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REBUILDING THE NAVY AND THE INFRASTRUCTURE BEHIND IT

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Rebuilding the Navy and the Infrastructure Behind It

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What the White House's New Shipbuilding Directive Means for America's Maritime Power

On August 13, 2026, the White House issued a presidential memorandum directing a major restructuring of the U.S. Navy's shipbuilding and maritime industrial base.

The directive recognizes a fundamental problem: America cannot expand its naval power while relying on an industrial system characterized by declining shipyard capacity, weak supplier networks, cost growth, schedule delays, excessive design changes, and bureaucratic friction.

The memorandum moves beyond simply ordering more ships. It calls for a broader reconstruction of the industrial and institutional system required to build, maintain, repair, and sustain them.

Five Strategic Moves

1. Rebuild American shipbuilding capacity

The Administration will pursue greater domestic shipbuilding capacity and competition, including a “Finland Model” under which foreign shipbuilding expertise can be brought into the United States while requiring investment in U.S. shipyards, American workforce training, technology licensing, and domestic supply chains.

2. Return to mature, proven designs

The memorandum specifically directs the Navy to prevent iterative design changes to mature parent designs. Changes to those designs will require senior-level approval.

The objective is straightforward: reduce complexity, cost growth, and delays.

3. Expand submarine and carrier maintenance capacity

The Administration has directed development of a plan for a fifth public Navy Yard, including consideration of up to three new dry docks capable of servicing current and projected submarine classes.

4. Establish a centralized Component Repair Center

A new repair infrastructure is envisioned to support the submarine industrial base and maintain spare equipment for the Los Angeles, Virginia, Seawolf, Ohio, and Columbia classes.

5. Reform NAVSEA

Perhaps most significantly, the memorandum directs a review of Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA) within 120 days.

The stated objectives include results-based accountability tied to speed of delivery, reducing bureaucracy, eliminating competing priorities, and preventing unnecessary redesigns of mature systems.

The Larger FRONTIERS Question

The directive is fundamentally about speed, scale, resilience, and control.

But rebuilding the physical Navy also raises another question:

What happens to the data infrastructure underneath the Navy?

Modern ships, submarines, shipyards, maintenance facilities, engineering organizations, logistics networks, and defense suppliers increasingly depend upon enormous volumes of digital information:

- Design data
- Sensor data
- Configuration data
- Maintenance records
- Mission data
- Engineering models
- Software
- Technical documentation
- Supply-chain information

If that data cannot move rapidly, securely, and reliably between the platforms and organizations that require it, physical industrial capacity alone cannot deliver the intended operational result.

The Administration has now made speed of delivery an explicit measure of NAVSEA performance. That makes the movement and management of trusted data part of the larger question of maritime readiness.

The Emerging Strategic Equation

- More ships require more industrial capacity.
- More industrial capacity requires more data.
- More data requires trusted, high-throughput infrastructure.

The next challenge is therefore not simply rebuilding America's shipyards.

It is building the digital infrastructure capable of supporting the Navy those shipyards are expected to produce.

That is where the next frontier of maritime industrial power may lie.

Primary Source

Rebuilding the United States Navy and America's Shipbuilding Industrial Base, White House, August 13, 2026

FRONTIERS examines the strategic forces reshaping technology, national security, infrastructure, and the future of American power.