

Support the NEPTUNE Act (H.R. 4625)

Naval Enhancement for Protection of Telecommunications Undersea Network Equipment Act

Congressman Max Miller (R-OH-07)

Background:

Our nation's connection to global markets, information, and communication depends on fiber-optic cables no bigger than a garden hose at the bottom of the ocean. We take our ability to communicate with the outside world for granted, but 99 percent of our international internet traffic and \$10 trillion in financial transactions travel over this vitally important infrastructure daily. Their importance makes them a target during wartime. Countless historical examples, as well as recent incidents in the waters around Taiwan and in the Baltic Sea, of this infrastructure being destroyed in order to disrupt effective communications should highlight the military need for effective repair capability.

The United States's ability to repair submarine cables during wartime is questionable at best. Congress established the Maritime Administration (MARAD) operated Cable Security Fleet (CSF) in the FY2020 NDAA, which has two dedicated vessels. However, the CSF has been chronically underfunded since its inception and is intended to act as a supplement, not a complete replacement of our Naval submarine cable laying and repair capacity.

The U.S. Navy has only one submarine cable repair ship operated by Military Sealift Command, the USNS Zeus (T-ARC (7)), which has been in service since 1984. The deactivation process began in April of this year.

Legislative Summary:

This bill will give the Secretary of the Navy the authority to enter into a new contract to procure two additional submarine cable laying/repair ships and the associated material to operate the vessels. It also prohibits the Navy from decommissioning the USNS Zeus until it is operating a replacement at least as capable as the Zeus.

In a combat scenario, especially a predominantly maritime conflict like a potential war over Taiwan, it is imperative that the U.S. Navy is able to restore communications on the island. If the People's Republic of China were to sever the Republic of China's communications with the outside world, it would make defending Taiwan even more difficult.

This legislation protects our nation's submarine cable laying and repair capability and prepares us for the future of maritime warfare and emerging grey zone tactics.

For more information on this bill, please contact Michael Kraan with Rep. Miller at Michael.Kraan@mail.house.gov.