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Threat Of Strike At Atlantic And Gulf Coast Ports Growing More Likely

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- by Shipping Telegraph

The largest union of maritime workers in North America, the International Longshoremen's Association, warns that the threat of a strike at all Atlantic and Gulf Coast Ports is becoming more likely, as time is growing short before the current contract with United States Maritime Alliance (USMX) expires on September 30.

Harold J. Daggett, ILA president and the union's chief negotiator, said that the employers represented by United States Maritime Alliance are

running out of time to negotiate a new master contract agreement and avoid a coastwide strike on October 1.

“Only 80 days remain before the end of our current contract and we are waiting on USMX,” said ILA president Daggett.

“The actions of violating our current Master Contract by some of their members caused us to cancel scheduled negotiations with USMX in early June,” he added.

The International Longshoremen’s Association (ILA), which represents some 85,000 port workers on the US East Coast and US Gulf, suspended talks with the US Maritime Alliance in June, due to a disagreement on automation.

According to market analysts and shipping reports from Baltic Exchange there is a significant risk of labor disruptions at US East Coast ports due to the breakdown in negotiations in June.

In the report in Baltic Exchange, Vespucci Maritime chief executive Lars Jensen, stated: “Should we get a strike on the US East Coast in September, this could well trigger the same effect and market stakeholders would face a similar second phase, with rates once more reaching such record-high levels.”

President Daggett said the ILA rank-and-file members are 100 percent behind him and are willing the “hit the streets” on October 1st if the union’s contract demands are not met.

“We will not entertain any discussions about extending the current contract, nor are we interested in any help from outside agencies to interfere in our negotiations with USMX,” said president Daggett.

“This includes the Biden Administration and the Department of Labor,” he added.

Whenever USMX resumes negotiations, the ILA said it expects shipping companies to recognize the contributions ILA longshore workers made during the pandemic, when ports remained open, allowing companies to record billion-dollar profits.