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13 Sailors Stuck on Abandoned Ship Appeal to Primorye Head for Help

By The Moscow Times

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Thirteen Russian sailors stuck on a ship that has been abandoned and anchored off the coast of the Phillipines since the owner company went bankrupt have appealed to the governor of Primorye region for help in returning home.

The sailors, crew members of the SS Veles, worked for a company called Sea Service, and after presenting expired documentation to authorities in the Philippines, got stuck in the Pacific Ocean. The company declared bankruptcy a short time later, RIA-Novosti reported.

In a letter to Primorye region Governor Vladimir Miklushevsky, relatives of the sailors say the crew members had not received the wages they were owed and were running out of food and fresh water. They have been anchored at the same spot off the coast of the Philippines since March 18.

The letter also says, "All relatives of crew members have been told over the phone by the

company that the ship no longer belongs to the company and that the fate of the crew members and their wages is of no concern to the company," Rossiiskaya Gazeta reported.

Criminal charges have already been filed against the company for slave labor, and three other ships have been seized, the letter notes without including details.

Relatives also say they have appealed to the Primorye region transportation prosecutor as well as the International Transportation Workers Federation, a global union of transportation workers' trade unions that represents the interests of transportation workers and organizes international solidarity actions.

Ilya Kuznetsov, a spokesperson for the Russian Embassy in Manila, told RIA-Novosti on Tuesday that the ship's owner had promised to sell the ship to send the crew members home, noting, however, that "the problem is that the ship is in poor technical condition. And worse yet, the state of Tuvalu has recalled its flag from the ship."

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