

## **Military Surface Deployment & Distribution Command**

### **News Release**

**SDDC Command Affairs Office**

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# **Anchorage is named DoD's newest Strategic Seaport**

**By Patti Bielling  
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The port of Anchorage, Alaska, has been selected as the Surface Deployment and Distribution Command's newest Strategic Seaport.

The port becomes one of 16 in the United States that are designated by the Department of Defense for use in moving surge military cargoes in time of crisis. Anchorage is the only port outside the continental United States.

Selection of the port was made following a joint assessment by the U.S. Maritime Administration, U.S. Army Alaska, and SDDC.

"The team evaluated a number of capabilities, including highway, water and rail access, cargo staging area and berthing capacity," said Carol Caldwell, of SDDC's Transportation Engineering Agency, Newport News, Va., who conducted the engineering analysis.

Units like the 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, at Fort Wainwright, and an Airborne Brigade Combat Team, at Fort Richardson, require the ability to deploy by sea, as do units that may train in Alaska, said Brig. Gen. Mark Scheid, SDDC's Deputy Commanding General/Director of Operations.

The port is embarking on a two-phase, major expansion plan, including a road and rail expansion that will improve cargo flow and loading facilities. In addition, the marine terminal will be redeveloped to increase vessel, dock and staging capacity.

The 15 other commercial ports that are designated as Strategic Seaports are located at: Oakland, Long Beach, Port Hueneme, and San Diego, Calif.; Corpus Christi and Beaumont, Texas; Wilmington and Morehead City, N.C.; Tacoma, Wash.; Jacksonville, Fla.; Savannah, Ga.; Charleston, S.C.; Philadelphia, Pa.; Hampton Roads area ports in Virginia; and the New York/New Jersey Port Complex.



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
HEADQUARTERS, SURFACE DEPLOYMENT AND DISTRIBUTION COMMAND  
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REPLY TO  
ATTENTION OF:

SDG3-RP

MEMORANDUM FOR Commander, Surface Deployment and Distribution Command

SUBJECT: Port of Anchorage Strategic Seaport Designation

1. PURPOSE: A team comprised of Ms. Phyllis Bailey, SDDC Operations Center; LTC Darren Zimmer, Commander, 833<sup>rd</sup> Transportation Battalion; Mr. Phillip Fantozzi, 833<sup>rd</sup> Transportation Battalion; Ms. Carol Caldwell, SDDC Transportation Engineering Agency; and Ms. Lyn McClelland, Maritime Administration, visited the Port of Anchorage to assess the port's ability to satisfy the requirements of a Strategic Seaport in Alaska. Based on the forces being positioned in Alaska and the limited seaport options in the region, the team recommends that the Port of Anchorage be designated as SDDC's 15<sup>th</sup> commercial Strategic Seaport.

2. BACKGROUND: DOD has Port Planning Orders (PPOs) in place with 14 commercial seaports, all of which are in the contiguous 48 states. Currently, there are no seaports with PPOs in either Alaska or Hawaii. For several years, the Port of Anchorage has requested that they be designated as a Strategic Seaport. SDDC (then MTMC) turned down Anchorage's request in Feb 02 based on the lack of deployment requirements for that region in the PACOM OPLAN. In Jul 03, HQDA G4 requested that SDDC reconsider this decision based on force stationing changes. In the fall of 03, SDDC began the process of re-evaluating the need to have a Strategic Seaport in Alaska. At that time, the team considered the Ports of Anchorage, Seward, Valdez, and Whittier to be candidates. Based on the information obtained from surveys sent to each of these ports, Seward, Valdez, and Whittier were eliminated. In May 04, a team comprised of representatives from SDDC (Operations Center, TEA, and the 833<sup>rd</sup> Trans Bn) and MARAD conducted a site visit at the Port of Anchorage to further evaluate their potential designation as a Strategic Seaport.

3. DISCUSSION: Due to the complex nature of the issue, many factors have been considered in evaluating the idea of designating the Port of Anchorage as a Strategic Seaport.

a. US Army Alaska (USARAK) is undergoing considerable growth. Not only are they standing up the 3<sup>rd</sup> STRYKER Brigade Combat Team (172<sup>nd</sup> SBCT) at Fort Wainwright, they are also expanding a Parachute Battalion into an Airborne Brigade Combat Team at Fort Richardson. These units must have the ability to deploy by sea. In addition to this unit growth, there is a desire to turn the military's large training areas in Alaska into a national training area site, much like NTC or JRTC. Units traveling to/from this training area will require the ability to move by sea.

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b. US Army Pacific (USARPAC) and US Army Alaska (USARAK) have written letters requesting that the Port of Anchorage be given Strategic Seaport status (Tab B). This designation would support the deployment requirements of both the SBCT and the Airborne Brigade Combat Team. USARAK plans to rail unit equipment from Fort Wainwright to Fort Richardson for eventual ship loading at the Port of Anchorage. To support this plan, DA is investing in projects totaling \$165.7M at these installations (Tab C).

c. The United States Coast Guard 17<sup>th</sup> District's Marine Safety Office (MSO) in Anchorage indicated that designating the Port of Anchorage as a Strategic Seaport would be advantageous for them. It would allow them to add billets and to better plan and prepare to support military operations. In addition, MSO Anchorage notes that if the Port of Anchorage becomes a Strategic Seaport, it will ensure the existence of an active National Port Readiness Network (NPRN) Port Readiness Committee (PRC).

d. During the May site visit, SDDC laid out our deployment requirements to the Port of Anchorage. We explained the timelines and procedures for cargo reception, staging, and vessel loading, and identified our facility requirements to them. Although they do have limitations, the Port of Anchorage expressed a willingness to support the military's operational requirements.

e. The Port of Anchorage appears to be the most suitable port in Alaska to support military operations.

(1) They have good highway, water and rail access.

(2) The port has a limited amount (12.4 acres) of paved, open staging available for military operations. Availability of additional staging at the port is dependent upon current traffic levels.

(3) Elmendorf AFB, which is adjacent to the port, and Fort Richardson, which is adjacent to Elmendorf AFB, could provide an additional staging area, if needed.

(4) Their RORO berth is over 1,500' long, with an alongside depth of 35'. Any RORO vessel in the current inventory can dock there.

f. Based on the conditions at the Port of Anchorage today, challenges will be encountered during operations.

(1) The extreme tidal range limits vessel ramp usage.

(2) Vessels must be loaded sequentially instead of concurrently due to limited berth length. The result will be an increased loading window.

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(3) The tidal range, in conjunction with our vessel and ramp characteristics, may necessitate the use of smaller vessels (Cape I Class). The result will be an increased loading window.

(4) Extreme cold, ice, snow and lack of daylight during the winter months will likely impact sustained operations during these months.

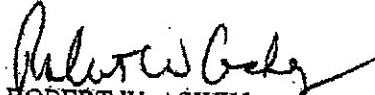
(5) The port's available staging may prove inadequate to support military operations. Alternate sites such as the old Defense Fuels Site (adjacent to the port) and nearby military installations (Elmendorf AFB and Fort Richardson) are being explored.

(6) The Port of Anchorage has Preferential Berthing Agreements in place with TOTE and Horizon. They occupy the militarily useful berths on Sundays and Tuesdays. All parties involved are willing to work with DOD on scheduling issues.

g. The port is embarking on a two-phase, major expansion plan. They are willing and eager to accommodate DOD's requirements in these plans. Phase I, the "Road and Rail Expansion Extension," will reduce traffic congestion (both highway and rail) accessing the port, and provide improved rail off-loading facilities. The rail facilities are being designed to accommodate circus-style offloading operations. Phase II, the "Marine Terminal Redevelopment Phase," will provide barge dock capacity, increase open staging, expand commercial dock space, and upgrade cranes to accommodate larger ships. This phase of the expansion includes a 30-acre staging area and a 1,000' berth that have been identified for military use in the "Port of Anchorage Marine Terminal Redevelopment Program" (Tab D).

4. RECOMMENDATION: After a careful evaluation, the team recommends that the Port of Anchorage be designated as SDDC's 15<sup>th</sup> commercial Strategic Seaport (Tab E.)

5. Questions can be directed to any of the team members listed in paragraph 1. POC for this memo is Ms. Phyllis Bailey, (757) 878-7403/DSN 826-7403.

  
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Director, Plans, Readiness  
and Mobilization