

An aerial photograph of a dense forest, likely a national park, showing a network of dirt paths and roads winding through the trees. The image is oriented vertically on the page.

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Impact of U.S. Maritime Action Plan (MAP), SHIPS Act, and USTR Fees on Global Shipping

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Introduction

This bulletin provides an overview of the recently introduced U.S. Maritime Action Plan (MAP), the SHIPS Act, and USTR fees impacting global shipping. These initiatives aim to strengthen U.S. maritime capacity, reduce reliance on foreign-built vessels, and counter Chinese dominance in global shipbuilding and maritime logistics.

Below, we outline the strategic components of these policies, their core objectives, and their immediate and long-term effects on the maritime sector.

America's Maritime Action Plan (MAP)

Basis

Developed under Executive Order 14269, "Restoring America's Maritime Dominance", signed April 9, 2025.

Released in February 2026 as a White House strategy document outlining a four-pillar program to:

1. Rebuild shipbuilding capacity
2. Reform mariner training
3. Strengthen the Maritime Industrial Base (MIB)
4. Enhance national/industrial security

Implementation of most initiatives will require new legislation or regulatory changes.

About the Author

Andrew is based in Washington D.C. and serves as Vice President, Global Policy and Trade at ShorelineHudson, where he leads the firm's Port and Trade Modernization and Digitalization Practice and oversees regional engagement across the Americas. He advises clients on maritime and port policy, directing initiatives focused on digitalization, legislative and regulatory reform, operational resilience, environmental governance, and supply chain security.

Core Components

- **Rebuild U.S. Shipbuilding Capacity:**
Modernize shipyards, diversify supply chains, ensure multiyear procurement, and implement advanced manufacturing.
- **Incentive Investment in U.S. Shipyards:**
Create Maritime Prosperity Zones; expand the U.S.-flag commercial fleet, tighten cargo preference rules, and introduce a universal fee on foreign-built vessels calling at U.S. ports.
- **Land Port Maintenance Tax:**
Equalize seaport/land port incentives.

SHIPS for America Act (SHIPS Act)

Basis

A major congressional legislative proposal: H.R. 3151 (introduced May 1, 2025), with bipartisan sponsorship led by Representatives Trent Kelly and John Garamendi, and a companion Senate effort by Senators Mark Kelly and Todd Young.

Designed as a sweeping statutory overhaul, it is over 300 pages and would create new governance structures, funding programs, cargo preference rules, and fleet expansion mandates.

Core Components

- **Maritime Security Advisor and Board:** Establishment of a new governance structure within the White House to coordinate national maritime policy.
- **Maritime Security Trust Fund:** Provides shipyard grants, vessel construction subsidies, and workforce development funding.
- **Fleet Expansion Targets:** Aiming to add up to 250 new U.S.-built, U.S.-flagged vessels over a decade.
- **10% Tariff Surcharge:** On imports moved on foreign-flag vessels, waived if U.S.-flag rates are competitive.
- **Cargo Preference Expansion:** 100% of U.S. government cargo will be carried on U.S.-flag vessels.

USTR Chinese-Linked Vessel Port Fees (Section 301 Actions)

Basis

A Section 301 investigation launched on April 17, 2024, targeting China's impact on the maritime/logistics/shipbuilding sectors. The result was a series of proposed fees and tariffs announced on April 17, 2025. These fees went into effect on October 14, 2025, with a suspension from November 2025 through November 2026 as part of U.S.-China trade negotiations.

Core Components

- **Fees on Chinese-Built Vessels and Chinese-Owned/Operated Vessels:**
 - \$50 per Net Ton (NT) for Chinese-owned/-operated vessels.
 - Greater of \$18 per NT or \$120 per container for foreign operators using Chinese-built ships.

- **Foreign-Built Vehicle Carriers:** \$46 per NT.
- **Capped at Five Calls Annually:** Fees apply for up to five vessel calls per year.

The fee structure is designed to penalize Chinese-linked maritime assets and incentivize a transition to U.S.-built vessels. A suspension was announced on November 12, 2025, lasting until November 9, 2026.

How MAP, SHIPS Act, and USTR Fees Relate to Each Other

Shared Strategic Driver: Reducing Chinese Maritime Dominance

All three instruments respond to the same strategic concern: China's overwhelming share of global shipbuilding and its growing influence in maritime logistics.

- **MAP:** References findings by the USTR about China's shipbuilding dominance.
- **SHIPS Act:** Incorporates China-linked vessel penalties through "country of concern" provisions
- **USTR Fees:** A direct trade remedy tool targeting Chinese-linked maritime transport to counter "dominance" in the sector.

MAP + SHIPS Act Together: A Combined Executive-Legislative Maritime Reindustrialization Strategy

- **MAP:** Provides a planning framework, proposing strategic tools for modernization, universal fees, workforce reforms, and more.
- **SHIPS Act:** Proposes the legislative framework with legal authority, funding streams (Maritime Security Trust Fund), and mandates like fleet expansion and cargo preference.

Overlap and Distinction:

- MAP's "universal fee on foreign-built vessels" parallels the USTR's Section 301 fees, reinforcing the goal of penalizing foreign shipbuilding reliance.

USTR Fees: Immediate Economic Pressure, MAP and SHIPS Act Long-Term Goals

While the MAP and SHIPS Act focus on building long-term industrial capacity, the USTR fee program applies near-term economic pressure to accelerate the decoupling from Chinese maritime assets.

- **MAP and SHIPS Act:** Long-term industrial focus on shipbuilding, workforce, fleet expansion.
- **USTR Fees:** Immediate economic tool targeting Chinese-linked vessels, designed to push for compliance with MAP and SHIPS Act goals.

Key Distinctions Between MAP, SHIPS Act, and USTR Fees

1. Legal Nature and Authority

- MAP: Executive strategy document, requires follow-through through regulatory or legislative actions.
- SHIPS Act: Federal legislation, binding once enacted with appropriations and mandates.
- USTR Fees: Section 301 trade remedy; an administrative tariff authority independent of MAP or SHIPS Act.

For more information contact ShorelineHudson's U.S. policy advisor in Washington D.C.

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2. Policy Focus

- MAP: Broad industrial revitalization – shipbuilding, workforce, infrastructure.
- SHIPS Act: Focus on governance, cargo preference, fleet expansion, tariff surcharge.
- USTR Fees: Trade-specific measures on Chinese-linked vessels.

3. Scope of Impact

- MAP: U.S. maritime ecosystem, including builders, owners, mariners, ports, and suppliers.
- SHIPS Act: Strong focus on U.S.-flagged, U.S.-built vessels, government cargo rules.
- USTR Fees: Directly targets certain foreign carriers, Chinese-built tonnage, and foreign-built vehicle carriers.

4. Timelines

- MAP: Immediate policy direction, long-term goals.
- SHIPS Act: 10-year fleet expansion targets (2025–2035).
- USTR Fees: Immediate economic pressure with suspension for one year, but could be reinstated at any time.

Conclusion

The MAP, SHIPS Act, and USTR fees collectively represent a bold strategy to revitalize the U.S. maritime sector, reduce reliance on foreign-built vessels, and challenge China's dominance in global shipbuilding. The combination of executive action, legislative mandates, and trade remedies will have far-reaching implications for shipowners, operators, and other stakeholders in the maritime industry.

For more details on how these changes will affect your operations, please reach out to ShorelineHudson for a personalized consultation.