

# Window on Washington: SHIPS Shape



FIRST QUARTER 2025

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The one thing folks in DC seem to agree on these days is the need to stay ahead of peer competition with China and the danger an ascendant China poses for US economic and national security. Since China entered into the World Trade Organization, its economy and its military capability have grown in leaps and bounds. While US shipbuilding capacity has largely atrophied to the point of producing only Jones Act and US military vessels required by law to be built in the US, it has become increasingly difficult to find economically competitive shipyards anywhere outside of China. Even the Department of Defense has sought permission to buy foreign-built vessels for sealift. By some accounts, China has a merchant fleet of up to 5,500 vessels, while the US has only approximately 90 US-flag ships in the international trades, supported by stipends available through the Maritime Security Program, Tanker Security Program, Cable Security Program, and by governmentimpelled cargo preference.

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