

Support the Cable Security Fleet Expansion Act

Reps. Max Miller (R-OH), Morgan Luttrell (R-TX), and Addison McDowell (R-NC)

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 subsea cables during wartime is questionable at best. Congress established the Maritime Administration (MARAD) operated Cable Security Fleet in the FY2020 NDAA, which has two dedicated vessels (CS Decisive and the CS Dependable). However, the Cable Security Fleet has been chronically underfunded since its inception and is in no position to fulfill its current obligations with only two vessels.

With the decommissioning of the USNS Zeus in 2025 (which was the U.S. Navy's last subsea cable repair vessel), our nation's sole subsea cable laying and repair capability rests with the cable security fleet.

Legislative Summary:

This legislation is a much-needed expansion of the cable security fleet program, which has not been updated since its establishment in 2020 to meet the strategic needs of today's national security challenges.

The Cable Security Fleet Expansion Act will:

- Increases the number of vessels permitted to be retained in the Cable Security Fleet from two to "not less than six";
- Grants MARAD some contract negotiation flexibility by allowing them to retain vessels for "up to \$7M per year" rather than the fixed \$5M contract that is in current law; and
- Finally, the legislation increases the total Cable Security Fleet authorization from \$10M to \$56M, which is enough for MARAD to retain at least eight vessels at the full stipend amount of \$7M.

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