



THE FEDERAL MARINER

Volume 13 • ISSUE 2
April-June 2022

MSC • NOAA • ARMY COE • MARAD



OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE SEAFARERS INTERNATIONAL UNION'S GOVERNMENT SERVICES DIVISION

SIU Turns Out for National Maritime Day at DOT

Union Members, Officials Also Active in Other Ceremonies Around Nation

SIU officials and apprentices from the union-affiliated Paul Hall Center for Maritime Training and Education contributed to the respectful, appreciative atmosphere May 24 at Department of Transportation (DOT) headquarters as the agency hosted an in-person observance of National Maritime Day.

The event (which also was available as a livestream) marked the first in-person National Maritime Day ceremony in the nation's capital since 2019.

Union members and officials also took part in National Maritime Day events in Norfolk, Virginia; San Pedro, California; and elsewhere.

SIU officials in attendance at the DOT gathering included Executive Vice President Augie Tellez, Secretary-Treasurer David Heindel, Vice President George Tricker, Assistant Vice President Pat Vandegrift and Port Agent Mario Torrey. Paul

Hall Center Apprentices Faith Wood and Alexander Boothby played key roles in the ceremony, which featured remarks from Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg, Maritime Administrator Ann Phillips (RDML, USN, (Ret.)), U.S. Coast Guard Commandant Admiral Karl Schultz, Federal Maritime Commission Chairman Daniel Maffei and Military Sealift Commander Rear Admiral Michael Wettlaufer. Deputy Maritime Administrator Lucinda Lessley served as the emcee.

"It is nice to have human voices reverberating in this atrium again," said Buttigieg.

He stated, "We are a maritime nation. From the three ships that changed the fate of the American continent, to the naval base in Hawaii whose bombing catalyzed America's entry into World War II, to the ships carrying most of the things we all count on every day to our nation's ports, we have always been and will always be a nation whose destiny is connected to the sea."

Buttigieg added, "In Peace and In War, our mariners are the reason food reaches families' tables around the country, the reason supplies reach our service members deployed around the world.... Facing a once-in-a-century pandemic, you have adapted. You have kept sailing. You have kept America afloat."

"It's my distinct honor to be here as MARAD's 20th administrator," said Phillips. "I'm thrilled to have this opportunity to serve our nation, and to work with so many stakeholders, many of whom are here in person today.... To foster, promote and



Front row, from left: SIU Port Agent Mario Torrey, SIU Asst. VP Pat Vandegrift, Maritime Administrator Ann Phillips, SIU VP George Tricker, SIU Exec. VP Augie Tellez, Deputy Maritime Administrator Lucinda Lessley, SIU Secretary-Treasurer David Heindel, MTD Executive Secretary-Treasurer Daniel Duncan. Apprentices from the SIU-affiliated Paul Hall Center for Maritime Training and Education are on stage.



MSC Commander Rear Adm. Michael Wettlaufer addresses the crowd.

develop the maritime industry to meet our nation's current and future economic and security needs."

She continued, "Maritime Day is our annual opportunity to celebrate and commemorate, to honor our maritime history and to make sure our fellow Americans understand how critical the maritime industry has been – and continues to be – to our nation's success. Most importantly, today we are thankful for the women and men of the U.S. Merchant Marine, and we celebrate

their essential role in safeguarding and strengthening our nation."

Shultz said, "From the Coast Guard perspective, the marine transportation system is critical to our nation's economy and our national security. About 24 percent of our gross domestic product ties to that. And all of us here today, we know the importance of seaborne cargo. We know the importance of a strong U.S. Merchant Marine. But over the past few years, I think Americans are becoming increasingly aware of the ties to their day to day lives."

He added, "In our world, it's easy to focus on the ships, the ports and the other infrastructure that enable us to execute the mission. But you heard the secretary say it: It's really about the mariners. It's not the steel, it's not the concrete. It's the people that make this important industry the great industry it is."

Maffei spoke on the importance of the merchant mariners of WWII, who recently received a Congressional Gold Medal for their service. He said, "Now, more than three-quarters of a century later, we remember their sacrifice and heroism, and that of all U.S. Merchant Mariners who have –

A Proclamation on National Maritime Day

From sea to shining sea, whether in still or raging waters, America has always been a Nation of maritime travel. Across our 25,000 miles of waterways and over 360 commercial ports, the United States Merchant Marine is integral to our Nation's prosperity. From helping move goods throughout the supply chain to supporting our troops wherever they are deployed, the Merchant Marine plays a vital role in the economic security and defense of our country. On National Maritime Day and every day, we honor the Merchant Marines for their service and sacrifice and acknowledge their crucial role in protecting our Nation's security and commerce.

Today, our Merchant Marine remains inextricably linked to our national and economic security and competitiveness. Merchant mariners' legacy of perseverance and dedication is carried on by today's civilian mariners. As tyranny and violence again cause the tragic loss of innocent lives and senseless destruction in Europe, our merchant mariners have answered the call of duty by crewing vessels of our United States Ready Reserve, moving vital military cargo to help the Ukrainian people in their defense of freedom.

We also salute the remarkable efforts of our entire maritime industry throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. They put the well-

being of the American people first, risking their lives to ensure that essential cargoes of medical supplies and personal protective equipment were delivered to those in need across our Nation.

As we continue to build a better America, our Merchant Marine plays a pivotal role in securing our coastal and inland waterways so that they are open to trade. No matter the hardship, mariners provide a smooth passage for America's critical domestic goods and serve as stewards of our Nation's trading gateways with the rest of the world. My Administration continues its unwavering support of the United States Merchant Marine, as well as the Jones Act, which protects the integrity of our domestic maritime industry, supports hundreds of thousands of jobs, and contributes over \$150 billion in economic benefits.

We also know that the future success of the vital maritime industry depends on its ability to attract the talent of all Americans and reflect the diversity of the Nation it serves. That is why we are resolved to continue the urgent work of advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion in the ranks of the Merchant Marine and to end sexual assault, sexual harassment, and bullying in the workplace.

Our Nation's merchant mariners serve with honor and integrity each and every

day. Today, we recognize their service and sacrifice and recommit ourselves to fulfilling the promises and uplifting the values that they continue to protect.

The Congress, by a joint resolution approved May 20, 1933, has designated May 22 of each year as "National Maritime Day" to commemorate the first transoceanic voyage by a steamship in 1819 by the S.S. Savannah. By this resolution, the Congress has authorized and requested the President to issue annually a proclamation calling for its appropriate observance. I also request that all ships sailing under the American flag dress ship on that day.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, JOSEPH R. BIDEN JR., President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim May 22, 2022, as National Maritime Day. I call upon all Americans to observe this day and to celebrate the United States Merchant Marine and maritime industry with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twentieth day of May, in the year of our Lord two thousand twenty-two, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and forty-sixth.

JOSEPH R. BIDEN JR.

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DOT Sec. Pete Buttigieg commends the U.S. Merchant Marine.

President's Column

Union Yes

The recent win by workers who formed a union at an Amazon distribution center in New York is excellent news in its own right, but it also signals even greater potential for employees across the country.

For anyone who missed it, this was no April Fools' Day joke:



Michael Sacco

On April 1, more than 2,500 individuals voted to join the Amazon Labor Union. They won the election by more than 500 votes, overcoming a massive anti-union campaign and securing the first such victory in the company's history. One prominent publication called it "one of the biggest wins for organized labor in a generation."

Whether an election happens at a large facility like the Amazon warehouse or at comparatively smaller ones like

the various Starbucks locations that have recently unionized, it's always heartening to see workers pulling together and choosing union representation. It also demonstrates that even though our nation's labor laws remain severely outdated, workers can in fact beat the odds and win.

Labor unions have always served as the strongest employee advocate in any workplace. From factory floors to the federal government to the deckplates, union members have always counted on their organization to fight for their rights, wages, safety and health care. Through continual work and perseverance, unions will remain a cornerstone of the American workforce.

It would be even better news if wins like the one at Amazon were the rule rather than the exception. And I believe that'll be the case if the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act becomes law. This legislation, long overdue, would restore fairness to a process that gradually has become severely slanted in management's favor.

When workers want to form or join a union, they should be free to do so, without employer interference. The PRO Act would give them that chance. Meanwhile, kudos to the grassroots movement in New York that culminated in a spirit-lifting victory for workers.

Register and Vote

While some Seafarers already have voted in this year's primaries, it's not too soon for others to double-check their voter registration status ahead of Election Day 2022 (Tuesday, November 8). Make sure you and your eligible family members are registered, and please support pro-maritime, pro-worker candidates.

Without question, there has been an awakening across the U.S. regarding workers' rights. In part, that's why the labor movement finds itself at a crossroads with the elections on the horizon. The combination of a labor-friendly administration and a rising interest in collective action has generated considerable momentum, but at the same time, the opponents of labor are as well-funded and determined to dismantle worker power as they have ever been. To make matters even more complicated, partisan gridlock has stalled progress on more than one item on the labor movement's agenda.

It's no secret that union membership across the country has declined over the years, but union households still play a major role in determining outcomes of many elections. This depends, though, on everyone from the movement exercising their constitutional right to vote. That the enemies of the working class have attempted so many times to interfere with that right only reveals how terrified they are of a unified labor movement making its voice heard.

This encouragement goes beyond presidential and congressional elections. Union families must vote the whole ballot from state legislatures to city hall to local school boards. Those who seek to swipe power away from America's working class operate best under the cover of darkness, funneling money into races and legislative manipulations that mostly escape the notice of national and even your local media.

That's why labor cannot leave any political stone unturned. Leadership must do its part to educate members on the issues, but ultimately the responsibility rests with each union member to cast her or his ballot strategically. Without concentrated political power at every level of government, the labor movement cannot achieve its goals. And make no mistake, those goals benefit not just America's working families, but all of America.

SIU Directory

Michael Sacco, *President*

Augustin Tellez, *Executive Vice President*

David Heindel, *Secretary-Treasurer*

George Tricker, *Vice President Contracts*

Nicholas Celona,
Vice President Government Services

Joe Vincenzo,
Asst. Vice President Government Services

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AFL-CIO Opposes Open Register

The AFL-CIO Executive Council on March 15 unanimously adopted a statement opposing a proposed open register in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

SIU President Michael Sacco, the council's longest-serving member, provided background on the situation to other board members.

In part, the statement reads, "American merchant mariners are the gold standard for the world in terms of safety and training. From iron ore for steel mills along the Great Lakes to food aid to hungry citizens in Africa, from materiel for American armed forces stationed around the world to vital household goods at domestic ports, they deliver.

"For generations, foreign interests and their allies have tried to find ways to circumvent the nation's labor and tax laws to take good jobs away from hard-working Americans," the statement continues. "The latest effort, announced last month, calls for the creation of a so-called open registry for the U.S. Virgin Islands. As outlined, this initiative would take cargo from U.S.-flag vessels, crewed by American citizens, and place it on vessels that do not use American crews, do not pay American taxes and do not meet American safety and labor standards. This attempt to create a flag of convenience using the U.S. Virgin Islands is wrong and harmful to American workers."

The statement concludes, "The AFL-CIO joins with the Maritime Trades Department, AFL-CIO; the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO; and the Metal Trades Department, AFL-CIO in calling upon the Biden Administration, the Congress, the Department of Defense and the Maritime Administration to reject any effort that U.S. Virgin Islands-flag vessels be treated as if they are the same as U.S.-flag, U.S.-crewed for any purpose or for any program. At the same time, we reiterate our commitment to work with the Biden



SIU President Michael Sacco (right) and AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler pause for a snapshot during a break in the federation's executive council meeting in the nation's capital.

Administration and the Congress to achieve a more robust, commercially viable U.S.-flag, U.S.-crewed fleet that will continue to protect America's economic, military and homeland security."

Previously, a joint statement from shipboard maritime unions including the SIU pointed out, "The proposed U.S. Virgin Islands flag of convenience open registry will not benefit the United States nor America's maritime industry, any more than any other second or open registry benefits a national flag country. In fact, the establishment and growth of second registries by other industrialized nations has done little more than decimate their national flag fleets to the point that they are no longer able to provide the requisite military security and logistical support to their flag nations."



Pictured at the National Maritime Day event May 19 in Norfolk, Virginia, are (from left) SIU Safety Director Anthony Houston, SIU Government Services Division Representative Sam Spain, Maersk Line, Limited President/CEO Bill Woodhour and SIU Port U.S. Agent DeCarlo Harris.

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right up to the present COVID crisis – put their lives and health on the line in order to ensure the success of U.S. forces and humanitarian efforts abroad. U.S.-flag ships continue to deliver important cargoes, across waterways, to all parts of our country.... On this Maritime Day, we owe them once again our heartfelt gratitude."

Wetlaufer used his speech to look to the future, saying, "To the people in the front row here, turn around and look at the [apprentices] from the [Paul Hall Center]. That's the future.

"In 2022, as in 1945, American mariners remain essential to our economy and our defense," he con-

tinued, "The close collaboration between and integration across our commercial and labor partners, the U.S. Coast Guard and the Maritime Administration, the shipbuilding and repair industry, certainly the Department of Defense and the merchant marine allow our nation to maintain and retain a vital strategic advantage. An advantage that allows the joint force to maneuver across the globe at the time and to the place of our choosing, in both peacetime and in conflict."

To close out the ceremony, students from the Paul Hall Center (based in Piney Point, Maryland) served as wreath tenders and performed the sounding of Eight Bells, as is tradition.

How to Become an SIU Member

Joining the SIU is easy and an important step in protecting your workplace rights. The union's website – www.seafarers.org – includes printable PDF versions of forms that mariners may use to request and authorize payroll deductions for labor organization dues. The forms are posted at:

<https://www.seafarers.org/news/labor-maritime-news/civmar-news/>
Forms are also available under "SIU Forms" in the ABOUT tab.

Contact Information

Vice President Government Services
Nicholas Celona:
Phone: (201) 434-6000
Email: ncelona@seafarers.org

Asst. Vice President Government Services
Joe Vincenzo:
Phone: (253) 272-7774
Email: jvincenzo@seafarers.org

Government Services Fleet Representative Sam Spain:
Phone: (757) 622-1892
Email: sspain@seafarers.org

Government Services Fleet Representative Jesse Ruth:
Phone: (619) 581-6008
Email: jruth@seafarers.org

Biden Reaffirms Support for Maritime

President Biden, meeting with the AFL-CIO leadership and principal officers of international unions on March 5, said once again he will not waiver in his longtime support for the Jones Act, the nation's freight cabotage law.

The president was responding to a statement from SIU Executive Vice President Augie Tellez during the gathering in Wilmington, Delaware.

Tellez, who attended with MEBA Secretary-Treasurer Roland Rexha and MM&P President Don Marcus, thanked the president for standing with American mariners throughout his career as a senator and vice president. He alerted Biden to new attacks being directed at the Jones Act in the wake of rising petroleum prices because of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The maritime contingent noted recent news columns preposterously trying to claim the Jones Act as anti-American.

Tellez also informed the president about the February announcement proposing an open registry in the U.S. Virgin Islands that would take away cargo from U.S.-flag ships and jobs from American mariners.

Biden told Tellez, Rexha, Marcus and the other labor leaders he will continue to fight for American mariners and workers.

In a recent statement about the proposed open register, the SIU and other unions noted, "Open registries exist so that shipowners can increase their profits by avoiding the same rules, regulations, tax obligations and manning requirements that attach to a national flag fleet. This latest effort is nothing more than an exercise in labor arbitrage designed to generate registry fees and to enrich foreign shipowners at the expense of American workers and America's national interests. The military security of the United States will not be strengthened by relying on foreign owned and foreign crewed vessels."



President Biden on March 5 hosted a labor roundtable in Wilmington, Delaware, during which he listened to union officials and reiterated his strong backing of the labor movement and the U.S. Merchant Marine. Biden is pictured in front, second from left. AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler is kneeling at far left. SIU Executive VP Augie Tellez is in the second row (sixth from right), behind the president's left shoulder. Secretary of Labor Marty Walsh, who also addressed the group, is standing at far left.

VP Emphasizes 'Historic Commitment to Worker Organizing, Empowerment'

The Biden administration will continue working to be known not merely as pro-worker, but as the most pro-union administration in U.S. history.

Vice President Kamala Harris delivered that message April 12 during a gathering at a Sheet Metal Workers facility in Philadelphia. Attendees included U.S. Secretary of Labor Marty Walsh; U.S. Sen. Bob Casey (D-Pennsylvania); U.S. Rep. Mary Scanlon (D-Pennsylvania); U.S. Rep. Dwight Evans (D-Pennsylvania); Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Wolf (D); Philadelphia Mayor Jim Kenney (D); and AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler, who traveled with the vice president.

Harris described Shuler as a friend and "a fighter. She goes to work every day for the working people of our nation, and she is an essential partner to our administration."

The vice president's speech was titled, "The Administration's Historic Commitment to Worker Organizing and Empowerment." She detailed many of the steps that demonstrate the commitment, including cross-country travel with Walsh for visits to "job sites and training facilities and union halls."

After mentioning Walsh's long background in organized labor (including growing up in a union household), Harris said that although their respective histories differ, they have much in common.

"My parents met while they were marching for civil rights," Harris stated. "They taught me that people can make a difference and that when we use our collective voice, whether at a protest or a picket line, we can drive great change. And that belief in the power of solidarity has guided me, [Walsh], and all of us our entire lives. And it guides our administration."

"President Joe Biden and I are determined to lead the most pro-union administration in America's history," she continued. "We know, each and every day in ways big and small, unions change lives. Unions negotiate better wages and safer working conditions for millions of workers around our country."

Harris also pointed out, "Even if you are not a member of a union, you (should) thank unions for every benefit that you receive. Thank unions for the five-day workweek, for the weekend, for sick leave. We should all – anyone who works in America – know that you have benefited from the hard work, from the fight of the leaders in this movement. Our labor leaders, our unions train people to take on good jobs."

However, unions contribute more to society than just a skilled workforce, she said. The labor movement and the good jobs it helps create and maintain "provides community. It provides home. It provides a place that remembers that nobody should be made to fight alone. It is so fundamental in terms of the approach, which says that we all know we are stronger when we stand together. That is at the heart of the spirit behind this movement."

She continued, "Unions create stronger communities. They bring people together. And they, of course, protect workers from things like harassment and discrimination. They give workers a voice. Put simply, unions move our nation forward. And the American people know it. The American people know that when unions win, workers win, families win, communities win. When unions win, America wins, as evidenced by the fact that, today, unions have their highest approval rating since 1965."

Despite the favorable views of unions, it often remains an uphill climb to join one. The vice president said that's because, in part, "powerful forces in our country have been hard at work building barriers to stop workers from organizing. We've got to then take it on with a powerful counterforce, which is why our administration is working even harder to tear those barriers down."

She discussed the work of the White House Task Force on Worker Organizing and Empowerment, which she and Walsh lead. "Last year, our task force proposed nearly 70 actions the executive branch of our government can take to protect and expand the rights of workers to organize and



Vice President Kamala Harris tells a Philadelphia audience that the administration remains solidly committed to workers and the labor movement. (Photo by Bastiaan Slabbers)

collectively bargain," Harris stated. "Our President, Joe Biden, accepted every single one."

Harris explained that the bipartisan infrastructure bill that recently became law "will put thousands of union workers, carpenters, and pipefitters, and plumbers, and, yes, sheet metal workers, to work across the country."

She concluded, "Every worker deserves a safe and a healthy workplace. Every worker deserves a job with good wages and fair benefits. Every worker in America deserves the choice to join a union. And the President and I will always stand with you to defend these sacred principles. Our administration will do everything in our power to ensure the workers of our nation can succeed and can thrive. Because when workers succeed and thrive, so does our nation."

World War II U.S. Merchant Mariners Honored With Congressional Gold Medal in D.C.

The SIU on May 18 joined in celebrating long-overdue recognition for U.S. Merchant Mariners of World War II as they received the Congressional Gold Medal in the Capitol Building.

Ten members of the American Merchant Marine Veterans (AMMV) participated in the one-hour ceremony, which featured remarks from members of congress, the administration, and the military. SIU Executive Vice President Augie Tellez represented the SIU at the event.

The Congressional Gold Medal is the highest honor bestowed by the U.S. Congress. The veterans received the medal on behalf of the approximately 1,500 remaining mariners of World War II.

More than 1,200 SIU members lost their lives in wartime service.

"The bravery demonstrated by the U.S. Merchant Mariners to keep Allied Forces supplied during World War II is second to none," said AMMV President Dru DiMatia. "In the face of targeted attacks by German submarines and U-boats, the unarmed U.S. Merchant Mariners met the moment with resilience and courage, and serve as an inspiration for all of American maritime."

In 2020, Congress unanimously passed the Merchant Mariners of World War II Congressional Gold Medal Act thanks in part to the advocacy of U.S. Rep. John Garamendi (D-California) and Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) along with organizations including the SIU. The bill was promptly signed into law, but the official award was delayed due to the global pandemic.

"We gave up our yesterdays for your and their tomorrow," stated former mariner Dave Yoho during the ceremony, which he called a "humble tribute to my fallen brothers." Yoho served in the engine department, signing on as a 16-year-old.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-California) and Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell (Kentucky) led the congressional delegation to recognize the mariners.

"We celebrate these patriots for doing their part to preserve liberty," Pelosi told them.

"They earned their rallying cry: 'We deliver the goods,'" added McConnell.

Garamendi and the late U.S. Rep. Don Young (R-Alaska) pushed Congress for years to honor the World War II mariners with a gold medal.

After saying it was "a great day, a happy day," Garamendi declared, "Without you, the success of the World War II would not have happened."

House Republican Leader Kevin McCarthy (California) said the presentation was "long overdue." He saluted the mariners: "Everything America asked them to do, they delivered."

U.S. Rep. Joe Courtney (D-Connecticut) paid tribute by quoting President Franklin Roosevelt: "The merchant marine delivered the goods when and where needed in every theater of operation and across every ocean in the biggest, most difficult job ever undertaken."

Also taking part in the presentation were Rear Adm. Michael Wettlaufer, commander of the U.S. Military Sealift Command; U.S. Coast Guard Vice Admiral Scott Buschman; and U.S. Maritime Deputy Administrator Lucinda Lesley.

The gold medal will be placed on display in the American Merchant Marine Museum at the Academy in Kings Point, New York. The World War mariners on hand received duplicates. They included Yoho, William Balabanow, Gerard Driscoll, James T. Lindsey, Charles A. Mills, George Offenhauser Sr., Bob Ross, James Sciple, Jack Laub and George Shaw.

For information on ordering a replica of the medal, email Katrina McRae at katrina.mcrae@dot.gov.

Editor's note: For additional coverage including photos, please visit the SIU website and/or the union's Facebook page.

SIU Snapshots from Around the Fleet



SIU Asst. VP Joe Vincenzo and SIU Government Services Division Representative Jesse Ruth recently met with federal mariners in San Diego. They also helped conduct habitability inspections on two new builds at General Dynamics NASSCO, a union shipyard. The photo immediately below, right was taken at NASSCO; Vincenzo is second from right, while Ruth is at left. The other two individuals are from the U.S. Military Sealift Command. The photo above was taken with CIVMARS aboard the *USNS John Lewis*.



SIU Government Services Division Representative Jesse Ruth (fourth from right) meets with new members at the West Coast CSU.



SIU Asst. VP Joe Vincenzo (fifth from right) and SIU Government Services Division Representative Jesse Ruth (far right) meet with new and veteran CIVMARS in San Diego while the mariners await vessel assignments.



SIU Asst. VP Joe Vincenzo (right) is pictured with U.S. Rep. Marilyn Strickland (D-Washington) at a kickoff event for Washington State's 10th District.



SIU VP Government Services Nicholas Celona (right) and SIU Port Agent Chris Westbrook discuss future job opportunities for Seafarers. They're pictured at the New Orleans hall.



The CIVMAR crewed fast combat support ship *USNS Supply* (left) and SIU crewed tanker *Maersk Peary* conduct the first two-station consolidated cargo replenishment at sea (CONSOL). (Photo by navigator, 2nd Mate Daniel Hall, from an MH-60S Sea Hawk helicopter flown by Lt. Cmdr. Jared Webster)