USNS Wally Schirra at Kattupalli: ship-repair cooperation

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Prelims: MSRA, LEMOA, Military Sealift Command | Published: 21 November 2026



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Why in news

The US Navy supply ship USNS Wally Schirra has reached L&T's Kattupalli shipyard near Chennai for repairs. According to the Ministry of External Affairs, this is the **fifth occasion** a US naval vessel has come to Kattupalli for repairs, a sign of growing American confidence in India's ship-repair infrastructure. The repairs fall under the India-US **Master Ship Repair Agreement (MSRA)**.

The ship and its mission

- **USNS Wally Schirra**: A Lewis and Clark-class dry cargo and ammunition ship of the US Navy's Military Sealift Command; it provides ocean transport, logistics and specialised maritime support to the US military and government agencies worldwide.

The repair journey since 2022

- **August 2022**: USNS Charles Drew, the first US Navy vessel to undergo repairs at an Indian shipyard.
- **March 2023**: USNS Matthew Perry.
- **2023**: Kattupalli signed the MSRA with the US Navy, institutionalising cooperation and enabling voyage repairs of US Navy vessels.
- **July 2023**: USNS Salvor.
- **December 2024**: USNS Charles Drew returned for repairs.

- **November 2026**: USNS Wally Schirra, the first US vessel to arrive after the **revised SOP** easing crew entry and exit came into force.

Why the revised SOP matters

The new SOP was finalised jointly by the Ministries of External Affairs, Home Affairs and Defence, the Bureau of Immigration and the Department of Defence Production, a "whole-of-government" effort to ease the movement of foreign naval crews. It is intended to simplify crew movement. MRO means maintenance, repair and overhaul; the release does not quantify any reduction in turnaround time.

Strategic significance

- **Maturing logistics ties**: Logistics cooperation has deepened since LEMOA (2016); the MSRA is its industrial dimension.
- **Indian Ocean utility**: In-theatre repair raises the operational availability of US vessels; for India it signals deeper strategic partnership.
- **Industrial signal**: Entry of the private sector (L&T) into high-end naval MRO, aligned with Make in India and defence self-reliance.

Way forward

Timely repairs, quality and easier crew movement can bring work to Indian shipyards. A repair arrangement is not an announcement of a military alliance, permanent base or joint shipbuilding programme. LEMOA is a separate logistics framework; an MSRA concerns a shipyard's repair qualification and arrangements.

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Prelims practice questions

Question 1: Consider the following statements:

Statement 1: USNS Charles Drew was the first US Navy vessel to undergo repairs at an Indian shipyard

Statement 2: The Master Ship Repair Agreement (MSRA) is an agreement between the navies of India and Japan

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

(a) 1 only

(b) 2 only

(c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 nor 2

▼ **Answer and explanation**

Answer: (a) USNS Charles Drew came to Kattupalli in August 2022; the MSRA was signed between L&T's Kattupalli shipyard and the US Navy in 2023.

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Question 2: With reference to USNS Wally Schirra, choose the correct statement:

(a) It is a US Navy aircraft carrier

(b) It is a dry cargo and ammunition ship of the Military Sealift Command

(c) It is a US Coast Guard patrol vessel

(d) It is a nuclear-powered submarine

▼ **Answer and explanation**

Answer: (b) It is a Lewis and Clark-class dry cargo and ammunition ship providing logistics support under the Military Sealift Command.

FAQ

In short: US supply ship USNS Wally Schirra has arrived at Kattupalli (Chennai) for repairs; per the MEA it is the fifth such visit and the first after the revised SOP.

Q: What is the MSRA?

The Master Ship Repair Agreement, a 2023 contract between the Kattupalli shipyard and the US Navy allowing the yard to carry out voyage repairs of US vessels.

Q: What changed with the revised SOP?

Entry and exit of foreign naval crews has been simplified; five central ministries/departments framed it together, and Wally Schirra is the first vessel to arrive under it.

Q: What does India gain?

A showcase of high-end MRO capability, work for the defence industry, and deeper strategic partnership in the Indian Ocean.

Sources

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2. US Military Sealift Command, ship class and inventory: https://www.msc.usff.navy.mil/Ships/Ship-Inventory/Dry-Cargo-Ammunition-Ships/
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