

Shipping and maritime 2024 – a year in review

Seatrade Maritime News takes a look back at the stories that shaped the shipping industry in 2024.

[Marcus Hand](#), Editor

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January

January

Maersk and Hapag-Lloyd cooperation to set off alliance domino effect



Credit: YouTube screenshot from Maersk video

January saw the announcement of the Gemini Cooperation container shipping alliance between Maersk and Hapag-Lloyd. The two parties had managed to keep the planned cooperation well under wraps and even Hapag-Lloyd's existing partners in THE Alliance only found out on the day it was announced.

The Gemini Cooperation will commence operations in February 2025 and aims to differentiate itself with a network focused on major transshipment hubs run by the terminal arms of the two partners. It has set an ambitious target of 90% reliability.

It has also precipitated a major shuffle in the East – West trades and the creation of the Premier Alliance in the place of THE Alliance.

[Maersk and Hapag-Lloyd cooperation to set off alliance domino effect](#)

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February

Philippine's President delays signing the Magna Carta of Filipino Seafarers



Credit: YouTube screenshot

A surprise development in the world's largest supplier of seafarers the Philippines in late February a landmark piece of legislation was withdrawn at the last moment.

The Magna Carta of Filipino Seafarers – was not signed into law by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr as expected on 26 February and was later withdrawn by the House of Representatives.

The legislation was to take until September to be finally signed into law after much wrangling over some its provisions including those related to maritime training and injury cases.

[Philippine's President delays signing the Magna Carta of Filipino Seafarers](#)

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March

Six presumed dead in Baltimore bridge strike



The biggest story in March, and one of the top stories for the year as a whole, was the allision between the container ship *Dali* and the Francis Scott Key Bridge. The Singapore-registered, Maersk-chartered box ship, lost power leaving the Port of Baltimore striking the bridge and causing its collapse with the loss of six lives of workers carrying out works on the bridge at the time.

It took some four months to clear the wreckage and the disaster is now the subject of multi-billion law suits filed against owner Grace Ocean and manager Synergy Marine.

[Read our full coverage of developments with the Dali across the year](#)

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April

Ammonia as an alternative fuel gathers pace, safety concerns remain



Credit: MPA

Ammonia as an alternative marine fuel has seriously moved up the agenda during 2024. This was particularly evident at Singapore Maritime Week where the converted offshore vessel Fortescue Green Pioneer which was moored at Keppel Bay for visiting officials and executives to get an opportunity to see first-hand a vessel retrofitted with an ammonia engine and fuel systems.

The Fortescue Pioneer had recently undergone the first bunkering trials for ammonia and the issue of ammonia of bunkering was a major topic of discussion at conferences around Singapore Maritime Week. There were announcements of ammonia-dual newbuildings by MISC and Eastern Pacific Shipping. However, for others safety concerns over the highly toxic fuel remained.

[Ammonia as an alternative fuel gathers pace, safety concerns remain](#)

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May

Singapore is new chokepoint in global supply chains



Credit PSA

The impact of the Houthi attacks and the Red Sea Crisis is a story we could arguably have highlighted for most months in 2024 and it will feature a couple of times. In this case it was the impact that the large scale re-routing of container ships on the east – west trade via the Cape of Good to avoid attacks in the Red Sea had on major container hub ports.

Analyst Linerlytica reported, “The global port congestion indicator hit the 2m teu mark, accounting for 6.8% of the global fleet with Singapore becoming the new congestion hotspot.” Berthing delays of up to seven days were reported at the world’s largest transshipment hub with lines opting in some cases to drop calls.

Singapore responded by reactivating old berths that has been mothballed and accelerating the development of its new Tuas Port.

[Singapore is new chokepoint in global supply chains](#)

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June

Heightened risk on Day of the Seafarer 2024



Credit US CENTCOM X Feed

Those bearing the brunt of Houthi attacks on commercial shipping the Red Sea were innocent seafarers. As the industry celebrated its workforce on The Day of the Seafarer, crews faced challenges on multiple fronts, including an ongoing threat to life in the Red Sea.

Less than two weeks before the Day of the Seafarer, an attack on the dry bulk carrier Tutor in the Red Sea left one seafarer dead, and the survivors were forced to abandon the ship in a military evacuation. The following day a seafarer was seriously injured in a separate attack on Verbena, a ship which was also abandoned due to damage and fires. Three seafarers were killed in a missile attack on True Confidence in March.

[Heightened risk on Day of the Seafarer 2024](#)

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July

Geopolitical events push shipping earnings to 15 year high



Credit MSI

While geopolitical events such as the Red Sea crisis put the lives of seafarers and risk and disrupted trade, these very same disruptions proved to be rather good for shipping.

In our half year markets outlook round-up with Maritime Strategies International (MSI) the unexpected positive surge in shipping markets was highlighted. MSI Managing Director Adam Kent said: “But of course it's the events that we're seeing around the world that are shaping a lot of the shipping markets and sort of helping drive the markets on to levels where we would struggle to anticipate this time six months ago.

“Earnings now for some sectors of shipping, are the highest they've been for the last 15 years.”

[Geopolitical events push shipping earnings to 15 year high](#)

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August

X-Press Pearl Captain trapped in Sri Lanka for over three years



Credit: X-Press Feeders

The criminalisation of seafarers has long plagued the industry and in August we highlighted the plight of Captain Vitaly Tyutkalo who more than three years on from being arrested in Sri Lanka following the fire on the container ship X-Press Pearl could not return home.

Seatrade Maritime New spoke Capt Vitaly and the uncertainty of his situation and being trapped indefinitely overseas has clearly taken its toll. “I just don’t what is happening with me – the High Court seems to go on forever, it has already been three years,” he says. He missed his eldest daughter’s wedding a year and his younger daughter, 19, has graduated from school, which he was unable to attend. He says it was “heartbreaking” missing these life events with his family.

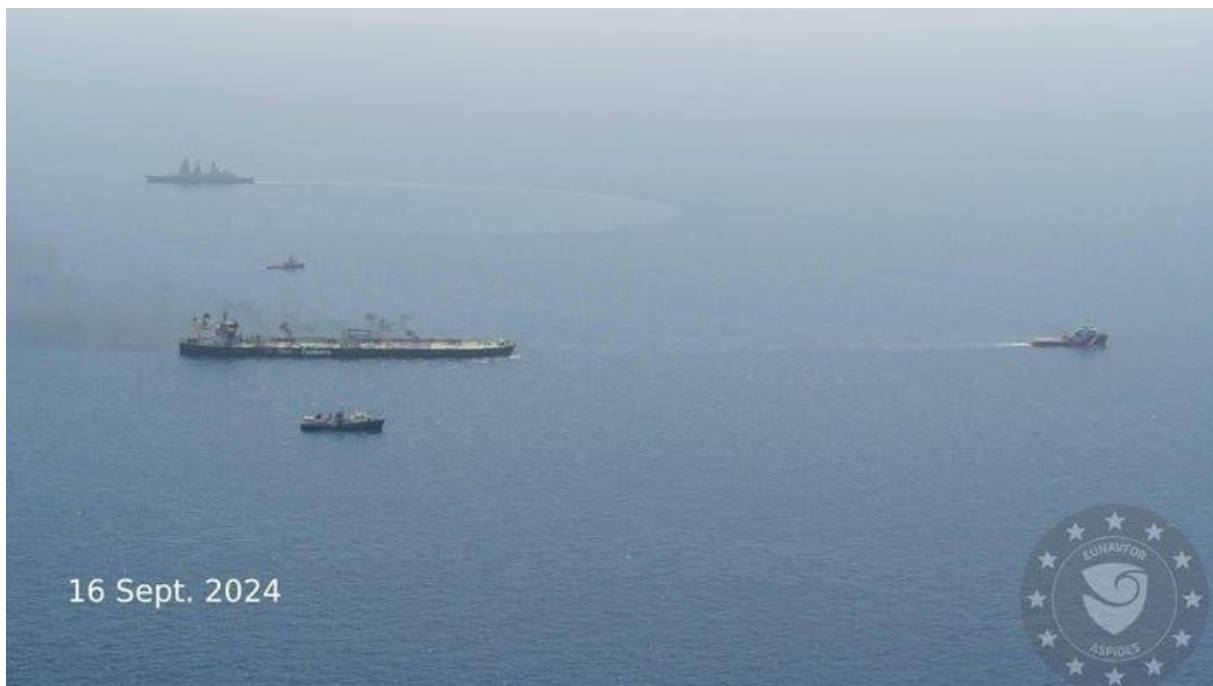
As where near the end of 2024 he remains unable to leave Sri Lanka.

[X-Press Pearl Captain trapped in Sri Lanka for over three years](#)

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September

Fire damaged tanker Sounion towed to safe area



Credit: EUNAVFOR ASPIDES X-Feed

One of the worst tanker spills in history was averted in mid-September when the Suezmax Sounion was towed to safety by salvors under protection of EU naval forces.

The loaded 164,000 dwt Sounion was abandoned at anchor in the Red Sea when it was attacked by the Houthi from Yemen on 21 August with its crew being rescued by the EU NAVFOR ASPIDES naval force. Two days later the Sounion was attacked again, this time with missiles, causing the vessel to catch fire with at least five fires observed on the vessels deck.

There were fears that the tanker could break up and sink causing one of the largest oil spills in history. Initial attempts to salvage the tanker were met with resistance from the Houthi, who later relented and said they would allow the vessel to be towed to safety.

[Fire damaged tanker Sounion towed to safe area](#)

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October

US port strike ends – unions and employers reach tentative agreement



Credit: PNANYNJ

A US East Coast port strike that had threatened supply chain chaos lasted just three days. The International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) and the United States Maritime Alliance (USMX) reached tentative agreement on wages. However, the tentative agreement covered only wages leaving till 15 January 2025 to sort out other issues including the key area of automation and semi-automation.

In November negotiations between the two sides broke down as the ILA walked out saying employers were intent on pushing through semi-automation. The ILA and USMX have not returned to the table since and renewed strike on 15 January is an ever growing possibility. Such a strike would say before President Donald Trump takes office on 20 January and he has publicly shown support for the ILA and protecting jobs of American workers.

[US port strike ends – unions and employers reach tentative agreement](#)

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November

Fresh Houthi attacks one year after Galaxy Leader seizure



Credit: Houthi Press Release

Was to see an unwanted anniversary one year since the car carrier Galaxy Leader was hijacked in the Red Sea in the Houthi marking the start of attacks of commercial shipping in the area.

The Galaxy Leader was hijacked on 19 November 2023 and the ship's crew of 25 seafarers — 17 Filipinos, two Bulgarians, three Ukrainians, two Mexicans, and a Romanian— have been held hostage since.

International shipping organisations repeated calls for the immediate release of the seafarers held hostage. Meanwhile on the eve of the anniversary Houthi attacks continued unabated with missiles fired at two merchant vessels.

[Fresh Houthi attacks one year after Galaxy Leader seizure](#)

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December

FuelEU Maritime - 18 days to go and counting



Credit: European Union, 2018

The latest EU emissions regulation, FuelEU Maritime, will enter into force at the start of 2025 but for owners with ships trading in or to European waters, its impact will be felt for the next three decades and beyond.

The regulation, which goes much further than the EU Emissions Trading System, is in some ways already in place because it is a feature of new charter contracts agreed and signed for 2025 and later.

A webinar on compliance by DNV emphasised a key factor is to make sure that sufficient time and attention is paid to ensuring accurate data monitoring, reporting and, above all, verification.

[FuelEU Maritime - 18 days to go and counting](#)