



U.S. Department
of Transportation



Reflagging Ships to U.S. Flag and the Vessel Transfer Program

Maritime Administration Fact Sheet

Strategic Objective: National Security: Assure that sufficient sealift capability and intermodal transportation infrastructure exists to support vital homeland and national security interests.

Current MSP Companies

American International Shipping, LLC
APL Marine Services, Ltd.
APL Maritime, Ltd.
Argent Marine Operations, Inc.
Central Gulf Lines, Inc.
Farrell Lines Incorporated
Fidelio Limited Partnership
Hapag-Lloyd USA, LLC
Liberty Global Logistics, LLC
Maersk Line, Ltd.
Mykonos Tanker, LLC
Patriot Shipping, LLC
Santorini Tanker, LLC
Waterman Steamship Corporation

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Mission: Strengthen the U.S. maritime transportation system—including infrastructure, industry and labor to meet the economic and security needs of the Nation.

On November 23, 2003 the MSP was reauthorized by the Maritime Security Act of 2003. The reauthorized program was for fiscal years (FY) 2006-2015 and provided funding for 60 ships. In 2011, Congress extended the MSP to FY 2025. On January 2, 2013, the President signed the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) of 2013 (H.R. 4310). Section 3508 of the NDAA authorizes the Secretary of Transportation to extend existing MSP operating agreements through September 30, 2025.

VISA Participation

1. 55 Companies
2. 97 Ocean Going Ships
3. 303 Tugs, barges and other vessels

VISA Open Season

The Maritime Administration conducts an annual open season during which additional companies may apply to enroll in the VISA program.

Maritime Security Program (MSP)

Voluntary Intermodal Sealift Agreement (VISA) Program

The MSP serves to maintain an active, privately-owned, U.S.-flag and U.S.-crewed liner fleet in international trade. This fleet is also available to support the Department of Defense (DOD) sustainment in a contingency.

The MSP helps retain a labor base of skilled American mariners who are available to crew the U.S. Government-owned strategic sealift fleet, as well as the U.S. commercial fleet, both in peace and war. MSP is responsible for retaining approximately 2,400 U.S. citizen mariners.

The structure of MSP encourages flexibility as operators are able to upgrade their fleets to compete in the global marketplace. From FY 2005 through FY 2016, 62 MSP ships were replaced with more efficient ships. Maritime Administration approvals are required to ensure that vessels entering the MSP meet Maritime Administration and DOD requirements. The Maritime Administration and the U.S. Coast Guard have established expedited procedures to encourage reflagging of modern, efficient vessels into the U.S. fleet.

MSP carriers must commit 100 percent of their MSP vessel capacity and related intermodal transportation resources to Stage III of DOD's approved Emergency Preparedness Program, VISA. The MSP fleet provides 82 percent of all U.S.-flag capacity to VISA to meet DOD requirements. VISA operators without MSP contracts are required to commit 50 percent of their U.S.-flag capacity to Stage III of the VISA program.

VISA provides DOD with assured access to commercial intermodal capacity to move ammunition and sustainment cargo. The objective of VISA is to maximize DOD's use of the multi-billion dollar, state of the art, U.S. commercial intermodal transportation system to serve America in peace and war while minimizing disruption to commercial operations.

VISA activation would be time-phased to streamline the availability of capacity to coincide with DOD requirements.

VISA Joint Planning Advisory Group sessions, with participants from the Maritime Administration, DOD, and industry, and maritime labor, test the ability of the maritime industry to meet military requirements.

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