



December 09, 2020

**National Maritime Interagency Advisory Group (NIAG)
Industry-focused NIAG on responses to COVID-19
30 September 2020
Microsoft Teams**

Summary of Conclusions

Executive Summary: On 30 September 2020, the Maritime Domain Awareness Executive Steering Committee (MDA ESC), in conjunction with the Maritime Administration (MARAD), hosted the annual Industry-focused NIAG virtually on Microsoft Teams. The intent of the event was to gather and share creative solutions for managing operations during the COVID-19 pandemic, and identify common interests and opportunities for effective information sharing between government and the maritime industry. Participants included approximately 150 people from the following domestic and international stakeholder groups: maritime industry, US federal and local government organizations, academia, and foreign government and business entities. (See attached list of attendees.) Recurrent themes included the value of established relationships among stakeholders, local coordination venues, and developing a community of interest to address emergent issues.

Background: Due to the far-reaching impact of COVID-19 on the global economy, and its associated effects on the maritime industry, the NIAG's purpose was to identify information sharing obstacles and best practices, and to share these observations and solutions with stakeholders. The event took a broad view of the industry, with panelist representation from cruise lines, port operations, and inland waterways.

Principals' Opening Remarks: The Industry NIAG opened with remarks from the principal attendees, who emphasized the importance of a healthy maritime transportation system and its importance to the well-being of national and global economies. RADM Kelly Aeschbach, Chair, MDA ESC, noted the supply chain disruptions and decline in trade resulting from the impact of COVID-19. RADM Mark Buzby (USN, ret.), US Maritime Administrator, highlighted the close relationship between the industry leaders and the Department of Transportation during the crisis. RDML Nancy Hann, Deputy Director for Operations, NOAA Office of Marine and Aviation Operations, emphasized the Blue Economy and America's growing economic ties to the ocean.

Ms. Julie Gascon, Director General, Marine Safety & Security, Transport Canada, presented the keynote address. She summarized COVID-19's impact to Canada's broader economy and the national response, which, she noted, continues to evolve daily. Director General Gascon highlighted the Maritime Security Operations Centers (MSOCs), which supported government departments and agencies as they strove to work better together and share information within their legal mandates. She emphasized Canada's inclusive approach, bringing in all stakeholders (government, industry, and labor) to find solutions and adapt to new situations as they arose.

Following the conclusion of the Principals' remarks, the event moved to the panel phase of the agenda.

Panel Discussion: The NIAG included six speakers representing a cross section of the maritime industry. Mr. Lyston Lea, Principal Advisor at the National Maritime Intelligence-Integration Office, acted as moderator. Each of the panelists provided their perspective on how their segment of the maritime industry is responding to the pandemic, and the associated information sharing challenges and successes. The audience also had an opportunity to ask the panelists questions via Microsoft Teams chat function.

Mr. Donald Brown, Vice President, Maritime Policy with Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA)

CLIA is the world's largest cruise industry trade association, representing over 90% of the global cruise capacity.

Mr. Brown described the impact of COVID-19 on the cruise line industry, highlighting the loss of \$20 billion to the US economy and at least 135,000 jobs in the cruise line industry.

The cruise industry announced the start of a voluntary global suspension of operations in mid-March 2020. It subsequently extended the suspension through at least the end of October.

Suspending cruise operations could not be done immediately and repatriation of passengers and crew proved to be very challenging. Key agencies included Department of State, who engaged with foreign embassies and coordinated charter flights; and US Coast Guard and port partners who were very supportive of meeting the needs of ships in US waters.

Mr. Brown advocated for seafarers to be recognized as essential workers to minimize administrative hurdles for crew changes. He noted CLIA efforts advocating for seafarer wellbeing with national and international organizations, such as International Maritime Organization.

Mr. Brown concluded by summarizing potential steps toward resuming cruise operations. He stressed the need for establishing policies for pre-embarkation testing for all passengers and crew; crew testing prior to leaving home country, prior to boarding ship, and monthly testing; onboard procedures, including mask use and social distancing; passenger excursion procedures; and policy for designated cabins set aside for quarantine and diagnosis.

CAPT Rebecca Ore, Captain of the Port and USCG Sector Commander, Los Angeles—Long Beach

The ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach (LA-LB) are the number one and two container ports in the nation, annually handling approximately 40% of containerized cargo entering the United States and 50% of California's petroleum needs.

CAPT Ore spoke of COVID-19's impact on port operations. She related that it is helpful to think of its impact on the Maritime Transportation System in terms of a major transportation disruption to the entire supply chain. Widespread illness can disrupt nodes throughout the maritime supply chain.

Port Coordination Team—a COVID-19 community of interest—met weekly and engendered reliable, predictable relationships for handling the evolving situation. The LA-LB Port Coordination Team provided stakeholders, whose many members included organized labor, port authorities, and federal, state and local agencies, with a venue to share COVID-19-related concerns and best practices. CAPT Ore emphasized the need to continually examine the development of this team to ensure its membership is sufficiently comprehensive to meet the challenges of the rapidly changing threat, regularly asking, “Who is not represented and should be?”

She emphasized the crucial role the Centers for Disease Control (US CDC) played in handling COVID-19 positive crew. The Coast Guard's prior working relationship with the US CDC facilitated the partnership with the US CDC quarantine station at the nearby Los Angeles International Airport. CAPT Ore also emphasized establishing a consistent, repeatable process, noting that determining how to handle sick crew used to take a couple days, now takes 15 minutes. Sector Los Angeles – Long Beach, the US CDC Maritime Unit, LA County Public Health, and Long Beach Public Health Department developed protocols for commercial vessels with COVID-19 positive crewmembers in coordination with several shipping companies. These have now become the US CDC's national posture for all vessels arriving from international voyages. Protocols generally include three options for vessels with suspected or confirmed positive COVID-19 cases onboard. Protocols can be found here: <https://www.cdc.gov/quarantine/maritime/recommendations-for-ships.html#>

Public relations played a role as well. The 27 ships anchored offshore the San Pedro Bay Port Complex, mostly tankers, created a public perception of risk and heightened media interest. Port stakeholders turned this into a positive message of products ready to be deployed as soon as normal operations resumed.

Mr. Glenn Wiltshire, Deputy Port Director, Broward County Port Everglades

Port Everglades generates more than \$32 billion worth of business activity annually and directly supports more than 13,000 local jobs.

Mr. Wiltshire described Port Everglades' response to the coronavirus and its effect on port operations. He described the response plan that established a Unified Command, which included private partners, USCG Captain of the Port, US CDC, US Customs and Border Protection, Florida Department of Health, Port Everglade Pilots, and the Broward County Sheriff's office, and Broward County Emergency Management Organization.

He stressed the utility of the Unified Command concept. This model allows port entities to speak with one voice, and facilitates coordination, flexibility, teamwork, and resiliency, all of which are crucial for a pandemic or disaster response.

He noted that Port Everglades had previous experience managing operations in the midst of public health concerns. Their contingency plan was initially established in response to concerns over transmission of Ebola from western Africa in 2014. More recently, Port Everglades exercised its plan in response to a norovirus outbreak.

The Unified Command structure was highlighted as a key organization for Port Everglades' management of the situation following the initial cruise line shutdown. The Unified Command facilitated the management of 29 ships and nearly 48,000 passengers, who converged on the port. Additionally, three vessels arrived with symptomatic crew members and the Unified Command enabled coordination with county health officials.

There was a general discussion about the challenging situation of ships' crews and the impact on their mental wellbeing. Local Seafarers Houses were highlighted as a valuable resource for responding to the needs of crews stranded in port.

Ms. Debbie Murray, Director of Policy and Regulatory Affairs, Association of Canadian Port Authorities (ACPA)

ACPA represents all Canadian Port Authorities and is the leading association advocating for the Canadian Port Industry. It includes government and commercial entities involved in conducting business in the maritime sector.

Ms. Murray discussed the impacts of COVID-19 on Canada's port operations. She noted that the pandemic's initial impact to the Canadian transportation system was particularly acute because it occurred immediately after the resolution of an indigenous peoples' rail blockade.

Initially, the Port Authority Association was not involved in government discussions of protocols that they would be asked to put in place. In the meantime, port authorities were developing their own protocols. This challenge was quickly remedied.

She highlighted the importance of collaboration between commercial and government partners, and the role port authorities play in identifying key players. Transport Canada held weekly calls with stakeholders starting in mid-March. Public Safety Canada hosts a Critical Infrastructure Forum in which Public Health of Canada can provide direction, which can then cascade down to all organizations.

Ms. Murray noted a rapid Canadian response to COVID-19, which included the establishment of a Unified Command structure on the Great Lakes. She advocated for the continuance of this mechanism, which is being reported to Ottawa as worthy of replication in other areas.

Ms. Murray also noted the value of the Seafarer Wellness Board, which looks into the mental health and wellness of seafarers and petitions the government to consider the allowance of shore leave.

Jennifer Carpenter, President and CEO of the American Waterways Operators (AWO)

The American Waterways Operators is the national advocate for the US tugboat, towboat and barge industry.

Ms. Carpenter addressed the impact COVID-19 has had on the US towboat and barge industry. She stressed that operations have continued throughout the pandemic with low rates of crew infection. She noted three success factors—resiliency, workforce health, and timely industry-government interaction.

Ms. Carpenter noted the response has been excellent in terms of operational resilience, and workforce health and safety. This is due in part to experience with contingency planning and emergency management. She also acknowledged the value of the Unified Command concept to crisis management.

She noted the early realization that keeping mariners healthy was the key to continuing vessel operations. As such, the industry took protocols seriously. These included crew pre-screening, modified crew change procedures, minimizing contact between crew and non-crew, and increasing cleaning and sanitation onboard vessels.

Government-industry communication complemented steps industry was already taking. Classifying the industry as an essential sector of the economy was important in cutting through restrictions and stay-at-home orders. The USCG and the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) were proactive and cooperative in modifying regulations and extending certification deadlines. She highlighted that timely, national-level guidance enabled the industry to avoid management pitfalls potentially caused by a patchwork of local regulations.

Ms. Carpenter also noted a number of continuing challenges. Economic demand for bulk cargos remains reduced and there are lower volumes for petroleum products, steel and chemicals. There continues to be a high degree of uncertainty surrounding when demand will rebound. From an operational perspective, she noted the challenges associated with lack of timely dredging and buoy setting, and the need for consistent and proactive enforcement of safety regulations.

Ms. Carpenter also commented on the risk to the maritime industry posed by malicious cyber actors. Internet applications have enabled remote work and continued operations. Cyber security and cyber risk management are of great concern and industry and government are working together on this.

Ms. Carpenter concluded by highlighting the importance of an American work force, US control over the domestic supply chain, and the key role the Jones Act plays in supporting supply chain security. The Jones Act requires that all goods transported by water between US ports be carried on US-flag ships, constructed in

the United States, owned by US citizens, and crewed by US citizens and US permanent residents.

Captain J. Stuart Griffin, Maritime Pilot, Chairman, Mariners' Advisory Committee for the Delaware River and Bay

The Mariners' Advisory Committee was established in 1964 and is primarily concerned with the safe and efficient operation of commercial traffic in the region surrounding the Delaware River and Bay.

He discussed COVID-19 impacts on piloting and operations. While impacted, operations are being maintained on a close-to-normal basis. While the circumstance surrounding the pandemic evolved rapidly, he noted the strong relationships built through the Mariners' Advisory Committee prior to the pandemic supported adaptation to operations on the Delaware River and Bay.

Regular, quarterly business meetings with local and federal representatives, and port and industry stakeholders are important venues for information sharing. The regular and personal connections, built over time from long-standing communications patterns before this crisis arose, allowed members to efficiently address COVID-19 issues as they began to arise.

The regular contact between members from Delaware, Pennsylvania and New Jersey allows participants to know each other, their strengths, and organizational cultures. Representatives from all three states are on pertinent calls in case a contingency requires a hand-off between facilities in different states.

CAPT Griffin commented on the impact of restrictions on seafarers, noting the lack of shore leave and increased visa restrictions. Crew mental health is a concern, as some international crews have been restricted to their vessels for 12-14 months. Captain Griffin commented further on the potential benefit of implementing a Seafarer Wellness Board, such as in Canada. In other cases, international crew members leaving from Philadelphia had to fly out of Canada, as Philadelphia International Airport was closed to international travel.

General Question and Answer: Following the panel discussion, there was a brief question and answer period to address topics that were not previously discussed.

There was a question and general discussion about public relations and media outreach. In the case of LA-LB, the Marine Exchange and USCG were part of the outreach. It was evident that proactive communications with the public and the ability to get ahead of negative press was important.

An audience member highlighted that many seafarers were unable to leave their ships and get home when their contracts expired. He advocated for facilitation enabling seafarers the ability to come and go.

Wrap-Up: Mr. Joseph Cunningham, MDA ESC Executive Director, summarized the recurring themes from the event.

Command Center/Unified Command/Port Coordination Team open to all port stakeholders is an effective mechanism to coordinate and integrate federal, state, local, and maritime industry equities. These centers served as a clearing house for information, and facilitated shared expectations and consistent application of evolving regulations.

Existing, habitual relationships and regular meetings ease the operational response to an emergent situation. Following the onset of a crisis, identify key players early. Proactively identify and include stakeholders who are not at the table. Constantly refine the community of interest in favor of a membership that is comprehensive.

Consistent communication among all stakeholders—industry; labor; local, state, and federal governments; public health officials; and the public—assists in managing expectations and resources.

The various experiences illustrated the nationally and internationally interconnected nature of the Maritime Transportation System (MTS), which is foundational to our way of life. Mariners are at the core of the MTS and mariner wellbeing is essential to its efficient function and our economy.

Closing Remarks: CAPT Charles Culotta, USCG, provided closing remarks.

CAPT Culotta emphasized the importance of a resilient supply chain and the crucial role that the MTS plays. He thanked all attendees, especially the panelists, and extended his thanks to include the men and women of the maritime industry.

30 September 2020, Industry NIAG Attendees (as reflected in MS Teams)

Aeschbach, Kelly A RADM (USN)
Apitz, Bradford E CAPT (USCG)
Argeles, Fernando J CDR (USN)
Arguin, Wayne R CAPT (USCG)
Bashir-Ahmed, Mohamed
Baysdell, Peter M
Beckley, Matt
Belanger, Brett F LCDR (USCG)
Bisang, Robert A
Blaney, Hank
Boone, Todd R
Booth, Richard
Brickman, Jay
Brown, Donald
Brown, Janel
Brown, Kimberly
Buzan, Robert
Buzby, Mark
Canino, Manuel
Carpenter, Jennifer
Carroll, Dave
Cleary, Matt
Costanza, Joe
Craig, Scott
Crowell, James L
Culotta, Charles C CAPT (USCG)
Cunningham, Joseph M
Curt, Evan
Demory, Wes
DGMM Honduras
Dion, Andrew
Doran, John
Eggleston, Brian F
Flocken, Nicholas
Fuentes, Sara
Garofalo, Peter A LCDR (USN)
Gascon, Julie
Gavigan, Daniel P CAPT (USN)
Genovese, Scott
Gingras, Steeven
Gionet, Remi-Martin

Glass, Chris
Goudie, Dwayne
Green, Michelle L
Griffin, Stuart
Hallett, Natasha
Hann, Nancy RDML (NOAA)
Hanson, William H
Heindel, Dave
Heron, Justin
Hilton, Anthony R LCDR (USCG)
Huggins, Jon
Igari, Shunichi
JCG Hisashi Ikeda
JCG Sakikawa
Johnson, Josh
Jones, Derek
Keehner, Joseph
Kelley, Brian
Kidwell, Lori
Kline, Sean
Koch, Steven M
Koppenhaver, Michael
Krick, Kevin
Lane, Brian
Laurentius, Ted
Lea, A Lyston II
Lenway, Charlie
Lerner, Ben
Lisbeth, Laurie
Lussier, Cristina
Mackie, Steve
Marshall, Mekisha Z
McBryde, Doris Ruth
McCloskey, Kevin
McConnell, Jonahthan
Mckay, Martin
McNeill, Darrick D
Mead, Arthur
Metz, Michael W LCDR (USCG)
Meyers, Steven
Mittleman, John
Murray, Debbie
Naron, Cameron

Newberry, Marshall E CDR (USCG)
O'Donnell, Louis
Opstal, Daniel W
Ore, Rebecca E CAPT (USCG)
Oubre, Fr. Sinclair
Owsianiecki, Christopher J
Patrick
Pegg, Russell
Plows, Emilie
Prazak, James
Primmer, Christopher
Quick, Colin
Rawson, Tanya
Raymond, Jana H
Richardson, Lorne
Rimmer, Charles
Roll, Rachel F
Sanford, John M
Schieb, Brandie R
Shaffer, Mark F
Sheahan, Michael F CDR (USN)
Shiozawa, Hideyuki
Signoriello, Alessandro
Smihal, Norma L LCDR (USCG)
Smith, Bryan
Somers, Scott
Sugimoto, Andrew M RDML (USCG)
Szilard, Mike
Thompson, Michael A
Thompson, Sarah
Tucker, Matthew
Turnbull, Adrienne
Vaughn, Dave
Vaughn, Karl
Warwick, Simon
Wielfaert, Dag
Wiltshire, Glenn
Wristbridge, Ian
Woodring, Marcus

Unknown Callers:

Fifteen callers from calling areas domestic to the United States participated in the meeting but are not recognized on the attendance list.