



# SEMAPHORE

Newsletter of the Maritime Law

Association of Australia and New Zealand



## Reflections on Maersk Alabama Lawsuit

Houston (Texas)-based VB Attorneys lawyer Brian Beckcom recently reflected on “lessons learned” from the lawsuit that nine crew members onboard the hijacked Maersk Alabama successfully brought against the Danish carrier and its crew contracting firm.

As immortalised in the 2013 movie “Captain Phillips” starring Tom Hanks, the 155-metre and 14,120-GT containership was hijacked by Somali pirates off the coast of Africa for several days in April 2009.

However, Mr Beckcom says the subsequent lawsuit shed light on “what really happened”.

“The facts surrounding the event, as told by crew members and witnesses, along with the communications between Captain Richard Phillips and Maersk, reveal that Captain Phillips knowingly placed the lives of his crew in danger by sailing into dangerous waters in an effort to save time and money,” states Mr Beckcom.

“The recklessness of Captain Phillips led to a multi-day standoff between the pirates and the United States Navy. The successful rescue of the crew showcased the risks faced by seafarers navigating treacherous waters, emphasising the importance of the Jones Act and other maritime laws in ensuring their protection.”

Mr Beckcom, whose firm represented the nine seafarers, says the federal law allows injured seamen to seek compensation for injuries caused by the negligence of their employers or co-workers.

“Our legal team worked tirelessly to ensure that these seafarers received the compensation and support they deserved after enduring such a harrowing ordeal. Our investigation uncovered facts that expose the inaccuracies in Phillips’ and Hollywood’s versions of events.

“We can’t reveal the specifics, but the company was found guilty of actively endangering its employees.”

He says VB Attorneys’ experience in the lawsuit has shaped its approach to representing injured seamen in subsequent cases.

“We understand that working at sea can be perilous, and when accidents occur, the consequences can be devastating. This drives us to fight passionately for our clients and ensure they receive the compensation they are entitled to under the law. We consistently go up against mega-corporations like Maersk on behalf of injured seamen.”

December 2023



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