



SUPPORT

THE TANKER SECURITY PROGRAM

“While previous mitigation strategies relied on the use of foreign flag tankers to meet large scale contingency demands, today’s environment may require a different approachas our mobility analysis continues to refine requirements, a 10-tanker program will be a welcome start to begin to address the gap in U.S.-flagged bulk fuel delivery.” **Lieutenant General John Broadmeadow Deputy Commander, United States Transportation Command (2019)**

OBJECTIVE

To achieve full Fiscal Year 2025 funding for the Tanker Security Program (MSP) at its Congressionally authorized level.

America’s maritime industry is experiencing a dangerous decline in the number of vessels operating under the U.S. flag and, consequently, in the number of trained and qualified American merchant mariners available to crew the surge and sustainment vessels needed by the Department of Defense to protect America’s interests and to support American troops deployed around the world. We believe Congress should take immediate action to increase the number of commercial vessels operating under the U.S. flag to increase the shipboard employment opportunities for American mariners by providing full funding for the new Tanker Security Program. Absent such action, we as a nation will not only experience the continued outsourcing of American maritime jobs to the benefit of foreign maritime personnel but will also be forced to entrust a greater portion of the requisite commercial sealift readiness capability needed by the Department of Defense,

along with the safety and supply of American troops, to foreign flag of convenience vessels and their foreign citizen crews.

BACKGROUND

“[the] Department of Defense faces a gap of approximately 76 fuel tankers to meet surge sealift requirements. A Tanker Security Program would be a rapid and cost-effective means to help address this gap . . .” **Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessment Strengthening the U.S. Defense Maritime Industrial Base (2020)**

The FY21 National Defense Authorization Act established a 10-vessel, Tanker Security Program with an authorized funding level of \$60 million for Fiscal Year 2022. This Program, modeled after the Maritime Security Program, would more than double the number of U.S.-flag, U.S.-crewed privately-owned petroleum product tankers available to support the U.S. military, and would do so at a very modest cost to the government.

The TSP is critically and strategically important to begin reversing a major vulnerability in our military surge and sealift capabilities and the sustainment of logistics support in any long-term military engagement. Further, as a result of the shortage of U.S. flag tankers operating internationally, delivery of strategically important fuel to U.S. defense installations by foreign-owned and crewed petroleum product tankers whose loyalties and vulnerability to influence against U.S. interests during any conflict create risks unacceptable to our national security. The TSP will immediately begin closing this vulnerability gap by significantly expanding our U.S.-flag tanker fleet and creating approximately 500 new jobs for American mariners. This is a major step in the right direction although still far short of meeting the identified need for U.S.-flag tanker capability.

Consequently, Congress, through the FY’23 National Defense Authorization legislation expanded the Tanker Security Program to include 20 U.S.-flag, U.S. crewed petroleum product tankers, with an authorization of \$120 million for FY’ 25.

From Desert Storm to Bosnia, from Afghanistan to Operation Iraqi Freedom, America’s Merchant Mariners continue to serve on the leading edge of our defense transportation system, carrying the combat equipment and supplies needed by our joint warfighters. To carry that logistics power to the fight, we have always relied on our Merchant Marine. And they have always answered the call. Despite the dangers and long separations from home, our U.S. Merchant Marine has sailed in

harm's way time and time again to make sure that American warfighters and our allies have had the supplies they need to overwhelm our adversaries.” **Rear Admiral Dee Mewbourne, Commander, Military Sealift Command (2018)**

We ask all Members of Congress to urge the Committee on Appropriations to provide full funding for the Tanker Security Program at its Congressionally authorized level for FY'25.

April 10, 2024