



ARMING GENOCIDE AMMUNITION TRANSFERS FROM U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE TO ISRAEL THROUGH SPANISH NAVAL PORT

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PALESTINIAN
YOUTH
MOVEMENT



حركة
الشباب
الفلسطيني

Image: A crane lowers shipping containers of munitions into the deep hold of the MV Sagamore container ship. 24 April 2021.

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Executive Summary

On 9 November 2024, the MV Sagamore container ship transferred an estimated 1,245 tonnes (1.2 million lb.) of ammunition and other military supplies from the U.S. Department of Defense to the Port of Ashdod in Israel.

A previous report from the **Palestinian Youth Movement** showed that the Danish shipping company **Maersk** made more than 2,000 shipments of military cargo to the **Israeli military** over the past year—including **armored personnel carriers, military tactical vehicles, armored plates, aircraft parts and fuselage, MK84 bomb assays, and bullet cores**, or parts thereof.

The shipments detailed in the November report were found to be **in violation of the Spanish policy prohibiting military shipments to Israel transiting through Spanish ports**. Consequently, on 7 November 2024, the Spanish Foreign Ministry blocked two Maersk vessels—the **Maersk Denver** and **Maersk Seletar**—from docking at the Port of Algeciras, Spain, forcing Maersk to reroute all future transatlantic shipping to **Morocco**. Both of these vessels were confirmed by Maersk to be carrying military cargo for Israel from the U.S. Department of Defense as part of the “**US-Israel security cooperation program**.”

This report presents new evidence that the U.S. Department of Defense is knowingly flouting Spanish law. The MV Sagamore called at the **joint Spanish/U.S. Navy base in Rota, Spain**, on its way from the U.S. Department of Defense’s **Military Ocean Terminal Sunny Point (MOTSU)** in Wilmington, NC, to **Ashdod, Israel**—with a high likelihood that it was **carrying ammunition to Israel**. This is in violation of **Article 53/2007 of Spanish law prohibiting the transfer of military materiel to Israel**. The U.S. Navy operates at Rota, Spain as tenants. The base itself is Spanish territory.

Additionally, the MV Sagamore participated in the U.S. military’s ill-fated **Gaza pier mission** in Spring 2024, ostensibly for the purposes of delivering aid, but while **simultaneously holding a DoD contract for the transport of ammunition**, a fact which has not been previously reported. During this time, the MV Sagamore spent two months transiting between **Cyprus** and **Ashdod Naval Base**, while still holding some of the ammunition cargo it had picked up in MOTSU; the full purpose of these trips remains unclear.

It is crucial that the Spanish government takes swift action to prevent more U.S. Department of Defense-chartered vessels from transporting ammunition and other military cargo to Israel using Spanish ports and waters. We welcome Izquierda Unida’s recent proposal for the seizure of Israeli military cargo on commercial vessels, which will provide an excellent framework for commercial oversight. **The Spanish government must also ensure that all U.S. Department of Defense-chartered vessels declare the final destination of their cargo, and must turn away vessels from Spanish ports and naval bases if they are found to be carrying cargo destined for Israel.**



The MV Sagamore sets sail from Larnaca, Cyprus, en route to Gaza. 9 May 2024. (Yiannis Kourtoglou/Reuters)

Introduction

The **MV Sagamore** (IMO: 9322009; MMSI: 368160000),¹ is a container ship owned by **Sealift Inc.** It has previously been operated by **A.P. Møller – Mærsk A/S** (hereafter “**Maersk**”), often as a charter on behalf of the U.S. Navy’s **Military Sealift Command (MSC)**.

The vessel’s owner, Sealift Inc., is a privately-held American shipping company headquartered in Oyster Bay, New York.² Its public website lists ownership of 6 U.S.-flagged vessels, all of which have been used as charters by the MSC or as participants in the **U.S. Maritime Administration (MARAD)’s Voluntary Intermodal Services Agreement (VISA)**—in effect, these ships can be used by the **U.S. Department Defense (DoD)** for **military purposes**.

Sealift Inc. has long supported the U.S. military with its shipping and transportation needs, and played an important role in the delivery of military cargo, arms, or ammunition to support U.S. forces during the wars in **Iraq** and in **Afghanistan**.³ Its four founders and management are **John Raggio**, **Alan Alder**, **Fred Isaksen**, and **Ragnar Mayer-Knutsen**.⁴

¹ There have been three ships owned by **Sealift Inc.** that have borne this name: MV Sagamore I (IMO 9322009; 1987–1988; sold to the U.S. Maritime Administration [MARAD] and eventually broken up); MV Sagamore II (IMO: 9127863; 2000–2014; sold to Saudi Arabia’s Baaboud Trading & Shipping and reflagged/renamed MV Alahmed); and **MV Sagamore III** (IMO: 9322009; 2018–present; currently owned by **Sealift Inc.**), hereafter “**MV Sagamore**”.

² **Sealift Inc.** (Incorporated in New York; Company Number: [382982](#)) is the ship management company. Registered at 68 West Main St., Oyster Bay, NY 11771-2298, U.S., with key officer **John Raggio**, per NY Department of State, Division of Corporations. Standard Carrier Alpha Code [SCAC]: SLFI; ISO-9001 Compliance for “Management of Ships on Time Charter to U.S. Military.”

Sealift Holdings Inc. (Incorporated in Delaware; Company Number: [2092899](#)) is the corporate vehicle that is used for government contracts. Registered at 251 Little Falls Drive, Wilmington, New Castle, DE, 19808, U.S., with key officer **Alan Adler**. Five subsidiaries include: Remington Shipping Inc.; Sealift Chemical Inc.; Victory Maritime Inc.; Sealift Tankships Inc.; and **Sealift Inc. of Delaware**.

³ “**Sealift Inc.**”, **Center for Public Integrity** (2008) (Archived).

⁴ Per archived corporate web-page.

Sealift Inc. purchased the MV Sagamore in 2018. For about six years, **Maersk** operated the vessel on behalf of Sealift. On November 2023, one month after the war on Gaza began, the operator of the vessel was listed as Maersk in the federal database of U.S.-Flag Fleet Vessels. When asked for comment, **a spokesperson for Maersk stated that the company stopped chartering the MV Sagamore in January 2023 and that the federal database was inaccurate.**

The **MV Sagamore made six calls to Military Ocean Terminal Sunny Point (MOTSU)** over the last year.

MOTSU is the **largest military port in the world**, and is **exclusively used for the transport of live ammunition and explosives**, as these hazardous materials cannot be containerized at commercial ports. This port contributed 90% of the wartime resupply of ammunition for the 1991 and 2003 Iraq Wars, and supplied 85% of the wartime resupply of ammunition for the Vietnam War.⁵ This port was also used by the **MSC** in 2008 to coordinate the shipment of explosives and ammunition to Israel, including explosives with white phosphorus, during the 2008–2009 Israeli offensive against Gaza.⁶

Sealift Inc. has transported ammunition to Israel from MOTSU in the past, per a 2007 contract for the delivery of **Hazard Class 1 ammunition** to Israel;⁷ and so has **Maersk Line Limited (MLL)**, per a 2010 contract for the delivery of Hazard Class 1 ammunition to Israel.⁸

⁵ “[Military Ocean Terminal Sunny Point](#)”, Star News (2024).

⁶ “[Fueling Conflict: Foreign Arms Supplies to Israel](#)”, Amnesty International (2009).

⁷ **Contract** [Sealift Inc.]: [N00033-07-C-5236](#) (28 August 2007).

⁸ **Contract** [Maersk Line Limited]: [N00033-10-C-5518](#) (30 April 2010).



Army soldiers assigned to the 7th Transportation Brigade (Expeditionary) and sailors attached to the MV Roy P. Benavidez assemble the floating pier to be deployed off the shore of Gaza in support of Operation Neptune Solace. 26 April 2024. (U.S. Department of Defense)

Gaza's Floating Pier

On 5 April 2024, the U.S. Navy's **Military Sealift Command (MSC)** posted a contract solicitation for a single vessel capable of receiving a load from **Larnaca, Cyprus**, and then remaining at anchor 3–12 nautical miles off **southern Israel** during the length of the charter.⁹ Among the bidders for the contract was **Sealift Holdings** (UEI: E22JTV1XQEB1). Sealift won out, and the contract was officially awarded on 15 April 2024 at an estimated value of **\$18.2 million** (final obligation \$12.9 million) to **Sealift Inc. of Delaware** (UEI: PK6FZVJ591H2), a child of Sealift Holdings. It appears that the **MV Sagamore** was the vessel selected for the mission.

⁹ The contract solicitation states that MSC will charter a single vessel, either a minimum 270 passenger capacity or a minimum 570 passenger capacity. The anticipated load port will be **Larnaca, Cyprus**, and the vessel will be expected to remain at anchor 3-12 nautical miles off Southern Israel during the length of the charter. The lay day (i.e., expected first call) will be between 15 April 2024–30 April 2024.

In 2024, it was publicly reported that the **MV Sagamore** was used for the U.S. military's **floating pier operation in Gaza**. Only officially active from May 2024–July 2024, the pier was ostensibly mobilized under the guise of humanitarian aid provision after President Biden's 2024 State of the Union address, but was also suspected to have been used by U.S. special forces to assist in the **Nuseirat massacre** of 8 June 2024, something the U.S. DoD has strenuously denied.¹⁰

According to the public sourcing, the MV Sagamore allegedly picked up food aid in **Cyprus** and delivered it to the **Port of Ashdod (ILASH)**, where the goods were transported by truck to the floating pier established on northern Gaza's coast.¹¹ It is unclear what additional goods or services the MV Sagamore ultimately provided, though it is worth noting that it has been previously reported that the **U.S.** is using the **UK military base in Cyprus** to covertly supply weapons to Israel and that southern Cyprus has become a logistics hub for supporting the war on Gaza.¹² **The usage of a vessel for an aid mission from Cyprus while on an ammunition contract reinforces the imperial strategy of establishing Cyprus as a launchpad for force projection to support Israel's genocidal war.** This research takes place against the backdrop of Cyprus attempting to join NATO, with the explicit goal of expanding military capacity through upgraded naval and airlift infrastructure.¹³

A review of the federal DoD contract data and vessel travel data **complicates the publicly-stated narrative that the MV Sagamore was engaged in simple humanitarian aid transfers**. The vessel received two contract extensions for both the **pier mission** and for **ammunition movement** such that its functional period in the Mediterranean spanned the entire time in which the U.S. pier was operational.¹⁴ Using satellite transponder and imaging data, researchers were able to reconstruct the journey of the MV Sagamore during its mission, which corroborates that the ship was involved in supplying Ashdod through April, May, and June, with two back-and-forth trips from Ashdod to Cyprus. Within this timespan, the ship spent three weeks hovering off the shore of Gaza, a holding period which corresponds to the collapse of the pier due to inclement weather.



MV Sagamore at Ashdod Naval Base. 26 May 2024.

¹⁰ ["Nuseirat, anatomy of Israel's massacre in Gaza"](#), Al Jazeera (2024) and ["Israeli rescue operation and Nuseirat massacre"](#), Middle East Eye (2024).

¹¹ This operation used **Joint Logistics Over The Shore (JLOTS)** capability, "an army/navy/civilian mariner system that marries sealift with temporary port infrastructure. By setting up and using the JLOTS system, the 1,000-person team will be able to transfer food aid from a commercial sealift vessel onto a moored receiving barge out at sea; transfer the cargo onto U.S. Army landing craft; ferry the goods to a mile-long floating causeway, or 'trident pier'; and then truck the food to a nearby distribution hub."; "A U.S.-flagged geared freighter, the **MV Sagamore**, is already in **Cyprus** loading food aid for the first shipment. MV Sagamore will unload her cargo directly onto Army trucks at the floating pier, and the trucks will carry it the rest of the way via the JLOTS infrastructure." Source: "[Floating Pier for Gaza is Fully Assembled and Ready to Install](#)", The Maritime Executive (2024) ([Archived](#)).

¹² ["U.S. military is secretly supplying weapons to Israel using UK base on Cyprus"](#), Declassified (2023). "[Turkiye reveals intelligence that Cyprus serves as military base for Israel](#)", Middle East Monitor (2024).

¹³ ["Cyprus eyes future NATO membership amid US talks to boost military standards"](#), Euro News (2024).

¹⁴ Initial Contract Period (18 April 2024–28 May 2024); Extension Option Exercised (28 May 2024–18 June 2024); Extension Option Exercised (18 June 2024–28 July 2024).

The MV Sagamore's trip to the Mediterranean was directly preceded by a trip to the **Military Ocean Terminal Sunny Point (MOTSU)**. The MV Sagamore traveled from there to **Gdansk, Poland**, the location of a recently founded NATO base supporting operations in Ukraine, where it dropped off the majority of the ammunition that it had picked up at MOTSU. This is corroborated by the vessel's **draught changes**, as well as an ammunition contract received for the same period from MSC. The draught changes reported by the MV Sagamore, however, are not consistent with it depositing the entirety of its original ammunition payload from MOTSU in Poland. **Based on these estimates, the vessel was still laden with nearly 1,200 tons of military cargo from MOTSU when it arrived in the Mediterranean**, with no evidence of unloading until after the vessel made a trip to **Ashdod**. From there, the MV Sagamore traveled to Greece and Cyprus before making a flurry of visits between Cyprus and Ashdod Naval Base.

The public can choose to take the U.S. government's claims at face value that the MV Sagamore—while on contract to the U.S. Department of Defense for an ammunition mission—traveled to Israel solely to participate in humanitarian activities and did not provide any military support for the Israeli war on Gaza. **However, recent voyages by the MV Sagamore cast doubt on this narrative. The following section of this report will demonstrate how this same vessel directly transported ammunition to Israel six months later.**

MV Sagamore and U.S. Ammunition Supply

Ten days after 7 October 2023, the Navy's **Military Sealift Command (MSC)** posted a contract solicitation for an **Ammunition Mission**.¹⁵ Again **Sealift Inc.** bid, and on 20 December 2023, was awarded the contract at an estimated value of **\$25.5 million** (final obligation \$21.4 million).¹⁶ The contract solicitation asks for a vessel that is a participant in the **VISA program** capable of carrying **Hazard Class 1 (major explosive) material** from the U.S., and that the mission would require a **classified clearance**.

There are two primary U.S. military ports for ammunition: **Military Ocean Terminal Sunny Point (MOTSU)**, outside Wilmington, N.C., for the Atlantic basin; and **Military Ocean Terminal Concord (MOTCO)**, outside Concord, C.A., for the Pacific basin. The contract solicitation indicates that the port of call for ammunition loading would be **MOTSU**. Only 4 of the 6 Sealift Inc.-owned vessels have called at MOTSU from 7 October 2023–22 November 2024,¹⁷ but through an analysis of the above-mentioned vessels' routes, **this research report has determined that the MV Sagamore was the vessel that ultimately carried out this ammunition mission**. It was also deduced that **these ammunition missions were primarily to support NATO sites in Northern Europe**.

The MV Sagamore's ammunition mission took place with two extensions, totaling approximately 9 months, from January 2024 to present, with the ability to extend one more time for 90 days.¹⁸ As previously mentioned, throughout this time, the **MV Sagamore has called at MOTSU six times**.¹⁹ The researchers have periodized each of these distinct trips, with their legs, to describe the vessel's whereabouts. Of particular note to this report is the most recent trip, initiated **16 October 2024**, which is described in the next section.

¹⁵ The official contract title is "N103 - N321 - L. HAZLEY: 90-DAY DRY CARGO TIME CHARTER W/ THREE 90 DAY OPTION PERIODS ISO ETAC II AMMUNITION MISSION". In this case, **ISO** stands for "In Support Of"; **ETAC** likely stands for the **European Tactical Airlift Center**. In 2015, Spain was appointed the **Executive Director of the European Defence Agency (EDA)** and Zaragoza Air Base was designated as the permanent headquarters of the European Tactical Airlift Center (ETAC) of the **European Tactical Airlift Program (ETAP)**, with the Spanish Air Force heading up its activities under the initiative of the **European Air Transport Fleet (EATF)**.

¹⁶ The contract solicitation states that it requires one U.S. or foreign flag, self-sustaining vessel capable of carrying a minimum of 800 TEUs while satisfying all applicable regulatory **HAZMAT** compatibility and segregation requirements. The place/range of delivery and redelivery is **Military Ocean Terminal Sunny Point (MOTSU)**, NC. The charter contract with MSC will be for 90 days with three 90-day options, commencing 14 January 2024. The vessel will be carrying an intended Hazard Class 1 material (Divisions 1.1D through 1.4S) and Hazard Class 4 material (Division 4.2G). It also adds that the designated vessel may initially plan to operate at specific ports, but that additional ports might later be identified for loading/unloading military cargo. In these cases, the contractor must coordinate stevedoring services at those new locations and will be reimbursed for the associated costs. There is a classified requirement in this solicitation and the contractor must have appropriate security clearances in place.

¹⁷ From **7 October 2023–22 November 2024**, only 5 containerships have docked at **Military Ocean Terminal Sunny Point (MOTSU)**: **MV Sagamore** (owned by Sealift Inc., operated by Maersk A/S); **MV Capt. David I. Lyon** (owned by Sealift Inc., operated by Liberty Global Corp); **MV LTC John U.D. Page** (owned by Sealift Inc., operated by Sealift Inc.); **MV SSG Edward A. Carter Jr.** (owned by Sealift Inc., operated by Sealift Inc.); and **MV Gopher State** (owned and operated by MARAD as part of the NDRF fleet).

¹⁸ Initial Contract Period (20 January 2024–~20 April 2024); Extension Option Exercised (8 May 2024–6 August 2024); Extension Option Exercised (6 August 2024–~6 November 2024).

¹⁹ It is worth noting that the **MV Sagamore** has carried ammunition from **MOTSU** before; it was the recipient of a 2021 contract award with the **MSC** for carrying ammunition (N32205-21-P-2636), and the award solicitation documents state that the MSC was looking for vessels capable of carrying hazardous, explosive cargo from MOTSU (N32205-21-R-4189). A public U.S. Navy report from that year confirms this, identifying the MV Sagamore as a Navy asset performing U.S. Transportation Command quarterly ammunition movements. Source: ["Annual Report"](#), Strategic Sealift Officer Force, U.S. Navy (2021).

MV Sagamore and U.S. Ammunition Supply to Israel



MV Sagamore Trip from MOTSU to Ashdod (October 2024), Global View.

On **16 October 2024**, the MV Sagamore was loaded with cargo at MOTSU. The vessel then traveled from MOTSU directly to **Naval Station Rota**, in **Spain**, unloading approximately 48 containers (draught decrease of 0.2 m) despite not docking. On **10 November 2024**, the vessel appeared **34 miles away from the Port of Ashdod** after a period of turning its tracker off for 37 hours. Using navigational analysis, it can be estimated that Sagamore had at least 8 hours and 42 minutes to unload its cargo in Ashdod.²⁰ This vessel anchored briefly to refuel at sea in south Crete before **reporting a draught decrease of 0.4 m, corresponding to approximately 96 containers of ammunition.**²¹ After anchoring shortly in Rota, **The vessel then returned to MOTSU, after this direct trip to Israel.**



MV Sagamore Trip from MOTSU to Ashdod (October 2024), Regional View.

²⁰ The last time the MV Sagamore transmits heading to Ashdod was 8 November 2024, 11:52:57 UTC, with the coordinates 27.87711333, 34.20507 (Point A). Sagamore turns its tracker back on 34 miles off the coast of Ashdod headed away from Port on 10 November 2024, 1:02:17 UTC at the coordinates 34.0805, 32.01125667 (Point B). Conservatively assuming the same speed of 14.2 knots that MV Sagamore was cruising at Point A, and given the Ashdod Port is located at coordinates 31.821064, 34.642368, using two Haversine Distance measurements between Point A and Ashdod, and Ashdod and Point B, this report estimates that the MV Sagamore had at least 8 hours and 42 minutes in port. Using the MV Sagamore's returning speed at Point B of 15.8 knots, an upper boundary of 11 hours and 34 minutes in port can be established.

²¹ Vessels that are chartered for the **MSC** carrying live explosives and ammunition do not list **bills of lading** in accessible databases. This means that the precise amount of military materiel loaded or unloaded cannot be ascertained, but estimates can be made based on changes in draught. Draught is the distance of a ship's hull from the surface of the water, and changes depending on how much cargo the ship is carrying. Ships are required to report draught to ensure safe passage through variable depths of water. Researchers used key variables for the **MV Sagamore**, including its **maximum draught** (9.9 m), which corresponds to the draught of the ship when it is fully laden, and its **deadweight tonnage** (30,800 tons) to estimate how much cargo was unloaded at the Port of Ashdod.

Satellite imagery can confirm that the **MV Sagamore** was carrying containers from MOTSU when it docked in Rota, and that it unloaded them before it returned to Rota on its second leg—**this cargo was almost certainly dropped off at Ashdod**.



27 October 2024: MV Sagamore shown outside Rota before its trip to Ashdod, with yellow containers seen on deck.



16 November 2024: MV Sagamore shown again at Rota after its trip to Ashdod, with no yellow containers present.

This ammunition mission has no publicly-disclosed voyage contract currently available. However, on 28 August 2024, the **U.S. Navy posted two “sources sought” notices** for vessels capable of carrying ammunition from MOTSU whose **dates and specifications closely align with the current delivery of ammunition to Israel** and therefore likely correspond to the trip to Israel detailed in this report.²²

The various sources of evidence—draught changes, vessel travel history, satellite imagery, and past history of delivering ammunition to Israel—have led the researchers to conclude, with a very high degree of certainty, that **the U.S. Department of Defense chartered a vessel that delivered hundreds of tonnes of Class 1 explosive ammunition to Israel this winter as it currently conducts its war against Gaza.**

²² “50-Day Dry Cargo Time Charter”, Military Sealift Command, DoD, [N32205-SS-N321-24-122](#) (11 November 2024–present). Sources sought for a 50 day **MSC** charter, commencing 11 November 2024; vessel must be capable of carrying 700 TEU's of containerized ammunition from MOTSU to an unidentified destination.

“Time Charter United States Army”, Military Sealift Command, DoD, [N103B-SS-0068](#) (25 September 2024–15 November 2024). Sources sought for a 52 day **MSC** charter, from 25 September 2024–15 November 2024; vessel must be capable of carrying 1600 TEU's of containerized ammunition from MOTSU to an unidentified destination.

We note that, as of 3 December 2024, the **MV Sagamore** is docked at **MOTSU** and may be planning to return to deliver additional ammunition to Israel.

The Palestinian Youth Movement (PYM), Progressive International, and Mask Off Maersk campaign call on the European and North African nations of conscience to deny docking or refueling to all vessels carrying ammunition or military cargo to Israel.

We specifically **call on the government of Spain** to uphold the decision it made in May 2024—when it refused to allow the vessel **MV Marianne Danica** to dock in Cartagena because it was carrying explosives from India to Israel²³—and **refuse to allow Naval Base Rota or any Spanish waters to be used for vessels carrying ammunition to Israel.**

The Spanish government must also ensure that all U.S. Department of Defense-chartered vessels **declare the final destination of their cargo**, and must turn away vessels from Spanish ports and naval bases if they are found to be carrying cargo destined for Israel.

We also **call on all port, transportation, and logistics workers of conscience** in Europe and North Africa to **refuse to handle any shipments of ammunition or military cargo destined to Israel.**

²³ “[Spanish port grapples with allegations of ships carrying arms to Israel!](#)”, *Ship Technology* (2024).

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The **Palestinian Youth Movement (PYM)**
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