SEA DINNER



(Left to Right) Captain Brian Mershon and Rear Admiral Dee L. Mewbourne, Commander, Military Sealift Command

**NEW YORK, NY (NOVEMBER 14, 2018)** - Recognition was given to American Seafarers for specific acts of bravery and heroism while at sea at the United Seamen's Service (USS) 2018 Admiral of the Ocean Sea Awards (AOTOS).

The AOTOS Award was presented to Salvador "Tony" Bruno, President and CEO of Hapag-Lloyd USA; Paul Doell, National President of American Maritime Officers and Raymond F. Fitzgerald, Chairman of the ARC Group. More than 700 guests attended the 49<sup>th</sup> annual dinner and dance at the Sheraton Times Square Hotel in New York City on November 2.

During the evening, a total of four Mariners' Plaques, two Rosettes and an AOTOS Special Recognition Plaque were presented. Maritime Administrator Rear Admiral Mark H. Buzby, USN (Ret.) and Rear Admiral Dee L. Mewbourne, US Navy, Commander of the Military Sealift Command, presented the AOTOS Mariners' Plaques and Rosettes.

The captain and crew of the USNS Trenton were presented with the first AOTOS Mariners' Plaque. Captain Susan Orsini and Chief Engineer Daniel Saunders accepted the AOTOS Mariners' Plaque for this ship.

On June 12<sup>th</sup> 2018, the watch officer for the USNS Trenton (T-EPF 5) sighted a capsized vessel with people drifting in the water. The ship's civilian and embarked military personnel immediately recognized the danger and began maneuvering to rescue the 41 migrants. For five days, the crew provided food, shelter, clothing and medical care to those rescued, donating toiletries, time and individual expertise. The migrants were transferred to the Italian Coast Guard near Lampedusa, Italy.

The second AOTOS Mariners' Plaque went to the captain and crew of the M/V Edgar B. Speer. Captain Richard A. Laskey accepted the award.

The U.S. Coast Guard Sector Buffalo advised the Speer that a fishing vessel had capsized. Engineering personnel of the Speer took quick action by getting generators online for bow thruster maneuvering and lookouts for maintaining watch over the floundering fishing vessel. The deck crew, led by Chief Officer Jim Stengel and ABU Frank Jackson, provided extra lifesaving gear and manned the fast rescue boat moving through 25-30mph winds.

A third AOTOS Mariners' Plaque went to the captain and crew of the MV Norfolk of Argent Marine. Chief Engineer James Brown accepted the award.

On February 4, 2018, the M/V Norfolk responded to a Mayday call from the Maritime Rescue Coordination Center (MRCC) to a vessel, which had a medical emergency on board and was in distress, running on one engine as the mast was damaged. The M/V Norfolk rescued four crewman and the medical team stabilized the injured captain as the vessel sailed to Martinique.

The captain and crew of the TT Michelle Sloan were presented with the final AOTOS Mariners' Plaque. Kelly Moore accepted the award on behalf of the TT Michelle Sloan.

The U.S. Coast Guard dispatched the Tractor Tug Michelle Sloan to battle the flames of a 47-foot fishing boat that was burning out of control. Mate Brian Edmiston, Chief Engineer Micah Denny and AB Dominic Grasseschi assisted, and by noon, had extinguished the fire, preventing the release of 1,500 gallons of diesel from entering the water.

The first AOTOS Mariners' Rosette was presented to AB Leo Onofrio of the M/V Patriot for his quick thinking in response to a fire in the cargo hold of the M/V Patriot. Onofrio's actions averted a major conflagration and prevented extensive damage to both the cargo and the M/V Patriot.

The final AOTOS Mariners' Rosette was presented to 3<sup>rd</sup> Mate Mark Goodwin of the USNS Yuma for his individual act of valor that prevented potentially catastrophic damage. During a storm with blinding rain and winds gusting to 77 knots, Goodwin singlehandedly deployed the anchor system—a process normally handled by three people. He worked alongside the Yuma crew, the harbor pilot and two pusher boats to secure the vessel in a recovery plan until the Yuma was moored.

Special recognition was given to The USNS Mercy, one of the U.S. Navy hospital ships. The primary mission of the USNS Mercy is to provide surgical medical services in support of U.S. military operations. Additionally, it serves in disaster or humanitarian relief efforts.

The life-saving efforts of all of the seafarers honored demonstrate exceptional compassion for others adrift at sea, and is in harmony with the highest traditions of the maritime services.

USS has presented nearly 2,000 Honored Seafarer Awards in the past 49 years. Proceeds from the AOTOS event benefit USS community services abroad for the U.S. merchant marine, seafarers of all nations, and U.S. government and military overseas. USS, a non-profit agency established in 1942, operates centers in six foreign ports in Europe, Asia, and Africa and in the Indian Ocean, and also

provides seagoing libraries to American vessels through its affiliate, the American Merchant Marine Library Association.