

ARTICLE

## Stop Studying and Build Ships



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Maybe it is a human trait, or maybe a Washington, D.C. trait, but when confronted with a difficult problem with unpalatable solutions, there is usually an impulse to delay the moment of difficult decision by ordering a study. The U.S. merchant marine industry is the poster child for this behavior. The industry has been studied and studied, and is currently being studied, but studies don't build ships — shipyards build ships.

Going back to the Lynch Committee in 1870, the U.S. government has regularly produced studies on how to revive the U.S. merchant marine. President Trump's April 2025 maritime executive order sticks to the pattern and directs the production of more studies albeit together with an action plan that may be released early this year. Meanwhile, nothing is happening to spur the building of commercial ocean-going ships in the United States even though a bipartisan group of members of Congress and President Trump have said that goal is a national policy imperative. It is long past the point where the United States should stop studying and just build some ships.

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