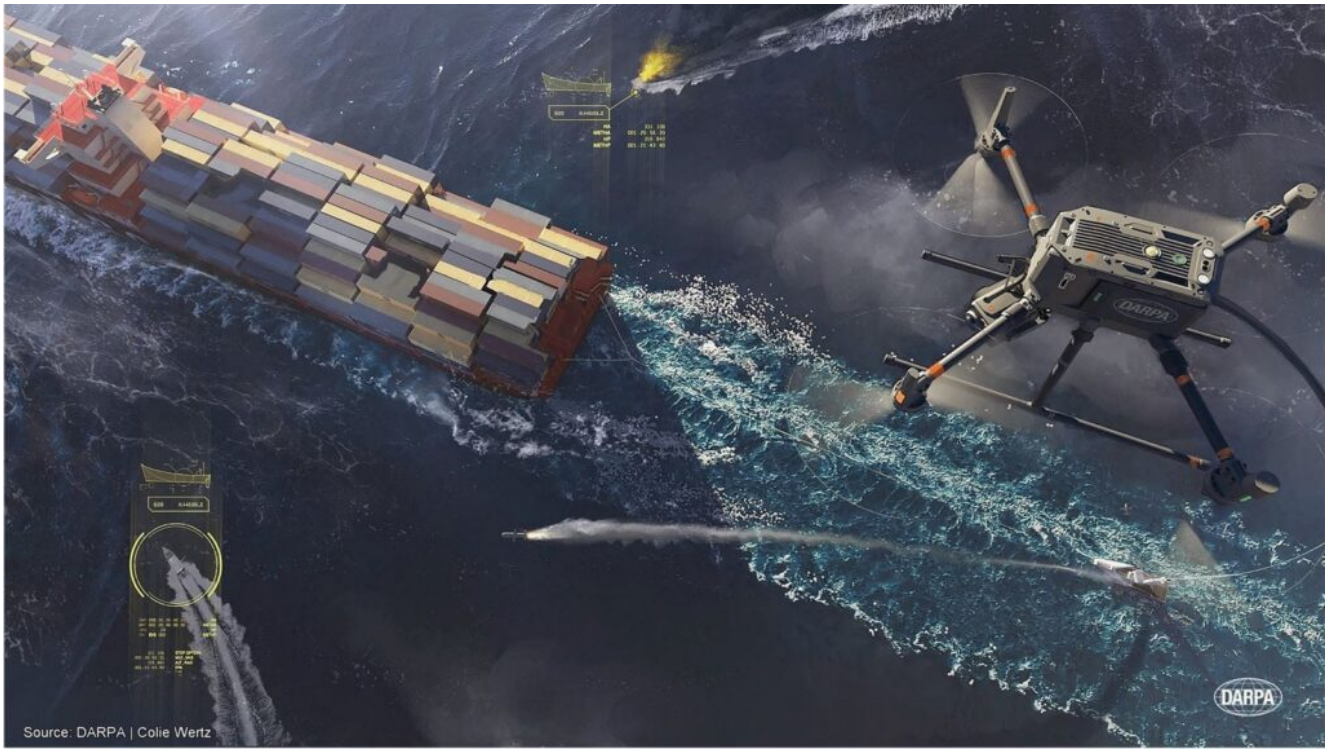
RTX’s Raytheon Selected by DARPA to Develop Advanced Maritime Defense Technologies



Release From RTX

New capability will protect vulnerable vessels from threats at sea

PORTSMOUTH, R.I., (February 2, 2026) – Raytheon, an RTX (NYSE: RTX) business, has been selected by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) to develop an advanced sensing and targeting system that will help defend vulnerable commercial shipping and naval logistics vessels against emerging threats such as unmanned surface vehicles (USVs).

Under the contract, Raytheon’s Advanced Technology team will design, build, and demonstrate a system that consists of Electro-Optical/Infrared (EO/IR) sensors, advanced detection software, and robust command and control capabilities to enhance situational awareness and threat response.

The system, which is being developed for DARPA's Pulling Guard program, will deploy the sensors via a tethered drone connected to a semi-autonomous unmanned platform that is towed by commercial and naval logistics vessels. The sensors will provide real-time target tracking data to remote operators, enabling them to make rapid, informed engagement decisions.

Phase one of the program will focus on simulated engagements to evaluate system performance and operator workflows. In phase two, the system will transition to integrating operational launchers and effectors for live operations.

"Through this development, we are advancing critical security technologies for commercial shipping in regions like the Red Sea," said Colin Whelan, president of Advanced Technology at Raytheon. "By integrating our proven expertise in command and control, high-performance sensing, and effectors, we will deliver a scalable, cost-effective solution that minimizes risks to both cargo and naval assets."

Beyond its primary focus of vulnerable ship protection, the technology Raytheon is developing has the potential to deliver broader capabilities across a wide range of naval and security operations, including automated overwatch for medium and large USVs and manned combatants operating in multiple theaters.

Transportation Secretary Sean P. Duffy Taps New Leadership for U.S. Merchant Marine

Academy

Rear Admiral (select) Tony Ceraolo & Dr. Johnathan Gajdos will lead the charge in restoring the Academy's prominence and military readiness

From the U.S. Department of Transportation, Jan. 8, 2026

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Transportation Secretary Sean P. Duffy today announced Rear Admiral (select) Tony Ceraolo as Superintendent and Dr. Johnathan Gajdos as Provost at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy. Both men bring decades of experience

in public administration, military leadership and education.

Under the leadership of President Trump and Secretary Duffy, Rear Adm. (sel) Tony Ceraolo and Dr. Gajdos are focused on restoring the Academy to an institution worthy of the sacrifices made by these young patriots and strengthening its academic programs so midshipmen are fully prepared to serve, lead, and defend our great nation.

President Trump's Executive Order on Restoring America's Maritime Dominance directed a revitalization of the Academy earlier this year. Secretary Duffy swiftly signed a partnership with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to modernize campus facilities, upgrade simulators and navigation labs, and completely overhaul the IT system. The Secretary also spearheaded the restoration of the Christ on the Water painting. These initiatives aim to ensure the Academy is attracting the best and brightest to serve as our nation's merchant mariners.

"Rear Admiral Tony Ceraolo and Dr. Johnathan Gajdos are precisely the leaders the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy needs at this critical moment—especially after the last administration neglected the Academy and its midshipmen," said **U.S. Transportation Secretary Sean P. Duffy**. "These men bring the experience, discipline, and vision required to reverse years of decline at the Academy, restore America's maritime power, and prepare the next generation of American patriots for service to our country."

"I am honored and excited to serve as the 15th Superintendent of the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy at a pivotal moment for both the Academy and our nation. With unprecedented focus, support, and momentum behind the maritime sector, this is an exciting time to lead" said **Rear Adm. (sel) Tony Ceraolo, Superintendent at U.S. Merchant Marine Academy.** "I look forward to working alongside our exceptional faculty and

staff to educate, mentor and graduate leaders of exemplary character—men and women fully prepared to advance our nation's national security, economic success, and marine transportation needs."

"When I had the opportunity for a campus visit during the selection process for this position, I was immediately impressed by the dedicated faculty, the motivated midshipmen, and the skilled staff, fully embracing the Academy's critical mission," said **Dr. Johnathan Gajdos, Provost at U.S. Merchant Marine Academy**. "As I assume the role of USMMA's Provost, I am excited to support the work of our faculty as they educate America's future merchant mariners and maritime leaders."

About Rear Adm. (sel) Tony Ceraolo:

Before joining the Academy as Chief of Staff in 2023, Rear Adm. (sel) Ceraolo spent 34 years in the U.S. Coast Guard. Prior to his retirement, he served as the Executive Assistant to the Coast Guard Deputy Commandant for Operations. Earlier in his career, he served as a Senior Counselor to the Secretary of Homeland Security where he spearheaded and coauthored DHS's first-ever Strategic Approach for Arctic Homeland Security, as well as Director for Maritime Security and Director for Arctic Region Policy on the National Security Council Staff at the White House.

His command experience includes service as Commanding Officer of two Coast Guard cutters, as well as a deployment as Commander of U.S. Coast Guard Patrol Forces Southwest Asia – the Coast Guard's largest command outside the continental United States; and, as Sector Commander and Captain of the Port for San Francisco and Northern California.

Captain Ceraolo graduated with honors from the U.S. Coast Guard Academy. He earned a Master of Public Administration from Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, and a Master of Arts with Distinction in National Security and

Strategic Studies from the U.S. Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island. He is also a graduate of the Joint Forces Staff College, a designated permanent cutterman, and an Eagle Scout.

About Dr. Johnathan Gajdos:

Prior to joining the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, Dr. Gajdos spent more than 15 years in administrative and teaching roles at the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center (DLIFLC), the primary language education and training institution for the U.S. military. Most recently, he served as Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education, where he oversaw six schools providing full-time, intensive foreign language training in nine languages.

His prior assignments at DLIFLC include serving as dean of the Persian Farsi School, academic advisor at the Institute's Washington, D.C. office, and teaching team leader and instructor in the German program (earning the DLIFLC Civilian Instructor of the Year award from the Kiwanis Club of Monterey in 2013). Dr. Gajdos has also taught at Monterey Peninsula College, the University of Iowa, and Technische Universität Dortmund, Germany.

Dr. Gajdos earned a Ph.D. and M.A. in Germanic linguistics from the University of Iowa; a Bachelor's in German from Georgetown University; and a Graduate Certificate in Public Administration from the University of North Dakota. A graduate of the Army Training and Doctrine Command Intermediate Leader Development Program, he has completed Army Management Staff College courses as well as Wharton Online's Leadership and Management Certificate program. He is a two-time recipient of the Army Civilian Service Commendation Medal and in 2025 was awarded the Army Meritorious Civilian Service Medal.

The U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, located in Kings Point, New York, educates and graduates licensed merchant mariners and

leaders of exemplary character who will serve America's marine transportation and defense needs in peace and war. The U.S. Merchant Marine Academy is administered by the Department of Transportation.

Maritime Administration Will Take Over and Streamline Deepwater Port Licensing

Release From the U.S. Department of Transportation

Accelerating deepwater port licensing will unleash American energy dominance, lower energy costs for families

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Secretary of Transportation Sean P. Duffy today announced the Maritime Administration (MARAD) will take on oversight of deepwater port licensing from the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG). This change will streamline environmental reviews, accelerate license approvals, and lower domestic energy costs.

"The Deepwater Port Program is a key pillar of President Trump's energy dominance strategy. With this change, we'll soon accelerate project approvals so the nation can safely utilize more of its abundant natural resources, create more high paying jobs, and lower energy costs for American families," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Sean P. Duffy.

"MARAD is excited and proud to lead the Deepwater Port Program. We look forward to continuing to collaborate with our partners at the U.S. Coast Guard to make this process more

efficient and fuel our energy economy for years to come," said MARAD Administrator Steve M. Carmel.

While Joe Biden and Pete Buttigieg sat on deepwater port approvals for years to appease Green New Scam radicals, the Trump Administration is in the process of approving multiple licenses in the Gulf of America. These projects will substantially increase our energy revenue and allow America to dominate the global energy market.

Additional Information:

In overseeing the licensing process, MARAD will assume National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) and environmental compliance review duties. USCG will instead support as a Cooperating Agency and will remain responsible for overseeing safety, design, construction, and operations of deepwater port facilities. This transition advances President Trump's Executive Order on Unleashing American Energy.

The Deepwater Port Act of 1974 (DWPA) establishes a licensing system for ownership, construction, operation, and decommissioning of deepwater port structures located beyond the U.S. territorial sea for the import and export of oil and natural gas. The DWPA sets out conditions that deepwater port license applicants must meet, including minimization of adverse impacts on the marine environment and submission of detailed plans for construction, operation, and decommissioning of deepwater ports.

Thirty (31) Deepwater Port License Applications have been filed for approval since 1975.

Eighteen (18) applications were filed for licenses to import liquefied natural gas (LNG);

Five (5) applications were filed to export LNG;

Six (6) applications were filed to export oil; and

Two (2) applications were filed for licenses to import oil.

Atlantic Council Launches Task Force to Bolster US Maritime Industrial Base

Task Force brings together leaders across government, industry, labor, and academia to advance a bold vision for US naval shipbuilding and maintenance

Release From the Atlantic Council

WASHINGTON, D.C. – December 16, 2025 – The Atlantic Council's Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security and its Forward Defense program announced today the launch of the Revitalizing US Shipbuilding Task Force in collaboration with the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory (JHU/APL).

Galvanized by momentum in the shipbuilding sector, the Task Force will develop actionable recommendations to strengthen US shipbuilding. It will develop novel approaches to design, construction, and sustainment, while balancing those innovative steps with proven measures to address persistent gaps across the sector.

"The United States has a highly capable Navy, but to remain competitive, it needs to modernize its shipbuilding industry," said Christine Fox, former acting deputy secretary of defense and a co-chair of the Task Force. "It is vital that the United

States regains its ability to rapidly repair and produce ships today, while simultaneously preparing to take advantage of modern technology. Only with the adoption of new technology and processes will it be able to produce new, more capable ships, rapidly and affordably."

The Revitalizing US Shipbuilding Task Force is co-chaired by Fox; Mark Esper, the 27th secretary of defense; and Kenneth Braithwaite, the 77th secretary of the Navy. It will explore, among other aspects, how the United States can:

Integrate advanced manufacturing capabilities in shipbuilding and maintenance;

Develop workforce incentives to energize the maritime industrial base; and

Evaluate the role that ally-headquartered shipbuilding firms can play in increasing US shipbuilding capacity.

Over the next twelve months, this high-level Task Force will convene a bipartisan group of senior leaders to generate practical steps that ensure the maritime industrial base can restore US naval primacy and ensure the nation can effectively compete with China in the Indo-Pacific through sustained maritime presence and power projection.

The Task Force's world-class leaders will include former government officials, private-sector executives, academics, and experts in manufacturing, acquisition, and naval operations. They will convene for the first time on Tuesday, December 16.

Task Force Members

- Doug Beck, former director of the Defense Innovation Unit

- Meredith Berger, formerly performed the duties of US under secretary of the Navy; former assistant secretary of the Navy for energy, installations, and environment

- Admiral James Foggo, US Navy (retired), former commander, United States Naval Forces Europe-Africa and Allied Joint Force Command Naples

- Admiral Lisa Franchetti, US Navy (retired), 33rd chief of naval operations

- Vice Admiral William Galinis, US Navy (retired), former commander, Naval Sea Systems Command

- Nickolas Guertin, former assistant secretary of the Navy for research, development, and acquisition

- Ellen Lord, former under secretary of defense for acquisition and sustainment

- Erik Raven, former under secretary of the Navy

- Admiral John Richardson, US Navy (retired), 31st chief of naval operations

- Russell Rumbaugh, former assistant secretary of the Navy for financial management and comptroller

- Christopher Watkins, chief mission engineering and

integration officer, Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory

Industry Task Force Members:

- George Moutafis, chief executive officer, Fincantieri Marine Group (foundational partner)
- Rear Admiral Tom Anderson, US Navy (retired), president of US shipbuilding, Hanwha Defense USA
- Nicholas Galanos, vice president, navy and maritime industrial base, C3 AI
- Hank Holland, chairman and chief executive officer, Amaero
- John Lehman, vice president of strategy, corporate development and government relations, Abyss Defense
- Rob Lehman, co-founder and chief commercial officer, Saronic Technologies
- Vice Admiral Thomas Moore, US Navy (retired), senior vice president, government relations, HII
- Danny Poisson, federal aerospace and defense chief technology officer, PTC

- Dennis Pyatt, president and chief executive officer, Element US Space & Defense
- Robert Smith, executive vice president, marine systems, General Dynamics
- Vince Stammetti, executive vice president and chief operating officer, BlueForge Alliance
- Jordan Webb, president and general manager, Colonna's Shipyard
- Brooke Weddle, senior partner, McKinsey & Company
- Austal USA representative

The Task Force is directed by Stephen Rodriguez and is managed by Mark Massa, Theresa Luetkefend, and Gabrielle Ellicott.

The lead authors will be Michael Presley and Steven Wills. This work will build on the success of the Atlantic Council's previous Commission on Software Defined Warfare, Commission on Defense Innovation Adoption, and Hypersonic Capabilities Task Force, and work in collaboration with the recently launched ReForge Commission.

More information is available on the Task Force's website. To follow its progress and receive updates, subscribe to Forward Defense. For press inquiries, please contact: press@atlanticcouncil.org.

U.S. Department of Transportation Draws Record Turnout at U.S. Merchant Marine Academy’s Industry Day

180 participants were onsite to learn about the Academy's Campus Modernization Plan and federal contracting opportunities in engineering, design, construction, and modernization services

From the U.S. Department of Transportation Office of Public Affairs

KINGS POINT, NEW YORK – The U.S. Department of Transportation drew a record turnout at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy's Industry Day, welcoming 180 participants from 90 firms to learn about the Academy's Campus Modernization Plan (CMP) and

upcoming federal contracting opportunities. President Trump's Executive Order on Restoring Maritime Dominance dedicated an entire section to the modernization of the Academy.

"Modernizing our historic campus is not just about new buildings – it's about investing in America's future and restoring our maritime dominance," said Captain Tony Ceraolo, Acting Superintendent at U.S. Merchant Marine Academy. "I'm proud to see so many great minds from the private sector coming together to want to help create a campus that will inspire innovation, make our nation more competitive, and prepare the next generation of American leaders."

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers presented the CMP and the upcoming federal contracting opportunities in engineering, design, construction, and modernization services. Participants were also given a tour of the historic campus and joined a Q&A session.

MARAD Celebrates Christening of State of Maine Vessel at Hanwha Philadelphia Shipyard

New vessel symbolizes new era of maritime dominance

From the U.S. Department of Transportation, Aug. 26, 2025

PHILADELPHIA, Pennsylvania – U.S. Maritime Administration (MARAD) today celebrated the christening of the *State of Maine*, the third of five cutting-edge National Security Multi-Mission Vessels (NSMV), at Hanwha Philly Shipyard. Built for Maine Maritime Academy, the *State of Maine* will serve as a next generation training ship, supporting both the academic development of cadets and America's humanitarian relief.

Spearheaded by the U.S. Department of Transportation and the

Maritime Administration, the NSMV program is revitalizing America's maritime training infrastructure—a cornerstone of President Trump's Executive Order on restoring maritime dominance. The program directly supports nearly 1,500 skilled jobs in Philadelphia and boosts American competitiveness at sea and ashore.

President Lee Jae Myung of the Republic of Korea, and Acting Maritime Administrator Sang Yi, shared remarks during the ceremony.

"State of Maine is more than a ship – it's a strategic investment in the people and infrastructure that keep America's maritime economy strong," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Sean P. Duffy. "Our cadets deserve cutting-edge tools and training to become the industry leaders who will keep our nation strong and ready when it matters most. Under President Donald Trump's leadership, American shipyards can and will produce more big, beautiful ships again."

"This vessel marks a new era for American maritime power," said Acting Maritime Administrator Sang Yi. "MARAD's mission to modernize sealift and empower the Merchant Marine hinges on relentless innovation and partnership. Together, we can build the fleet America needs to secure our future and dominate the seas."

"Maine Maritime Academy is internationally recognized as a leader in maritime education and this vessel represents a major step forward in our mission to train the world's finest mariners," said Maine Maritime Academy President Craig Johnson. "As our first purpose-built training ship, the State of Maine will provide world-class learning experiences for cadets pursuing unlimited tonnage licenses. It's a game-changer for our mission and a powerful reflection of what's possible through strong partnerships and shared vision."

Additional Information:

MARAD is replacing aging training vessels from the National Defense Reserve Fleet with new, purpose-built ships designed to meet modern academy needs—and to provide critical capabilities for disaster response and national emergencies.

Stretching 525 feet long, a single NSMV can accommodate 600 cadets and up to 1,000 people in times of humanitarian need. These vessels boast eight classrooms, cutting-edge labs, a training bridge, auditorium, helicopter pad, advanced medical facilities, and roll-on/roll-off and container capacity—ensuring cadets get unmatched hands-on training.

State of Maine joins *Empire State* and *Patriot State* already in service, with two more NSMVs under construction at Hanwha Philly Shipyard, destined for Texas and California maritime academies.

NSMV Key Specs:

- Length: 525’ 1”
- Design Draft: 21’ 4”
- Breadth: 88’ 7”
- Depth: 55’ 1.5”
- Speed: 18 knots
- Deadweight: 8,487 MT

HASC Marks National Defense Authorization Bill

Edited by Richard R. Burgess, Senior Editor

Arlington, Va. – The House Armed Services Committee (HASC) filed the bill for the 2026 National Defense Authorization Act, the bill's leaders, Committee Chairman Sen. Roger Wicker (R-Miss.) and Sen. Jack Reed (D- R.I.) announced in a July 16 release.

Some announced naval-related provisions are listed below:

- Authorizes procurement for not more than five Columbia-class submarines.

- Authorizes a block buy of up to 15 Medium Landing Ships (LSM) to support testing and experimentation of the Marine Littoral Regiment formation.

- Limits funding for TAGOS Ship unless the Secretary of the Navy provides information on the Navy's management of the program and an assessment of alternative solutions for the mission.

- Requires the Navy, in implementing the Medium Landing Ship and Light Replenishment Oiler programs, to utilize a Vessel Construction Manager (VCM) acquisition strategy, employing commercial design standards, construction practices, and an external entity to

contract for construction.

- Exempts unmanned surface vessels and unmanned underwater vehicles from the Senior Technical Authority requirement and limits certain technical requirements from the Chief Engineer of the Naval Sea Systems Command without prior approval of the program manager.

- Modifies certification requirements of operational demonstrations for propulsion and electrical systems of large and medium unmanned surface vessels to increase industrial base participation.

- Limits funding to certain Navy-developed software for autonomy and command and control of unmanned surface vessels.

- Directs a briefing to the congressional defense committees to prioritize innovative, commercially driven solutions to deliver a scalable medium unmanned surface vessel (MUSV) capability that meets the urgent needs of the fleet while fostering a competitive industrial base.

- Requires the Navy to move leadership for conventional surface ship maintenance to the Type Commanders, delegates decision-making authority to project managers, port engineers, and ship commanding officers, and directs a new contracting strategy that emphasizes workload stability and collaborative planning.

- Requires the Navy to investigate, and where feasible

qualify and fully integrate, 23 advanced technologies and processes into Navy surface ship readiness.

- Supports amphibious warship production and readiness by limiting funding of the Secretary of the Navy and the Secretary of Defense if the 30-year shipbuilding plan does not comply with the statutory requirement for 31 amphibious ships, 15 defines “temporarily unavailable” within the 31 amphibious ship requirements, and requires a plan to maintain and extend the service lives of amphibious ships

- Requires DOD to develop a comprehensive plan to establish a government-controlled open mission systems computing environment for all variants and blocks of the F–35 aircraft operated by the DOD.

- Directs the Navy and Air Force to conduct a comparative study, independent of the air vehicle manufacturer, on the two propeller systems on the C-130J platform.

- Accelerates development of the nuclear-armed sea-launched cruise missile and creates a supplementary parallel pathway for rapid fielding.

- Strongly encourages the Secretary of Defense to invite the naval forces of Taiwan to the Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) exercise, as appropriate, and requires a notification and justification if the Secretary chooses not to do so.

- Requires the Navy to develop options for two sources of

domestic solid rocket motors in the Navy Modular Missile program.

- Directs a briefing on opportunities for the Irregular Warfare Technical Support Directorate to complement innovation efforts by Naval Special Warfare Command for research, experimentation, and prototyping of unmanned maritime vessels.

- Authorizes personnel end strength for the active component at 344,600 for the Navy; 172,300 for the Marine Corps; 57,500 for the Navy Reserve; 33,600 for the Marine Corps Reserve; and 7,000 for the Coast Guard Reserve.

Read the FY26 NDAA Bill Language.

Read the FY26 NDAA Executive Summary.

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.

Trump's MARAD Pick Signals Commercial Maritime Focus

ARLINGTON, Va. — President Donald Trump's decision to nominate former Maersk executive Stephen Carmel to lead the Maritime Administration, replacing retired Navy submarine commander

Brent Sadler as the nominee, signals a strategic pivot toward commercial maritime expertise as the administration pursues its ambitious shipbuilding revival agenda.

The nominee switch reflects the administration's belief that rebuilding America's maritime industrial base requires deep industry experience rather than purely military credentials. Carmel's four decades in commercial shipping – from tanker captain to corporate executive – align with Trump's emphasis on taking a business approach to maritime challenges.

From Bridge to Boardroom

Carmel brings a rare combination of operational and executive experience to MARAD. A 1979 graduate of the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, he achieved his first command – a 40,000-ton clean product tanker – at age 26, according to his biography at the academy where he now serves on the Board of Visitors.

"Steve began his career sailing as a deck officer and Master primarily on tankers for Maritime Overseas Corporation and Military Sealift Command," his USMMA biography states, before transitioning to corporate roles at Maersk Line Limited, where he served as senior vice president for maritime services.

Currently president of U.S. Marine Management LLC, Carmel was a Ph.D. candidate at Old Dominion University.

The Trump Administration's April executive order establishing a Maritime Action Plan emphasized commercial competitiveness over traditional military-centered thinking. A fact sheet on the White House website claims that 0.2% of the world's ships are built by the United States, compared to 74% built by China.

Carmel's experience with Maersk Line Limited – a major participant in the Maritime Security Program – provides some insight into the public-private partnerships the administration seeks to expand. His corporate background

appears to be seen as a plug as the administration focuses on expanding the U.S.-flag fleet for both international and domestic trade, and as MARAD implements new initiatives including the Maritime Security Trust Fund and Maritime Prosperity Zones.

“Steve knows maritime, he knows the American Flag, and he sailed commercially in the U.S. Merchant Marine,” said Dredging Contractors of America CEO William Doyle in supporting the nomination.

Carmel’s selection follows the administration’s pattern of choosing industry veterans for key maritime positions, including the creation of a new Office of Maritime and Industrial Capacity at the National Security Council. This approach contrasts with previous administrations’ emphasis on military appointees for these types of roles.

If confirmed, Carmel would become the first MARAD administrator since 2005 to hold a Master’s Unlimited license, underscoring the administration’s preference for hands-on maritime experience.

His advisory experience on the Chief of Naval Operations Executive Panel and Naval Studies Board provides some additional government experience, potentially easing coordination between defense and transportation maritime programs.

Implementation Challenges Ahead

The nominee inherits a MARAD facing significant personnel challenges, with approximately 12% of authorized positions vacant, according to recent reports. If confirmed, he will be a key figure in Trump’s ambitious maritime agenda, including expanded shipbuilding incentives and Arctic strategy development.

Carmel has corporate experience managing profit-and-loss

responsibility for complex vessel operations, which may be helpful as MARAD balances expanded responsibilities with constrained resources.

The Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Technology will consider Carmel's nomination as the administration pushes to implement its Maritime Action Plan. With Trump promising to "resurrect the American shipbuilding industry," Carmel's confirmation could signal a new commercial-first era in the U.S. maritime industry.

Sea-Air-Space: TRANSCOM Chief Touts Navy, Merchant Marine Cooperation

Air Force General Randall Reed, commander of U.S. Transportation Command, discussed the strength of the Navy-Merchant Marine connection on April 8. *Photo credit: Dan Goodrich*

Air Force General Randall Reed, commander of U.S. Transportation Command, walked attendees at the Navy League Luncheon on April 8 through a history lesson of national and international conflicts to show the importance of the team of the U.S. Navy and Merchant Marine.

As a boy growing up in the Hampton Roads, Virginia, area, he would ride his bicycle to the historic Fort Grove and watch commercial ships sail by, followed by gray Navy ships from Norfolk Naval Base.

“The inextricable link between Navy combatants and our commercial Merchant Marine, the combination of those two makes our country great and that is what also makes TRANSCOM great,”

he said.

Throughout American history, the Navy, often at incredible odds, has made the waterways safe so merchant ships could carry supplies. Some of the historical issues are familiar to the audience at Sea-Air-Space, Reed said.

During this year's conference, "We've talked about trouble with shipbuilding, we've talked about supply chains, we've talked about contested logistics, long distances. And the next fight we have coming up, there's this thing about blockades we have to consider. We have very capable adversaries with very large fleets. There's a need for shallow draft ships and we have to get the mission done for sustainment. If this isn't enough to keep you up at night, then you probably miss the fact that I'm not talking about today. I'm actually talking about the challenges that we had during the Revolutionary War," Reed said.

"And the message here, ladies and gentlemen, is we've been here before, and during that time we had just as much uncertainty."

Lessons from other periods in history are also still relevant, Reed said, such as during the War of 1812, when the U.S. Navy swept away threats on the water, in this case Lake Eerie, so the Merchant Marine could supply the front lines from behind.

"So, in this case, once again, it's the Navy being able to fight, set the conditions to get some kind of sea control, to allow the Merchant Marine to provide the sustainment that's needed for the rest of the force."

That carried on through two world wars, and especially World War II, when the Merchant Marine was called upon to perform sustainment heroics, at great cost to its ships and crews.

"And with that, we became the nation that the world needed us to be, to have great influence to partner with allies,

partners and friends, in order to create a period of peace for the last 80 years that has delivered for all of us, I'm told, economic prosperity that the world has never seen," Reed said. "And so with that, I want to take a moment to pause and say the combination of the Navy and the Merchant Marine at that time was really incredible and actually changed the world."

Going forward, Reed said sustainment is still the "name of the game," only now it's contested by groups such as the Houthi rebels from Yemen who don't have to have a lot in the way of resources.

The Merchant Marine needs newer ships and better equipment, Reed said, and he's been telling that to supportive members of the U.S. House and Senate.

"I'm telling them that the ages of our ships right now are way too old, and we need to get younger ships and I'll take them however I can get them. But the main thing is, it's not necessarily for the ships and the platforms, it's also for the proof force because we have a very capable proof force and they need the best in the biggest equipment that we can absolutely get for them."

This was brought home to him during a recent visit to the Merchant Marine Academy in Kings Point, New York, Reed said. There, he witnessed 14 cadets receiving expeditionary medals from the secretary of transportation, a scene he said nearly brought him to tears.

"Think about that. Expeditionary medals on a cadet because as part of their education they take to sea, and these cadets have actually seen combat. They've actually been in harm's way. They were actually telling us stories of what it's like to sail past Yemen and watch things go over their head or to watch the Navy actually engage targets to protect them. And they were not afraid. In fact, they were ready to go back for more. And so, ladies and gentlemen, we need to do this for

them.”

Medal of Honor winner Edward C. Byers Jr. was awarded the Admiral Arleigh Burke Leadership Award.
Photo Credit: Dan Goodrich

Awards

Following the lunch, the annual Navy League Awards were presented:

- The Admiral Vern Clark Individual Award went to Angelo Owens, the safety and occupational health division director at the Fleet Readiness Center East.
- The Admiral Vern Clark Unit Safety Award went to Airborne Command & Control (VAW) 117 Wallbangers.
- The General James L. Jones Individual Award went to

Deputy Chief Ryan Tworek at Marine Corps Logistics Base Barstow, California.

- The General James L. Jones Unit Safety Award went to Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, California.
- The Albert A. Michelson Award went to Robert Taylor of Bardex Corp.
- The Fleet Chester W. Nimitz Award went to Robert “Scott” Forney III of General Atomics Electromagnetic Systems.
- The Admiral Arleigh Burke Leadership Award went to Master Chief Special Warfare Operator (SEAL) Edward C. Byers Jr., U.S. Navy, retired.

“I really do look out at this room and I see the fabric of America, the threads that hold our nation together during our most precious times” Byers said upon accepting the award.