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Maritime Administrator Presents Gallant Ship Citation Award to the Crew of U.S. Flag Ship M/V Green Lake for Daring Rescue Actions at Sea

NEW YORK – Today, the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Maritime Administrator, Mark H. Buzby, presented the Maritime Administration’s (MARAD) Gallant Ship Citation Award and U.S. Merchant Marine Medals for Outstanding Achievement to the crew of the U.S.-flag ship M/V GREEN LAKE. The awards were given for the crew’s unprecedented rescue efforts in response to the horrific fire aboard the foreign-flag vessel M/V SINCERITY ACE in the northern Pacific Ocean on December 31, 2018. Administrator Buzby presented the award to the GREEN LAKE’s owner, Waterman Transport, Inc., and its captain and crew at a ceremony in New York City.

“Today, as we honor the crew of a great American ship, we again see the value of the Maritime Security Program to our country,” said Administrator Buzby. “The GREEN LAKE was there to respond in the time-honored tradition of mariners coming to the aid of fellow mariners. This American-trained crew highlights the professionalism and valor of our nation’s mariners, whether conducting humanitarian aid missions or providing vital sustainment to the U.S. Armed Forces.”

The GREEN LAKE’s heroic actions began on New Year’s Eve 2018 when the U.S.-flag ship responded to a disaster unfolding 2,000 miles northwest of Hawaii. The SINCERITY ACE, a massive 650-foot car carrier vessel, caught fire, forcing her 21-man crew to abandon ship. Arriving on the scene, the GREEN LAKE encountered a daunting task – locating SINCERITY ACE crew members floating in unforgiving seas spread out across several miles. The GREEN LAKE fought 17- to 20-foot waves and turbulent winds, making lifesaving attempts even more dangerous and challenging. The rescue effort lasted 18 hours, with the GREEN LAKE’s entire deck crew working tirelessly to get the survivors onboard. The crew and officers of the GREEN LAKE saved seven SINCERITY ACE crew members.

The Gallant Ship Award dates back to an executive order issued by President Franklin D. Roosevelt during World War II to recognize excellence and bravery in merchant mariners. Between 1944 and 1994, only 41 ships received Gallant Ship status, with the last award presented in 1994. The award is presented “to any United States vessel or to any foreign vessel (merchant, Coast Guard, Navy, or other), the crew of that ship, or other individuals or organizations participating in outstanding or gallant action in marine disasters or other emergencies for the purpose of saving life or property.” Ships and crews receiving Gallant Ship status must have encountered substantial danger during rescue and lifesaving efforts while demonstrating efficiency, discipline, and expertise in conducting such operations.

The Merchant Marine Medal for Outstanding Achievement is awarded to U.S. merchant mariners who have participated in an act or operation of humanitarian nature directly aiding an individual or group of individuals.

The GREEN LAKE is part of the MARAD Maritime Security Program fleet. Created in 1996, the Maritime Security Program maintains a fleet of 60 modern U.S.-flag ships, active in international trade, yet available on-call to meet U.S. Department of Defense transport requirements.

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