



Patricia Lacina
Consul General
U.S. Consulate General Frankfurt
Gießener Str. 30
60435 Frankfurt am Main
Federal Republic of Germany

September 1, 2020

Dear Consul General Lacina,

We hope this letter finds you well.

We are writing to urge you to provide certain national interest exceptions to Presidential Proclamation 9993: “Suspension of Entry as Immigrants and Nonimmigrants of Certain Additional Persons Who Pose a Risk of Transmitting 2019 Novel Coronavirus.” Specifically, we seek exceptions for employees of Voith Group, who are seeking to travel to the United States in order to provide technical assistance to Eastern Shipbuilding Group (ESG); their expertise is necessary for the completion of the new Ollis-class ferry vessel *Staff Sergeant Michael Ollis*, the newest addition to the Staten Island Ferry fleet.

We further ask for your cooperation in allowing these technicians to return, if necessary, in early 2021 for the launch of the *Sandy Ground*, the second Ollis-class vessel planned for Staten Island Ferry service. These employees are registered with the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) system, but without National Immigration Exception (NIE) cannot travel to the United States pursuant to PP 9993.

The *Staff Sgt. Michael Ollis* is named after a hometown hero, a man who gave his life in Afghanistan to save a wounded Polish officer from an insurgent wearing a suicide vest. For his actions, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, the Bronze Star, the Silver Star, the Audie Murphy Medallion, and the Purple Heart.

The *Sandy Ground*, the second Ollis-class vessel, is named after the oldest, continuously-settled, free black community in the United States, established by former slaves after the abolition of slavery in New York in 1827.

The Staten Island Ferry serves 22 million riders a year, the largest ridership of any single-route ferry system in the country; it is not only an iconic representation of our borough, but more importantly a key link from Staten Island to the rest of New York City. Delivery of these vessels to the Staten Island Ferry system will not only improve the daily commutes of thousands of New Yorkers, but will also remind of us the greatness of our shared history.

Currently, four technical experts from Voith Group are needed to complete the inspection process of the *Staff Sgt. Michael Ollis* prior to launch; they would need to be in the United States for an estimated 45 to 60 days, during which time they will be supervising the completion of the project. Further, until these experts can certify the project, the *Staff Sgt. Michael Ollis* cannot be launched, and therefore cannot be delivered into service. State Department guidelines provide for national interest exceptions under PP 9993 (Schengen Area) for qualified travelers with ESTA authorization, in the interest of “assisting with the economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and bolster key components of our transatlantic relationship.” The fact that their technical expertise is necessary for the completion of a long-standing contract, one that will benefit thousands of commuters and essential workers every day, is a clear indication that their admittance into the United States is in our national interest.

We understand the need for judicious enforcement of all immigration laws and regulations in order to prevent further transmission of the COVID-19 virus, and we are working with ESG and Voith Group to guarantee that all necessary precautions will be taken to ensure non-transmission during the work period. Given the toll this pandemic has extracted from our economy, we urge you to grant these technicians entry so they may help deliver real infrastructure benefits, and improve the daily commute of so many tens of thousands of workers each week.

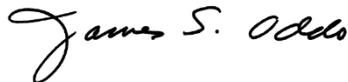
We urge you to grant said National Immigration Exemptions to the Voith Group employees, so that they may travel to the United States as soon as possible.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Undersigned



Max Rose
Member of Congress



James Oddo
Staten Island Borough President