



**THE MARITIME LAW ASSOCIATION (MLA) OF THE UNITED STATES  
COMMITTEE ON REGULATION OF VESSEL OPERATIONS, SAFETY, SECURITY  
AND NAVIGATION SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
MARITIME AUTONOMOUS SURFACE SHIPS (MASS)**

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**Subject: Update to MASS Subcommittee Members**

Happy New Year and I hope you had a pleasant holiday season! A new year is always a good time to look back on your wake to see where you have been and what you have accomplished, as well as looking forward to the horizon for new opportunities.

Reflecting back, we have many accomplishments to celebrate as we stood up the newest MLA subcommittee, and with your insight and help, infused it with thought leaders on rapidly emerging autonomous vessel technology, while simultaneously working to tether these advancements into existing (and sometimes ancient) tenets of maritime law.

Looking forward, all indicators are that autonomous vessel technology will only continue to advance, and our goal is to ensure both MLA, and you as members of the MASS subcommittee are at the leading edge of this intersection of law and technology as it pushes into commercial, defense, and other sectors.

We also want to hear from you as the counsel who are critical to MASS safe operations and legal conformity – as we navigate these emerging space where do you see our trackline headed? What issues should we put on our agenda? And, how would you like to be involved? Your involvement and insights are of critical importance to me, so I request you reply to me directly regarding this request!

Additionally, our MLA subcommittee page has been updated with the materials and presentations from our Fall 2021 meeting in Boston – it makes for an excellent reference – and I once again extend my utmost thanks to our many excellent presenters! Look for updates as to programming for our Spring Meeting in New York City in the coming months. I am also attaching an appendix which contains MASS country-by-country and International Maritime Organization developments and upcoming engagements, to ensure you are fully informed as you embark upon the new year.

Lastly, I special note of sincere gratitude to our Vice-Chair Joe Kramek and Secretary Allison Skopec for their invaluable support.

Best in the New Year,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sean Pribyl', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Sean Pribyl  
Chair

## **MASS Subcommittee Appendix: Country-by-Country and IMO Developments and Engagements**

### **United Kingdom**

In the UK, Version 5 of the Code of Practice prepared by the Maritime UK Autonomous Systems Regulatory Working Group (MASRWG) and published by Maritime UK through the Society of Maritime Industries. It has been prepared in two parts. Part 1 is a set of Industry Conduct Principles that supersede the previous Code of Conduct published in 2016; Part 2 is the Code of Practice. You can download the MASS UK Industry Conduct Principles and Code of Practice 2021 (V5) here: [MASS UK Industry Conduct Principles and Code of Practice 2021 \(V5\)](#).

### **Norway**

Yara Birkeland will be the world's first fully electric and autonomous container vessel with zero emissions. With this container vessel, Yara will reduce diesel-powered truck haulage by 40,000 journeys a year. <https://www.yara.com/news-and-media/press-kits/yara-birkeland-press-kit/>

### **IMO**

Development of a goal-based instrument for Maritime Autonomous Surface Ships (MASS), MSC 105/7 (20-29 April 2022). The Committee will be invited to consider and agree on a draft road map prepared by the Chair in consultation with the Secretariat (MSC 105/7) and, time allowing, commence the work on the new output in accordance with the road map. A working group may be established to consider matters in detail.

### **United States**

- National Merchant Marine Personnel Advisory Committee has undertaken a Task Statement 21-X8 on “Remote Operator of Maritime Autonomous Surface Ships.”
  - <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/10/28/2021-23448/national-merchant-marine-personnel-advisory-committee-meeting>
- Virginia Governor Ralph Northam announced \$1.5 million in Port Host Communities Revitalization Fund awards to develop a testing site in Newport News for unmanned surface vehicles and unmanned underwater vehicles.
  - <https://www.governor.virginia.gov/newsroom/all-releases/2021/december/headline-916638-en.html>
- Sea Machines
  - On September 30, 2021, Sea Machines set out to prove that the world's waterways are primed and ready for autonomy by undertaking the longest autonomous journey at sea, 1,000 NM. Sea Machines said it collected 3.8TB of essential operational data showcasing how the ships can readily connect as “Internet Of Things” (IOT) systems into the cloud economy. The SM300 also

provided the remote commanders in Boston with an active chart of the environment and live augmented overlays showing the progress of the mission, state of the vessel, situational awareness of the domain, real-time vessel-borne audio, and video from many streaming cameras.

- <https://sea-machines.com/a-look-back-at-the-history-making-machine-odyssey>
- US Navy – investment here is incredible and growing faster than anywhere – issues remain as to COLREGs and UNCLOS compliance, but no other country (to my knowledge) has conducted as many international voyages as the US (Navy).
  - Drone Crazy: The Navy Is Making Major Leaps with Its Unmanned Systems: <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/drone-crazy-navy-making-major-leaps-its-unmanned-systems-198110>
- MAYFLOWER – US Flag vessel
  - On 7 September 2021, Mayflower Autonomous Ship (MAS) was re-launched to resume its testing and scientific research schedule. Science teams associated with the equipment installed on MAS will continue collecting and analyzing data in order to establish the methodology of using autonomous platforms for oceanographic surveys and research. Updates will be published in this space and via our social media accounts. Camera and data feeds will be turned back on for the cruises along the UK coast planned for Autumn and Winter. The next attempt for the Atlantic Crossing is planned for Spring 2022.
  - <https://mas400.com/dashboard#live>
- US Coast Guard – they are reviewing responses to a Request for Information to which they received about 400 public comments, so they have not made plans on next steps for new regulations or best practices (if any).
- Request for Information on Integration of Automated and Autonomous Commercial Vessels and Vessel Technologies Into the Maritime Transportation System.
  - <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2020/08/11/2020-17496/request-for-information-on-integration-of-automated-and-autonomous-commercial-vessels-and-vessel>
  - <https://www.regulations.gov/document/USCG-2019-0698-0001/comment>

## **Japan**

- Japanese shipping company Mitsui O.S.K. Lines (MOL) is claiming to have conducted the world's first sea trial of an unmanned autonomous containership.
- The trial took place using the 2015-built feeder containership M/V Mikage, operated by Imoto Lines, from January 24-25th. The ship departed on a pre-formulated route from Tsuruga Port in Japan's Fukui Prefecture, arriving in Sakai Port in Tottori Prefecture – a distance covering a few hundred miles.
- ['World First' Autonomous Containership Tested in Japan \(gcaptain.com\)](#)