VISA OBJECTIVES

- Assure DOD access to critical sealift capability for national security contingency requirements.
- Engage in joint pre-planning with government and industry.
- Support defense requirements while minimizing commercial disruption of the U.S. transportation system and national economy.
- Support the emergency deployment and sustainment of U.S. military forces.
- Establish pre-negotiated rate methodology.
- Allow for a seamless transition from peacetime to wartime with commercial U.S. transportation providers.

For additional information visit the Maritime Administration’s Web Page at http://www.marad.dot.gov

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The keystone of VISA is that it brings the carriers into the DOD planning process through participation in JPAG meetings with DOD and the Maritime Administration. This enables carriers to better meet defense transportation needs while maintaining ongoing commercial arrangements during contingencies.

The VISA program can be activated in three stages as determined by DOD with each stage representing a higher level of capacity commitment. In Stage III participants must commit at least 50 percent of their capacity. Dry cargo vessels enrolled in the MSP must commit 100 percent during Stage III. VISA participants get priority preference when bidding on DOD peacetime cargo.

The importance of the link between VISA and the MSP is clearly apparent. More than 90% of the militarily useful vessels in the U.S.-flag fleet are committed to the VISA program and over 80% of that capacity comes from MSP vessels.

Approximately 118,500 20-foot equivalent units (TEU’s) plus 3.4 million sq. ft. of militarily useful capacity is available from MSP participants. In this manner, the Government leverages a relatively modest investment to gain “assured access” to a global commercial transportation network for use in national emergencies.

The VISA program is open to U.S.-flag vessel operators of oceangoing militarily useful vessels. Interested U.S. flag vessel operators are invited to apply to the VISA program at any time. Applicants must provide satisfactory evidence that the vessels being committed to the VISA program are operational and are intended to be operated by the applicant in the carriage of commercial or government preference cargoes. VISA applications can be obtained from the Maritime Administration’s Office of Sealift Support.