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The Day: EB seeking approval for first conversion projects at former Crystal Mall

By Jack Lakowsky, Day Staff Writer, May 18, 2026

Waterford — Electric Boat, the new owner of the former Crystal Mall property, is awaiting state traffic approval tied to its renovation project and is seeking town approval to approve conversions of old anchor stores into training centers.

EB wants to renovate the former Bed Bath & Beyond and Sears stores, according to Planning Director Mark Wujtewicz, who said he meets with EB officials weekly. The submarine maker has also applied for a building permit from the town.

Wujtewicz said last week the company seeks approval for "selective demolition" and conversions of the two former retailers. The Sears space would be made into permanent workforce training facility, while the shell of the Bed Bath & Beyond will be made into a temporary workforce training center.

"It would just be limited to this work," Wujtewicz said.

Wujtewicz said the company's conversion of the former mall, which officially closed its doors at the end of March after 40 years in business, is proceeding on schedule. He added that EB's purchase means the town has to rework its own long-term development plans and must abandon its vision of a mixed-use, business and residential operation.

EB purchased the mall property last year after pressure from the U.S. Navy to deliver submarines.

Moving some workers to Waterford would free up space in the Groton shipyard, which can’t expand because it has the Thames River on one side and neighborhoods on the other.

The Groton shipyard could then focus more on building submarines.

The company plans to begin renovating the mall as offices for its engineering, training and software development departments. It invested a total of $42.4 million to acquire the mall property.

Opened in 1984, the mall was once a busy regional destination where people could shop, eat and meet friends. Employees had to park at the Waterford Speedbowl during the Christmas season because every space had to be reserved for customers. In 2010, 140 stores occupied the once-bustling mall.

When the full transformation is complete, EB will occupy 542,000 square feet of space along Route 85.

In addition to the professional and business offices proposed, EB will use the building to house 50 classrooms for training and workforce development. Beginning in 2027, the company expects to employ up to 5,000 people on the 83-acre property, about 55 acres of which are developed.

The company plans to make changes to the Route 85 on- and off-ramps from I-95 to handle the increased traffic. EB Director of Communications and Public Affairs Myra Lee said she was not aware Monday whether the state had made a decision yet on a traffic permit for the project.

EB, which employs more than 24,000 workers in Groton, New London and North Kingstown, R.I.

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The Day: Buckeye Terminal in Groton fails to secure $11M in federal funding.

By Greg Smith, Day Staff Writer, **Updated:** May 20, 2026

Groton — Buckeye terminal, a major diesel and home heating oil storage and distribution site on Eastern Point Road, has tried and failed to obtain more than $11 million in federal funds to ensure its continued operation here.

Buckeye Partners' proposed infrastructure upgrade plan was not among among the 37 projects awarded $774 million in grants through the federal **Department of Transportation's U.S. Maritime Administration Port Infrastructure Development Program**, according to a recent announcement from U.S. Transportation Secretary Sean P. Duffy.

The Connecticut Port Authority, which applied for the grant on behalf of Buckeye last year, is now in talks with Buckeye officials about whether to reapply for another round of grants. The deadline for the new grant application is June 1.

Port Authority Executive Director Michael O'Connor said he is poised to call for a special meeting of the port authority's board of directors as early as next week to approve another memorandum of understanding with Buckeye to get that application submitted.

Buckeye announced in April 2025 that it was "evaluating the long-term viability" of its fuel terminal, which led to concerns about the impact of a possible closure. The company has continued operations since that time.

“Buckeye Partners ... continues to evaluate operations across its network, including the Groton terminal, as part of our routine process to ensure we are operating efficiently and meeting customer and market needs," Buckeye said in a statement on Tuesday.

The 17-acre Groton facility, purchased by Buckeye Partners from Hess Corp. in 2013, is one in a national network of more than 130 liquidpetroleum terminals.

“We are in continued dialogue with the Connecticut Port Authority and other stakeholders to assess potential paths forward, including reapplying for federal funding and other opportunities that could support the long-term viability of the terminal. At this time, our evaluation is ongoing, and we have not made any determinations regarding changes to operations," the statement reads.

O'Connor said the terminal is a regional asset that supplies more than 100,000 gallons of diesel to local ferries every week during the busy season.

"There is a strong interest in keeping the facility in service. We will do what we can to maintain the facility to keep fuel costs low, keep the product in the sea lanes and not on the highways," O'Connor said.

The closing of the facility, O'Connor said, would inevitably lead to a major uptick in fuel trucks on the region's roadways. The Groton terminal is one of the federal Northeast Home Heating Oil Reserve storage sites.

Groton City Mayor Jill Rusk said while she was disappointed Buckeye did not secure funding on its first attempt, she was encouraged by the possibility of a new round of grant funds.

"The Buckeye terminal is an important part of southeastern Connecticut’s fuel infrastructure and the only fuel terminal in the region. Its closure could lead to higher fuel and heating costs for residents and businesses, particularly with upcoming construction impacts on the Gold Star Bridge," Rusk said.

Closure of the site, Rusk said, could create significant environmental remediation and redevelopment challenges in the future.

State Sen. Heather Somers, R-18th District, in a statement, said “funding Buckeye Terminal in Groton is no longer simply an option; it is essential to the energy security and economic stability of Southeastern Connecticut. I urge the federal government and members of our congressional delegation to make this project an immediate priority."

"Over the past year, we have continued to see global conflict and rising costs place enormous pressure on working families, seniors, small businesses, fishermen, and regional transportation services that depend on reliable fuel access. Without Buckeye Terminal serving our region, distributors will be forced to travel to Providence or New Haven for supply, increasing transportation and operational costs that will inevitably be passed down to consumers," she said.

Somers said she has been meeting with Buckeye officials since last summer to express her concerns and to work collaboratively toward a solution. She said she plans to support the effort to obtain a grant in any way possible. She urged her colleagues "at every level of government, including Governor Lamont," to work together to ensure the terminal remains operational.

State Rep. Aundré Bumgardner, D-41st District, said the terminal's future should be viewed not only through the lens of today's fuel economy, "but through the broader responsibility to maintain Groton's working waterfront and critical energy systems."

"Its location also matters. The terminal sits along a vital section of southeastern Connecticut's deep water port network tied to the Thames River, State Pier, regional transportation corridors and the broader shipbuilding and defense economy that supports thousands of jobs across our region," he said in a statement.

Bumgardner said if ownership changes are ever contemplated, there needs to be discussion surrounding the public interest value of "retaining key waterfront assets and industrial capacity for future generations."

Buckeye's application for federal funds envisions a roughly $14 million infrastructure upgrade project that includes work on an aging dock. O'Connor said the application was well received but was competing against 200 applicants seeking $3 billion worth of funds for projects across the U.S. Feedback from the maritime administration over the past few weeks will help in the second grant application, O'Connor said.

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The Day: National Maritime Day ceremony honors merchant mariners

By Kimberly Drelich, Day Staff Writer, May 22, 2026

New London — Mariners, veterans, community members and officials gathered Friday at the World War II Merchant Marine Memorial on the Fort Trumbull peninsula to honor merchant mariners and the community’s maritime ties.

The National Maritime Day ceremony was hosted by the Connecticut Shoreline Chapter of the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy Alumni Association and Foundation.

Harold Haugeto, the chapter's treasurer and a graduate of the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy in Kings Point, N.Y., said New London is forever linked to national maritime history. Moses Rogers, the captain of the S.S. Savannah, the first steamship to conduct a trans-Atlantic voyage, was from New London. The vessel set out from Savannah, Ga., on May 22, 1819, for Liverpool, England.

In 1933, Congress declared May 22 as National Maritime Day.

Fort Trumbull was also the site of the former Maritime Service Officers' Training School. After World War II, the officers school and several others around the country were consolidated into the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, said Haugeto, the main organizer of the event.

"In celebrating National Maritime Day, I think it's fitting that we recognize a group of heroes that are too often forgotten in our history books: the American merchant mariners," said state Sen. Heather Somers, R-18th District. She was at the ceremony with her father, Roger Sherman, who attended the New York State Merchant Marine Academy at Fort Schuyler.

Somers said that while merchant mariners don't always wear the uniform of a solider, sailor, airman or marine, they serve on the front lines of war just the same.

"They carried the fuel, the ammunition, the food, the medicine, the equipment and supplies that kept America fighting and kept freedom alive around the world," Somers said.

During World War II, the merchant marines suffered one of the highest casualty rates of any service, and thousands never came home, she said.

Somers said that although for decades many merchant mariners received little or no recognition, that is starting to change.

Kyle Knickerbocker, regional vice president for Region 4 of the American Merchant Marine Veterans and a co-organizer of Friday's event, said the annual observance honors the service and sacrifice of U.S. merchant mariners, particularly those who served during World War II.

More than 30 people attended the ceremony, including New London Mayor Michael Passero.

Knickerbocker said during the ceremony that as he looked at the Merchant Marine flag, he was reminded that for generations, “the service has too often gone unseen, and yet without them our nation simply cannot function.”

The Merchant Marine dates to 1775 and has been instrumental in almost every conflict since the United States’ founding.

Haugeto, who is the senior director of lead ship delivery at General Dynamics Electric Boat, spoke about the growth at Electric Boat, which has a goal of hiring 8,000 people this year and has been expanding its footprint in Rhode Island and Connecticut. He acknowledged the many Kings Point alumni who work at Electric Boat.

Tom Maher, a Kings Point graduate, read aloud a presidential proclamation about the U.S. Merchant Marine service.

The ceremony also featured a gun salute by the Naval Submarine Base weapons department, a presentation of colors by the Navy Silver Dolphins, and prayers by the Rev. Brian Maxwell, of the Divine Mercy Parish in Uncasville.

Carl Roth, a graduate and chapter member, and his 8-year-old-son, Merrick, placed flowers on the memorial. Retired U.S. Navy corpsman Joyce M. Harris performed taps.

After the ceremony, the Custom House Maritime Museum sponsored a lunch at Captain Scott’s Lobster Dock.

Vice Adm. Joanna M. Nunan, former superintendent of the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, who attended the ceremony, said it’s important to honor merchant marines, now more than ever.

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Bangor Daily News: Trump’s shipbuilding plan has Maine politicians worried about Bath Iron Works

By **Benjamin Kail**, May 20, 2026

Bath Iron Works sits at the center of a widening debate over the future of American naval shipbuilding, with politicians raising the specter of layoffs and reduced demand even as Pentagon leaders pledge to strengthen the domestic maritime industrial base.

Lawmakers have called on Pentagon officials to consider upping their 2027 budget request beyond a single destroyer from the Maine shipyard. The request is down from

prior years and undermines pledges to bolster the shipyard and wider industry, members of Maine's congressional delegation have argued in recent hearings with military leaders.

It's common for politicians here to champion more of the Bath-built destroyers. But the Trump administration also is exploring new ship designs, including nuclear-powered battleships that can't be built here as well as the possibility of building vessels in Japan and South Korea.

General Dynamics, Bath Iron Works' parent company, could be forced to lay off workers as soon as next year without a more steady demand signal from the government, U.S. Rep. Jared Golden, a Democrat from Maine's 2nd District, said in a hearing last week. Allied shipbuilding has become almost as much of a nonstarter with the delegation.

"That is the worst idea since the Red Sox traded Babe Ruth to the Yankees," King told the Navy's acting secretary in a hearing on Capitol Hill Tuesday. "It just doesn't make sense to be handing over that level of technology even to our allies."

The shipbuilding plan came a few months after Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth visited BIW and said the Pentagon intended to "max out" production of the DDG 51 destroyers.

Collins and King visited BIW in early April, pressing the Pentagon for a long-term, multi-ship contract and saying Maine's workforce, defense and associated industries required a steady schedule. Golden recently proposed an amendment to the defense spending bill that would bar any federal funds from producing American warships or parts overseas.

The Navy has offered a measured explanation for the lean budget request. Acting Secretary Hung Cao told lawmakers BIW currently has 11 destroyers on contract and seven under construction, with fabrication not yet begun on the remaining four.

"I would love to put 10 destroyers in the budget, but the fact is I need for the industrial base to catch up," Cao said.

BIW quietly marked a milestone Tuesday, announcing it had begun fabrication of a new destroyer, the future USS J. William Middendorf, at its Brunswick facility. The shipyard declined to comment on the record about the broader contract picture or potential workforce impacts.

The Navy's own shipbuilding plan acknowledges the Bath-built destroyer "is the most capable surface combatant anywhere at sea," while also conceding the U.S. has "reached the limits of its capacity."

It is touting a nuclear-powered battleship class named after President Donald Trump, though the plan notes the ship "is not a destroyer replacement." Those vessels aren't slated for construction until the 2030s, and where they'll be built hasn't been decided. BIW threw its hat in the ring in December, with its president arguing the yard has the "capacity, capability and engineering expertise" for the job.

Collins, the delegation's only Republican, told Hegseth she was "particularly puzzled" about investments in overseas shipbuilding when only one American-built destroyer was requested for the next fiscal year. King argued Tuesday the Navy's wait-and-see approach gets the logic backward.

The way for the industry to catch up "is to provide the demand signals so that the shipyards can make the additional capital investments, along with the Navy, in order to increase productivity," he said.

In the meantime, at least 10 BIW-built destroyers are deployed in the Middle East amid a tenuous ceasefire with Iran in a reminder of what the shipyard produces and why the debate over its future carries national implications.

BIW is unlikely to disappear, Craig Hooper, a former vice president at BIW competitor Austal USA who is now an analyst covering the defense industry, said. But he said the yard needs a stronger demand signal to justify the capital investments required to grow and that the U.S. must do a better job allowing its own military shipbuilding innovations to be marketed overseas.

"We've used overseas suppliers to help relieve transient industrial challenges," Hooper said. "America certainly wants to build ships in the United States, but, if we take too rigid an approach, we risk cutting ourselves off from maritime innovation."

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Defense Watch: Sub Deal Soon

Defense Daily Staff, May 22, 2026

Navy officials on May 19 told the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) the service is close to finalizing a contract with General Dynamics' Electric Boat and HII on 10 Block VI *Virginia-class* attack submarines and two *Columbia*-class ballistic missile submarines but they are trying to get the language right and better than in past agreements. SASC ranking member Jack Reed (D-R.I.) indicated the Navy last provided an update to the committee two weeks ago that contract negotiations "are very close to being finalized" and asked what the current status was. Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Daryl Caudle

said they need to get the contract done “but we want to make sure what’s baked into it, the lessons we’ve learned on poor contracting strategies that we’ve not always been in the right position to have the right oversight and the right incentives and the right mechanisms to ensure we get them delivered on time.” He added the Navy acquisition team and Secretary of Defense’s team have provided a “thoughtful approach” to get it right and while he cannot give a specific time, they expect the contract to be finalized “at any time…and we’re just making sure that we get that contract language correct.”

Sub Tenders. The Navy’s acting head of acquisition on May 20 told lawmakers the Navy’s next-generation submarine tenders are “probably going to be online in the early 2030s, realistically.” Jason Potter told the House Armed Services Seapower subcommittee that the Navy is continually assessing service life extensions for its current fleet, including the *Emory S. Land*-class submarine tenders. When asked about tenders by Rep. Scott DesJarlais (R-Tenn.), Potter noted the Navy is focused on finishing the next-gen tender design with General Dynamics and getting the first ship under construction. “We’ve had a good process here to work through the requirements,” Potter said. It’s the first time we’ve built a sub tender in a while, and kind of making sure it’s going to have the maintenance capability to maintain our latest *Virginia*-class submarines, and the quantities took a measure twice, cut once approach over the last few years. So, I think we’re there, we need to finish the design and get into construction.” The Navy’s FY 2027 budget request seeks $4.4 billion to start procuring two new tenders and projects contract awards in April 2027 and delivery by November 2033 and May 2034.

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The Economist: America’s submarine dominance is under threat

By The Economist, May 7, 2026

THE NETS enclosing the inner harbour draw open. A black-finned predator slips out. Minutes later it reaches the open ocean and, with a great exhalation, disappears beneath the tropical waters. Getting under way from Apra Harbour in Guam, the *USS Annapolis*, one of the ocean’s apex hunters, is engaged in a silent but intensifying contest with China and Russia for dominance of the vast Pacific.

Warships are noisy, rumbling along like lorries. Not so a nuclear-powered attack submarine, which hums like a Tesla. For months on end the *Annapolis*’s crew of 145 men (and, when your correspondent visited, one woman) inhabit a surreal world of artificial light and recycled air, largely incommunicado—a windowless spaceship arcing

through suffocating blackness. Nuclear propulsion means that the main limit on a voyage is neither fuel nor air nor fresh water, but food. These marvels of engineering thus set out like an overloaded caravan, with bananas hanging from pipework and jars of peanut butter shoved between the padding of seats. Fathoms under water, the galley bakes bread daily, turning compact flour into fluffy rolls.

Just keeping sailors alive inside a hull squeezed by 24 or more atmospheres of pressure is a feat. “Every single ounce of seawater is trying to kill us, every second,” says the captain, Commander Clinton Emrich. The sub is officially able to dive more than 240 metres and zip along at more than 25 knots (the real numbers are secret and probably much higher). It is armed with Tomahawk cruise missiles, Mark-48 torpedoes, sea-mines and perhaps other weapons. In the war with Iran, American subs fired Tomahawks at targets on land and, for the first time since the second world war, a torpedo at an enemy ship, sinking an Iranian frigate, the *IRIS Dena*.

Attack submarines operating from Guam, including both Los Angeles-class vessels like the *Annapolis* (in service for 34 years) and newer Virginia-class ones, are the “tip of the spear”, American submariners say. In any future war with China they would be counted upon to deliver some of the earliest and heaviest blows. In the meantime their tasks range from tracking foes’ ballistic-missile submarines to gathering intelligence and inserting special forces. Above all, their main job is deterrence. One might pop up unexpectedly off Australia or South Korea. Or one might surface close to a Chinese warship in a show of stealthiness—or perhaps several might appear simultaneously near different Chinese vessels.

Putting the boat in

The ocean depth is the last domain where America still has a clear military advantage over China. As battlefields fill with sensors, becoming increasingly transparent, “being under water matters because it’s one of the last places you can hide,” says Thomas Shugart, a former submariner. Yet America’s sub-sea dominion, too, is under threat.

The “silent service” says little about each side’s capabilities, but American submariners talk of roaming the Pacific almost as if it were an American lake. Until recently they joked that Chinese subs were so noisy they could be heard from America’s west coast. No longer: mockery is turning to alarm. Xi Jinping, China’s leader, having built the world’s largest surface navy and its fastest-growing nuclear arsenal, is also transforming China’s submarine force.

The current fleet consists mostly of conventionally powered vessels, with limited speed and endurance, useful mainly to attack shipping close to home. However, over the coming decade or so, American intelligence reckons, a new generation of nuclear-powered, ocean-going subs will come to dominate China's force, challenging American supremacy in the Pacific and Indian oceans, the approaches to the Arctic and perhaps even the Atlantic.

American military sources say China is developing much quieter submarines with the help of Russian technology, whether stolen or bartered in exchange for China's support for Russia's stuttering war in Ukraine. China's latest models "are formidable, incorporating advanced technologies that challenge the US Navy's long-standing undersea dominance", said Vice Admiral Richard Seif, the commander of America's submarine force, in recent testimony.

America's head of naval intelligence, Rear Admiral Michael Brookes, thinks China will have 70 submarines next year and 80 by 2035. Crucially, about 40 will be nuclear-powered—substantially more than previously estimated. This compares with America's all-nuclear force of 67 boats.

To stay ahead, America is supplying nuclear-propulsion technology to Australia under AUKUS, a submarine-building partnership that also includes Britain. The AUKUS boats are not due for delivery until the 2040s. In the meantime America has promised to sell Australia three to five Virginia-class submarines in the 2030s. Australian sailors are already training on American subs, which are set to begin regular deployments from a base near Perth next year. China's loud protests suggest alarm.

Meanwhile, America and South Korea agreed last year to build new "hunter-killer" subs (SSNs) together, though the details of how and where they will be built remain sketchy. Hanwha, a South Korean conglomerate, is developing a new "smart" shipyard in Philadelphia that, it hopes, could become a site for submarine construction. Japan, too, has shown interest.

America's submarine-building, though, is being hampered by its woeful industrial capacity. America and Australia have invested billions in America's submarine industrial base. "Build Submarines" ads shown during big sporting events have urged young Americans to train as welders and other roles. Even so, America is falling short of its requirement to build two Virginia-class boats a year. To supply Australia, it needs to raise output to about 2.33 boats a year. In fact, it manages barely 1.1-1.2 Virginias a year, in addition to one Columbia-class SSBN (a bigger vessel capable of launching long-range nuclear missiles) to replace ageing Ohio-class subs.

Sub-par

America's submarine fleet has shrunk from 70-odd boats a decade ago to 67 today—49 SSNs, 14 SSBNs and 4 SSGNs (mid-sized subs capable of firing guided missiles). It will shrink further, to 63, before in theory growing to 66 by 2054. That will still be well short of the navy's goal of 66 ssns alone. Worse, an agonising maintenance backlog means a third of SSNs are in maintenance or idle. The *USS Boise* has been out of action for so long—it was tied up in 2017—that the Pentagon this year decided to decommission it. A new dry dock is under construction in Pearl Harbour in Hawaii to speed up maintenance and repair from next year. Even so, regular "depot" maintenance can take over 18 months. The yard's wartime feats—it put the *USS Yorktown*, a badly damaged aircraft-carrier, back to sea in three days to fight the battle of Midway in 1942—are a fading memory.

Britain, too, is struggling. A parliamentary report warned last month that "shortcomings and failings", including delays in upgrading the "depleted submarine industrial base", risked holding up AUKUS, "with serious consequences both for UK national security and for credibility with AUKUS partners". Unnerved Australian experts are debating options for "Plan B". Meanwhile, satellite imagery suggests China has been managing to build two attack subs and an ssbn a year since 2024, thanks to expanded facilities at Huludao on the Bohai Sea, says the International Institute for Strategic Studies, a think-tank in London.

Nuclear-powered submarines are so expensive and difficult to make—a Virginia-class boat costs about $5bn apiece—because they must keep sailors alive in extreme conditions. Their hulls must be made of special steel that is strong, tough and ductile, and sealed only by expert welders. Controlling buoyancy is tricky: a submarine shrinks as it dives, displacing less water, and so sinking ever faster (and vice versa as it rises). Uncontrolled by ballast and trim, it will either drop to the sea floor (and perhaps be crushed) or bob to the surface. Then there is the problem of propulsion. Submarines of the first and second world war used a combination of diesel engines, to sail on the surface and charge batteries, and an electric motor for short bursts under water.

Nuclear propulsion was a game-changer. "Our submarines have 30 years of fuel or more on board, so effectively, unlimited endurance," explains Rear Admiral Christopher Cavanaugh, commander of the Pacific Fleet's submarine forces. "That also gives them stealth. They don't need to come up and snorkel."

America's first nuclear-powered submarine, *USS Nautilus*, made the first journey under the Arctic ice-cap in 1958. In April *HMS Vanguard*, a British SSBN, completed a record

205-day patrol. On the *Annapolis,* crews are away for so long they must tell superiors whether they wish to receive bad news from home while at sea. To maintain circadian rhythms, lighting levels follow the day-night cycle of Guam. Cribbage and books help pass the time. Tom Clancy's "Hunt for Red October" is a favourite.

Water quickly absorbs most light and radio waves, which makes submarines stealthy but hard to communicate with. Water readily transmits sound, however, be it the songs of whales or the thrumming propeller of an enemy vessel. The submariner's art is to understand the layers of temperature and salinity, the vagaries of the seafloor and current, knowing where to hide and where to find "sound tunnels" to detect faraway objects.

You could shout at the top of your lungs and scarcely be heard outside a modern submarine. That is because decks, and the machines on them, float on sound-absorbing "rafts". The boat's exterior is covered with a rubber-like coating to further muffle noise and confound sonar. The control room of the *Annapolis* is a hubbub of loud commands and responses; the cramped torpedo room even more so. Before pulling a brass lever to fire a "water slug" (a blank torpedo), your correspondent had to don earmuffs. But interior noise is most dangerous if there is an "acoustic short", when a stray object touches both a raft and the outer hull, transmitting sound to the water. Officers prowl the boat looking for carelessly secured equipment or, say, tins of food stored in inviting but forbidden gaps.

Pearl Harbour, home to America's Pacific Fleet, is dotted with memorials—not just to those who died in Japan's attack in 1941, but also to the submarine crews that held the line thereafter, as the fleet was rebuilt. Unrestricted warfare against Japanese merchant ships in the Pacific, announced within hours of the attack, had greater success throttling Japan than Nazi Germany's U-boats managed against Britain. Submarines sank about 55% of Japanese vessels lost during the war, including eight aircraft-carriers.

Ship show

China worries that American submarines could unleash similar havoc today. About 80% of its oil imports pass through the Strait of Malacca. Iran's closure of the Strait of Hormuz, which has caused a global energy crisis, is a salutary warning. There are lessons for America, too. Its bases and other fixed targets, including radars and parked aircraft, have proved vulnerable to Iranian missiles and drones. China's missile force is formidable, able to rain munitions not only on American bases on the "first island chain", which runs from Japan to Malaysia (see map), but also with lesser intensity on rear

bases in Guam, Hawaii and Alaska. It can also take aim at warships racing across the Pacific to join the fight.

If Chinese submarines can slip undetected through the passages of the first island chain into the Pacific beyond, then American forces would face the additional threat of volleys of cruise missiles fired from any direction. A related worry is that Russia is increasingly making common cause with China. Their submarines conducted joint exercises last year. North Korea's navy, too, seems to have obtained Russian assistance with its own submarine programme. Even if they don't join the fighting, Russian and North Korean forces could cause trouble in a Sino-American war simply by going on exercise.

All this could stretch America's submarine force desperately thin. At the least, a credible Chinese submarine threat would slow American reinforcements, giving Chinese forces more time to subdue Taiwan, say. The more American submarines are diverted to hunting Chinese ones, or tracking rival forces, the fewer will be available to challenge a Chinese armada crossing the Taiwan Strait.

China still worries about the "open door" America enjoys under water, says Ryan Martinson of the China Maritime Studies Institute at America's Naval War College. Internal Chinese military writings argue that America's underwater surveillance system—including satellites, sensors on aircraft and submarines—gives it an "extremely high" chance of detecting Chinese submarines as they leave port and a "fairly high" chance of intercepting them in the South and East China Seas.

One response has been to make its subs harder to detect. The Type 093B SSGNs it now deploys use pump-jet propulsion, like America's Virginia class, which is quieter than propellers. The bigger Type 095, which may soon undergo sea trials, also seems to use a pump-jet, as well as a more manoeuvrable X-shaped rudder. Yet another new model, the Type 096 SSBN, is under construction. Admiral Brookes says these submarines display "substantial advancements" in nuclear technology, sensors, weapons and noise-quieting—though how advanced is still unclear.

Another Chinese strategy is to make the seas less opaque. The "underwater Great Wall" involves a range of systems from sea-floor sensors to satellite observation. Among other things, these create protected "bastions" from which China's SSBNs can fire nuclear weapons at most of the American mainland. American commanders reckon the effect will not be real "transparency", but rather a "narrowing of the US stealth margin".

Despite China's progress, says Admiral Cavanaugh, "our sensors are better than their stealth; and our stealth is better than their sensors. I know what submarine force I'd

want my kids to be a part of." American submariners, moreover, know the Pacific better than anyone: "We're walking the battlefield where we might have to fight."

But even America's submarines face constraints. For one thing, they carry limited munitions. When they run out, they must sail thousands of miles to replenish them. In the course of a month, an aircraft-carrier can deliver hundreds of times more munitions than an attack submarine, a military source notes. What is more, there is a dearth of harbours suitable for submarines in the Pacific beyond the first island chain: mainly Guam, Pearl Harbour and now Perth. Belatedly, the navy is thinking of upgrading other ports. Specialised vessels can resupply submarines, but only in sheltered waters, and America has only two such ships in the Pacific.

America and its allies may be able to mitigate the problem with cheaper and more expendable drones. Ukraine has shown prowess in using naval drones against Russian warships in the Black Sea. But these sail on the surface, under the control of Ukrainian operators. Communicating with uncrewed underwater vehicles (UUVs) is as hard as with submarines, which makes it difficult to keep a "man in the loop". That raises ethical questions, though perhaps not unanswerable ones. A torpedo is a UUV of sorts, after all.

Anduril, one of the emerging breed of "neo-prime" military contractors, has sold a version of its Dive-XL UUV called Ghost Shark to the Australian navy and is making prototypes for the American navy, too. Small enough to fit in a shipping container or cargo plane, its fibreglass body floods with water, with only small pressure vessels housing the most important components. Radio and acoustic gear allows communication; modular bays carry torpedoes, mines, sensors and more. China, too, is deploying a variety of uncrewed vehicles. Its "dolphin" wave-gliders use changes in buoyancy to propel themselves slowly, surveying the waters. Some Chinese military analysts have discussed using robotic "shoals" to confuse the enemy.

In his office in Pearl Harbour, its walls covered with mementoes from the second world war and gifts from fellow submariners in allied navies, Admiral Cavanaugh sees advantages in "manned-unmanned teaming". Drones can go deeper and be sent to riskier places than crewed submarines. "There's certainly room for both," he says. "But I don't see the end of the crewed submarine any time in my lifetime."

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The Defense Post: Australia Taps Lockheed for Virginia Submarine Combat Systems

By Rojoef Manue, May 19, 2026

The move marks another milestone in Australia's plan to operate conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarines beginning in the early 2030s under the broader AUKUS security pact with the UK and the US.

Under the agreement, Lockheed Martin Australia will support combat system integration, testing, sustainment, and crew training for the future submarines, helping preserve and upgrade the vessels' combat capabilities throughout their service life.

The company will also work with the Australian Submarine Agency and ASC Pty Ltd to strengthen local industrial capacity and technical expertise.

The program is expected to produce approximately 100 additional roles at Lockheed Martin Australia, with initial work based in Western Australia.

"AUKUS is on track and happening now," Australian Deputy Prime Minister Richard Marles stated.

"By making these decisions now, we are ensuring our local industry and naval workforce is equipped with the skills it needs to operate and maintain conventionally-armed, nuclear-powered submarines which will protect our nation and keep Australians safe."

'Seamless Interoperability'

Canberra said that the combat systems will help ensure coordination between its incoming submarines and the US Navy's existing Virginia fleet while boosting the country's sovereign defense capabilities.

Those solutions will be integrated into three Australian Virginia submarines, which will serve as an interim capability while transitioning to the separate SSN-AUKUS or AUKUS-class vessels being developed under the trilateral AUKUS partnership with London and Washington.

Five SSN-AUKUS submarines are expected to replace the Royal Australian Navy's Collins-class fleet, while up to 12 boats will eventually succeed the Royal Navy's Astute-class submarines once commissioned.

"Drawing on more than 60 years of experience as the US Navy's submarine combat system integrator, we're confident that our expertise will enable seamless interoperability between the Australian and US navies, ensuring the SSN fleet is equipped to meet the evolving needs of the Indo-Pacific region," said Stephanie Hill, president of rotary and mission systems at Lockheed Martin.

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National Security Journal: China Is Building A 'Great Wall' of Undersea Sensors to Find U.S. Navy Nuclear Submarines

By Brent M. Eastwood, May 20, 2026

Rear Admiral Mike Brookes testified to the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission in March that Beijing is building an undersea Great Wall of sensors — integrating air, surface, seabed, and undersea systems into a networked architecture designed to track American submarines and push them out of contested waters. China's Blue Ocean Information Network combines a seabed sensor grid with satellite imagery from the Ocean Star Cluster, smart buoys, wave gliders, autonomous underwater vehicles, and the Deep Blue Brain data integration system. Non-acoustic detection technology can spot U.S. submarines through the magnetic field disturbance caused by their steel hulls. The U.S. Navy plans to use manned subs as quarterbacks for Unmanned Underwater Vehicles to survive.

No More Stealth U.S. Navy Submarines?

Is the era of U.S. Navy stealth submarines dominating the seas over?

The "Silent Service" has enjoyed a huge advantage for decades.

These subs run quietly and run deep and can attack anywhere in the world at any time.

However, China has a vote in the underwater fight. The Chinese now have a "Great Wall" of sensors that can sniff out an American sub's location and track it wherever it goes. This capability is often overlooked when assessing the U.S. Navy's ability to deploy its submarines in the Indo-Pacific.

But now China could have a greater advantage in anti-submarine warfare.

Someday, the American subs will have no place to hide in the East and South China Seas.

They could even be stopped from patrolling the Taiwan Strait at will, which would give the Chinese a great advantage should they mount an amphibious attack against Taiwan.

The Power of Manned and Unmanned Sumbarines

The U.S. Navy still believes it has a tactical advantage with its submarines and even hopes its force of nuclear-powered boats could run unmanned-manned teaming arrangements with Unmanned Underwater Vehicles (UUVs).

The crewed subs can serve as UUV quarterbacks, aiming to improve survivability for hunter-killer attack submarines and ballistic-missile SSBN boomer submarines.

China's Great Wall of Sensors

Meanwhile, China is developing a multi-layered defense known as the undersea "Great Wall" to keep American submarines and future UUVs from operating with impunity.

As Asia Times has reported, American naval officers are concerned that China's ability to detect and track U.S. submarines could erode their stealth advantage.

What Is 'Systems Confrontation?'

Rear Admiral Mike Brookes appeared in front of the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission in March. Brookes believes China has a new strategy of underwater defenses he calls "systems confrontation."

Asia Times described systems confrontation as the integration of "air, surface, seabed, and undersea sensors into a networked architecture to control key maritime areas and compel adversary submarines to withdraw."

Sharpening the Assassin's Mace Weaponry

Undersea sensors can also be described as "Assassin's Mace" technologies that counteract a stronger naval undersea force with asymmetric capabilities. The Chinese can thus keep the Americans from sending their subs into areas of the ocean the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) considers its own.

The Blue Ocean Information Network

Brookes also discussed the "Blue Ocean Information Network." This is a "seabed sensor grid [used] to erode U.S. stealth advantages, complicate US undersea operations, and enable persistent surveillance across the South China Sea and beyond," as the Rear Admiral explained in his testimony.

Non-Acoustic Detection Technologies

My colleague Kris Osborn reviewed an article from the Navy Submarine League called the "Non-Acoustic Means of Submarine Detection." China could be basing its Great Wall of sensors on what this essay uncovered.

There are non-acoustic detection technologies that could give the Chinese an advantage in discovering American submarines. These devices can measure disturbances in the Earth's magnetic field.

"As a large piece of ferrous metal, the steel-hulled submarine causes a local disturbance," the authors explained.

This means American submarines could still be detected because their acoustic signature is not entirely eliminated.

"Submarines contain a large amount of metal that becomes magnetized in the course of normal operations. The permanent magnetic field associated with the submarine remains until active measures are used to demagnetize it," the Naval Submarine League essay declared.

Looking at Subs With the Ocean Star Cluster

Asia Times also pointed out that analysts Tye Graham and Peter Singer, writing in Defense One, have identified a Chinese anti-submarine warfare practice that uses a layer of satellite imagery on top, called the "Ocean Star Cluster."

"Below the Ocean Star Cluster, Graham and Singer claimed that the 'Air-Sea Interface' layer employs smart buoys, wave gliders, and unmanned surface vessels as relays. Beneath that, they observe that 'Starry Deep Sea' deploys floats, gliders, and autonomous underwater vehicles, while 'Undersea Perspective' incorporates seabed observatories and cabled hubs." Graham and Singer added that the "Deep Blue Brain integrates and manages data across domains."

Is China Really That Good?

Now that is one complicated system that could be overstated and may be vaporware. China may not have that concept fully deployed, but it would be a formidable deterrent against U.S. submarines if fully developed.

The Americans Can Still Be Superior in Undersea Combat

I'm skeptical about Chinese anti-submarine warfare, though.

There are certainly many people in China studying the subject. They have expertise in STEM fields that produce some of the world's top thinkers.

But U.S. sailors on submarines are highly trained and expert at their jobs. They know how to run a boat that can counteract Chinese sensors, no matter how advanced they are.

So, my money is still on the U.S. Navy's submarine force, which can be stealthier than anything the Chinese try to develop to counter it. Yes, the PLAN is catching up in anti-submarine warfare with new systems.

But they are untested in combat, and the U.S. Navy is aware of innovative tactics and operational art that could put its boats at risk.

We'll keep an eye on this Great Wall of underwater sensors. This field is growing and should be monitored closely by the U.S. Navy, oversight bodies, think tanks, and Congress.

But Chinese anti-submarine efforts have a long way to go before they stop U.S. submarines from sailing anywhere they need to for American undersea dominance.

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Ottawa Citizen: South Korean submarine arrives in Canada

By **David Pugliese** • Ottawa Citizen, May 23, 2026

VICTORIA — A South Korean KSS-III submarine arrived in British Columbia on Saturday as part of an effort to further defence relations, but also to market the high-tech boat in the multi-billion-dollar competition for Canada's new sub fleet.

The Republic of Korea's Dosan Ahn Chang-ho docked at Canadian Forces Base Esquimalt in Victoria after a 14,000-kilometre voyage, the longest ever undertaken by one of Korea's submarines.

The KSS-III submarine is in Canada to conduct joint exercises with the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN), but it is also doing double-duty in a hotly contested multi-billion-dollar defence procurement competition.

Canada will acquire up to 12 new submarines for the RCN and has narrowed the competition down to the KSS-III submarine from the South Korean company Hanwha Ocean and the Type 212CD submarine from Germany's ThyssenKrupp Marine Systems (TKMS).

The Liberal government hopes to make an announcement on the winning bid by this summer.

Glenn Copeland, CEO of Ottawa-based Hanwha Defence Canada, said that, while the arrival of the sub showed the increasingly close military relations between South Korea and Canada, the timing was fortuitous for his company. “It works well,” he said. “We are going to take advantage of the submarine being here.”

The Royal Canadian Navy is using the Korean submarine visit to push home its message of the need for a modern submarine fleet.

Rear-Admiral David Patchell, commander of Maritime Forces Pacific, acknowledged that only one of Canada’s four aging Victoria-class subs was currently operational. “I need them yesterday,” Patchell said when asked when the navy would need new submarines.

Patchell said the purchase of 12 new boats would signal that Canada was a “submarine nation.”

“It’s a message to our allies that we’re taking defence seriously,” he added.

Joining the crew of the Dosan Ahn Chang-ho were Lt. Cmdr. Britany Bourgeois and Petty Officer Second Class Jake Dixon of the Royal Canadian Navy. Both RCN members participated in training activities at sea and observed how both the crew and equipment operated.

Bourgeois described the South Korean boat as spacious, clean and modern. “What really hit home is that Canada needs new submarines,” she said.

South Korean officials said the journey demonstrated that the Dosan Ahn Chang-ho had the operational range, endurance, and self-sufficiency that Canada required for its Canadian Patrol Submarine Project.

The ROK Navy announced May 18 that the Dosan Ahn Chang-ho successfully established communications with the Royal Canadian Navy Pacific Fleet using its onboard communications systems under simulated war-time conditions. Through the successful communication, the ROK and RCN directly verified interoperability between the two navies in an operational environment, according to the South Koreans.

“This successful communications exchange will demonstrate the capability of our navy to expand its operational reach into multinational combined operations, including with

NATO allies like Canada," Capt. Lee Byung-il, commanding officer of the Dosan Ahn Chang-ho, noted in a statement.

During his visit to Victoria, Lim Ki-mo, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Canada, highlighted the links between the two nations, both current because of a new defence alliance and in the past with Canada's participation in the Korean war.

"Canada has been looking for different friends and allies, other 'middle-powers,' to diversify investment, trade and defence capabilities," the ambassador said. "South Korea has opened its arms to Canada and is taking every step possible to enhance and expand a relationship that started 75 years ago, when Canada sent more than 26,000 troops to help defend our nation."

When it comes to capabilities and weapons, either the German or South Korean submarine can do the job for Canada, senior Royal Canadian Navy officers have concluded. "Both of them fulfil the requirements, the very high requirements, for the Canadian Navy," Prime Minister Mark Carney said in September 2025.

A key factor for a winning bid on the submarine program will be the industrial benefits offered to Canada. Both Hanwha and TKMS have entered into multiple alliances with Canadian companies as part of their bids.

Copeland said the proposed South Korean investment package was worth more than $60 billion to Canada. Included is a partnership with Canada's Automotive Parts Manufacturers' Association (APMA) to establish a new company that would produce military and industrial vehicles in Canada.

The other strong point in the Hanwha bid, Copeland said, is the ability of the company to quickly deliver the new boats. "(The first) will be here in 2032," he said. "No one can match that."

Hanwha officials say they can deliver the first four KSS-III submarines to Canada by 2035 if a contract is signed in 2026. The additional submarines would be delivered at a rate of one per year, meaning the entire fleet of 12 submarines could be delivered to Canada by 2043.

The other pitch the South Koreans have made as far as the delivery schedule is that it would allow Canada to fully retire the current Victoria-class sub fleet before 2035. That would result in estimated savings of approximately $1 billion on maintenance and support costs of those aging vessels, according to the South Koreans.

The German submarine, being built in conjunction with Norway, is not yet in the water. However, construction has started and that submarine program is being touted as an example of co-operation between NATO nations.

David Pugliese is an award-winning journalist covering Canadian Forces and military issues in Canada. To support his work, including exclusive content for subscribers only, sign up here: ottawacitizen.com/subscribe

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Foreign Policy Research Institute: The Golden Fleet On Paper: Ambition Meets Strategic Contradiction – Analysis

By Dr. Emma Salisbury, May 23, 2026

The new US Navy Shipbuilding Plan has arrived. It is lavishly produced, rich in operational color, and bracingly confident in its own ambition. Reading it, one encounters the language of generational transformation, the promise of a Golden Fleet, and the vision of an American navy reborn—larger, more lethal, ready to fight tonight. Read in isolation, it is a compelling document. Read in the context of American naval acquisition history, and of the tensions in this administration's naval program, it is something more complicated: A plan whose best instincts are undermined by its own contradictions.

What's the Problem?

Let me start with the diagnosis, because the plan deserves credit for it. The US Navy currently operates 291 battle force ships against a legal requirement of 355. The shipbuilding budget has doubled over two decades while fleet size has flatlined. Requirements crept during construction, cost estimates were systematically optimistic, and the acquisition bureaucracy—spread across disaggregated chains of command that the plan traces, with some pride, all the way back to the Bureau of Construction, Equipment, and Repairs in 1842—produced delays as reliably as it produced paperwork. None of this is new analysis. The Government Accountability Office has been saying versions of it for 30 years. But it is rare for a shipbuilding plan to lead with so frank an admission of institutional failure, and the reforms it proposes in response deserve genuine attention: Portfolio Acquisition Executives with real authority, stricter requirements discipline, the ShipOS production management platform, the Vessel Construction Manager model. These reflect a serious attempt to change how the US Navy does business, not merely what it buys.

The plan's most coherent thread is the hedge strategy, the framework outlined by CNO Adm. Daryl Caudle in his recent Fighting Instructions that pairs high-end, multi-mission platforms with modular, attritable, lower-cost systems capable of being produced at volume. The logic is sound: A force that can deter peer adversaries while meeting the relentless daily demand for presence and crisis response cannot be built exclusively from expensive, exquisite platforms, each of which spends roughly a quarter of its service life in maintenance. The hedge strategy recognizes that the character of naval competition has changed, that distributed lethality and unmanned mass offer genuine operational advantages, and that the unforgiving economics of modern naval warfare demand a more diversified force. What distinguishes Caudle's framework is the attempt to embed this thinking structurally into fleet design rather than treating it as a doctrinal afterthought. I remain cautiously optimistic about it. American naval circles have been discussing variants of distributed lethality for decades without the concept making it off the page, and some healthy skepticism about whether this iteration fares any better is entirely warranted, but the intellectual architecture is correct.

Playing Battleships

Where the May plan parts ways with that framework—and where the tensions in this administration's naval policy become most visible—is in the battleship program. I have written at some length about the BBGN already, and nothing in this shipbuilding plan has done much to assuage my concerns. The document requests advance procurement funding in FY27 for a nuclear-powered guided-missile battleship, with the lead ship of three to be procured in FY28. It describes this vessel in terms that would embarrass the most intense naval enthusiast: a platform for high-volume long-range fires, theater nuclear weapons, directed-energy systems, hypersonic missiles, and a Maritime Operations Centre. It is simultaneously a strike platform, a command ship, a strategic delivery vehicle, and an air defense asset. We should remember that ships designed to do everything are likely to do nothing on schedule and nothing within budget.

When I wrote about the battleship concept earlier this year, I made two observations that the May plan has done nothing to answer. First, the ship uses enormous displacement for negligible marginal gains in missile firepower compared to smaller ships. Second, and more damagingly, it replaces the DDG(X) program—which for all its limitations was at least sized to fit existing shipyards and represented an evolutionary step built on proven industrial foundations. The battleship resets the clock entirely: a clean-sheet design for a vessel the size of an Iowa, developed by a navy that has been delegating in-house design capability to shipbuilders for the better part of three

decades, requiring yards that are not currently configured to build at that scale. The plan acknowledges, in a passage that deserves attention, that foreign module fabrication will likely be required for the BBGN—a significant concession from an administration whose public posture on restoring American shipbuilding has been decidedly triumphalist.

The deeper problem is strategic rather than industrial. I remain concerned that there is a serious conceptual tension that sits uncomfortably underneath both this plan and the Fighting Instructions: Caudle wants a navy of distributed lethality and attritable mass, but the battleship concept is the apotheosis of the high-value platform. A battleship is precisely the kind of asset that the hedge strategy seeks to move away from—large, expensive, crewed by hundreds of sailors, dependent on technologies that are not yet operational, and almost certainly not reaching the fleet until the late 2030s at the earliest. The shipbuilding plan asks us to believe that the US Navy can pursue distributed, unmanned-centric hedge operations while simultaneously committing billions to a program that embodies the opposite philosophy. It does not resolve this tension because it cannot. The battleship is a political program. The hedge strategy is a warfighting program. Printing them in the same document does not reconcile them.

Growing the Fleet

The frigate story illustrates a different but related pathology, and one I have been watching with a mixture of professional interest and professional despair. Last December, I wrote about the cancellation of the Constellation class as an autopsy of how a program that began with genuinely sound premises—buy a proven European design, exercise restraint on modifications, field hulls quickly—collapsed under the weight of the very institutional habits that it had explicitly been designed to avoid. The May plan confirms the cancellation of Constellation and introduces a new frigate, FF(X), with a lead ship in FY27. It presents the speed of this transition, accomplished “in a matter of weeks, not years,” as evidence of reformed acquisition culture. I want to believe this, but Constellation’s collapse was not principally a structural failure: It was a behavioral one. The May plan provides no convincing mechanism for preventing the same thing from happening a third time, after Constellation and after the Littoral Combat Ship. My conclusion stands: America’s ability to get the small surface combatants it needs depends solely on the US Navy’s willingness to pick a design and leave it alone long enough for a shipyard to actually build it. Announcing a new frigate is the easy part. The hard part comes when the first requirements review convenes.

The unmanned programs are where I find myself most genuinely encouraged, which is perhaps a function of having spent considerable time cataloguing everything else that

has gone wrong. The shift to a mission-driven competitive gauntlet model—in which companies deliver prototypes and production-ready capabilities for evaluation against operational requirements, rather than chasing technology demonstrations—reflects a real lesson from the early unmanned acquisition era. The procurement profile provides a meaningful demand signal. If the US Navy can resist the temptation to add a hundred extra requirements to these platforms before the first hulls are delivered, it may finally field unmanned systems at the scale that operational concepts have assumed for years. That is a significant if, but at least the structural conditions are more propitious than they have been before.

The submarine program is the plan's least controversial element, which is not a coincidence. Columbia-class and Virginia-class procurement follow well-established industrial logic. The Direct Reporting Program Manager for Submarines provides the single-point accountability that programs have historically lacked. The ShipOS results—reducing schedule planning from 160 manual hours to under ten minutes, cutting material review times from weeks to under an hour—are exactly the kind of mundane industrial progress that rarely generates headlines but genuinely moves the needle.

The industrial base section contains the plan's most honest passage, even if it is not framed that way. As well as encouraging overseas investment into US shipbuilding, the US Navy is seeking legislative authority to allow American prime contractors to subcontract the building of large-scale non-sensitive modules to allied overseas shipyards for programs including the BBGN, DDG-51, LHA, and LPD. These are pragmatic choices, and I support them as such—American shipbuilding capacity genuinely cannot support the construction of the Golden Fleet at the pace and scale the plan demands, and pretending otherwise would be more dishonest than the plan's actual approach. But there is an obvious tension between this admission and the administration's loudly America-first public narrative about shipbuilding and maritime dominance. That tension matters not just rhetorically but politically, because the durability of foreign shipbuilding arrangements depends on a congressional and executive mood that could shift with the political headwinds.

Papering Over the Cracks

The plan's conclusion returns to the language of accountability it established at the outset: success measured by ships delivered on time, an industrial base strengthened, a fleet ready and globally present. This is the right measure. Applied honestly, and applied retrospectively, it would produce some uncomfortable scores. The Constellation class failed it. The Littoral Combat Ship failed it on an extended schedule. The Zumwalt

class, which the plan cheerfully incorporates as a “bridge” between existing destroyer technology and the battleship—as though that framing erases the program’s history—failed it in ways that should give the administration pause before betting the next generation of surface combatant development on another clean-sheet design stuffed with immature technology.

The reforms the plan proposes are, in places, genuinely serious. The investment in unmanned systems reflects correct strategic instincts. The maintenance reforms—digital twins, predictive scheduling, smaller and more frequent availabilities—address one of the most persistent drains on operational readiness. The industrial base investments, ShipOS, the PAE structure: these are not window dressing. But the plan is compromised by a political program that contradicts its own operating concept, leaving a gap between the CNO’s hedge strategy and the Golden Fleet’s capital-ship ambitions that the document papers over rather than resolves.

Naval force structure does not care about spectacle. It does not care about Golden Fleets or concept art or quotes from Mahan. It cares about usable combat power delivered on schedule and within budget, available to combatant commanders when they need it.

The plan’s authors know this—the plan says so, repeatedly and with evident conviction. And then it funds three battleships.

That tension, more than any single program decision, is the most revealing thing in the document. Whether this administration has the discipline to resolve it in favor of the warfighter, rather than the press release, is a question that only time will answer.

- *About the author: Dr. Emma Salisbury is a Non-Resident Senior Fellow in the Foreign Policy Research Institute’s National Security Program, an Associate Fellow at the Royal Navy Strategic Studies Centre, and a Contributing Editor at War on the Rocks.*

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The Washington Times: National security demands that White House act on maritime legislation - Commentary

By Brent D. Sadler, May 20, 2026

What to know

- There is a national consensus to revive the U.S. maritime industry.

- China dominates global shipping and shipbuilding, impacting the U.S. economy.
- President Trump has initiated efforts to change the maritime situation.
- Legislative efforts have stalled, necessitating a new proposal from the president.

For the first time since Richard Nixon was in the White House, there is a national consensus that we must revive the nation's strategically important maritime industry. Driving that consensus is an understanding that the nation's economy operates at the whim of those who have the ships — in a word, China.

China dominates the sector with its state-controlled shipping and shipbuilding, backed by a global network of strategically placed ports. The U.S. let this state of affairs continue far too long, but fortunately, President Trump has begun the steps necessary to change it.

The president has led the effort with executive orders and his personal political capital, notably calling for a maritime revival in his joint session speech to Congress in March 2025. This is commendable, and he's drawn considerable support on Capitol Hill, but like all good initiatives, it needs an additional push.

Given the stalled legislative efforts to memorialize this generational effort, the time is now for the president to propose legislation, using the authority given to him in the Constitution — specifically, the Recommendation Clause, under Article II, Section 3.

James Madison in Federalist No. 47 asserted that the Constitution gives the president significant agency in the legislative process. President George Washington submitted three proposals to Congress, President Franklin D. Roosevelt launched a blitz of bills during his first 100 days in 1933, reacting to the Great Depression, and President Dwight D. Eisenhower reluctantly created the Office of Congressional Relations to assist in working with Congress in legislating.

The current effort to revive the nation's maritime industrial base began in the spring of 2022 in response to supply chain and shipping backlogs evident during the COVID recovery. Wars in Ukraine and the Middle East have only hardened the national consensus and resolve. The signature outcome of this effort was the bipartisan/bicameral SHIPS for America Act — a comprehensive bill by necessity, given the sad state of the nation's maritime industry.

That legislation was first presented to Congress in December 2024 at a time when no meaningful legislative action was possible. Then, following Mr. Trump's April 2025

executive order Restoring America's Maritime Dominance, Congress again introduced a refined SHIPS for America Act later that same month.

Yet now, over a year later, Congress is again dead in the water on this historic legislation.

Given national security imperatives, it's time for Mr. Trump to propose that Congress take up a new bill — and given his penchant for self-branding, he could call it the Transformative Revival and Urgent Maritime Program.

This new bill would look remarkably similar to — but not a carbon copy of — the SHIPS for America Act from which the president's Maritime Action Plan and executive orders draw.

If Mr. Trump should take this step, three modifications are worth sending to Congress:

• Adjust the incentives for industry to reinvest in workforce and shipbuilding infrastructure — something the president has also issued in an executive order.

• Allow for regulatory relief with local community concurrence within proposed Maritime Prosperity Zones to accelerate industrial investment and attract new entrants to the sector.

• Propose a new Maritime Department to consolidate the U.S. Coast Guard, Maritime Administration, Federal Maritime Commission and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to a unified body charged with reviving our nation's commercial maritime sector.

More navel-gazing in Washington is unacceptable. With Congress' summer recess fast approaching, national political attention will shift from bipartisan endeavors, such as a national maritime revival, to vote-seeking.

Our adversary in Beijing, though, is not biding its time in its aggressive pursuit of a New Cold War, which America is tardy in realizing. We must act.

Brent D. Sadler is a senior research fellow specializing in naval warfare and advanced technology at The Heritage Foundation's Allison Center for National Defense.

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American Enterprise Institute: A CEO's Guide to the FY2027 Defense Budget

By John G. Ferrari, May 18, 2026

The fiscal year 2027 defense budget is not just another spending cycle; it is a generational inflection point. With a topline bolstered by reconciliation funding and the urgent need to outpace near-peer adversaries, the Pentagon is offering a historic "liquidity event" to the defense industrial base.

For the CEOs and the Boards of Directors leading these firms, the challenge is clear: How do you absorb this massive influx of capital today while ensuring your firm remains lean, profitable, and indispensable when the surge eventually normalizes?

To navigate this surge, exploit the current system, and avoid the inevitable fiscal "hangover," leadership must focus on three strategic pillars.

Navigating the Surge: Prioritize Throughput over Novelty

The FY2027 budget is unapologetically production centric. While "innovation" remains a Washington buzzword, the actual dollars, such as the $70.6 billion total for missile and weapons procurement are flowing toward high-volume throughput. Similarly, the $50B+ for autonomous weapons are likely going to those that can produce those weapons, not development for a decade from now.

To navigate the surge, Board of Directors need to challenge their CEOs to do the following. First, they need to identify the bottlenecks. The winners of this cycle will not be those with the flashiest prototypes, but those positioned inside the system's tightest bottlenecks. If your firm provides mission-critical components such as naval nuclear parts or high-reliability actuation systems, you are the "throughput enabler." Next, firms must scale within constraints. CEOs need to focus capital expenditure on expanding capacity for weapons that the Pentagon cannot afford to delay. For example, with $15.2 billion allocated to the COLUMBIA Class Submarine and $13.9 billion for LHA Replacements, the demand signal for naval infrastructure is unambiguous. Finally, above all else, maintain quality under pressure. As production ramps up, the greatest risk is a degradation in quality. Boards must ensure that management is incentivized to maintain rigorous certification standards; speed-to-market is worthless if the product fails at the point of need.

Exploiting the System: Use New Tools to Stabilize the Supply Chain

The Pentagon is currently offering new mechanisms such as the Office of Strategic Capital ($20.2B), the Defense Production Act ($30.4B), and Industrial Base Analysis and Sustainment ($41.8B) to help firms pass traditional bureaucratic friction. Savvy CEOs should view these not as "government handouts," but as tactical tools to strengthen their own business models. The strategy for CEOs is three-fold. First, look to assist your Tier 2 and Tier 3 suppliers gain access to these new government funds. By partnering with the government to fund and secure your own supply chain, you reduce exposure to "single-point failures" without shouldering the entire financial risk alone. Treat the new Direct Reporting Program Managers working directly for the Deputy Secretary as fast lanes for acquisition. Finally, more firms need to emerge as the integration layer. There is a massive gap between venture-backed startups (fast but unproven) and traditional primes (reliable but slow). Position your firm as the bridge, the entity that hardens, qualifies, and integrates new technology into existing platforms.

Avoiding the Hangover: Planning for the Reversion

History teaches us that every defense surge is followed by a "cliff." As the $350 billion in reconciliation funding tapers off, the industry will face a familiar cycle of overbuilt capacity and margin compression. The board's primary job today is to ensure that growth in 2027 does not erode return on capital in 2030. As such, the Board should "stress test" the CEO with seven questions.

1. On Capital Allocation: "How much of our current CAPEX is justified strictly by temporary FY2027 demand, and what returns do these investments generate if budgets flatten or decline by 2029?"
2. On Pricing vs. Volume: "In this constrained environment, are we maximizing margins in our specialized niches, or are we defaulting to volume growth that will leave us with excess capacity later?"
3. On Supply Chain Control: "What are our top three single points of failure, and how specifically are we using Strategic Capital or other authorities to stabilize or acquire these critical suppliers?"
4. On "Indispensability": "In which specific programs is our technology truly irreplaceable and where are we merely a commodity supplier that can be swapped out when the budget tightens?"

5. On Switching Costs: "How are we proactively increasing the switching costs for the customer through deeper system integration and proprietary certifications?"
6. On Strategic Positioning: "Are we spreading resources across too many speculative 'innovation' efforts? Where are we deliberately choosing not to grow to protect our core margins?"
7. On Implementation Speed: "Are we actively shaping the use of strategic capital to accelerate our entry into Programs of Record, or are we simply reacting to the signals sent by the Primes?"

The FY2027 budget is a stress test for the American defense industry. It offers a rare window to recapitalize and expand, but it demands a level of discipline that exceeds the customer's own. The firms that will define the next decade are those that use this surge to become more embedded in critical programs, more in control of their supply chains, and more focused on the physical reality of production. By planning for the "hangover" now, you ensure that your firm doesn't just survive the surge, it leads it.

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