

Newlead Castellano Story Featured on NPR

Since April, the Newlead Castellano has been anchored off the Georgia coast, near Savannah — with a crew on board that couldn't come ashore.

Now, after several motionless months, the Filipino sailors are close to heading home. The auction of the ship is bringing an end to what Splash247, a maritime news site, called a “shameful story of crew neglect.”

The cargo ship had been seized by U.S. marshals because its owners had stopped paying on their loans. The ship would be sold to pay off those debts — a process “similar in concept” to a home foreclosure, says attorney Todd Baiad, who represents the lenders.

“Because it's a movable object, there's some intricacies involved,” he explains. “And, you know, you've got crew members.”

In fact, the owners of the Newlead Castellano — NewLead Holdings, of Greece — hadn't just been skipping out on loan payments. They also hadn't been paying the ship's crew for months.

When the ship was stopped by the marshals, the owners could have put down money as security and allowed the ship to continue on its scheduled route as the legal process worked itself out. That's what normally happens, Baiad says.

Instead, the owners let the ship, and crew, sit at anchor.

As the legal fight played out, the sailors were paid wages that Baiad delivered. And they were provided with food and water through a court-appointed custodian, National Maritime Services, which was responsible for the safety of the ship and crew.

But, as member station WABE has reported, the Filipino crew members didn't choose to be repatriated to the Philippines and didn't have the paperwork to allow them to set foot in the United States.

Baiad, who visited the ship several times during its months-long mooring, says the stranded crew asked for one thing in particular. He found himself calling up his parish priest:

“I contacted Father [Brett] Brannen and I said, ‘This may sound like an unusual request, but do you have any interest in going to minister to these sailors?’ ”

The pastor wound up making the trip offshore not just once, but several times over the course of the summer.

“If they can't come to Mass, Mass can come to them,” Baiad says. He says he was there for one of Brannen's visits, and that sharing the Sacrament with the stranded sailors was “a really meaningful spiritual experience.”

To read the full article, [click here](#).

Attorneys

- Todd M. Baiad