



COMMITTEE *ON* HOMELAND SECURITY

Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Joint Field Hearing Statement of Transportation & Maritime Security Subcommittee Ranking Member Shri Thanedar (D-MI)

Port Safety, Security and Infrastructure Investment

February 5, 2024

The past couple weeks have displayed the importance of the safe and secure functioning of our Nation's maritime ports and the Marine Transportation System. As we all are aware, on March 26th, a container ship crashed into the Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore, causing the bridge to collapse and claiming the lives of six men who were working on the bridge. My heart goes out to the friends and family of the victims of this tragic accident.

In the aftermath of the bridge's collapse, the Port of Baltimore was forced to shut down all maritime traffic in and out of the port. The incident has demonstrated how critical a single port's operations can be to the whole economy, as industries and communities throughout the country have felt the impact of the port's closure—including the automobile industry in my hometown of Detroit. But while this incident has highlighted some of the vulnerabilities of our maritime sector, it has also displayed its tremendous resilience.

The Coast Guard, along with a host of Federal, State, and local partners, has worked diligently around the clock to respond to the accident, carry out search and rescue missions, assess the damage, contain hazardous materials, and begin to clear the waterways. Thanks to their hard work, a temporary channel has already been cleared, allowing the port to reopen to limited traffic. I am grateful to all the first responders who have worked to save lives and limit the damage caused by this accident.

Today, we will discuss what more can be done to ensure the safe and secure operation of our Nation's seaports and prevent further disruptions to the Marine Transportation System. We must ensure that congested waterways can be navigated safely—and since accidents will happen regardless, we must develop better ways to protect infrastructure and prevent catastrophic damage. And while there is absolutely no evidence that the accident in Baltimore was caused by any kind of cyber or physical attack, threats to the maritime sector are very real, and we must ensure the Coast Guard and its partners have the resources and tools needed to counter them.

As computer systems and networks have grown increasingly prevalent within ports, addressing cyber threats has become especially critical. Cyberattacks on ports in the U.S. and overseas have already had drastic impacts, stalling the transport of cargo and costing hundreds of millions of dollars in economic damages. In February, the Biden Administration announced a series of actions to greatly enhance port cybersecurity, including:

- an Executive Order to address Coast Guard authorities and cyber incident reporting.
- proposed regulations to establish minimum port cybersecurity requirements.
- a security directive to address vulnerabilities posed by Chinese-manufactured cranes.
- and an investment of more than \$20 billion to improve port infrastructure and initiate domestic manufacturing of cranes.

These actions will significantly improve port cybersecurity.

I look forward to hearing more from our witnesses on what support is needed to carry out these actions and on other efforts to ensure the safety and security of our Nation's seaports.

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