

Secretary of the Navy Advances Maritime Statecraft in Copenhagen

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Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro visited A.P. Moller-Maersk during a trip to the Kingdom of Denmark last week. During the visit, he met with A.P. Moller-Maersk CEO Vincent Clerc, and stated that the U.S. Navy would continue to protect commercial ships and mariners against unprovoked Houthi attacks on civilian shipping in the Red Sea.

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The visit reflects ongoing efforts to renew the foundations of American seapower, since Secretary Del Toro announced his new maritime statecraft initiative at the Harvard Kennedy School on Sept. 26, 2023.

“With some of the world’s most technologically advanced shipbuilders already heeding our call to invest in integrated commercial and naval shipbuilding facilities in the United States, the next step in our maritime statecraft strategy is to attract the world’s foremost commercial shipping firms to signal their demand for new ships built in American shipyards,” Secretary Del Toro said.

In a more recent speech to the Naval War College on Aug. 8, Secretary Del Toro explained that “long-term solutions to many of the Navy’s challenges require we renew the health of our nation’s broader seapower ecosystem.” He added “Making naval shipbuilding more cost effective requires we restore the competitiveness of U.S. commercial shipping and shipbuilding.”

Secretary Del Toro’s visit follows months of collaboration with interagency partners – such as the U.S. Department of Energy and U.S. Department of Transportation Maritime Administration – and Congress to find innovative ways to leverage existing authorities and craft new incentives to build and flag commercial ships in the United States. For example, the Department of Energy’s Title 17 Clean Energy Financing program now permits the U.S. Government to offer low-interest loans for U.S.-built dual-fuel commercial ships. “Our calculus is that bringing a larger portion of the newbuild orderbooks of the world’s biggest shipping firms to American shores in the coming years will offer significant returns to Navy shipbuilding and sealift.”

Managed by the U.S. Maritime Administration, the Maritime Security Program (MSP) maintains a fleet of commercially viable, militarily useful U.S.-flagged merchant ships in international trade to support military sealift requirements during times of conflict or in other national emergencies.

Secretary Del Toro said he and his team were looking forward to continuing discussions with the leadership of A.P. Moller-Maersk on their next visit to the United States in the coming weeks.