

2020 IMO AWARD FOR EXCEPTIONAL BRAVERY AT SEA

Recipients of the Award

1. Mr. Marcio Santos Teixeira and Mr. Fabio Rodrigues Alves de Abreu, members of the São Paulo Pilots, nominated by Brazil, for their decisiveness, professionalism and ship-handling expertise demonstrated in an emergency caused by extreme weather conditions during a ship-to-ship oil operation at the Terminal Almirante Barroso in São Sebastião Port.

On 28 April 2019, Pilot Teixeira and Pilot Abreu were alerted by the Terminal manager that, due to the unprecedented wind gusts of up to 70 knots, the mooring lines of two tankers berthed in a ship-to-ship operation were breaking. Under poor visibility caused by heavy rain and high waves in the channel, both pilots boarded the pilot boat to attempt boarding the tankers, when they noticed that the vessels were already adrift. Under very challenging conditions, Pilot Teixeira managed to board tanker **Rio 2016** and communicated with both Masters to plan the best approach to the critical situation, since both vessels were still connected by oil hoses and mooring lines and drifting towards a nearby city. In the meantime, taking serious risks, Pilot Abreu managed to climb the pilot ladder of tanker **Milton Santos**. Having a pilot on each vessel was essential for communication purposes and as a back-up plan.

Pilot Teixeira proceeded with the navigation of the **Rio 2016**, towing the **Milton Santos** alongside, at a maximum speed of 1.5 knots, towards anchoring area. After 40 minutes of navigation, a challenging evacuation of a seriously injured crew member of the **Milton Santos** had to be coordinated with the assisting tugboats. Sadly, information arrived afterwards that he had passed away. Wind speed decreased to 30 knots and, while the anchor of **Rio 2016** was being dropped, the vessels were disconnected. Both pilots then carefully manoeuvred the **Milton Santos** away from the **Rio 2016** with the assistance of tugboats and, after more than five stressful hours, the **Milton Santos** finally also dropped her anchor. As a result of the courageous actions of Pilot Teixeira and Pilot Abreu, more lives were not lost, serious damage to pier structures and oil facilities were prevented and a major marine pollution incident was avoided.

2. Petty Officer Second Class Ralph Ofalla Barajan of the Philippine Coast Guard, nominated by the Philippines, for the leadership and determination displayed, while off-duty, during the flooding and sinking of the M/V **Siargao Princess**, where he was a passenger along with 54 people.

On the morning of 7 November 2019, alerted by the battering of big waves and screams from other passengers, PO2 Barajan quickly assessed the situation and called the Coast Guard to request immediate assistance, as the cargo hold was quickly flooding, affecting the vessel's stability. He took charge of the situation and provided assistance and instructions to both passengers and crew members to grab life jackets, transfer to the other side of the ship and prepare for evacuation.



After he calmly but firmly persuaded the Captain to declare abandon ship, he assisted all passengers to jump off the vessel, making sure that no one was left behind. The **Siargao Princess** sank in less than 10 minutes after abandoning ship. While floating on the water, PO2 Barajan tied the life jackets of passengers and crew members in groups for their own safety and aiming to facilitate the search and rescue operation of the Coast Guard, which arrived more than an hour later.

Certificates of Commendation

1. The crew of the all-weather boat SNS 061 **Jack Morisseau**, volunteer rescuers at the Station of Les Sables d'Olonne Port, National Maritime Rescue Association (SNSM), nominated by France, for their exceptional courage and self-sacrifice in attempting to rescue, in extreme weather conditions caused by storm "Miguel", the multipurpose fishing vessel **Carrera**, whose only crew member had sent a distress message. Tossed by the raging seas, the **Jack Morisseau** capsized several times and the force of the waves threw four of the rescuers out of the boat. Sadly, one of them passed away and two of his fellow crew members were found dead, trapped in the wheelhouse. Regrettably, the fisherman's body of the **Carrera** was also found nine days later.
2. Aviation Survival Technician Second Class Douglas M. Niebaum, United States Coast Guard Air Station Sitka, nominated by the United States of America, for his bravery, professionalism and endurance in rescuing five crew members of the fishing vessel **Masonic**, which was aground on jagged rocks with the crew's tethered life raft being battered by breaking surf. AST2 Niebaum swam incessantly in pitch-dark treacherous waters and towed each survivor out to open water, where they were hoisted into the helicopter. Later on the same day, AST2 Niebaum was deployed to assist the sinking fishing vessel **Neto**, expertly managing a challenging hoist to guide a dewatering pump clear of the vessel's hazardous rigging and fighting 20-knot winds. He brought the flooding under control, saving the Captain's life, as well as the vessel.
3. Captain Pavo Butijer, Master of the M/T **Towada**, nominated by ITF, for his exceptional seamanship and leadership in rescuing, in complete darkness and gale-force winds, 34 fishermen from 3 wooden fishing boats caught in a cyclone, who were about to jump overboard without basic life-saving equipment. Captain Butijer skilfully manoeuvred the 333 meter long tanker, sailing in ballast, alongside the fishing boats to protect them from the strong winds, while keeping a safe distance from the sinking boats for a 4-hour period, enabling the fishermen to climb on board to safety, using the ship accommodation ladder combined with a pilot ladder with the assistance of the crew of the **Towada**.
4. The No.330 Squadron RNoAF, CHC Helicopter Service, nominated by ITF, for the professionalism and determination shown during the evacuation of passengers and crew members of the cruise ship **Viking Sky** and the cargo ship **Hagland Captain**. With both ships experiencing engine failure and with the **Viking Sky** 100 meters (330ft) from grounding with only 10 centimetres gap under the keel, the No. 330 Squadron worked tirelessly, in rough seas and strong winds, carrying out 30 helicopter trips, some of them in complete darkness. As result of their efforts, 479 passengers and crew members were evacuated to safety from both ships.

Letters of Commendation

1. Captain Elbrus Ismayilov, Master of the M/V **Citadel**, nominated by Azerbaijan, for his professionalism and dedication displayed in the evacuation of 14 injured crew members, one of them in critical condition, of the pipe-laying barge **Israfil Huseynov**, following an explosion and a fire incident, ensuring a safe approach to the vessel in darkness and low visibility due to dense fog.
2. Mr. Edward Tavityan, Engineer of the ferry **Vincent Coleman**, nominated by Bulgaria, for risking his own life in rescuing a passenger who had fallen overboard. After several unsuccessful attempts using the rescue net, Mr. Tavityan did not hesitate to jump into the water, in bad weather conditions, saving the life of the drowning passenger.
3. Mr. Lin Youguo, Chief Officer of the rescue vessel **Donghaijiu 112**, Donghai Rescue Bureau, nominated by China, for his courage, determination and expertise displayed during the challenging rescue of all six crew members of the Sierra Leone Cargo ship **Elena**, in the midst of severe winds, rough seas and reduced visibility caused by Typhoon Lekima.
4. The crew of the M/V **Yuan Shen Hai**, nominated by China, for the bravery and great resolve demonstrated in their collective effort to rescue and transfer the crew of a fishing boat in danger of sinking due to flooding. As a result of their tenacious 3-hour long actions, all 23 crew members of the **Liao Da Kai Yu Yang 22208** were brought to safety.
5. The nautical and air unit commanding officers involved in the search and rescue operation of the crew of the M/V **Bourbon Rhode**, nominated by France, for the extraordinary joint effort, courage and tenacity shown in the large-scale search operation, which lasted 22 days, saving the lives of 3 crew members, in the midst of severe weather conditions caused by Cyclone Lorenzo, and enabling four families to mourn their loved ones.
6. Marine Corps Rating Rosa María Pérez Oliva, rescue swimmer at the Isla Mujeres Naval Search and Rescue Station, Secretariat of the Navy (SEMAR) – Mexican Navy, nominated by Mexico, for her professionalism and determination shown in rescuing 6 people of the sinking recreational vessel **La Traviesa**, in adverse weather conditions and poor visibility, by towing them one by one to the rescue unit, all at a great personal risk.
7. Captain Rashid Ahmad, Harbour Pilot at the Karachi Port, nominated by Pakistan, for the courage and professionalism shown following the incapacitation of the Master of the M/T **Chem Peace**, who was leading the tanker to run aground in the bow area in the port. Captain Ahmad took charge of the situation navigating the oil tanker away from the shores and into safer waters, preventing any harm coming to the crew and a potential environmental disaster.
8. The members of the United States Coast Guard search and rescue joint team involved in the rescue operation of the M/V **Golden Ray**, nominated by the Republic of Korea, for the excellent skills and collaboration shown during the challenging, coordinated

rescue operation of all 24 crew members in distress of the capsized cargo ship, which lasted nearly 40 hours.

9. Mr. Ruslan Baikov, Mr. Aleksander Nedorezov, Mr. Aleksey Mikhachuk and Mr. Sergey Ostrovskiy, crew members of the floating plant **Pyotr Zhitnikov**, nominated by the Russian Federation, for their great resolve and courage in combating a fire that broke on board their plant at great risk to their own lives. Their tireless efforts over 6 days, first containing the fire for 18 hours until the arrival of fire-fighting ships, and then assisting to extinguish the fire, prevented the loss of life and avoided an environmental disaster.

10. Captain Xuan Truong Dinh, Commander of the search and rescue vessel **413**, nominated by Viet Nam, for the professionalism and determination displayed in rescuing, after several attempts, all 11 crew members and passengers of the M/V **Dai Hai Phat 17**, in adverse weather and navigational conditions.

In addition, the Panel of Judges decided to give special recognition at the Awards ceremony to all seafarers for their outstanding response during the difficult conditions they had been facing during the continuing COVID-19 pandemic.
