



THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

3010 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-3010

ACQUISITION,
TECHNOLOGY
AND LOGISTICS

The Honorable Edward R. Royce
Chairman
Committee on Foreign Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

JUN 18 2013

Dear Mr. Chairman:

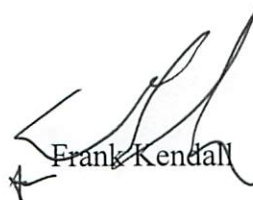
Thank you for your May 31, 2013, letter to the Secretary of Defense requesting his views on the impact of proposed changes to U.S. food aid programs on U.S. maritime readiness and national security. I am responding on his behalf.

The FY 2014 Food Aid Reform improves the U.S. Government's ability to respond to humanitarian crisis and chronic food insecurity within current budget constraints. The Department of Defense relies on the U.S. Merchant Marine to provide militarily useful ships to meet military sealift requirements and U.S. mariners for the crewing of defense reserve ships. The Department supports the President's proposed reform of the food aid programs and has assessed that it will not impact U.S. maritime readiness and national security. The Department's ability to crew the surge fleet and deploy forces and sustainment cargo will not be affected.

We are working closely with the Maritime Administration to support the U.S.-flag fleet and facilitate the retention of militarily useful ships and credentialed mariners. Based on the most recent information available, our analysis indicates that the reform proposal may affect 8-11 vessels – all non-militarily useful – and roughly 360 to 495 mariners, assuming approximately 45 mariners are employed per vessel per year. In addition, we are collaborating with the Maritime Administration and industry to establish a working group to develop a sealift strategy that ensures the long-term viability of the U.S. Merchant Marine.

The Department shares your interest in ensuring a viable and strong U.S. Merchant Marine capable of serving as a naval and military auxiliary in time of war or national emergency. An identical letter has been sent to Congressman Engel.

Sincerely,



Frank Kendall



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Ranking Member
Committee on Foreign Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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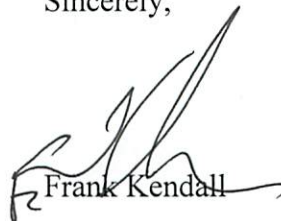
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