

# Navy Concludes Helicopter Aviator Training in TH-57 SeaRanger



PENSACOLA, Fla. (Feb. 23, 2017) Two U.S. Navy TH-57C Sea Ranger helicopters conduct a formation training flight over Pensacola Beach, Fla. (U.S. Navy photo by Ensign Antonio More)

By Richard R. Burgess, Senior Editor

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Navy has retired the Bell TH-57 Sea Ranger helicopter from training naval aviators after 57 years of training Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and foreign naval aviators to fly helicopters.

The last Sea Ranger in Training Air Wing Five, TH-57C Bureau Number 162668, side number E-106, based at Naval Air Station (NAS) Whiting Field, Florida, made its last flight on Sept. 19, 2025, and was delivered to the National Naval Aviation

Museum at NAS Pensacola, Florida. The helicopter was presented that day to museum director Sterling Gillum by the pilot, Commander James Gelsinon.

Another of the wing's TH-57Cs was delivered to the USS Lexington Museum in Corpus Christi, Texas.

The TH-57 in its three versions – A, B, and C – provided flight training over the years to student rotary wing aviators by Training Air Wing Five's Helicopter Training Squadrons HT-8, HT-18, and HT-28. The Navy procured a total of 40 TH-57As, 51 TH-57Bs, and 89 TH-57Cs.

The TH-57 is not quite gone, however, being used at NAS Patuxent River, Maryland, by an air test and evaluation squadron, HX-21.

"HX-21 still flies TH-57 for readiness flights, not testing," said Connie Briggs, a spokeswoman for the Naval Air Systems Command. "Right now, there are no immediate plans to retire the aircraft."

The TH-57 has been succeeded by the TH-73A Thrasher for training naval helicopter pilots at Whiting Field. The Thrasher is built by AgustaWestland Philadelphia, a Leonardo company.

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**Sea Power: The Decisive  
Factor in the American  
Revolution**



On Oct. 13, 1775, Congress authorized the outfitting of two warships and the recruiting of Sailors to create a fleet to pursue and capture British merchant vessels. The Naval Committee purchased the merchant ship *Black Prince* from John Barry and renamed it *Alfred*. The ship was placed in commission on Dec. 3, 1775. *Image credit: Naval History and Heritage Command | William Nowland Powell*

“The Continental Navy, with few exceptions, was a wasteful and humiliating fiasco.” So wrote Ian Toll in his introductory chapter in “Six Frigates” in his effort to set the stage for the construction of the ships that would lay the foundation for our present navy. In contrast, Tim McGrath, author of “Give Me a Fast Ship,” argues that beginning with five converted merchantmen, “America’s Sailors became formidable warriors, matching their wits, skills, and courage against the best of the British fleet.”

Whatever your assessment of the “Navy of the United States,” as John Paul Jones referred to it in his proposed regulations for officer uniforms, an aspect of the American Revolution that cannot be emphasized enough is the role sea power played as a determiner for the American colonies being unshackled from British rule. What started as a rebellion of the colonies

against the Crown for a variety of factors, to include tariffs imposed on imported goods, grew into a global war that overtaxed the capabilities of the Royal Navy.

Ironically, sea power was one of the key factors leading to revolution. The decisive Royal Navy triumph over the French at Quiberon Bay near Saint-Nazaire on Nov. 20, 1759, during the Seven Years' War, and British success with American colonial help in the French and Indian War (the North American component of the Seven Years' War), which brought Canada under British rule, meant France and its allied Native American tribes no longer posed a threat that fostered colonial dependence on British armed forces. Of course, establishing Pax Britannica came at a cost, and the British sought colonial help in footing the bill.

"Taxation without representation" drove a wedge between the British Crown's overseas subjects and the motherland, especially in New England as illustrated by the Boston Tea Party. The attempt to quell revolt by garrisoning troops in Boston would backfire in the spring of 1775 at Lexington and Concord, and soon the British found themselves in an uncomfortable situation as colonial militias formed to become an army under George Washington, who took command on July 3, 1775. Surveying the situation, Washington recognized he could change the British situation from uncomfortable to untenable by interdicting British supply ships.



The battle between Bonhomme Richard, center, commanded by Captain John Paul Jones, and HMS Serapis off Flamborough Head, England. *Image credit: Naval History and Heritage Command | Thomas Mitchell*

In his assessment, he likely was inspired by a failed early-June trading mission to Machias, located northeast of present-day Bar Harbor, Maine. Hoping to exchange food for lumber, the British commander, Midshipman James Moore, would have his two cargo ships Polly and Unity seized as local Sailors, led by Jeremiah O'Brien and inspired by events at Lexington and Concord, then captured Moore's schooner Margareta and in doing so dispatched Moore and nine of his crew. O'Brien armed Unity with Margareta's guns; renamed Machias Liberty, this first American warship would immediately capture two British vessels on a surveying mission without firing a shot.

To clear the British from Boston, Washington turned to John Glover, who commanded the 21st Massachusetts Regiment from Marblehead, which was composed mostly of Sailors. In his 2021 bestseller of the same name, Patrick K. O'Donnell would dub the Marblehead men "The Indispensables," members of whom would

crew Glover's schooner Hannah. On Sept. 7 the schooner, under the command of Nicholson Broughton, seized back an American merchantman that had been pressed into British service to deliver supplies to the British Army. Seeking to replicate Hannah's success, additional schooners quickly claimed some 55 prizes.

### **Birth of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps**

The success bolstered efforts by John Adams in Philadelphia to authorize a national navy. An initial step had been taken over the summer to allow each colony to form their own fleet as they saw fit. Resistance had come from the South, which had yet to experience hostile actions from the Royal Navy. Attitudes changed as September turned to October as John Barry returned from a trip to England with newspaper accounts of the Royal Navy fitting out additional ships for duty in North America. Adams was joined in calling for the creation of a navy by Rhode Island delegate Stephen Hopkins, who learned of a bombardment conducted against Bristol. However, Samuel Chase of Maryland exclaimed, "It is the maddest idea in the world to think of building an American fleet." Reports of additional British reinforcements en route and fear of the potential of Royal Navy men-of-war roving along the Eastern seaboard, leveling towns and villages, led Congress to act on Oct. 13, 1775, to fit out two vessels to serve in a national navy.

The fears were justified. Five days after the birth of the navy, a British squadron bombarded and then landed a raiding party to torch Falmouth in present-day Maine. That action spurred Congress to approve the acquisition of additional ships. Of course, to crew the ships, officers and enlisted Sailors, stores and supporting infrastructure were needed. Esek Hopkins, the younger brother of the Rhode Island delegate, was appointed to command America's first naval squadron. With the Navy established, Stephen Hopkins saw the need for two battalions of Marines. Formed on Nov. 10, 1775, the Marines' first commissioned officer would be a Quaker,

Samuel Nicholas. The ship Alfred would be the first converted merchantman to be commissioned on Dec. 3, 1775. Four days later John Paul Jones received his officer commission. On Dec. 13, Congress would authorize the construction of 13 frigates to build on the number of converted merchantmen coming into service.

***“It is the maddest idea in the world to think of building an American fleet.” – Samuel Chase, delegate, Continental Congress***

In March 1776 the warring parties displayed aspects of sea power that factored into the course of the war. For the British, the arrival of transports meant General William Howe could extract his troops to fight another day. Meanwhile, the American squadron under Esek Hopkins headed south to the Bahamas to pull off a raid to extract arms and gunpowder. Returning from the Bahamas, the squadron experienced its first engagement with the Royal Navy in coming upon HMS Glasgow off Block Island. After Hopkins failed to exploit his numerical superiority, the British 20-gun warship was able to escape to Newport.

In the coming months, sea power would prove nearly decisive for the British. As Congress met in Philadelphia to draft the Declaration of Independence, a massive armada arrived off New York in what David Hackett Fischer declared “was the largest projection of seaborne power ever attempted by a European State.” Some 70 warships, half the order of battle for the Royal Navy, oversaw the offloading of 23,000 Redcoats and 10,000 Hessians onto Staten Island. The Royal Navy and ground forces worked in tandem to defeat Washington’s forces on Long Island.



John Paul Jones served as lieutenant on the first American Navy ship, Alfred, in 1775 and soon became captain of Providence in 1776. While operating in British territorial waters with his flagship Bonhomme Richard in 1779, Jones fought HMS Serapis and won one of the bloodiest naval battles of the American Revolution. *Image credit: Naval History and Heritage Command | Arthur S. Conrad*

Small craft proved to be Washington's salvation as the

Marblehead Sailors were able to extract him and some 9,000 troops from Brooklyn under cover of fog. In an attempt at asymmetric warfare, Washington approved the use of David Bushnell's submersible Turtle, which failed early on Sept. 8, 1776, to attach an explosive to the hull of the British flagship Eagle. Dodging that bullet, a week later, the Royal Navy supported the army's landings on Manhattan. Washington's troops would repeatedly fail in battle, and by December they were hunkered down at Valley Forge in Pennsylvania. As documented by Fischer in "Washington's Crossing," it was those "Indispensable" Marblehead Sailors who crewed the boats that delivered Washington's force across the Delaware for a successful raid on Trenton.

Sea power proved consequential during the pivotal year of 1777. Though Benedict Arnold's gunboats were soundly defeated at the Battle of Valcour Island on Lake Champlain in October 1776, the action delayed British efforts to drive south from Canada to reach the Hudson River Valley until the following year. Eventually, British General John Burgoyne's army would be defeated at Saratoga in October 1777. This blow came in part due to General Howe's decision not to head north to link up with Burgoyne but rather to use sea power to transport a portion of his army up the Chesapeake Bay to offload regiments near present-day Elkton, Maryland.

Following the American defeat at Brandywine, British troops seized Philadelphia. Perhaps a motivating factor for Howe in seizing the revolutionary seat of government was not to cause the Congress to flee to York but rather to shut down a part of the infrastructure needed to sustain an American Navy. As British forces worked their way up the Delaware to open the waterway to support the new garrison in Philadelphia, they met resistance from vessels of the Continental and Pennsylvania state navies. One of the 13 authorized frigates, Delaware, would run aground and be captured. To prevent their capture, Washington ordered the scuttling of two of the other frigates

trapped further upriver, Effingham and Washington. In a bombardment that would be replicated at Fort McHenry during the War of 1812, Royal Navy warships fired broadsides at Fort Mifflin. The fort would be pummeled but at a cost: The British lost HMS Augusta, a 64-gun ship-of-the-line. Credit the Army, not the Navy, for the greatest loss ever inflicted against His Majesty's navy.

### **Privateers and Irregular Warfare**

There is a reason Ian Toll wrote about six frigates instead of 13, as the fate of the other congressionally authorized frigates mirrored that of the three mentioned above. But elements of sea power began to work to support the newly declared United States' effort to free itself from British rule. Privateers became the ultimate force multiplier. Congress and the individual states provided some 2,000 letters of marque to enterprising merchantmen to interdict British commerce. Motivated by prize money obtained through the sale of captured vessels and their cargoes, the privateers prowled the Atlantic in search of British merchants. Rising insurance premiums would influence British attitudes about the cost of sustaining the effort to quell the rebellion. In addition to having to divert assets to protect its merchant fleet, the Royal Navy had an even bigger challenge with the French decision to support the rebellion.

With France and eventually Spain joining the American cause, the British saw not only their other overseas possessions at risk – especially in the Caribbean, but also the homeland itself. French entry in the war and the threat of French sea power caused the British government to direct the abandonment of Philadelphia to redistribute troops to New York, Canada and the Caribbean. The veiled maritime threat had accomplished what Washington's troops could not: the liberation of the new nation's capital. Unfortunately, French naval deployments would not contribute toward an immediate change in the direction of the war. A potential game-changing showdown off

Rhode Island on Aug. 11, 1778, between a superior French force commanded by Vice Admiral Charles-Henri d'Estaing and a British force led by Admiral William Howe was thwarted by a storm causing the two fleets to scurry to the safety of American-held Boston and British-occupied New York. However, the British would not be able to prevent the landing of French troops or block the steady stream of arms arriving from Europe.

Before the Franco-American alliance, French authorities tended to look the other way when American naval vessels fit out and operated from French ports, an arrangement that led to Lambert Wickes in *Reprisal* and Gustavus Conyngham in *Revenge* having very successful commerce-raiding deployments off the British Isles early in the conflict. With the alliance, France became an operating base for several American skippers, with the best-known being John Paul Jones – a master of what historian B.J. Armstrong has dubbed “irregular warfare” – a component of sea power that can be seen today with Navy SEALs. Having commanded *Ranger* in operations against his native land that included a raid on Whitehaven, Jones turned *Ranger* over to his First Lieutenant to take command of *Duc de Duras*, a merchantman of considerable size that Jones armed and transformed into the *Bonhomme Richard*.



The French fleet (left), commanded by Vice Admiral the Comte de Grasse, engaging the British fleet under Rear Admiral Sir Thomas Graves off the mouth of Chesapeake Bay. *Image credit: Naval History and Heritage Command | V. Zveg*

Sailing out as part of a Franco-American raiding squadron, Bonhomme Richard engaged HMS Serapis off the Yorkshire coast of England on Sept. 23, 1779. With the rigging of the two ships becoming entangled and Jones losing the use of several of his guns, the American commander refused to surrender. Having “not yet begun to fight,” Bonhomme Richard’s crew boarded and seized Serapis, an outcome that would be tops on the Continental Navy’s rather limited highlight reel for the American Revolution. In contrast, a month earlier, a good portion of that navy chose to scuttle itself in the Penobscot River to avoid capture from a superior British naval force, a tragic conclusion of what may have been the young nation’s mightiest attempt to flex its sea power muscle in assembling an armada of 19 warships including the frigate Warren and 25 support ships to sail north from Boston to eliminate British footholds along the coast of present-day Maine. The disastrous Penobscot Expedition illustrated how sea power could prove

decisive – unfortunately, in this case, on behalf of the British.

A few months later the British used their superior naval forces to good advantage by loading 90 transports, crewed by 5,000 Sailors, at the end of December in New York with some 8,700 troops and 396 horses to sail south past Cape Hatteras to seize Charleston. Although few horses survived the stormy journey, the troops did and were skillfully deployed by General Henry Clinton to entrap the defending American garrison. In addition to surrendering some 6,700 men, the Americans lost two more of its 13 frigates authorized by Congress.

Though the British were exploiting sea power to good effect in 1779–1780, in the end it would work to their disadvantage. Through attrition, the British did succeed in whittling the Continental Navy to just a handful of ships, with the 36-gun frigate Alliance being the most powerful warship to survive the war. A 74-gun ship-of-the-line America, completed after the battle at Yorktown, would be offered to the French as a gift for their support of American effort to achieve independence. That effort culminated with the arrival of a French fleet under the command of Vice Admiral Comte de Grasse off the mouth of Chesapeake Bay. In the Battle of the Capes, fought Sept. 5, 1781, de Grasse defeated an inferior British squadron commanded by Rear Admiral Thomas Graves, sealing the fate of General Charles Cornwallis's troops at Yorktown.

Faced with debt, Congress would not continue to fund a navy, and with the auctioning of Alliance in August 1785, the navy that Congress created a decade earlier was no more. However, the new nation's political leaders would quickly appreciate the consequences of their folly. In a new constitution that replaced the Articles of Confederation, in Article 1, Section 8, Congress was authorized "To raise and support armies, but no appropriation of money to that use shall be for a longer term than two years." In contrast, the founders enshrined the

need “To provide and maintain a navy.”

*Dr. Winkler has been nominated to be the next Historian General of the Naval Order of the United States. This article originally appeared in the October issue of Seapower magazine.*

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# Navy Determines Planned Ship Inactivations for Fiscal 2026



Henry J. Kaiser-class underway replenishment oiler USNS Pecos (T-AO-197) sails during the at-sea phase of Exercise Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) 2024. (U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Terrin Hartman)

By Richard R. Burgess, Senior Editor

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Navy plans to inactivate or transfer eight ships during fiscal 2026, including two warships and six auxiliary ships, the service said in a Sept. 12 internal message to the force.

The navy plans to inactivate two Los Angeles-class attack submarines, USS Newport News (SSN 750) on Jan. 31, 2026, and USS Alexandria (SSN 757) on Aug. 4, 2026. The two submarines will be scrapped in Puget Sound Naval Shipyard, Washington.

Two Henry J. Kaiser-class fleet replenishment oilers will be withdrawn from service with Military Sealift Command by July 31, 2026. USNS John Ericsson (T-AO 194) will be retired but retained as a logistics support asset as a parts source for remaining ships of its class. USS Pecos (T-AO 197) will be transferred to the Maritime Administration (MARAD).

Three Watson-class large, medium-speed roll-on/roll off ships will be transferred from the Military Sealift Command's Prepositioning Force: USNS Pomeroy (T-AKR 316) by Apr. 1, 2026; USNS Watkins (T-AKR 315) by July 1, 2026; and USNS Red Cloud (T-AKR-313) by Sept. 30, 2026.

Also being transferred to MARAD on July 1, 2026, is the USNS VADM K.R. Wheeler (T-AG 5001), a ship which uses an offshore petroleum distribution system to pump fuel ashore from a distance of eight miles to U.S. forces ashore.

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## **Naval Aviation at Highest Readiness in Years, 'Air Boss' Said**



The world's largest aircraft carrier, USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78), transits the North Sea, Aug. 23, 2025. (U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Tajh Payne)

By Richard R. Burgess, Senior Editor

ARLINGTON, Virginia – U.S. naval aviation is at its highest readiness in years, a senior naval aviation admiral said to an audience in Washington and online.

Speaking Aug. 26 in an event of the U.S. Naval Institute and the Center for Strategic and International Studies sponsored by HII, Vice Admiral Daniel L. Cheever, commander Naval Air Forces and commander, Naval Air Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet – the Navy's Air Boss' – said the Naval Air Forces are "sustaining the readiness increases that we enjoyed" and "we're at the "highest state of readiness we've had in at least 10 to 15 years back. And so, both carriers and the air wings with the carriers and our expeditionary forces are all at that heightened readiness."

Cheever said that small pockets of challenges to readiness

remained, particularly with the management of the supply chain and sustainment,

“We have a good playbook,” he said. “When there is a challenge, we get after it, and we have a perform-to-plan that re-energizes and gets us back to where we should be for readiness, and that’s across the board. And it’s pretty exciting to be part of that. It’s a lot of hard work but it is totally worth it. The return on investment from all of that parts supply is in the readiness of the force.”

Cheever praised the F-35 Lightning II strike fighter as “a game changer, a difference maker in the fleet,” while noting that there are some supply-chain challenges that are being addressed.

He said that a mixture of 4th-, 5th-, and 6th-generation mix of carrier-based strike fighters with manned-unmanned teaming is the “right blend.”

The 6th-generation strike fighter is being designed to replace the F/A-18E/F Super Hornet strike fighter and the EA-18G Growler electronic attack aircraft.

Cheever offered no details of the concept for the 6th-generation strike fighter but said that “I see a maritime version of the aircraft that starts at the carrier, is made for the carrier, and is a complete carrier version ... I’m looking forward to the down-select... because that 6<sup>th</sup> generation means air superiority in that timeframe in the future, which means sea control.”

He affirmed that aircraft carriers will be central to air superiority in the future for the Navy and America as a maritime nation.

He noted that the MQ-25 Stingray unmanned refueling aircraft will fly this year and be integrated with the aircraft carrier next year.

The air boss praised the design of the USS Gerald R. Ford, lead ship of the Navy's newest class of aircraft carriers. The position of the island superstructure is farther aft than on the Nimitz class produces less of an air burble for approaching aircraft. The increase of aircraft parking space forward of the island eases aircraft handling and enables an aircraft to park directly over a weapons elevator for weapons download.

He also noted that, unlike the Nimitz class carriers, the Gerald R. Ford is completely air conditioned.

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**Coast Guard District is  
Economic Nerve Center with  
Complex Northern Border  
Challenge**



The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Bristol Bay, homeported in Detroit, assists the vessel James R. Barker at Rock Cut in the St. Marys River April 2, 2018. Bristol Bay worked the river to keep the waterway open. *Photo credit: U.S. Coast Guard | Chief Petty Officer Nick Gould*

*Editor's Note: Since this article first appeared in the July/August issue of Seapower, the 9th District has been renamed the Great Lakes District.*

The 9th Coast Guard District, or D9 as it is known to the 5,000 people stationed at more than 78 units across five sectors, encompasses eight U.S. states and the five Great Lakes, including three of the world's largest by surface area – Lake Superior, Lake Michigan and Lake Huron.

With 6,700 miles of shoreline and a 1,600-nautical-mile international border with Canada, the 9th District ensures safe passage each year for 80 million tons of bulk cargo – iron ore, taconite pellets, grain, salt, concrete and fertilizer – along a handful of vital shipping corridors. In D9, these waterways are essentially narrow passages; in the

event of a marine casualty situation, bypasses are scarce. What's more, 90% of the nation's iron ore (taconite) comes from open-pit mines in Minnesota and Wisconsin on Lake Superior, where its shipping relies entirely on the Soo Locks, a complex of locks on the St. Marys River without which Lake Superior would be isolated from the rest of the Great Lakes.

Inside the 9th District is the 2,340-mile St. Lawrence Seaway. The primary access route to North America's heartland, the seaway connects the Atlantic Ocean to the head of the Great Lakes. The route is the only navigable link for oceangoing vessels, including cruise ships, to reach the major inland ports of the Great Lakes, among them Ontario's Port of Thunder Bay and the Port of Duluth-Superior.

D9 also has oversight of 5.5 million registered boaters with some of the busiest recreational boating activity in the world. Driving home the economic value of D9's area of responsibility is the fact that America's five great lakes contain 20% of the Earth's fresh surface water, and 40 million Americans rely on the lakes for safe drinking water.

But there's more: a "Hall-of-Fame" stat one might not expect, according to Rear Admiral Jon P. Hickey, the 9th District commander and senior Coast Guard commander for the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Seaway.

"If you took the Great Lakes region, the eight states, the two Canadian provinces, the five lakes, and called that a nation, it would be the third-largest GDP in the world [after] the United States and China," Hickey told Seapower. "The impact that this sector has, it's real, it's tangible. In the 9th District, we're all about safety and security of these maritime regions, these lakes. It is a lifeblood of the U.S. economy."

D9 is a thriving ecosystem in which all the moving parts – the multitude of lakes and waterways, the valuable cargo, the skilled workforce and the robust, if overworked, fleet –

function seamlessly, usually without disruption and therefore, out of the public eye. None of the work is effortless, much less easy. Hickey described the “challenging” narrow passage along the St. Marys River, considered critical infrastructure by the Department of Homeland Security.

“That’s why we have the vessel traffic system. It is absolutely critical what these folks do to manage vessel traffic safely and securely in those waterways,” Hickey said. “You’ve got these ... thousand footers [ships] going through there ... carrying a product that’s essential to our economy, our security, and if anything were to go wrong, it’s likely [to] block the waterway. These are the things that keep me up at night. The idea of a marine casualty in the St. Marys River, the Detroit River, the St. Clair River because those are the single points of failure in the MTS,” or maritime transportation system.

The regulatory and security landscape surrounding maritime operations on the Great Lakes is nothing if not complex. With 1,600 nautical miles of maritime international border, Hickey said the long-standing cooperation with Canadian maritime authorities is crucial.

“We have an incredible partnership with [our Canadian partners],” Hickey said. “We call it ‘Shiprider,’ where they come on board our vessels, and we go on their vessels. So, it’s a seamless enforcement of Canadian and U.S. laws across that border. We’re ensuring the safety and security of our maritime transportation system, which on the Great Lakes is tantamount to our border. If you were to navigate from the Sioux Locks to Duluth, you would cross the Canadian and U.S. border, staying inside the channel, over 20 times.”

Unique to the 9th District is the Canadian and U.S. Laker fleet, which operates solely within the bounds of the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence Seaway up to around Montreal, Hickey said. Made of Canadian and U.S. commercial cargo

vessels designed for the transport of bulk commodities within the Great Lakes system, the Laker fleet is “not really considered international” and not subject to the same international regulations, such as SOLAS (International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea), given they only operate within the internal waters of Canada and the U.S.

Meanwhile, the seasonal foreign trade routes through the St. Lawrence Seaway bring foreign flag vessels into the Great Lakes from mid-March to January every year. These vessels are subject to international regulations and must abide by SOLAS requirements because they are in U.S. and Canadian internal waters.

“We have to be very vigilant about ... what’s coming in,” Hickey said. “Are they threats to our critical infrastructure, our safety, security? If they meet the threshold for a high-interest vessel, we are going to board them as soon as – or before – they get into the lakes. In the U.S. waters and in the seaway, we’re going to make sure we keep our American public safe and secure.”

Since January, D9 has allocated available operational capacity toward securing and defending the northern border, Hickey said. He said D9 is “leaning into” northern border concerns and intelligence, using resources on hand in anticipation of how border events elsewhere in the country play out.

“We’re also asking the questions of: ‘What would we need if we wanted to do more in the event that ... illicit activity increases on the northern border as we continue to lock down the southern border?,’ that balloon effect,” he said. “We have really doubled down on our interagency coordination. [We are] making sure that illegal cross-border activity like drug trafficking and people trafficking is not happening, and we are as committed to that as we are to our search and rescue mission.”



U.S. Coast Guard units coordinated with local partners in a response to a capsized vessel with five persons and a dog in the water off Mackinac Island, Michigan. (U.S. , in August 2024. Photo credit: U.S. Coast Guard Station St. Ignace

The 9th District does the second-most search and rescue cases after the 7th Coast Guard District in the Southeastern U.S. and Caribbean. In the past year, the people of D9 executed more than 2,000 SAR cases across the Great Lakes, Hickey said.

“We saved 873 lives,” he said. “I tell my people, if you save one life, you’ve impacted and changed the lives of everybody in their circle of trust, circle of love, friends, family and loved ones, for the rest of their lives. Search and rescue goes beyond just a mission. It is our special trust with the American public.”

Whether on behalf of recreational boating safety, icebreaking or the uneventful movement of critical bulk cargo, the D9’s Vessel Traffic Service teams rely on a healthy fleet of

multimission cutters, response and patrol boats, and, by extension, U.S. Laker cargo vessels. This is not as easy as it sounds, according to Hickey, who said overdue maintenance and slow to no vessel recapitalization are ongoing challenges for VTS operations and overall readiness.

“Those VTS folks are like air traffic controllers. They maintain situational awareness,” Hickey said. “Our U.S. Laker fleet and the Canadian Laker fleet is old, and what we’re witnessing is an increase in our maritime casualties. I am concerned about the health of the fleet. We are in a downward readiness spiral ... and it’s due to the perennial underinvestment in our Coast Guard. We have backlogs and maintenance across the board, whether it’s our cutter fleet, our boats, our aircraft or our shore infrastructure.”

In April 2025, DHS issued the Force Design 2028 report, which outlines plans for implementing transformational changes within the Coast Guard, including an overhaul of the agency’s acquisition and contracting system to expedite much-needed new ships. Shortly after the report’s release, Admiral Kevin Lunday, the acting commandant of the Coast Guard, told members of the House Armed Services Committee that efforts were underway and that production milestones outlined in Force Design 2028 are being met.

Hickey said the plans in Force Design 2028 can’t come soon enough. Citing last winter’s above-average ice season in the Great Lakes, he said it was the first time in a while the 9th District had been “stress-tested” with respect to the icebreaking mission. But, thanks to some excellent advanced planning by D9 district staff for maintenance and to complete aids to navigation, or ATONs, in the summer months, they were well prepared.

“We were able to cover down very, very well on the ice season. But, from my perspective, this plan to renew our fleet, our Coast Guard writ large, can’t come soon enough,” Hickey said.

“When we talk about Force Design 2028 and recapitalizing the Coast Guard, the VTS system is part of that. We need to recapitalize that system. I am very grateful for the leadership of the administration to get after recapitalization and renewal of the Coast Guard, because it’s not sustainable.”

*Daisy Khalifa is a journalist and publicist. With more than 25 years of professional, public affairs and writing experience in Washington, D.C., she recently relocated to the Minneapolis area. Khalifa has consulted and worked full-time in the federal government, for associations and for Fortune 500 companies, among them the Smithsonian Institution, MCI and Nextel Corp.*

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# **Shipbuilding Investment: The Policy Proposals and Political Environment in Washington**



By Luke Lorenz and Sonia Toloczko

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Since American shipbuilding peaked during WWII, the production of U.S.-flagged vessels has dropped precipitously despite American imports rising at a similarly steep rate. The text of the recently introduced SHIPS for America Act of 2025 illustrates the dire state of American shipbuilding through several alarming statistics.

Although 80% of goods imported to the U.S. arrive by sea, fewer than 1.5% of the ships carrying them are American. This percentage is surprisingly low, but the number of U.S.-flagged vessels in operation is even more startling: approximately 80 American ships are engaged in international commerce. Without intervention, that figure is unlikely to see any significant increase given the weakened state of the shipbuilding industry and its infrastructure. Only a handful of U.S. shipbuilders can produce large ocean-going vessels. In 2023, these shipyards received just five orders for oceangoing ships, most of which engage in domestic trade. As it stands, American shipbuilding capacity is so diminished that even the most concerted efforts to expand it could take years to produce results. That is why Congress needs to start

addressing the problem now.

Ramping up production of U.S.-flagged ships is imperative to America's maritime security, and doing so will require the government to invest in all aspects of the shipbuilding industry. China's shipbuilding capacity already outpaces that of the United States by an order of magnitude. Still, Congress and the president have yet to enact legislation providing the consistent funding to close that gap. Lawmakers are late to address this problem, but the political will to do so is steadily growing.

In congressional committee hearings, many lawmakers recognize the dire state of America's shipbuilding and Merchant Marine. Speaking to Dr. Kurt Campbell in a May 15 House China Committee hearing, Rep. Ritchie Torres (D-New York) remarked that "one Chinese shipyard has more capacity than all our shipyards combined. China's shipbuilding capacity is over 23 million deadweight tons. The United States has less than 100,000 deadweight tons. The difference is a multiple of 230." In an April 10 Senate Armed Services INDOPACOM posture hearing, Sen. Roger Wicker (R-Mississippi) observed, "we need a drastic improvement in our shipbuilding. The risk is simply too high for us to avoid making these changes." In nomination, posture and budget hearings across Congress, many other legislators have echoed these statements.

Two major legislative developments this Congress are indicative of the growing support for shipbuilding in Congress: the House passage of a reconciliation spending bill providing for millions in shipbuilding investment and the introduction of the bicameral and bipartisan SHIPS for America Act. This month's Washington Report will explore the bills' potential impact and lawmakers' responses to them so far.

## **The 'One Big Beautiful Bill Act'**

### **Commercial and Military Shipbuilding Provisions**

The House-passed reconciliation bill promises landmark investment in military and commercial shipbuilding as well as Coast Guard operations and facilities. Many shipbuilding funding allocations in the bill, or H.R.1, the "One Big Beautiful Bill Act," align

with the Navy League's legislative recommendations. However, the Navy League advocates that Congress provide consistent funding through the annual budget process, not only reconciliation spending bills.

H.R.1 provides \$2.6 billion in funding to improve military shipbuilding capacity and technology. The bill also allocates \$2.4 billion to expand and modernize the commercial shipbuilding industrial base. Most notably, Section 20002 of H.R.1, "Enhancement of Department of Defense Resources for Shipbuilding," promises \$28 billion in funding for naval ship construction, technology, maintenance and repair, and autonomous systems. Although the investment is less remarkable in comparison, it bears noting that the bill also includes \$100 million for the procurement of commercial logistic ships and \$700 million for the lease and purchase of ships under the National Defense Sealift Fund.

Section 20009 of the reconciliation bill, "Enhancement of Department of Defense Resources to Improve Capabilities of United States Indo-Pacific Command," also allocates \$9.7 billion for INDOPACOM operations and infrastructure. Of that funding, INDOPACOM would receive \$35 million for additive manufacturing capabilities and \$19 million for the development of naval small craft capabilities. Under Section 20010, "Enhancement of Department of Defense Resources for Improving the Readiness of the Armed Forces," the DoD can expect \$2 billion in funding for Navy depot and shipyard modernization and capacity enhancement, as well as \$241 million for the production and integration of Marine Corps amphibious vehicles. H.R.1 would provide the DOD with \$13 billion to build 16 warships. When combined with the proposed annual budget, the reconciliation bill's passage would result in a \$33.8 billion shipbuilding budget

However, the \$13 billion plus-up provided by the reconciliation bill is only for 2026, leaving \$20.8 billion as the starting point for shipbuilding in 2027. H.R.1 promises the shipbuilding industry a historic one-time influx of investment. But shipbuilders and shipbuilding component manufacturers will expect demand to drop back down in 2027 when funding from the reconciliation bill ends.

If the maritime industry cannot expect consistently elevated funding from an increased annual budget, manufacturers will be wary of making the long-term investments crucial to expanding American shipbuilding capacity.

## **Coast Guard Funding**

In addition to large investments in the military and commercial shipbuilding industries, the reconciliation bill also promises \$14.6 billion in funding for Coast Guard offshore patrol cutters, fast response cutters, polar security cutters, and Arctic security cutters. Section 100001, "Coast Guard Assets Necessary to Secure the Maritime Border and Interdict Migrants and Drugs," allocates \$3.2 billion for Coast Guard shoreside infrastructure, \$1.3 billion for all facility depot maintenance and \$180 million for autonomous maritime systems providing maritime domain awareness. The \$20 billion that H.R.1 allocates to the Coast Guard mirrors the \$20 billion budget recommended by the Navy League but still does not offer the commercial and military shipbuilding industries the reliable investment of an increased annual budget.

## **The SHIPS Act**

### **Introduction and Impact**

At the beginning of May, Sens. Mark Kelly of Arizona and Todd Young of Indiana and Reps. Trent Kelly of Missouri and John Garamendi of California reintroduced legislation colloquially referred to as the SHIPS for America Act in their respective chambers of Congress. Kelly and Young initially introduced two bills, splitting the House version of the SHIPS Act into one piece of legislation with tax policy provisions and another with the remaining proposals for increasing American shipbuilding.

The 2025 SHIPS for America Act includes the policies proposed in the original 2024 legislation, such as implementing a National Maritime Strategy under an executive branch Maritime Security Advisor and creating a 250-ship fleet of "commercially operated, U.S.-flagged, American crewed, domestically built merchant vessels" referred to as the Strategic Commercial Fleet. In

addition to these original provisions, the 2025 bill has a few notable updates. For one, the original bill introduced a Maritime Security Trust Fund that would “reinvest duties and fees paid by the maritime industry into maritime security programs and infrastructure supporting maritime commerce.”

Along with those duties and fees, the updated SHIPS Act would also supply the Maritime Security Trust Fund with fines resulting from the U.S. Trade Representative’s April 2025 Section 301 investigation into China’s illegal shipbuilding trade practices. The other new provisions in the 2025 SHIPS Act similarly tighten restrictions on activity hindering the expansion of America’s shipbuilding industry.

## **Barriers to Passage**

Although support for shipbuilding legislation is growing, the budget reconciliation bill may prevent Congress from acting on the SHIPS Act for some time. President Trump and Speaker of the House Rep. Mike Johnson (R-Louisiana) have publicly aimed to push the One Big Beautiful Bill Act through the Senate and onto the President’s desk by the Fourth of July. If the Senate passes the legislation, current speculation indicates it will likely be a revised version. Congressional Republicans may not be able to debate and vote on the revised bill in time to meet the July 4 deadline to which they previously agreed.

Whether Congress passes the reconciliation bill by Independence Day, senior lawmakers will be busy trying to finalize committee budget bills throughout July before their summer recess begins at the end of the month. With budget deadlines quickly following Congress’ return from recess in September, activity on the SHIPS Act could be stalled until mid-fall, assuming the appropriations process runs on schedule. While this timeline is entirely speculative, it illustrates how the upcoming congressional calendar could impede the timely passage of the SHIPS Act. To push the bill through Congress, advocates for its passage will need to capture lawmakers’ attention during the busiest working period of this Congress.

## The State of Support

The current political climate and growing support for shipbuilding in Washington are promising indicators the SHIPS Act will continue to gain traction in Congress. Sen. Kelly, one of the bill's original sponsors, was optimistic about its reception in Washington during an April 30 press conference. "I'm glad that my colleagues in Congress – Republicans and Democrats in both the House and the Senate – and the administration see this challenge too and are ready to do something about it," he said.

Kelly's observations are borne out by the number of sponsors for the 2025 SHIPS for America Act legislation. In addition to its sponsors, the 2025 bills now boast a combined total of 38 Republican and 32 Democratic co-sponsors. Supporters like Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) have been enthusiastic about the bills' benefits for their states.

"Because of our vast geography, the maritime industry is uniquely vital to Alaska, with many of our coastal communities relying on a strong U.S.-flagged fleet for everything from everyday logistics, to commercial fishing and homeland defense," Murkowski said. "I am proud to cosponsor the SHIPS Act, which advances common-sense solutions that will invest in the workforce and revitalize our nation's shipbuilding, increasing Alaska's resilience and security."

Other legislators, such as Sen. John Fetterman (D-Pennsylvania), have expressed support for the bill's international and local impacts, saying, "not only will this [bill] strengthen our national security, but it'll also grow our local economies and support working families right here in Pennsylvania. I'm proud to support this commonsense, bipartisan legislation that will help us build more ships in America and stand up to China."

Alongside lawmakers, several prominent maritime organizations have also publicly backed the SHIPS for America Act. Among the most notable of these supporters are several state maritime academies, USA Maritime, American Maritime Partnership, United Steelworkers, AFL-CIO, Marine Machinery Association, Transportation Institute,

National Defense Transportation Association and Shipbuilders Council of America.

## **Still to Come**

Congressional activity on the One Big Beautiful Bill Act may not indicate very much about legislators' attitudes toward shipbuilding investment. However, the bill's inclusion of such significant funding for the commercial maritime industry, new warships and the Coast Guard signals there may be enough political will to push shipbuilding bills, like the SHIPS for America Act, through Congress. Many members of Congress have come to understand a shipbuilding investment is a necessary element of safeguarding America's economic and national security future. Now that lawmakers have become aware of the dire state of American shipbuilding, it remains to be seen how committed they are to improving it.

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# **Coast Guard Academy Think Tank Puts Polar Issues Front and Center**



Coast Guard Cutter Bertholf (WMSL 750) transits through Glacier Bay, Alaska, Oct. 24, 2024. During the patrol, Bertholf's crew operated as far north as the Arctic Circle, patrolling along the maritime boundary line between the United States and Russia and supporting U.S. strategic interests in the North Pacific Ocean. *Photo credit: U.S. Coast Guard | Troy Spence*

The Arctic is a hot topic these days. As sea ice melts, many questions surface: How should Arctic nations manage more shipping traffic while preserving the delicate environment? Can countries maintain a history of regional cooperation in this increasingly contested space?

As these and other concerns come to the fore, there's one entity keeping all things polar on the front burner: the Center for Arctic Study and Policy, or CASP.

This tiny U.S. Coast Guard Academy office – with an annual operating budget of just \$150,000 and two salaried positions – plays an outsized role in promoting knowledge of the north and south polar regions, a growing area of human interest as the environment rapidly changes.

The Arctic polar region is primarily ocean, surrounded on its

edges by the eight member states of the Arctic Council: Canada; the Kingdom of Denmark, which includes Greenland and the Faroe Islands; Finland; Iceland; Norway; the Russian Federation; Sweden; and the United States, where Alaska includes a 1.5-million-square-mile exclusive economic zone in its surrounding waters.

Council decisions are achieved in agreement with six “permanent participants” that represent Aleut, Arctic Athabaskan, Gwich’in, Inuit, Saami and Russian Indigenous people, who have inhabited the Arctic for millennia. About 10% of the 4 million Arctic residents are native peoples, according to the “Arctic Review,” an online publication covering polar issues.

There is a long history of international cooperation regarding Arctic scientific research and discovery and access to the region’s abundant fisheries, oil and gas assets, minerals, tourist sites and other resources. But rapid changes to the area’s physical, economic, geopolitical and technological characteristics have altered the future of polar affairs. As a result, many nations, including the United States, have intensified their focus on the region.

The U.S. Coast Guard, part of the Department of Homeland Security, underscored the region’s strategic importance in its 2023 Arctic Strategic Outlook Implementation Plan: “Global geopolitical trends combined with changes to the Arctic’s physical environment are increasing the region’s economic opportunities and strategic importance while hastening the impacts and risks to U.S. Arctic residents, commercial activity, and U.S. national security.”

In the middle of the action is CASP, the U.S. Coast Guard’s only scholarly center and internal think tank. It focuses only on the polar regions – mostly the Arctic but also Antarctica.

**Widening Interest, Changing Arctic**

Tony Russell, CASP's executive director since 2022, said his personal interest in the Arctic started in 2007. He was serving as an active-duty officer in the Coast Guard and completing a master's degree at the Marine Corps University. The Arctic, Russell thought, would be a unique thesis topic.

"That was when folks were just beginning to understand how access – physical access – was increasing via the sea ice reducing [and asking] what does that mean?" said Russell, who retired from the Coast Guard as a captain in 2020. Global attention to the region also coalesced around a 2008 U.S. Geological Survey report predicting the Arctic Circle had massive stores of undiscovered oil and gas reserves.

Then, as now, the drastic environmental changes were hard to ignore: According to the National Snow and Ice Data Center, scientists have observed a consistent decline in Arctic sea ice cover in nearly 50 years of continuous satellite monitoring – a rate of decline of more than 2% per decade. In 2025, sea ice cover is at its lowest level since recording began in 1979.

The Arctic in the past four decades has warmed three times faster than the worldwide average, according to "Arctic Climate Change Update 2024: Key Trends and Impacts – Summary for Policymakers," a report by the Arctic Council's Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme.

The evolving situation sparked new areas of concern, collaboration and potential conflict among nation-states, residents, the scientific community and industry players.

The area's residents, land, waterways and wildlife face new threats from erosion, flooding, wildfires and greater human activity. The Arctic is at risk from more air crashes, vessel collisions and groundings. It's also exposed to threats to subsea cables, unsafe shipping through the Russian maritime Arctic and friction from regional military exercises

(involving the U.S. and its allies but also Russia and China).

“That all speaks to rising interest for U.S. national security,” Russell said.



Dr. Abbie Tingstad poses for a photo at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy, Sept. 25, 2024. Tingstad is a renowned Arctic analyst, a trusted voice on the challenges posed by the changing environment in the region and also the first Visiting Research Professor at the Center for Arctic Study and Policy (CASP) at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy. *Photo credit: U.S. Coast Guard | Petty Officer 2nd Class Janessa-Reyanna Warschkow*

### **Renewing the Center’s Mission**

Although CASP was founded in 2014, Russell’s tenure began as the Coast Guard Academy was relaunching and revitalizing the center, complete with new offices at the academy’s New London, Connecticut, headquarters. The center is now housed within the academy’s Office of Scholarship, Research and Innovation. Its renewed mission is focused on educating cadets, conducting research and analysis, and broadening partnerships.

At the reborn CASP, a federally funded rotating research professor position was first filled in 2023 by Arctic analyst Abbie H. Tingstad, who holds a Ph.D. and the title of visiting arctic research professor. Tingstad's predecessors, Drs. Rebecca Pincus and Barry Zellen, were funded by Coast Guard Academy alumni donations.

In addition to overseeing a two-year research agenda, Tingstad is a sought-after expert on Arctic affairs and widely published author of Arctic peer-reviewed research, policy papers and presentations, and media commentaries. Her work has touched on topics such as the role of icebreakers in diplomacy and the effects of a poleward shift in fish stocks in the Northern Bering Sea.

Tingstad also directs CASP's participation in international policy development for the Arctic.

"For example," Tingstad said, "we are part of a multinational network of research and educational institutions that are shaping the conversation about all the facets of Arctic security and what that means, and how it's changing, and what it implies for governance and cooperation in the Arctic region."

CASP is also educating the next generation of Coast Guard officers. It accepts some 18 to 20 cadets every other semester into its polar studies course, focused on U.S. and international strategies and policies in the region. In addition to studying Arctic history and policy, cadets attend expert lectures involving academia, the military, business, Indigenous communities and political spheres.

They also benefit from CASP's reorganization, which "allowed us to increase our access to all of the academic disciplines at the academy," Russell said. That's important because "the challenges that the Arctic faces are definitely multidisciplinary," he said, involving infrastructure, science, policy, business and more. "All of those things factor

into what's going on in the Arctic region.”

Each year, CASP encourages six to eight cadets to delve deeper into polar issues as Arctic scholars. Russell highlighted two cadets, among others, making important contributions to Arctic policy.

Elise Beauchemin, an Arctic scholar studying marine environmental science, completed CASP-sponsored internships last year with the University of Alaska Anchorage and at CASP. She worked with the Coast Guard Research and Development Center, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Lincoln Labs, and the Navy's Undersea Warfare Development Center. She also completed a course supporting Tingstad's research. Beauchemin was accepted into the prestigious Fulbright U.S. Student Program and recognized by DHS Secretary Kristi Noem at the Coast Guard Academy commencement in May.

And, after completing the Arctic studies course, Emelia Campbell was one of three team members invited to partner with the Coast Guard's Maritime Law Enforcement Fisheries Division to research implementation options for the Central Arctic Ocean Fisheries Agreement. This 10-party pact bans commercial fishing in the central Arctic Ocean for 16 years while scientists study the ecological impact. With CASP, Campbell participated in the Fridtjof Nansen Institute's Arctic Security Conference in Oslo, Norway. In January 2025, she presented research findings at the Arctic Frontiers conference in Tromsø, Norway, and later briefed Coast Guard executives.

CASP has also sponsored cadets to attend and present at industry conferences, such as the Navy League's Sea-Air-Space, American Society of Naval Engineers symposia and International Marine Design Conference.

The center supports summer internships for roughly eight cadets each year. “We have two cadets right now on an exchange with the Icelandic Coast Guard,” Russell said, where they're

“getting some great exposure” working with another Arctic nation partner.

Other cadets have interned at the Marine Exchange of Alaska, a nonprofit focused on preventing maritime disasters; the Arctic Domain Awareness Center, a DHS research center at the University of Alaska Anchorage; and the Defense Department’s Ted Stevens Center for Arctic Security Studies.

### **Promoting International Partnerships**

In addition to maintaining a spirit of cooperation, CASP’s ongoing outreach and engagement with most Arctic nations and dozens of U.S. and international organizations – through cadet exchanges, tabletop exercises, policy and research development, and other areas – is yielding Arctic insights for potential action by U.S. and allied militaries, policymakers, industry groups and affected populations.

For the Coast Guard decision-makers, Russell said, CASP “helps flatten the learning curve and it helps maintain consistency and quality of information we’re using for those decisions.” And for external partners who need or want to share information with the Coast Guard, “we know who the subject matter experts are within the service that do that.”

Through its extensive partner network, CASP can foster international dialogue on issues such as illegal fishing, homeland defense, Arctic-capable shipping design, transportation safety, biodiversity preservation, ecosystem management and emergency preparedness.

For instance, CASP helps nations better prepare for Arctic emergencies, which now occur with relative frequency. That includes this year’s Bering Air Flight 445 that crashed on the sea ice on the way to Nome, Alaska, killing 10 people on board; and the 2023 grounding of a 206-person cruise ship stranded for days on Greenland’s remote East Coast.

A recent CASP-hosted tabletop exercise convened emergency response and aviation representatives from four nations and several U.S. military and federal organizations to wargame crises in remote areas of the Arctic. The exercise revealed potential gaps in training, infrastructure, communication and hardware. CASP also moderated a panel discussion on cruise ship search and rescue with the Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators and maritime rescue organizations.

“At the end of the day,” Russell said, “the process is as important as the answer, and we strive to provide the kind of analytical research and defensible background knowledge that best informs polar policy choices and answers.”

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## **Securing the Backbone: The Defense Industrial Base**



PHOTO BY: Air Force Staff Sgt. Marco Gomez

By [Ryan Caughill](#), President, Western New York Council, Navy League of the United States.

***“You can’t fight tomorrow’s war with yesterday’s plans.”***

In the summer of 2018, I completed my internship at Moog Inc., one of the United States’ premier defense contractors. My role was in Environmental Health & Safety, but my mission went deeper: I was tasked with modernizing and guiding emergency management planning across an organization that was deeply integrated into the Defense Industrial Base (DIB), and yet, lacked a dedicated emergency management function.

Like my time later at M&T Bank, this experience left a lasting impression. It showed me that even companies at the forefront of defense technology can have blind spots when it comes to continuity, resilience, and crisis preparedness.

[While this article isn't just about my singular experience, but a holistic and general overview,] that's what makes the Defense Industrial Base one of the most paradoxical critical infrastructure sectors in America: incredibly advanced, but dangerously lacking.

### **The Backbone Behind the Uniform**

The Defense Industrial Base is more than just tanks, missiles, or aircraft. It's an expansive network of over 100,000 private companies that provide products, services, logistics, and technologies to support the U.S. military.

This includes:

- Weapons systems and munitions
- Aerospace components and military-grade software
- Advanced electronics and cyber capabilities
- Research and development institutions
- Transportation and supply chain networks
- Small manufacturers producing critical, often irreplaceable, parts

Some of these are Fortune 500 giants. Many are small, family-owned machine shops in rural communities. All are vital.

But here's the problem: there is no unified resilience standard across the DIB. And that's a problem hiding in plain sight.

### **The Vulnerabilities No One Wants to Talk About**

During my time at Moog, I saw firsthand how emergency management often sits outside the core of DIB corporate culture. Not out of apathy, but due to the sheer scale and complexity of operations. Many companies have excellent safety and security programs, but few have comprehensive crisis management systems. Fewer still have trained emergency managers or business continuity professionals guiding cross-

functional coordination across cyber, physical, and operational risks. This isn't to say they don't exist, I've met some, and they do a really great job.

That makes this sector vulnerable in ways most people don't understand.

The DIB is:

- Extremely decentralized: A single failed supplier can halt delivery of critical weapons platforms.
- Highly classified: Cyber breaches can compromise national defense secrets, yet many companies, especially smaller ones, lack mature cyber defenses.
- Logistically fragile: Long-lead items, global supply chains, and just-in-time manufacturing leave little room for error.
- Resource-limited: Many smaller firms simply don't have the bandwidth or expertise to build robust resilience programs.

Worse yet, we take it for granted that these companies – because of what they do – are already hardened. That's not always true.

### **Why This Sector Isn't Taken Seriously – Until It's Too Late**

The Defense Industrial Base occupies an odd place in the national consciousness. We respect the military. We fund the military. But we rarely consider who makes the military work.

The supply chains, R&D labs, fabrication shops, and logistics hubs that build and sustain America's warfighting capability are not invincible. And yet, the DIB isn't regularly treated like critical infrastructure in the traditional emergency management sense, even though it underpins our strategic deterrence, military readiness, and wartime surge capacity.

That disconnect has consequences. If a natural disaster,

ransomware attack, insider threat, or geopolitical disruption strikes a key node in this ecosystem, the effects won't be immediate headlines. They'll show up months or years later when a military platform is delayed or compromised.

In an age of strategic competition with China and resurgent threats in Europe and the Middle East, that delay could mean the difference between deterrence and disaster.

### **Strengthening the Arsenal of the Republic**

If we want the DIB to remain viable, competitive, and secure, we must elevate resilience as a strategic imperative, not an afterthought.

At the Federal Level:

- The DoD must go beyond cybersecurity compliance and require holistic emergency management, business continuity, and crisis communications programs for Tier 1 and Tier 2 contractors
- Congress should fund regional DIB resilience initiatives and technical assistance hubs to help small firms build preparedness capacity
- DIB firms must be integrated into DHS-FEMA and CISA exercises, not treated as isolated contractors

In the Private Sector:

Contractors should invest in full-time emergency managers or resilience officers, especially at multi-site operations

Continuity of Operations plans (COOP) must be tested regularly and integrated across functions – especially cyber, facilities, HR, and production

Leadership should prioritize exercises and scenario planning, particularly for cyber-physical convergence threats

Across the Supply Chain:

Vendors must be mapped and tiered by criticality, with redundancy plans in place for sole-source dependencies. Smaller manufacturers should be given access to resilience toolkits and grant-supported planning assistance.

For the Defense Community:

Collaboration must improve across DoD, DHS, and the intelligence community to identify emerging threats to the DIB. Emergency management professionals should be embedded, or a partner, in acquisition planning and supplier vetting. The public and political class must recognize that defense readiness includes domestic resilience.

### **Resilience is Readiness**

The Defense Industrial Base is one of the quietest, but most consequential, sectors in the nation's infrastructure portfolio. You don't see it in parades. But it's there in every missile defense test, every jet engine, every encrypted radio, and every armored vehicle.

If we allow it to weaken, structurally, logistically, or digitally, we erode not just our defense capability, but our credibility.

We cannot afford to wait for crisis to realize that the arsenal of our Republic isn't just built on innovation or budgets.

It's built on resilience.

These challenges aren't theoretical, they're unfolding in real time. Delays in the F-35 rollout, the Navy's struggles and eventual cancellation with the Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) program, and schedule slippages in the next-generation aircraft carriers, guided missile frigates, and Columbia-class ballistic missile submarines all point to a sector under immense strain. While these issues stem from a mix of design complexity, funding cycles, and industrial bottlenecks, one

thing is clear: the Defense Industrial Base cannot afford additional disruption.

A well-funded, well-placed crisis management function, integrated at both the facility and enterprise level, won't solve design flaws or procurement hurdles, but it can absorb shock, accelerate recovery, and ensure continuity when disaster strikes. In a sector already grappling with compounding risks, crisis management isn't a luxury, it's a strategic buffer against the unpredictable threats of 21st century warfare.

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# **Airspace around Coast Guard Cutters Now Restricted for Drones**

By Richard R. Burgess, Senior Editor

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Federal Aviation Administration has declared the airspace in the vicinity of U.S. Coast Guard cutters to be restricted airspace to unmanned aerial systems (UAS).

In a June 16 directive from Coast Guard Headquarters, the commandant of the Coast Guard announced the new policy that “explicit approval is required to fly UAS in the immediate vicinity of a Cutter.”

All UAS are prohibited from flying “within a stand-off distance of 3,000 feet laterally and 1,000 feet above all Cutters operating, transiting, or at port within U.S. territorial waters,” the directive said.

The directive applies to all Coast Guard cutters greater or equal to 65 feet in length, which is the length that distinguishes a cutter from a boat.