

Philippine authorities call shipowners, country's seafarers to stay out of 'high-risk' areas

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by Shipping Telegraph



Photo credit: Philippines coast guard.

The Philippine Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) reiterated its call on Thursday for shipowners and licensed manning agencies to reroute their vessels away from 'high-risk, war-like' areas, particularly traversing the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.

Iran-backed Houthis last week attacked the Greek bulker vessel, Liberia-flagged, *Magic Seas*, 51 nautical miles southwest of Al Hudaydah in Yemen. The vessel was attacked by multiple small ships using different types of weaponry. In just 24 hours in a similarly coordinated assault Houthis attacked the Greek-managed bulker, Liberia-flagged *Eternity C* in the southern Red Sea, the second ship attacked by Iran-backed Houthis last week after months of calm.

Migrant Workers Secretary Hans Leo J. Cacdac confirmed on Thursday evening that three more Filipino crew members of the Houthi-attacked *Eternity C* were rescued, bringing the total number of rescued Filipino seafarers to eight (out of the 22 crew members).

Six of the 17 Filipino crews of the vessel *Magic Seas* are now finally safe at home, DMW said on Friday, after arriving at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 1 in Pasay City and Clark International Airport in Pampanga on July 11.

Among those who arrived at NAIA are the ship's chief officer, 2nd officer, and 3rd officer. Meanwhile, three more crews mostly engineers, landed at Clark International Airport around 4pm.

In a statement, Migrant Workers Secretary Hans Leo J. Cacdac reiterated key provisions of the department order No. 1, series of 2024, ensuring protection of Filipino seafarers amid the increasing incidence of hijacking or armed violence against ships passing through the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, and surrounding areas.

"We asked shipowners carrying Filipino seafarers to please divert your voyagers. It is not enough to just say, we are taking the necessary safety precautions; the best way to spare our seafarers is to avoid the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden," Cacdac emphasized.

He also urged shipowners and manning agencies to "report the scheduled passage of ships and those Philippine seafarers on board in our welfare monitoring system including information on deployment or knowledge of any scheduled passage to the Red Sea or Gulf of Aden," saying that failure to do so will result in the imposition of sanctions under the DMW rules and regulations upon the manning agent and the principal.

"The Department will not hesitate to take firm and lawful action against those who compromise the safety of our seafarers. We owe them protection, not promises," Cacdac stressed.

The Department also reminded Filipino seafarers of their right to refuse sailing in risky areas, mentioning that licensed manning agencies and principals must arrange an immediate and safe repatriation for those invoking this right.

The DMW already reached out to affected families via phone calls and zoom meeting to ensure that necessary assistance and updates are delivered directly.

"President Marcos has directed us to take a people-first approach – to make sure every Filipino seafarer is accounted for and that their families are given the attention and care they deserve," Cacdac concluded.

The U.S. Embassy Yemen said Wednesday that the Houthi group kidnapped many surviving crew members of the ship *Eternity C* in the Red Sea after attacking it.

"After killing their shipmates, sinking their ship and hampering rescue efforts, the Houthi terrorists have kidnapped many surviving crew members of the *Eternity C*," the embassy said in a statement on X.

It called for their "immediate and unconditional safe release." "The Houthis continue to show the world why the United States was right to label them a terrorist organization," it added in the statement on X (former twitter).