

## Seafaring corridors

The Daily Telegraph (London)

June 9, 2020 Tuesday, Edition 1, National Edition

Copyright 2020 Telegraph Media Group Limited All Rights Reserved

# The Daily Telegraph

---

An estimated 400,000 mariners are stranded around the world as a result of restrictions on movement imposed to tackle the **coronavirus** pandemic. Many have been stuck on ships for months while replacement crews languish in ports with little in the way of financial help. This is not just a humanitarian matter but an important economic issue as well. The seafarers need help to return to their homes or to join the ships they are contracted to crew. The rest of the world needs trade to continue seamlessly if there is to be any hope of recovery from economic calamity.

Although lockdowns are easing, without an international effort to sort this out, there is a real prospect of gridlock as shipmasters refuse to go to sea for fear of being personally liable for any accidents caused by fatigued crew members. Many have already worked well beyond normal regulatory limits, with some having spent more than a year on board without a break.

There is an opportunity here for the UK to take the lead in seeking international agreement for the creation of "safe corridors" to move seafarers around, with protected transit areas at airports and visa exemptions. The Royal Navy, which was created to protect trading routes, has a long history of collaboration with the merchant marine and could help out, including through its contacts with other national navies.

Boris Johnson, anxious to signal the country's global pretensions after Brexit, could use this issue as a declaration of intent. It is a matter to be pursued by No 10 since other countries will only respond to a call for international action from the Prime Minister. This needs to be taken seriously before trade seizes up just when we need it to flourish.

**Load-Date:** June 9, 2020

---

End of Document