

# America's Maritime Action Plan: Policy Overview and Key Measures

Hiroyuki Yamagami, Japan International Transport and Tourism Institute, USA

Yosuke Yamashita, Japan International Transport and Tourism Institute, USA

## 1. Introduction

On February 13, 2026, the U.S. government released the Maritime Action Plan (MAP) <sup>1)</sup> through a joint announcement by the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs (APNSA) and the Director of the Office of Management and Budget. The MAP outlines a comprehensive strategy aimed at revitalizing the U.S. maritime sector and strengthening its long-term resilience.

The plan was developed pursuant to the April 2025 Executive Order titled “Restoring America’s Maritime Dominance.” <sup>2)</sup> The Executive Order directed the U.S. government to formulate concrete policy measures to rebuild the country’s maritime industrial base, which policymakers increasingly view as a critical component of both national security and economic security.

The MAP contains several policy proposals that could significantly affect global shipping markets and U.S. trading partners. These include:

- the introduction of a universal fee on foreign-built vessels calling at U.S. ports,
- the establishment of cargo preference requirements favoring U.S. vessels, and
- expanded support for U.S. shipbuilding and maritime workforce development.

At the same time, the plan emphasizes the adoption of advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence and automation in shipbuilding, as well as the development of Arctic shipping routes. These initiatives also create potential areas for U.S.–allied cooperation, including with Japan.

This paper provides a preliminary overview of the MAP and analyzes its major policy components.

## 2. Overview of the Maritime Action Plan (MAP)

### 2.1 Policy Background

The MAP originates from the April 2025 Executive Order “Restoring America’s Maritime Dominance.” The order tasked the APNSA with developing the MAP and instructed the Director of the Office of Management and Budget to evaluate legislative, regulatory, and fiscal measures necessary for its implementation.

Relevant cabinet members—including the Department Secretaries of Transportation, Commerce, and Defense—were also directed to submit policy recommendations to be incorporated into the plan.

Although the Executive Order required the MAP to be completed within 210 days, the final release occurred significantly later.

### 2.2 Structure of the Plan

The MAP is organized around four strategic pillars, each containing multiple policy initiatives.

1. Rebuilding U.S. Shipbuilding Capacity
2. Reforming Maritime Workforce Development
3. Protecting the Maritime Industrial Base
4. Strengthening National Security, Economic Security, and Industrial Resilience

In addition to these pillars, the plan proposes several regulatory reforms and legislative initiatives that will likely require congressional action.

While the pillars are conceptually distinct, many of the proposed measures are interconnected and address overlapping policy objectives.

### 3. Key Policy Objectives

The MAP is based on the assessment that the United States currently lacks sufficient shipbuilding capacity and merchant shipping capability to respond effectively during national emergencies or major conflicts.

Accordingly, the plan aims to:

- rebuild domestic shipbuilding capacity,
- increase the number of U.S.-flagged vessels engaged in international trade,
- expand the pool of qualified U.S. seafarers, and
- strengthen maritime supply chains and industrial resilience.

The following sections summarize the main policy measures.

## 4. Shipbuilding Policy

### 4.1 Creating Stable Demand for U.S.-Built Ships

A central objective of the MAP is to create stable and predictable demand for U.S.-built vessels, thereby encouraging private investment in domestic shipyards.

Several policy tools are proposed, including:

- reforming procurement practices for government vessels such as naval ships and Coast Guard cutters,
- establishing a Strategic Commercial Fleet (SCF) composed of U.S.-built and U.S.-flagged vessels,
- introducing regulatory measures that increase demand for domestically built ships, and
- expanding financial and tax incentives for shipyard investment.

One of the most notable proposals is the introduction of a universal fee on foreign-built vessels entering U.S. ports, calculated based on the weight of imported cargo. Revenue from this measure would partially finance a newly established Maritime Security Trust Fund intended to support maritime industry programs.

### 4.2 Encouraging Allied Investment

The MAP also seeks to promote investment in U.S. shipyards by allied countries.

Recent trade negotiations with Japan and South Korea have identified shipbuilding investment as a potential area of cooperation. The plan also proposes a “bridge strategy,” under which vessels may initially be built in foreign shipyards while investment is made in U.S. shipbuilding capacity, with the long-term objective of transitioning production to the United States.

This approach appears to be modeled in part on U.S.–Finnish cooperation on icebreaker construction.<sup>3)</sup>

### 4.3 Strengthening the Shipbuilding Supply Chain

In addition to shipyard investment, the MAP emphasizes the need to strengthen domestic supply chains for ship components.

The plan highlights vulnerabilities in the U.S. shipbuilding supply chain—including dependence on single suppliers—as a major contributor to delays and cost overruns in naval shipbuilding programs. Measures include:

- expanding domestic production of critical components, and
- diversifying suppliers.

### 4.4 Technological Innovation

The MAP promotes the adoption of advanced technologies in shipbuilding, including:

- artificial intelligence,
- robotics,
- automation, and
- digital manufacturing technologies.

The plan also calls for expanded investment in autonomous and robotic maritime systems, which are expected to play a growing role in future maritime operations.

## 5. Shipping Policy

### 5.1 Expanding the U.S.-Flagged Fleet

Another major objective of the MAP is to increase the number of U.S.-flagged vessels engaged in international trade.

The centerpiece of this effort is the proposed Strategic

Commercial Fleet (SCF). Under this program:

- vessels must be both U.S.-built and U.S.-flagged,
- operators receive subsidies covering both construction and operating costs, and
- the fleet could expand to up to 250 vessels over ten years.

This proposal closely aligns with provisions in the SHIPS for America Act currently under consideration in Congress.

The SCF differs from existing programs such as the Maritime Security Program (MSP) and Tanker Security Program (TSP), which only provide operating subsidies and do not require vessels to be built in the United States. It also calls for measures to streamline reflagging and equivalency reviews.

## 5.2 Cargo Preference Policies

The MAP also proposes expanding cargo preference requirements. Specifically, the plan calls for:

- increasing the share of government cargo transported by U.S.-flagged vessels, and
- introducing usage requirements for U.S. vessels in containerized imports.

The precise definition of “U.S. vessels” in this context remains unclear and may become an important issue in future policy debates.

## 5.3 Maritime Workforce Development

A substantial portion of the MAP is dedicated to addressing shortages of qualified seafarers. Proposed measures include:

- expanding maritime education institutions and financial support for students,
- ~~reforming~~ streamlining licensing and credentialing systems, and
- improving working conditions and career incentives for seafarers.

The plan also emphasizes coordination between federal agencies, educational institutions, and the private sector.

## 6. Arctic Maritime Strategy

The MAP incorporates an Arctic Maritime Security

Strategy, reflecting the growing strategic importance of the Arctic.

Key objectives include:

- strengthening U.S. presence in the Arctic region,
- expanding icebreaking capabilities,
- improving maritime domain awareness,
- ensuring freedom of navigation, and
- securing access to Arctic energy and mineral resources.

The strategy also highlights cooperation with Arctic allies in maintaining regional security.

## 7. Legislative Outlook

Many of the measures proposed in the MAP will require congressional authorization or appropriations.

The administration is expected to submit legislative proposals to Congress alongside the FY2027 federal budget request.

Unlike Japan, the U.S. executive branch does not possess formal authority to introduce legislation directly. As a result, implementation will depend heavily on the legislative process.

## 8. Conclusion

Efforts to revitalize the U.S. maritime sector have already had significant impact on international shipping markets, including recent actions taken under Section 301 of the Trade Act.

The MAP aims to introduce policies designed to increase demand for US-built vessels. However, some of these measures—such as fees on foreign-built vessels and expanded cargo preference requirements—could increase costs for international shipping and potentially the cost of living in the U.S.

The International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) has already expressed concerns that such measures may raise transportation costs and ultimately increase prices for U.S. consumers.<sup>4)</sup>

At the same time, the MAP provides greater clarity regarding the challenges facing the U.S. maritime industry.

Several of these challenges—particularly workforce development and the adoption of advanced technologies in shipbuilding—are shared by both the United States and Japan.

These areas have already been identified as areas of cooperation in the U.S.–Japan Memorandum of Cooperation on Shipbuilding signed in October 2025.<sup>5)</sup> Strengthening bilateral cooperation in these fields could contribute to both countries’ maritime industries and broader strategic partnership.

Because many details of the MAP remain unclear and key measures will require congressional action, continued monitoring of legislative developments and regulatory implementation will be essential.

## References

- 1) White House, America’s Maritime Action Plan  
<https://www.whitehouse.gov/maritimemight/>
- 2) White House, Restoring America’s Maritime Dominance  
<https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/04/restoring-americas-maritime-dominance/>
- 3) White House, Fact Sheet: President Donald J. Trump Authorizes Construction of Arctic Security Cutters  
<https://www.whitehouse.gov/fact-sheets/2025/10/fact-sheet-president-donald-j-trump-authorizes-construction-of-arctic-security-cutters/>
- 4) ICS, ICS response to the Maritime Action Plan  
<https://www.ics-shipping.org/statement/ics-response-to-the-maritime-action-plan/>
- 5) Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, MEMORANDUM OF COOPERATION Regarding Shipbuilding Between the Government of Japan and the Government of the United States of America  
<https://www.mlit.go.jp/report/press/content/001966582.pdf>