

U.S. Transportation Secretary Wants to Rebuild USMMA



Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy addresses USMMA midshipmen (DOT)

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In a visit to the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy last week, U.S. Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy pledged to help find the resources needed to restore the institution's infrastructure - an investment that DOT has not prioritized before.

"You don't deserve to have an academy that's dilapidated," Duffy told midshipmen in an energetic speech. "The problem is, you guys haven't had the focus of a secretary to say, 'we're going to turn this around.'"

Duffy said that he was astonished to hear reports that some USMMA midshipmen have to live with mold in their accommodations and sometimes don't have hot water. (These allegations could not be immediately verified, but his audience applauded.) "I tell you what, if you guys had been at West Point or the U.S. Naval Academy . . . they would have quit a long time ago," he said.

Duffy called the condition of USMMA a bipartisan issue, and he was accompanied on his visit by a Democratic member of Congress, Rep. Thomas Suozzi (D-NY). Four representatives from Long Island, including Suozzi, have introduced a bill to invest \$1 billion in federal funding for infrastructure improvements at the USMMA campus over 10 years.

The secretary declined to endorse any specific figure, but he pledged to support USMMA's efforts to find funding for improvements. He told Newsday that the academy needs to be rebuilt much more quickly than 10 years.

Duffy said that part of his rationale for boosting USMMA is the need to counter China on the high seas. He pointed to China's increasing dominance in shipping and shipbuilding as a cause for concern, noting that CSSC built more tonnage in 2024 than the entire production of every American yard since WWII. "That is going to change . . . and you all are part of that change," he told the audience.