

CONGRESSMAN DUNCAN HUNTER

NATIONAL MARITIME STRATEGY SYMPOSIUM REMARKS - *TRANSCRIPT*

Good afternoon everybody. My name is Duncan Hunter. I was in the Marine Corps and did three tours. I never forwarded, never ran a ship one time. I was in the Army Marine Corps. That's one point about my Marine service I wish I was able to do, get that amphibious experience, but I was never able to do so. Chip, thank you for the introduction and the opportunity to be here today.

I've spent about a year as the Coast Guard Maritime Subcommittee Chairman and what I've been trying to do for the last year is simply learn. I've been trying to learn about the entire industry, from the Coast Guard aspect to the fishing aspect, to the shipyard aspect, to the international fleet aspect.

The Jones Act, all the EPA regulations, and just all of the myriad and different things that affect the industry. I want to say, again, that there is somebody up here on the stage with me that understands all of those different ways and those different things that affect the industry. It's Miss. Bentley. I want to give Miss. Bentley a hand because she's been working this longer than I've been alive. I'm really young, though, so that's not a shot at you. I know you will get your chance at me after I sit down.

The old saying, you know, I think was in a Freedman book about combat and about war and the world, he said, "Whoever is controlling the ocean, controls the world—controls the option, controls the world." That applies now, but it also applied a few thousand years ago. You can track any nation and its Navy and its merchant fleet to how strong of a nation they are. You can watch the rise and fall of Britain, Spain and Portugal and you can tie that with their Navy and you can tie that to their merchant fleet and it's no different today than it was then.

In fact, I would argue with the emergence of China trying to grab back a lot of its power and trying to take control of their seas, it's even more important now than it's ever been because you're going to have big folds rising up again to challenge America's supremacy on the seas, and we have to make sure in every facet, whether it's our military side or merchant side, that we control the oceans.

The U.S. flag fleet engaged in international trade right now, as all of you know, is carrying 2 percent of entering national cargo. It used to be 25 percent, 60 years ago. Over the last 35 years, the number of U.S. flag vessels and international trade has dropped from 850 to less than 100. In the same period, we've lost tens of thousands of jobs in over 300 shipyards.

It's easy to see shipyards in America, Non-Jones Act shipyards, because there aren't any. Nobody is making Non-Jones Act ships, we all know that, and there's only one way to get there, and it's to do what we are doing here today. It's to try to get our hands this business and say, "What can we do to encourage it, to make it better, and protect American industry."

A lot of Republicans like to talk about protection, and I'm a Republican Congressman. They don't like to talk about protection. But you've got to protect things sometimes. You've got to protect manufacturing and you've got to protect the ability to control the oceans and the ability to ship American goods overseas and control those sealands.

We're going to reverse that trend that's been going since the 1980s, and I'm going to talk about, really quickly here, some of the things that we're doing and that we plan on doing in the Coast Guard Maritime Subcommittee to make those possible.

We're going to improve the cargo by giving Mayora the teeth it needs to enforce the law and prevent flagrant violations. Everybody knows it's illegal what some of the agency does and Mayora has a slap on the wrist, slap on the wrist. We're going to make it so it's more than a slap on the wrist. We are going to give enforcement ability that hurts those agencies that bypass American law, where it hurts them the most, in their pocketbook.

We're going to reduce regulatory burdens of the Coast Guard that the EPA is imposing on Vessel owners, operators, and builders.

We're going to study and provide recommendations on ways to reconcile the regulatory approaches between U.S. flag and foreign flag vessels in the international trade.

We're going to improve job access for Coast Guard veterans and Navy veterans in the Maritime sector but you have to have that robust maritime economy.

We're going to make reforms at the Maritime Commission to improve accountability. You have Marad and they need to be doing their job of promoting this industry and they need to do it clearly and be held accountable to some kind of standard and some kind of wickets, where you can say you've accomplished this, you've accomplished this, you've accomplished this. That doesn't exist right now.

We're going to further encourage myriad to continue this effort, started today, and develop a strategy to improve the competitiveness of the U.S. Flag Fleet. So that's one thing we're working on. We're going to pass this bill, it's going to be a markup in the next few months. That's that.

At the same time, we're working on a longer range, Maritime Promotional Bill. It's going to touch everything from the Maritime Security Program, it's going to touch Title XI, it's going to strengthen cargo preference more, because we're going to see—more, because we're going to have unintended consequences from the first bill we pass and we're going to go in and try and fix the unintended consequences or intended consequences, and make them work better.

A way to keep strengthening the cargo preference act, so that taxpayer dollars buy taxpayer goods are going to be shipped on American vessels, plain and simple. We're going to reduce the regulatory burdens, again, improving the competitiveness of U.S. Maritime Industry and creating new job opportunities for U.S. Mariners.

There are a few things we're working on. Global trade will continue to grow in Maritime policies – and Maritime policies need to take center stage. We have folks come in all the time that talk about trucking, rail, and the airline industry—and cargo industry is huge. And there are folks roaming the halls all day long, talking about those industries. We need to get with this industry, the same platform they have, so that you are at the table when we're talking about how to move goods, not just in the United States, and from the United States with Jones Act Shipping, but with international U.S. Flagshipping... (Applause)

You know, I was down in Fort Brishon a month ago and saw the incredible things we're doing with the energy industry. I'm telling you, I'm sure all of you, at least the ones in business here, are looking at that, saying, "This is going to be a great 50 years with the energy that we have in this country, that we're getting out of the ground, that we are going to be exporting."

It's going to be a great time, if we do this right, and we harness this great time in getting energy right now in the United States. If we harness that, then it is going to be a great time for the maritime industry, because you're going to have a lot of bulk fuel to drive around the oceans. And we're even looking at things, saying hey, if you're going to get it out of the U.S. soiland, you're going to export energy from the U.S., maybe it ought to be on U.S. ships, with U.S. mariners...

There are a lot of great things. The greatest thing about this industry that I really like is just the – it's a big family. It really is. You go to the shipyards, they are the greatest people in America working in these shipyards, and making a living wage, and they wanted to go to college and get a political science degree that does them nothing but pay student loans, but actually out there working, making things, bending steel, cutting it, putting it together, and anybody who stood as one of these big ships on a drydock and looked up, that is American greatness.

When you look up 30 stories at this giant steel behemoth, that is American greatness, that is American power and American projection, and I will tell you what, too, you can't build Navy ships without having a merchant shipbuilding going on at the same time at these shipyards anymore, because the Navy is not building enough ships.

You have to augment our Navy fleet, which in order to keep up enough ships in the Navy fleet, you have to be building American ships, merchant ships, too, because it augments what the Navy can do, so you don't have these big valleys and mountains when it comes to – so the shipyards don't have to lay off 1,000 people and hire them back again. That's what the U.S. shipbuilding does for the Navy.

So you're not going to have a big Navy fleet unless you augment all of these shipyards with making American ships and you can't force them to do it. You have to create an environment where they want to do it and you can make money doing it, and it's better for the country and its better for everybody in the long run.

And lastly, you need to get young people interested in this. I'm going to take my 13 year old son to Fort Bishon, because I think it's an amazing industry. There are amazing things that we are doing in the Gulf and things that we're doing when it comes to just the advancements made with L&G tankers. Just things like that.

We're the first ones doing L&G tankers and we're building them in the U.S.

We need to capitalize on technology and entrepreneurship and stay ahead of the curve and we need to get up there with the truckers and the rail guys and the air cargo guys and state our case and say this is important for America. This is important for this entire nation and our place in the world and our power.

So, thank you. It's an honor to be with you today. It's great to be with Miss. Helen Bentley. Anything she tells me, I do. Thank you all, God Bless you! Thank you.