

2025 IMO HONOURS FOR EXCEPTIONAL BRAVERY AT SEA

Recipient of the Award

Mr. Lee Tae-young, officer on board the fishing vessel **Geum Seong No.135**, nominated by the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF), for the extraordinary leadership, courage and selflessness he displayed in rescuing, in rough seas, 12 of his fellow crew members.

In the early hours of 8 November 2024, the vessel, after unloading its catch, rapidly listed and capsized, with only the propeller remaining above water. This left very little time to rescue the crew that had fallen into the water, and little space for survivors to use as refuge. Some crew members managed to hang on to the propeller whilst others were being swept away by strong currents and waves.

Mr. Lee, with no prior SAR training and at an immense risk to his own life, did not hesitate to rescue the 12 crew members desperately holding on to the vessel's propeller. He also threw two life rings and helped them climb up the ladder of the rescue boat, holding them tightly so they would not fall into the water when boarding it. He was the last to leave the **Geum Seong No.135**, after an extremely difficult rescue operation.

The extreme pressure Mr. Lee suffered during the incident had an enormous impact on his health. Despite the challenges, Mr. Lee continues to convey hope and courage to his colleagues.

Certificates of Commendation

1. The Captain and the crew of the Rescue 901 helicopter of the 103 Squadron, Gander NL&L, Royal Canadian Airforce, nominated by Canada, for their courage, tenacity and technical skill displayed during the rescue of the 20 crew members of the 207-meter long disabled cargo vessel **MSC Baltic III**, which had drifted and ran aground along a rocky shoreline due to powerful north-westerly winds, with a partially collapsed bridge and 20 crew members on board, including four with injuries. The helicopter required hand flying due to turbulence resulting in persistent and extreme variations in aircraft altitude. As the vessel rolled violently against the rocky shoreline amidst 18-foot waves and 40 to 55 knots of wind, with the ship's deck dangerously slippery due to ice and the bridge in complete disarray, with scattered debris, the rescue team successfully managed to hoist the whole crew to safety in over an hour.
2. Captain Dimitrios Flouris and the crew of the tug supply vessel **Aigaion Pelagos**, nominated by Greece, for their exceptional bravery, exemplary seamanship and resource management skills in the salvage operation of the **M/T Sounion**, averting a catastrophic environmental disaster under adverse safety and security conditions, and at the risk of their own lives. The vessel was sailing in the Red Sea carrying about 150,000 metric tons of heavy crude oil and nearly 3,000 metric tons of fuel/bunkers on board, when it was struck by three uncrewed aerial devices and lost engine power. Following the crew evacuation, and after a second

attack, the ship's bridge was blown away and further explosions at different locations on the main deck caused extensive damage to the vessel and multiple fires. A substantial salvage operation commenced, and the crew of the **Aigaion Pelagos** boarded the abandoned vessel under extreme heat and hazardous conditions, managed to extinguish all the fires and ensured that the cargo was maintained in an inert state. Throughout this operation, the lives of the rescuers were in danger due to being in range of further uncrewed aerial devices. Their work was made particularly hazardous because most of the firefighting operations had to be conducted at night due to the high heat and humidity of the Red Sea. The actions of the Captain and the crew of the **Aigaion Pelagos** were crucial in averting an environmental disaster in the area.

3. Members of the Special Rescue Team of the Japan Coast Guard, nominated by Japan, for their extraordinary courage and determination during the rescue of the remaining survivor of the Japanese tugboat **Shouei-Maru** that caught fire and capsized, following a collision with a cargo ship while towing a barge. Divers from the Kobe Coast Guard Office found and rescued the captain of the tugboat, who was sadly pronounced dead at the hospital. Later, the Special Rescue Team arrived at the site of the incident and struck the hull of the capsized tugboat with a hammer to check for survivors. When they heard hammering back, the Team dived to enter the upturned tugboat, without waiting for safety measures to be put in place, and despite the imminent danger of sinking. They searched the upturned tugboat while securing an evacuation route amid poor visibility caused by drifting fuel oil and scattered debris. If the tugboat sank, there would be no time to escape and the survivor would lose any chance of rescue. After half an hour, the crew member was found, at the limit of his endurance, and brought to safety. This extremely difficult rescue operation was carried out at great personal risk to the members of the Special Rescue Team who took part in it.

4. Aviation Survival Technician Second Class (AST2) Michael Diglio, Coast Guard rescue swimmer at the Coast Guard Air Station Clearwater of the United States Coast Guard, nominated by the United States, for his brave and decisive actions during the rescue, amidst torrential rain and near-zero visibility caused by the tropical storm Debby, of two mariners stranded aboard the disabled sailing vessel **Venture**, struggling against the surging seas. After seeing a distress flair briefly cutting through the darkening sky, due to the limited visibility, AST2 Diglio was forced to rely on the helicopter sensors instead of visual cues during the search. Upon locating the vessel, under time pressure due to the limited fuel reserves, he deployed into the turbulent sea, battling swirling currents and driving rain to intercept the survivors. Securing the first one, Mr. Diglio signaled for the hoist amid waves that threatened to swallow them both. Buffeted by wind gusts exceeding 50 knots, he kept the mariner stable during a harrowing ascent. Shortly after, he repeated the same operation with the second survivor. AST2 Diglio displayed selflessness and courageous leadership whilst executing an exemplary rescue operation at the risk of his own life.

Letters of Commendation

1. Lieutenant Md. Shofiul Alam and the crew of the Bangladesh Coast Guard Tug **Promotto**, nominated by Bangladesh, for the courage and determination they displayed during the fire-fighting operation onboard the crude oil tanker **Banglar Sourabh**. The crew's continued efforts, under adverse weather conditions, including strong winds, averted an oil spill and prevented significant damage to the marine environment.
2. The Master and the crew of the M/V **Maersk Leader**, nominated by Brazil, for their bravery and perseverance demonstrated during a night rescue, in challenging sea conditions with low visibility and a 2.5-meter swell, of the 20 crew members of the anchor handling vessel **Bram Force**, which had caught fire. After six round trips between the vessels, the crew were brought to safety.
3. Captain Todor Ivanov Todorov and the crew of the M/V **Eleen Armonia**, nominated by Bulgaria, for their courage and exceptional skills demonstrated during the challenging rescue of the crew members of the fishing vessel **Hasil Abadi 28**, which was ablaze. The vessel was without an automatic identification system and did not appear on radar. The crew, who skillfully came alongside the fishing vessel, battled the fire, facing the risk of explosion, until it was fully extinguished. All 34 crew members onboard the fishing vessel were rescued and brought to safety.
4. Captain Xu Jiamin, Master of the M/V **Luo Tong 7002**, nominated by China, for his leadership, courage and outstanding ship-handling expertise, displayed during the rescue of all 17 crew members onboard the non-powered crane ship **Yu Hang Qi Zhong 28** during a typhoon. The crane ship had lost control, after its anchor chains snapped, and was rolling and drifting uncontrollably in darkness and amid extreme weather conditions, with violent winds and waves surging to 4-5 meters. Through the unyielding determination and professionalism of Captain Xu, the crew of the crane ship were safely evacuated to the M/V **Luo Tong 7002**.
5. Mr. Li Wenxia, crew member of the of rescue helicopter B-7312, Beihai No.1 Rescue Flying Service, BeiHai Rescue Bureau, nominated by China, for the resolve and expertise demonstrated during the rescue of a fisherman who was holding onto the only mast remaining above water of the fishing vessel **Jileyu 02163**. In extreme weather and sea conditions, Mr. Li, at significant risk to himself did not hesitate to be winched down to the casualty and recover them to the helicopter.
6. Captain Qiang Li and the crew of the hopper dredger **Jun Yang 1**, nominated by China, for the bravery and determination displayed during the emergency towing operation of the sand carrier **Leo Empire**, which suffered a total loss of power and propulsion, following a main engine failure. The sand carrier, with 7 crew members onboard, was rapidly drifting towards a reef at the risk of sinking and causing a fuel spill. As a result of the brave and tenacious actions of the crew of the **Jun Yang 1**, the crew of the **Leo Empire** averted both loss of life and a serious environmental incident.

7. Captain Xiao Wei and the crew of the M/V **Xin An Ning**, nominated by China, for their courage and the perseverance displayed in the rescue of three persons adrift at sea for five days, without food or fresh water, after their pneumatic boat lost control and contact, due to strong winds and rough seas. They maneuvered the vessel to the distressed boat to professionally carry out the rescue and brought those in peril to safety.
8. Captain Zhao Guoqiang and the crew of the M/S **Amoy Century**, nominated by China, for their bravery and great resolve during the rescue of the container vessel M/V **ASL Bauhinia**, which had caught fire whilst laden with hazardous cargo, and with 22 crew members and three security guards onboard. The Captain and the crew did not hesitate to respond to the distress call despite the great risk to their lives posed by the imminent danger of explosion.
9. Captain Kondrate Gvadzabia and the crew of the oil/chemical tanker **Owl 5**, nominated by Georgia, for their exceptional seamanship skills and professionalism demonstrated in the assistance to, and evacuation of a critically ill civilian, in deteriorating weather and sea conditions, by skillfully maneuvering the vessel into a suitable position in turbulent seas and darkness to transfer the casualty onboard the **Owl 5** before their extraction by helicopter.
10. Mr. Albert Buettner, Mr. Peter Pfeiffer, Mr. Alex Hempel and Mr. Rene Baudisch, the leader and the members of the Towing Assistance Team (TAT), Central Command for Maritime Emergencies (CCME), nominated by Germany, for their courage and great resolve displayed during the towing operation, over several days, of the oil tanker M/T **Eventin**, which suffered a total power failure and was drifting uncontrollably whilst laden with nearly 100,000 tons of crude oil. The team's relentless efforts prevented the tanker from running aground and suffering a structural failure. This averted considerable damage to the marine environment.
11. Captain Soni Thomas and the crew of the **INS Teg**, Indian Navy, nominated by India, for their outstanding bravery and determination during the challenging rescue operation of the survivors of the capsized oil tanker M/V **Prestige Falcon**, amidst strong winds and limited visibility. As a result of the efforts of Capt. Thomas and the crew of the **INS Teg**, nine survivors were rescued from a partially submerged raft in adverse weather conditions. One life was sadly lost.
12. Captain Sabinesh S. Vayath and the crew of the M/V **Maersk Yukon**, nominated by Panama, for their vigilance, tenacity and ship-handling expertise displayed during the rescue of two fishermen who had been adrift at sea for four days after their boat's engine broke down. The crew skillfully maneuvered their vessel, in reduced visibility, bringing the fishermen to safety.
13. The crew members of the search and rescue vessel **BRP Melchora Aquino** (MRRV-9702), Philippine Coast Guard, nominated by the Philippines, for their leadership, courage and exceptional skills in the rescue, during a typhoon and in complete darkness, of the M/T **Terranova** with 17 crew members onboard, which had suffered engine failure whilst carrying 1.4 million liters of industrial fuel oil. The tanker was sinking, however, thanks to the relentless efforts of the rescuers despite hazardous weather conditions, 16 crew members were rescued and a catastrophic oil spillage was averted. The operation continued for the last crew member missing until, sadly, his remains were found.

14. Captain Byungsuk Park, Master of the fishing vessel **999 Bumsung**, and Captain Hyeongtaek Im, Master of the fishing vessel **621 Yeongsin**, nominated by the Republic of Korea, for their determination and coordinated actions, in a challenging night rescue in large waves and strong winds, of 10 fishermen, who were drifting without life jackets and at risk of hypothermia, after their fishing vessel **136 Danuri** was struck by high waves and capsized.
15. Captain Hyunwoo Park, Master of the fishing vessel **New Angel**, nominated by the Republic of Korea, for his bravery and selfless actions demonstrated during the rescue of the fishing vessel **Fighting**, after it had been flooded and ran aground. Captain Park without delay rushed to the half sunken vessel and rescued 11 passengers, some drifting at sea with life jackets and close to hypothermic shock. Through his selfless actions Captain Park demonstrated his strong commitment to maritime safety.
16. Captain Atıl Ayca Aksoy, Master of the tug vessel **Kurtarma 5**, nominated by Türkiye, for his professionalism and ship-handling expertise in preventing a collision of the bulk carrier **Bunun Ace**, that was drifting dangerously towards shore and close to passenger boats moored in the area. With great expertise, he maneuvered his tugboat alongside the bulk carrier, pushing it clear of the shoreline and altering its course, thus averting a disaster and preventing loss of life and damage to the marine environment.
17. The crew members of the M/T **T. Caroline**, nominated by Türkiye, for their courage and exemplary seamanship skills displayed in the rescue, in rough seas, and after both tug and helicopter rescues were deemed unfeasible, of two survivors of the sailing yacht **Delfin and Deniz**, that was drifting and at a risk of sinking, after losing all means of propulsion.
18. Lieutenant Robert Turns, Lieutenant Commander Joshua Womboldt, AMT2 Eric Lamy and AST2 Hunter Joseph, crew members of helicopter CG- 6048, Coast Guard Air Station Kodiak, United States Coast Guard, nominated by the United States, for their courage, professionalism and determination during the challenging rescue beyond operational limits, in complete darkness and under extremely challenging conditions, of a critically ill and unresponsive mariner from the fishing vessel **Alaska Victory**.

In addition, the Panel of Judges decided to award the following recognitions:

Special recognition for merchant vessels and their crew involved in the rescue of mixed migrants at sea, for the crucial role everyone on board their vessels played in rescuing and assisting persons in distress at sea (information about this recognition can be found [here](#)).

1. Captain Malcolm Joseph Nolasco Dsilva and the crew of the M/V **Nexoe Maersk**, nominated by China;
 2. Captain Ruan Wenyu and the crew of the M/V **Xin Bo**, nominated by China;
 3. Captain Soe Naing and the crew of the M/V **Nysted Maersk**, nominated by China;
 4. Captain Christopher Francis Phillips and the crew of the LNG tanker **British Achiever**, nominated by the United Kingdom;
 5. Captain Rafat Alcheikh and the of the M/V **Rukbat Star**, nominated by ITF;
 6. Captain Eduardo Ferrone and the crew of the M/S **Carnival Radiance**, nominated by CLIA;
 7. Captain Martino Pellegrino and the crew of the M/S **Carnival Paradise**, nominated by CLIA;
 8. Captain Panagiotis Skylogiannis and the crew of the M/S **Celebrity Apex**, nominated by CLIA;
 9. Captain Rino Costanzo and the crew of the M/S **Carnival Celebration**, nominated by CLIA;
 10. Captain Captain Stjepan Zuzic and the crew of the M/S **Oceania Insignia**, nominated by CLIA.
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