



WORLD SHIPPING COUNCIL
PARTNERS IN AMERICA'S TRADE

PRESS RELEASE

(February 12, 2003)--The World Shipping Council has asked the U.S. Department of State to consider a number of important issues in its review of the current visa process for international seafarers. The Council recommendations were made in its September 11 response to the State Department's Public Notice on "Elimination of the Crew List Visa".

If crew list visas are discontinued, the Council recommends that:

--the longstanding practice of allowing vessels to call at U.S. ports with non-visaed crewmembers who do not seek shore privileges must be continued.

--an expedited and workable U.S. visa application process should be established for seafarers.

--the results of the current ILO work on a new international seafarer's identification document, scheduled to be completed in June 2003, should be considered before eliminating the crew list visa. If the ILO meets U.S. security objectives, the new document should be recognized in the visa application process for seafarers.

--a credible visa waiver program should be established for seafarers signing on and off vessels in U.S. ports.

--costs for obtaining individual visas for seafarers should be kept to a minimum.

Additionally, the Council asked the State Department to consider possible actions by other countries regarding their treatment of U.S. seafarers, should the U.S. discontinue the crew list visa system.