

SUPPORT FULL FY'20 FUNDING **FOR THE MARITIME SECURITY PROGRAM**

The Honorable James Mattis, Secretary, Department of Defense (2018):

“As small as our Merchant Marine may be today, it is absolutely essential. It’s in every war plan that I review, I guarantee you. Because you’re going to be the fourth arm of the defense. You’re going to sustain our allies and fuel our ships and ferry our warriors.”

Rear Admiral Dee Mewbourne, Commander, Military Sealift Command (2018):

“I can assure you that U.S. Mariners will be there, reliably and bravely manning our ships – even if our seas become a battlefield. United we sail.”

OBJECTIVE

To achieve full Fiscal Year 2020 funding for the Maritime Security Program (MSP) at the Congressionally authorized (PL 114-113) level of \$300 million.

BACKGROUND

The Maritime Security Program is a unique U.S. Government – U.S. private shipping industry partnership that provides the Department of Defense (DOD) the commercial sealift capability, global intermodal systems and U.S. citizen civilian mariners it needs to advance America’s interests and to support American troops.

Originally enacted as Public Law 104-239, the Maritime Security Act of 1996 authorized the establishment of a maritime security fleet comprised of 47 militarily-useful, privately-owned U.S.-flag commercial vessels. Public Law 108-136, the National Defense Authorization Act of 2004, reauthorized and extended MSP for an additional ten years and expanded the maritime security fleet from 47 to 60 militarily-useful, privately-owned U.S.-flag commercial vessels. Public Law 112-239, the National Defense Authorization Act of 2013, further reauthorized and extended the Maritime Security Program and its 60-ship maritime security fleet for another 10-year period, from FY’16 through FY’25. Public Law 114-92, the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2016, authorizes \$300 million for MSP in Fiscal Year 2020.

Rear Admiral Dee Mewbourne, Commander, Military Sealift Command (2018)

“To carry that logistics power to the fight, we have always relied on our Merchant Marine. And they have always answered the call. Despite the dangers and long separations from home, our U.S. Merchant Marine has sailed into harm’s way time and time again to make sure American warfighters and our allies have had the supplies they need to overwhelm our adversaries.”

As history has proven, American mariners never fail to sail into harm’s way when needed by the United States. There is no guarantee or reason to believe foreign crews will do the same. It is essential that Congress and the Administration stop the further loss of U.S.-flag vessels and the outsourcing of American maritime jobs. The choice for our Nation is simple: either the United States continues to entrust the security of our nation and the safety of American troops deployed overseas to U.S.-flag vessels and their U.S. citizen crews, or instead turns over America’s security interests and the well-being of American troops to foreign flag, foreign crewed vessels which may or may not choose to support America and our allies. One important step is to fully fund the Maritime Security Program.

NATIONAL SECURITY BENEFITS OF MSP

Rear Admiral Thomas Shannon, Commander, U.S. Military Sealift Command (2016):

“[We] must be mindful that the execution of our national military strategy requires a robust U.S.-flag merchant marine, a strong surge sealift capability, and a deep pool of merchant mariners to literally carry our nation to war. . . Contracting out our ability to carry our nation’s combat power with foreign flag fleets is simply not an option. So let us all put our oar in the water, and pull together to sustain a viable U.S.-flag merchant marine.”

In their 2017–2018 maritime policy statement, the Navy League of the United States stated, [Failing to provide full funding for MSP] “could reduce reserve sealift readiness and capacity below levels that would fully meet the combatant commanders’ operational plans for major deployment of ground forces, which call for 95 percent of unit equipment and sustaining supplies to be moved by strategic sealift. Reduced funding will decrease the number of mariners employed on these vessels, and without adequate sealift and sealift manning, mission capability will be compromised.”

Since the inception of military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan in 2002, 98 percent of the cargoes have been transported to the region on either U.S.-flag commercial vessels or U.S. Government owned and/or controlled vessels - all of which are crewed by U.S. citizen civilian merchant mariners. Since 2009, privately-owned U.S.-flag commercial vessels and their civilian U.S. citizen crews have transported more than 90 percent of the sustainment cargo needed to support U.S. military operations and rebuilding programs in Iraq and Afghanistan. Most importantly, vessels enrolled in MSP carried 99 percent of these cargoes.

General Darren McDew, Commander, U.S. Transportation Command (2017):

“MSP has provided access to required commercial U.S.-flag shipping assets, while also supporting the pool of Merchant Mariners needed to operate the Military Sealift Command’s Surge and Ready Reserve Fleet. In this way, MSP significantly contributes to the supply of Merchant Mariners available to serve on U.S. vessels in time of war while mitigating future risk to our national commercial capability.”

ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF MSP

Rear Admiral Mark Buzby, U.S. Maritime Administrator (2017):

“The U.S. military, the most powerful military in the world, relies on U.S.-flag vessels crewed by U.S. civilian mariners, operating from strategic ports, and using intermodal systems to ensure delivery of vital supplies and equipment to service members and their families stationed overseas. This transportation partnership between the U.S. military and the U.S.-flag merchant marine has been proven as reliable, enabling, and cost effective to meeting sealift requirements.”

A 2006 report prepared for the National Defense Transportation Association and Military Sealift Command concluded that “the likely cost to the government to replicate just the vessel capacity provided by MSP dry cargo vessels would be \$13 billion.” In addition, the United States Transportation Command has estimated that it would cost the U.S. Government an additional \$52 billion to replicate the global intermodal systems made available to DOD by MSP contractors who are continuously developing, maintaining and upgrading their logistics systems. Instead of the estimated \$65 billion it would cost the taxpayer if there were no MSP and the government had to replicate this commercial sealift capability, a fully funded MSP will continue to provide DOD with the militarily-useful U.S.-flag vessels, U.S. civilian maritime manpower, and the global intermodal systems it needs at a cost to the taxpayer of \$300 million in FY’20 as authorized by Congress.

REQUEST FOR ACTION

We ask all Members of Congress to sign the Congressional “Dear Colleague” letter urging the Committees on Appropriations to provide full funding for MSP at its Congressionally-authorized FY’20 level of \$300 million.

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