**Operation: United States Agile Seaport Network**

*America is the world's largest economy and its leading global trader. Our seaports are the gatekeepers of that trade and associated prosperity. Multiple government agencies regulate, monitor and secure these critical nodes. Twice in the past four years, unforeseen events significantly disrupted the international economic equilibrium of this complex system; the Hanjin bankruptcy and the COVID-19 pandemic. During the Hanjin crisis the U.S. government lacked the necessary information to provide a timely and effective response. The crisis eventually resolved itself without a major catastrophe. The nation then focused on elections. The administration changed and the new team did not inherit the crisis.*

*Despite calls from every sector of the economy, the Nation still lacks a method to share the key transportation, production and logistics data needed to respond to catastrophic supply chain disruptions. COVID-19 has so profoundly impacted the health of the international supply chain that a return to economic "normalcy" will require national economic solutions as historic as our ongoing medical responses. While we can stand up a Task Force with the right players, we still lack the real time actionable information for them to create effective solutions.*

*Today, trucks arrive at ports with cargo for ships that will not sail and without warehouse space to off load. Visibility and access to supply chain data will be critical to the recovery; without information, the Nation's strategic ability to deal with, and rebound from, the current crisis will be delayed. Others, both competitors and adversaries will seek to take advantage while we struggle to regain economic stability.*

*To be effective, as recommended by industry and the Federal Maritime Commission, information sharing must be fostered between commercial, Federal government, local government, and related stakeholders. The platform must be trusted, neutral, secure, and wartime-tested.*

*The solution is the **United States Agile Seaport Network (USASN)**. A successful prototype of this unique information sharing capability was previously deployed at multiple US Strategic Seaports. It provided real time visibility of military equipment movements between the United States and global theaters of operation. It was a highly successful public-private partnership led by a woman-owned business (The Howland Group INC. (www.thehowlandgroupinc.com)) and included many of the key stakeholders that will be needed by the USASN; United States Maritime Administration, United States Department of Defense, State/Local authorities (Commonwealth of Pennsylvania & PhilaPort) and a secure technology platform provided by The Institute for Defense Analysis, a Federally Funded R&D Activity (FFRDA).*

**CHALLENGE**

***The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted the vulnerabilities of the U.S. international supply chain for vital medical supplies. Despite the call to improve information sharing across United States seaports agreed to by all sectors of the U.S. maritime transportation industry and reported by the Federal Maritime Commission in 2018, it has not happened.***

As the recent Hanjin bankruptcy crisis showed, the best efforts of no less than seven federal agencies were stymied by the lack of information sharing and coordination between the seaports and the Federal government. While thousands of containers were stranded or lost, the information gap was responsible for decisions that were often delinked from the actual situation on the ground and from the actions of other critical players. Without credible, real-time information, the positive impact of decision-making by

this patchwork of government and commercial players was sub-optimal at best. The Hanjin crisis gradually subsided, but the need for information sharing and a coordinated response capability remained.

Now the lack of an information sharing capability is impacting the movement of vitally required medical supplies. Shippers have wisely diversified their supply chains for resilience – using different ports of entry, ocean carriers, and service providers. The U.S. seaports have adopted technologies to manage their own throughput and operations. Yet there is no capability connecting the seaports to enable collaboration and improve visibility across the distribution network.  The pre-positioning of equipment and personnel as well as disseminating this information to truckers, warehouses, and other service providers is difficult and resource intensive. These challenges are magnified when ocean carriers change routings and sailings daily. Even the Nation's largest commercial seaport, the Port of Los Angeles, has struggled to locate and move COVID-19 medical supplies without visibility from other ports. The other ports are hesitant to share data with their competitors.

To address the current crisis, speed an economic recovery, and ensure the future competitiveness of U.S. seaports, must improve collaboration and the visibility gaps must be eliminated. Key stakeholders must be able to harness and leverage data to improve data analytics, better reveal demand needs, allow pattern recognition, and reveal network capability.  Sharing data and information will:

- Enable early problem recognition and allow remediation;
- Increase supply chain resilience, predictability, throughput, and efficiency;
- Mitigate systemic risk to international supply chains and U.S. distribution networks.

**SOLUTION**

The **UNITED STATES AGILE SEAPORT NETWORK (USASN)** *will be a predictable, resilient and agile capability creating a national collaborative seaport information environment. The* **USASN** *will be a "not for profit," non-commercial, trusted, neutral, secure and wartime-tested information sharing effort that enables collaboration between seaports and their critical stakeholders. Perhaps most importantly,* **USASN** *meets industry and government requirements; and can be quickly deployed.*

**ENDURING ADVANTAGES**

**The USASN** will manage crisis response, preserving U.S. competitiveness, while achieving national strategic objectives. **The USASN** will allow stakeholders to:
- Enhance the speed, precision and security of commercial distribution networks;
- Avoid costly, time consuming delays, and logistics disruption;
- Provide greater certainty in the delivery of goods to wholesalers, distributors, and consumers;
- Support military readiness of U.S. Strategic Seaports for rapid force deployment and sustainment.

Once the immediate crisis abates, the **USASN** will contribute to a speedier economic recovery and a more resilient transportation system and will attract broad participation by continuous demonstration of commercial neutrality and timely delivery of specified outcomes. Encourage commercial investment, fostering both infrastructure and employment growth.