

The importance of maritime security in an uncertain world

Thank you, and good morning everyone.

It is a real pleasure to join you today (29 September 2022).

And what better backdrop for a speech on maritime security than the magnificent HMS Queen Elizabeth.

Thank you to all her crew for accommodating us this week.

Yet whatever pride I feel delivering my first speech as Transport Secretary on the largest vessel ever built for the Royal Navy, my emotions are also tinged with sadness.

Because it was Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II who performed the naming ceremony for this superb ship just 8 years ago at Rosyth in Scotland.

Suitably, she didn't use the traditional bottle of champagne, but a bottle of whisky, to launch the new vessel.

Her Late Majesty will be profoundly missed, and I would like to thank all those around the world, including many friends here in the United States, who sent condolences. Your support and demonstrations of love and respect helped ensure a fitting farewell to Britain's longest-reigning monarch.

Her Late Majesty was a champion of the Royal Navy, and she understood its historic leadership in underwriting prosperity and trade.

Shipping continues to drive the global economy today, just as it has done for millennia.

Our seas are by far the most important arteries for global trade, carrying over 95% of all goods.

But while the maritime industry normally conducts its business beyond the public gaze, recent events have thrust global supply chains into the spotlight... and in particular, the importance of resilient and secure shipping routes.

In particular, Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine has awakened and reminded us all of our need as a global community to protect maritime trade, and support an international order based on rules and principles which are enforced.

For the Department for Transport, that is about ensuring the security of all networks that move goods, people and information around the world, and that underpin our way of life and our economy.

We have seen Putin weaponise food by trying to crush the economic and humanitarian criticality of Ukraine's agricultural economy.

In blockading of Ukrainian ports, Putin has prevented the export of global grain supplies.

These actions have had a terrible impact on the world's poorest people, and driven up food and fertiliser prices.

We are doing what we can to alleviate the international food security crisis that Putin has created.

The UK and our allies pushed hard to secure the UN-brokered Black Sea Grain Initiative in July that has allowed over 3 million tonnes of grain to leave Ukrainian ports so far.

We will continue to enforce the toughest sanctions against Russia to undermine its shipping industry and reduce its export revenue.

We will continue to work with international partners to implement an oil price cap and ban on maritime insurance for Russian oil later this year.

And we will continue to stand alongside our Ukrainian friends, strengthening their hand to finish this war on their terms.

The UK is an island nation with global interests.

The numerous islands that form the UK, our Crown Dependencies and our Overseas Territories all rely on unimpeded international trade.

The shipping routes between the UK and our trading partners and allies form some of the busiest trading routes in the world.

We are highly connected to the rest of the world and will continue to be so in the future.

Our maxim is to ensure the UK is and remains the most secure and reliable nation to trade with globally.

In 2021, we published [Global Britain in a competitive age: the integrated review of security](#).

This document reaffirmed the first duty of government – to protect our people, our homeland, and our democracy.

That means protecting our ports and airports, and the trade routes vital to our national prosperity.

In an increasingly uncertain world, we must work harder to safeguard transport networks against a complex variety of security risks and natural hazards.

That's why we have published our [National strategy for maritime security](#), setting out 5 strategic objectives to help deliver the objectives of the

integrated review.

Our strategy acts as a blueprint for maritime security – explaining how we will protect our borders and ports, and address the threats we face.

We consider how we will comprehensively tackle cyber security, defending the global supply chain at a time of increased automation and evolving cyber technologies.

An important aspect of this is covered in the UK by the [National Security and Investments Act](#).

This allows us to scrutinise and potentially intervene if acquisitions of assets linked to the UK may pose national security risks.

All investment involving our transport sector is subject to thorough analysis, and must satisfy robust legal, regulatory and national security requirements.

Alongside defensive measures, we are committed to maintaining our reputation for the UK to be one of the best places to invest.

That is why, the government has established a network of [freeports](#) – to act as business hubs for international trade, innovation and commerce, and have just announced last week a next wave of [investment zones](#). These hubs will regenerate communities by attracting investment and jobs to towns and cities up and down the country.

Beyond investment in security, we have been developing our maritime security structure for several years.

A significant part of this has been creating the [Joint Maritime Security Centre](#) in 2019. This national organisation helps coordinate what we call our ‘whole system response.’

This brings together all the organisations and teams which work to deter and respond to threats – including high-readiness maritime assets.

The Joint Maritime Security Centre ensures that government, military, and law enforcement agencies have a closely-coordinated understanding of threats and risks in our own waters, and across the globe.

We continue to develop these capabilities against current and emerging threats – from terrorism, piracy or hostile states – and also help us understand security concerns for shipping routes as our climate changes and we need to adapt.

This is particularly important when looking at the Arctic and High North, which will provide faster shipping routes to Asia. There will be new security challenges which we need to anticipate and plan to provide 21st century solutions.

At home and abroad, we will always protect our interests and those of our

international partners. That means understanding how threats could arise along international trade routes or chokepoints, how they can be addressed, and what their impact might be.

We don't just consider hard security dangers.

Threats to our marine environment are also a security issue.

The fragile marine ecosystem is a precious resource, so we must respond to any dangers early. From destruction of fishing stocks to dumping of illegal waste. Any activities that harm the marine environment and destroy the livelihoods of those living in coastal communities.

In many countries this loss of income for some of the most impoverished in society can lead to people being exploited by criminal gangs and terrorists.

So tackling environmental problems early can reduce long term harm and we have a unique window of opportunity to harness technology develop new green solutions.

We must act now to reduce maritime's contribution to climate change.

Maritime transport is currently responsible for almost 3% of global greenhouse gas emissions and if it were a country, it would be the world's sixth largest emitter.

We face a massive challenge. However, with concerted global action, the worst impacts can still be averted

That is why earlier in the year, as part of the UK's revised [National shipbuilding strategy](#), we announced £206 million for a new [UK Shipping Office for Reducing Emissions](#), to invest in maritime decarbonisation.

Today, I am delighted to launch the third round of the [Clean Maritime Demonstration Competition](#) – as part of this programme of investment.

This is the largest round to date, with up to £60 million available for technology and system demonstrations in clean maritime solutions.

So far, these competitions have helped many developers working on new shipping technologies and fuels.

From hydrogen, ammonia and methanol fuels, to batteries and shore power – and from automated vessels, hybrid engines and green storage facilities at ports to energy from offshore wind infrastructure – we are working hard to pioneer the breakthrough and secure maritime technologies of the future.

Today, I am also announcing the [winners from the second round of the competition](#), allocating over £12 million to 31 different projects, including 3 green shipping corridors which can help lead decarbonisation solutions.

This will help to fulfil our commitment under the [Clydebank Declaration](#), which the UK proudly launched at COP26 with 24 signatory states, including

the US, to progress 6 innovative zero emission shipping routes by the middle of the decade.

Of course, the more we collaborate, the faster we progress.

So we will continue to work closely with US partners and others to raise the level of ambition on climate change at the International Maritime Organisation, which faces a crucial year as it revises its initial strategy on greenhouse gas reduction.

More broadly, the UK will work with like-minded partners around the world to reduce every sector in transport's reliance on fossil fuels, and embrace decarbonisation.

On Tuesday, I was in Montreal speaking at the International Civil Aviation Organisation General Assembly, urging the adoption of long-term emission goals that are consistent with the Paris Agreement.

We must push every sector to play its part – but maritime will remain critical to our success or failure as a global family.

Under the leadership of new Prime Minister, Britain will be a relentlessly outward-facing nation.

The UK will continue to utilise its hard security, economic security and diplomatic heft to build stronger global alliances.

At a time when the world is recovering from the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, and rebuilding the supply chains that feed the global economy...

At a time when Russian aggression is disrupting established trade routes...

It has never been more important for the international community to come together and protect global shipping.

We will continue to support, defend and uphold the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and protect freedom of navigation.

We will safeguard the marine environment, and help lead the transition to green shipping.

And we will work with all our partners to ensure maritime trade and travel continues to operate safely, securely and sustainably, right around the world.

Thank you.