

Hi, Fred Nelson for Community Comment,

It has been awhile since I have commented on the United States Maritime Service. I recently found an interesting article in the Navy League publication "Sea Power". Over the past few years worldwide attention has been given to building larger and faster container ships, some so large that many U.S. ports cannot accommodate them. The Panama Canal is also recently been upgraded to receive larger vessels. Now attention is being focused by some U.S. Maritime companies on the building of container ships for the Jones Act, powered by LNG or Liquid Natural Gas. LNG is a stable gas that is neither toxic nor corrosive and is lighter than air. It is the cleanest fossil fuel available netting a one hundred percent reduction in sulfur oxide and particulate matter and a ninety two percent reduction in nitrogen oxide. At present, there are less than ten ocean capable ships of this type with eight more under construction and set to be launched over the next three years. Two of the operational LNG ships are now being used between the ports of Jacksonville, Florida and Puerto Rico. Owned by New Jersey headquartered TOTE Maritime, they would be the ships MV Isla Bella (the worlds' first liquefied natural gas-powered container ship) and its sister Perla Del Carlo. Over the years, the world's container ships have been built larger to accommodate as much cargo as possible. Each of the two new Marlin Class vessels I just mentioned has a length of seven hundred sixty four feet and is powered by two dual-fueled engines with the capability of burning diesel when needed. TOTE Marine executive vice president Peter Keller says that the future for LNG-fueled tankers is extremely bright. Keller also states that LNG is clearly the cleanest, safest, most environmentally friendly fuel that we make today. Jacksonville based Crowley Maritime Corp is now making progress in the construction of its container and roll-on/roll-off ships. The new ships are capable of speeds up to twenty two knots with a cargo capacity of twenty four hundred twenty foot containers with additional space for nearly four hundred vehicles in an enclosed garage. With the opening of the expanded Panama Canal, the United States soon will be exporting twenty percent of the worlds LNG due to the increased size of ships being able to pass through the canal. As LNG transport and facilities grow, the fuel will be more able to compete against bunker fuels. Crowley has now taken delivery of four LNG ready tankers. Mark Miller, vice president for corporate and marketing communications for Crowley Maritime Corp., said "In Crowley's case, the environmental benefit is clear, with reduced emissions and greater efficiency, plus, when you consider that natural gas is both abundant and provides superior emissions and particulate reductions over traditional fuels, you have a winning combination." Sounds like a winner to me.

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