

# AMERICAN MERCHANT MARINE VETERANS



## 2020/21

## NATIONAL CONVENTION

September 21<sup>st</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup>, 2021 «» Maritime Conference Center «» Linthicum Heights, MD

*"When final victory is ours, there is no organization that will share its credit more deservedly than the Merchant Marine." - Dwight D. Eisenhower*





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# AMMV 2020/21 National Convention

Linthicum Heights, MD – September 21<sup>st</sup> – September 24<sup>th</sup> 2021

Maritime Conference Center

Times & locations subject to change; check with AMMV Convention Committee

\*\*\* sign-ups sheets located at Registration for MITAGS simulator tours & John W. Brown tour \*\*\*

Monday, September 20<sup>th</sup> AMMV Convention Committee & volunteers commence set-ups

Tuesday, September 21<sup>nd</sup> \*meal times subject to change as per MCC

7:00 – 8:00 Breakfast (MCC cafeteria)  
8:30 – 11:15 AMMV Convention Committee & volunteers – continue set-ups  
11:15 – 1:00 Lunch (MCC cafeteria)  
1:00 – 9:00 Early Registration & Hospitality Room open! (8 South)  
5:00 – 6:00 Dinner (MCC cafeteria) & Hospitality Room open! (8 South)

Wednesday, September 22<sup>nd</sup>

7:00 – 8:00 Breakfast (MCC cafeteria)  
8:30 – 11:30 President's Report; organizational business (7A South)  
Registration continues (8 South)  
11:15 – 1:00 Lunch (MCC cafeteria) & Hospitality Room open! (8 South)  
12:30 – 4:00 Field Trip to Liberty Ship SS John W Brown (reception)  
Shuttle bus departs MCC at 12:30 - Arrives at Brown 1:00pm, returns approx. 4:30pm  
5:00 – 6:00 Registration & Hospitality Room open! (8 South)  
5:00 – 6:00 Dinner (MCC cafeteria)  
7:00 – 8:30 Entertainment: *America's Sweethearts* (8 South)

Thursday, September 23<sup>rd</sup>

Morning & afternoon sessions in Building 3 –  
Conference Center (Lower Level) – “Classroom 1”

7:00 – 8:00 Breakfast (MCC cafeteria)  
9:00 – 9:45 Guest speaker: **William Geroux**, author of *The Ghost Ships of Archangel*  
10:00 – 10:45 Guest speaker: **Dr. Salvatore Mercogliano**, maritime historian  
11:15 – 1:00 Lunch (MCC cafeteria)  
1:30 – 2:15 AWARDS CEREMONY: AMMV volunteer awards & **Convoy Cup** honors  
2:30 – 3:15 Guest speaker: **Rita Cosby**, Emmy Award-Winning TV host, primetime WABC radio host, Best-Selling Author of *QUIET HERO*, Daughter of WWII POW  
5:30 Cash bar open (*Chesapeake Salon*), start gathering for Congressional Gold Medal Dinner (Satellite registration table on cafeteria deck for local dinner guest check-in)  
**6:00 – 10:00** 2020/21 Convention Congressional Gold Medal celebration & Reception Dinner  
Industry tribute to Capt. Hugh Mulzac; unveiling of CGM design; 50/50 drawing;  
Keynote Speaker: **Dave Yoho**, WWII Merchant Mariner (*Chesapeake Salon*)  
10:00 – ??? Hospitality Room open! All hands invited! (8 South)



Friday, September 24<sup>th</sup>

07:00 – 08:00 Breakfast (MCC cafeteria); Heave Ho! Safe travels & see you next year!

## AMMV National Officers

**National President**.....Captain Dru DiMattia.....*drudimattia@gmail.com*

**National Vice President**.....Sheila M. Sova.....*shesova2015@gmail.com*

**National Treasurer**.....Dennis Kelly.....*dkelly49@aol.com*

**National Secretary**.....Cindy Komlos.....*cynthiakomlos@gmail.com*

## AMMV Regional Vice Presidents

**RVP Region 1** (FL, PR).....Stephen Synder.....*ssynderjax54@yahoo.com*

**RVP Region 2** (AL, DE, GA, KY, MD, MS, NC, SC, TN, VA, DC, WV).....George Bruno.....*gibruno@pacbell.net*

**RVP Region 3** (NJ, PA).....Howard Pfeifer.....*howdypfeifer@yahoo.com*

**RVP Region 4** (CT, MA, ME, NH, NY, RI, VT).....Michael Fiorenza.....*michaelfio.gr@sunymaritime.edu*

**RVP Region 5** (IA, IL, IN, MI, ME, NE, ND, OH, SD, WI).....Capt. Chris Edyvean.....*cjedyvean@hotmail.com*

**RVP Region 6** (AR, AZ, KS, LA, MO, NM, OK, TX).....Bob Ross.....*csknight@suddenlink.net*

**RVP Region 7** (AK, CO, ID, MT, NV, OR, UT, WA, WY).....Jens Egeland .....*jensingengeland@gmail.com*

**RVP Region 8** (AUS, CA, HI).....Christian Yuhas.....*cgyuhas@gmail.com*

## AMMV 2020/21 Convention Committee

**Chairman**.....Capt. Dru DiMattia

**Registration Head**.....Dennis Kelly

**Finance Chair**.....Lynn Kelly

**Committee Member**.....Sheila M. Sova

**Committee Member**.....Capt. Chris Edyvean

**Committee Member**.....Laura Johnson Riddle

**Committee Member**.....Dennis Ng

**Committee Member**.....Stephen Snyder

**Committee Member**.....Cindy Komlos



## **AMMV National Headquarters**

**National Office Administrator**.....Lynn Kelly.....[ammermarvets@gmail.com](mailto:ammermarvets@gmail.com)

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## **AMMV Corporate Office**

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## **AMMV Appointed Officers**

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**National Public Relations**.....Sindy Raymond.....[saaren@sonic.net](mailto:saaren@sonic.net)

**Nominating & Credentials**.....Richard “Ben” Benjamin.....[hoosierben@gmail.com](mailto:hoosierben@gmail.com)

**Judge Advocate**.....Capt. Joseph Byrne.....[joe@captbyrnelaw.com](mailto:joe@captbyrnelaw.com)

**Chaplain**.....Bob Ross.....[csknight@suddenlink.net](mailto:csknight@suddenlink.net)

## **AMMV Committee Chairs**

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**Special Projects & Veterans Outreach**.....Sheila M. Sova.....[shesova2015@gmail.com](mailto:shesova2015@gmail.com)

**Membership**.....Lynn Kelly.....[ammermarvets@gmail.com](mailto:ammermarvets@gmail.com)

**Editorial**.....Capt. Chris Edyvean.....[cjedyvean@hotmail.com](mailto:cjedyvean@hotmail.com)

**International Affairs**.....Jens Inge Egeland.....[jensingeegeland@gmail.com](mailto:jensingeegeland@gmail.com)

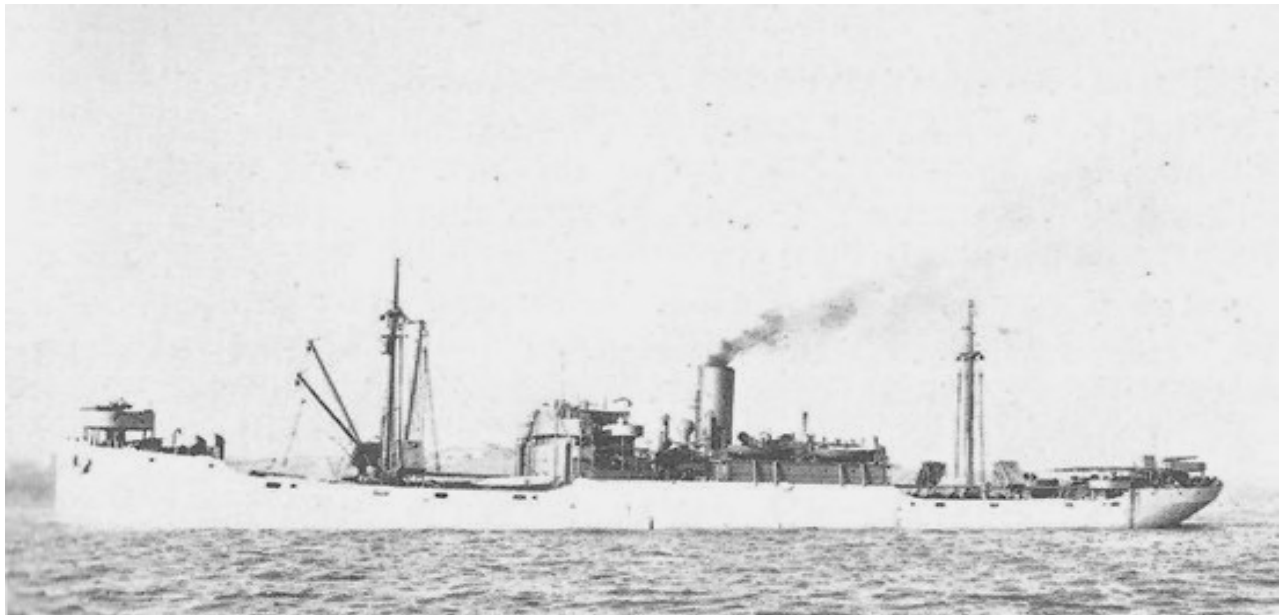
*AMMV would like to sincerely thank our sponsors and supporters.*

*“Together we can, and together we have, made a difference!”*

*This flyer is dedicated in memory of **Morris Harvey**, WWII Merchant Mariner & AMMV President Emeritus*

**THE AMERICAN MARITIME CONGRESS SALUTES THE  
MERCHANT MARINERS WHO COURAGEOUSLY SERVED IN  
ALL OUR NATION'S CONFLICTS**

**CONGRATULATIONS TO THOSE VETERANS WHO SERVED IN WORLD WAR II ON THE  
AWARDING OF THE CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL**



The S.S. Birmingham City was torpedoed by a German U-Boat on 9 Jan 1943 in the Atlantic Ocean with the loss of 10 crew



**The American Maritime Congress**

Jim Caponiti, President

Fair Kim, Policy Director

Rilla Gaither, Senior Advisor



The  
Maritime Trades Department, AFL-CIO

Gratefully Honors the

*American Merchant  
Marine Veterans*

You Are the Fourth Arm of Defense

Good Luck with Your Convention



**MICHAEL SACCO**  
*President*

**DANIEL DUNCAN**  
*Executive Secretary-Treasurer*

## Meet our WWII Merchant Marine Veterans in attendance!

Fame Academia: Born in the Philippines, Mr. Academia joined the USMM at age 17 during WWII, and sailed for seven years as a U.S. Merchant Mariner. He then served in the U.S. Navy for many years.

David E. Baker: Sailing from 1943-45, Mr. Baker served on several ships, mostly in the Deck Department as AB. He participated in the “Murmansk Run”, having sailed to Russia on the *S/S Arunah S. Abell*.

Bill Balabanow: Mr. Balabanow enlisted in 1944. He completed basic training at Sheepshead Bay, attended the Hoffman Island radio school, and signed on his first vessel, the “hog islander” *S/S Shickshinny*. He stayed in the U.S. Merchant Marine for over 30 years and has remained active as an advocate for USMM Veterans and other AMMV causes.

Stanley Blumenthal: Mr. Blumenthal joined the U.S. Merchant Marine as a Radio Operator at age 19. He sailed in convoys in which his ship saw direct action. He came out of retirement to sail on the *Cape Texas* during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

George Koch: Mr. Koch joined the Merchant Marine at age 16, having trained at Sheepshead Bay. He sailed to Murmansk in convoys in which the Allied ships were attacked by both U-boats and aircraft.

Lee Cox: Mr. Cox joined the Merchant Marine at age 16 and completed basic training at Catalina Island. He was on a ship passing under the Golden Gate Bridge on 4/17/44 and heard the explosion from the infamous Port Chicago incident nearby.

Gerard Driscoll: Sailing in the Merchant Marine from 1944-48, Mr. Driscoll worked in the Engine Room as a Coal Passer, Fireman, and Oiler. He later served in the U.S. Army from 1948-52.

Bill Kelley: Mr. Kelley trained at Sheepshead Bay (basic) & Gallups Island (radio school) and served as a USMM Radio Operator in the Pacific Theatre from 1944 to 1946. Later, he served in the U.S. Army in support of the Korean conflict. Kelley enjoyed a post-war career in military electronics, and has remained an advocate for fellow veterans.

Ed “Big John” Laughton: Soon to be 100 years old, Laughton was serving as 2<sup>nd</sup> Mate on the *S/S Hobbs Victory* when it was attacked by enemy aircraft and sunk on April 6<sup>th</sup>, 1945. His story was recently featured in the AMMV News magazine.

James T. Lindsey: Mr. Lindsey spent nearly four years in the WWII Merchant Marine, serving on vessels such as the *Alcoa Master*, *John W. Davis*, and *Percy E. Foxworth*. Afterwards, he joined the U.S. Air Force and served for an additional 23 years.

Charles A. Mills: 101-year-old Charlie Mills began his maritime career in 1937 when he climbed the gangway of the *S/S Carlton* (a ship that would later be lost in PQ-17). Mills sailed throughout WWII and was a charter member of the National Maritime Union (NMU). Mills would come ashore and serve as an NMU official for four decades. He has participated in all four AMMV “Storm the Hill” events and remains active in organizational activities.

Charles Montanaro: Centenarian Montanaro celebrated his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday by skydiving! He joined the Merchant Marine after being denied entrance into other service branches due to color blindness. His vessel was slated to be involved in the invasion of mainland Japan, until the A-bombs were dropped to end WW2.



George Offenhauser, Sr.: Mr. Offenhauser trained at Catalina Island, then first shipped out during WWII on the *S/S Plattsburgh*, a T-2 tanker. Other vessels he served on include the *S/S Wabash Victory*.

Edward Pascale: Mr. Pascale served aboard the vessels *John G. Carlisle*, *Chesapeake Capes*, and *John Wise* as OS, earning the Atlantic War Zone Bar and Mediterranean Middle East War Zone Bar.

Howard Pfeifer: Mr. Pfeifer made four voyages to Russia, including three “Murmansk Runs”. In one instance, his convoy was attacked by a U-boat, in which the tanker immediately in front of his vessel was sunk. He was at Omaha Beach for the invasion of Normandy, shortly after delivering bombs to England.

Bob Ross: Mr. Ross joined the USMM at the tender age of 14, serving between 1942-44 in the Steward’s Department. Together with daughter Shirley Knight and son-in-law Crawford Knight, the trio have been a driving force in support of AMMV goals and Merchant Marine Veteran recognition. The family still produces the AMMV Razorback newsletter.

James Sciple: Having trained in 1943 at St. Petersburg, Mr. Sciple first worked on a freighter before serving on LST vessels which were engaged in active landings and conflict.

George Shaw: Mr. Shaw served in the Engine Department between 1944-46, having “taken a break” from high school in order to serve. His recollections include his involvement in fighting a shipboard fire at a grain elevator in Galveston. After the war, Shaw went on to earn a Master’s Degree, and enjoyed a lengthy career in education.

Harold Wellington: After basic at Sheepshead Bay, Mr. Wellington served in the WWII Merchant Marine from 1942-46, and later served in the U.S. Army & U.S. Navy. During WWII he sailed on ships supplying Africa, Europe, and the Middle East.

Dave Yoho: World-famous motivational speaker Dave Yoho served in the Engine Department during WWII, having trained at Sheepshead Bay. When the war ended (V-J Day), he was just shy of his 17<sup>th</sup> birthday.



**Convoy Cup Awards** will be presented during this convention. The Convoy Cup Foundation is a joint Nova Scotian & Norwegian organization which strives to “perpetuate the memory of the courageous men and women who made possible the convoys, consisting of Merchant Navy and Air Force coverage”. From the Convoy Cup Foundation website: *For (many) years, the Convoy Cup Foundation has been promoting and preserving the history, stories, and memory of the sailors, airmen, and merchant marine that secured and preserved peace in our time. As the memory of the Battle of the Atlantic and World War II sink further into the past, the Convoy Cup Foundation, working with our sister*

*foundation in Risør, Norway, is dedicated to making this important part of our history accessible to a new generation. We use the sport of sailing to tell the story of the convoys. The convoys from Halifax and New York provided a lifeline to an entire continent locked in a struggle against unimaginable tyranny. It is our mission to ensure the scope and scale of the sacrifice made to defend liberty and democracy is never forgotten.*

# The U.S. Merchant Marine Officers of AMO Thank and Salute AMERICAN MERCHANT MARINE VETERANS



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**ROBERT RICE**  
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Founded by U.S. Merchant Marine Veterans of World War II



## AMMV special guests and speakers



**Rita Cosby** is a renowned Emmy-winning TV host, veteran correspondent and multiple best-selling author, who anchored highly rated primetime shows on Fox News Channel and MSNBC, and has secured exclusive interviews with more than twenty world leaders, including eight U.S. Presidents. Selected by **Radio Ink Magazine** as **Female Legend of the Year** for 2018, Rita was chosen among all women on and off air in the radio industry. Having written back-to-back **New York Times Best Selling books**, she was also listed among the Top 200 Most Influential Authors in the World. Her latest best seller, **“QUIET HERO: Secrets from My Father’s Past,”** details her fascinating discovery about her own father, a Polish Resistance fighter, who later became a Nazi prisoner of war, and was ultimately saved by American troops. Because of Rita’s “extraordinary journalism and exemplary service on behalf of her community,” October 11th, 2010 was officially named **“Rita Cosby Day” in the State of New York**. In 2011, she was **recognized by the U.S. Congress** for her professional and charitable achievements.



**Tomaczek Bednarek** is an American singer-songwriter, acclaimed producer and great entertainer who has performed with some real legends. In his early days, he opened for music icon **Frank Sinatra** and did command performances for President’s **Nixon, Ford, Carter, Reagan, Liz Taylor**, and more. As Director, East Coast of Brave Road Entertainment and founder of Cinestage Media Group, his films and videos have won the **New York World Fest Award, Best Videographer, Producer of the Year, and Aurora Award for Best Country Music Video, the Tele Award, Gracies Awards** and others. With music and writing as his passion, Tomaczek’s countless performances for our military range from the **USS Missouri at Pearl Harbor, the 75th Anniversary of D-Day** in Normandy, France, LIVE in Washington DC singing on the global broadcasts of **The National Memorial Day Parade** and LIVE on **Troopathon**, America’s annual TV Telethon which sends care packages to our service members on the front lines.



**William Geroux** appears at the AMMV 2020/21 National Convention in support of his second book about the WWII Merchant Marine, **The Ghost Ships of Archangel: The Arctic Voyage that Defied the Nazis**, which focuses on the “Murmansk Run” and the story of the fatal PQ-17 convoy. He previously appeared at the 2017 AMMV Convention to promote his first book, **The Mathews Men: Seven Brothers and the War Against Hitler’s U-boats**. Geroux spent 30 years as a newspaper reporter, much of it covering Hampton Roads for the Richmond Times-Dispatch, writing about numerous topics. He won numerous awards for breaking news coverage, feature writing, and investigative journalism. Later, he worked as a writer for Maersk Line Limited, a Norfolk-based subsidiary of one of the world’s largest shipping lines. He lives in Virginia Beach, VA.



**Dave Yoho** presides over one of the oldest and most successful consulting groups representing small business in the U.S. – He sits on the board of public companies and has made over 5,000 speeches in all 50 states and 22 foreign countries. Dave is a WWII Merchant Marine Veteran, having enlisted in the U.S. Maritime Service in mid-1944 – completed basic, or whatever was then called Boot Camp – at Sheepshead Bay. He was assigned to his first ship, a newly designed T-2 tanker, which was destined to be sent to the South Pacific where he spent 13 months. Four days after World War 2 ended – he turned 17 years old.



**Dr. Salvatore Mercogliano** has been a professor of History at Campbell University in Bules Creek, North Carolina, since 2010. He was named Professor of the Year in 2015 and 2011 and honored by his colleagues with the D.P. Russ Jr. and Walter S. Jones Sr. Alumni Award for Teaching Excellence. He has also taught at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy. Dr. Mercogliano has published numerous articles and given presentations on a variety of maritime related topics, with a focus on the role of the merchant marine in national defense. His latest book is **Fourth Line of Defense: Sealift and Maritime Logistics in the Vietnam War**. He holds degrees from the State University of New York, Maritime College (BS in Marine Transportation), East Carolina University (MA in Maritime History and National Archeology) and the University of Alabama (PhD in Military and Naval History), along with his U.S. Merchant Marine deck license.

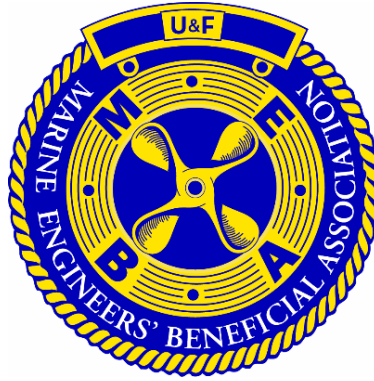
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A photograph of the SS Lane Victory Maritime Center, a large white ship hull with a blue star emblem and the name 'LANE VICTORY' painted on it. The ship is docked at a pier with blue water in the foreground. The sky is clear and blue.

LANE VICTORY

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**Best Wishes on Your National Convention**

*Thank You for Your Service to Our Country*



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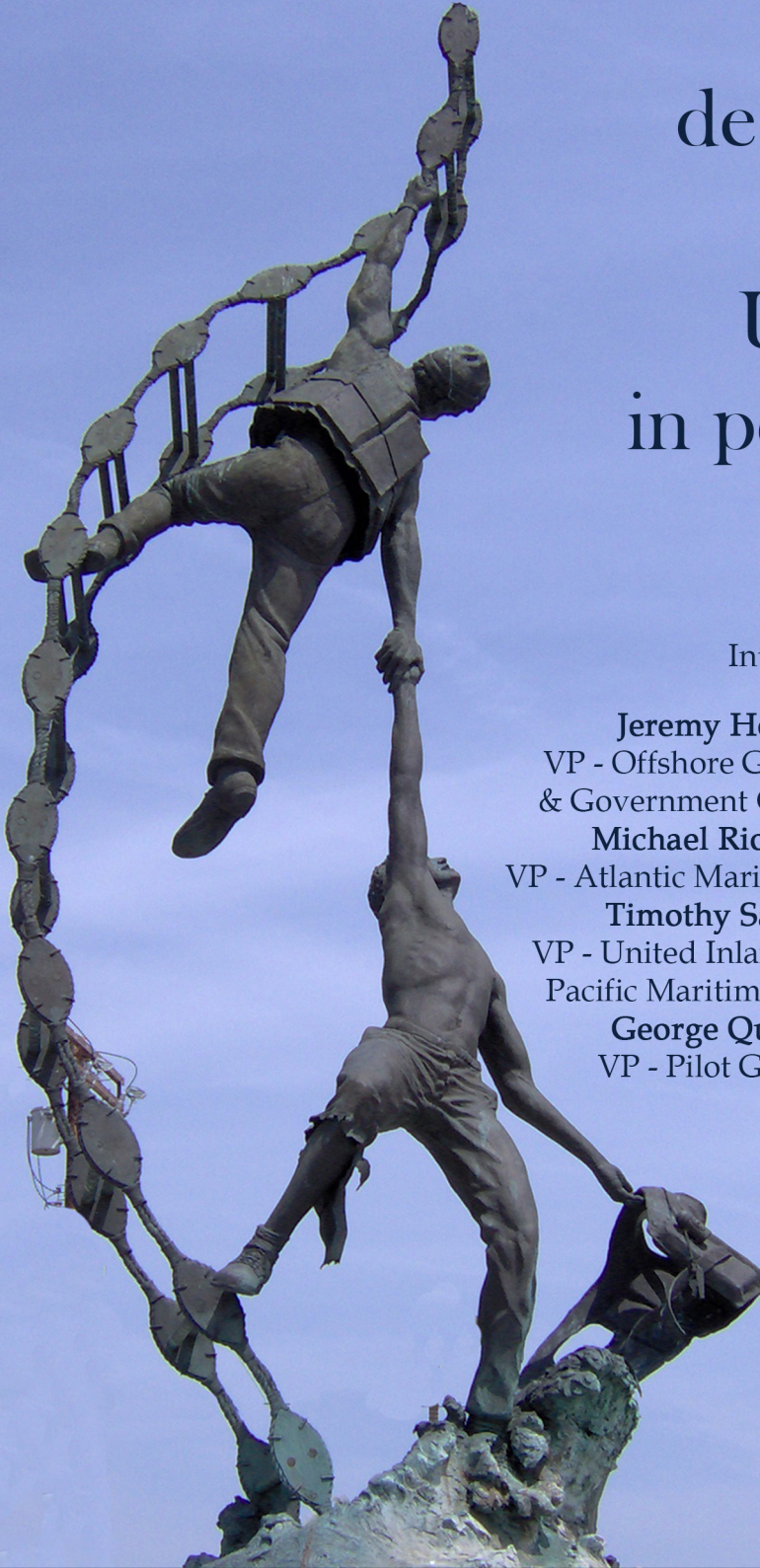
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