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HEARING

ON

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2021

AND

OVERSIGHT OF PREVIOUSLY AUTHORIZED PROGRAMS

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ONE HUNDRED SIXTEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS HEARING

ON

FISCAL YEAR 2021 NAVY AND MARINE CORPS READINESS POSTURE

HEARING HELD
MARCH 12, 2020



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[There were no Questions submitted during the hearing.]

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[There were no Questions submitted post hearing.]

FISCAL YEAR 2021 NAVY AND MARINE CORPS READINESS POSTURE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS,
Washington, DC, Thursday, March 12, 2020.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 9:02 a.m., in room 2118, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. John Garamendi (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN GARAMENDI, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM CALIFORNIA, CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS

Mr. GARAMENDI. We will get started here. The committee will come to order. As we notice, this is a rather vacant room. The attending physician has recommended that we hold hearings with as few people as possible in attendance at the hearing. These hearings are available via C–SPAN. And those who want to watch this and listen to the hearing, they can certainly do so on the C–SPAN channels. I want to thank our witnesses for bringing only essential staff. And I have one staff. Doug, you have one staff with us?

Mr. LAMBORN. I have people that are essential that are not here. I don't want their self-esteem to suffer.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Well said. And I will just say, me too. Now those who really want to come into the room, it is an open hearing and you are welcome to do so. Well, you can do so. Welcome is another matter. But you certainly can come to the hearing.

Let us go ahead and get started. Opening statement, I will probably do most of this, because it is relevant to all the things that we need to cover here.

Today, the subcommittee will hear from the Assistant Secretary of Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition, the Vice Chief of Naval Operations, and the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps on the state of the Navy and Marine Corps readiness, and how the fiscal year 2021 operation and maintenance budget supports training, weapon system maintenance, in alignment with the National Defense Strategy.

For the past several years, we have heard concerns about the state of the Navy and Marine Corps preparedness for great power competition. At the same time, a series of devastating accidents at sea, in the air, and on the ground have illustrated the urgent need to direct sustained attention to training of our personnel and the maintenance of our platforms.

While my colleagues on the Seapower Subcommittee may have their own views on this year's smaller shipbuilding budget, I must

applaud the Navy for its attempt to protect readiness and the message that this budget sends about the risks of creating a hollow force.

As for the Marine Corps, I would like also to recognize the Commandant's forward-leaning visionary planning guidance and look forward to learning about the sustained concepts that will support a realigned Marine Corps.

There are several issues at the forefront of my mind. I am extremely troubled that the Department, in its wargaming, budget planning, and public narrative, seems incapable of confronting the deteriorating sealift capacity. This year, we learned that only 40 percent of the Ready Reserve Force was able to get underway in TRANSCOM's [U.S. Transportation Command's] turbo activation exercise. The decline of the logistics force is an existential threat to our deterrence capability. And this issue cannot be held hostage to institutional paralysis any longer. There have been numerous hearings on this, including yesterday afternoon, and in which we went into this in some depth. We may explore it today also.

From the perspective of the subcommittee, this means we must ensure we are appropriately investing in recapitalizing, maintaining, and manning our sealift vessels. We must also keep an eye on the ball when it comes to ship maintenance, with only one-third of the availabilities delivered on time in recent years. We are still not where we need to be.

As Secretary Esper stated in his testimony to the full committee, maintenance challenges are preventing the Navy's force generation model from operating as intended.

I look forward to hearing about the plans that the Navy has in fiscal year 2021 to improve the timeliness, modernization of the public shipyards, and provide more stability and predictability to the private shipyards, and invest in building a skilled workforce.

This subcommittee has also focused extensively on aviation readiness. While we saw encouraging results from Secretary Mattis' 80 percent mission capability initiative, the Navy and Marine Corps needs to avoid regressing in the meantime, and demonstrate sustained commitment to remedying the problems with depot throughput, spare parts, and maintenance practices that have motivated this effort in the first place.

In addition, I am deeply concerned about the cost of sustaining the F–35 and the Department's lack of access to key technical data necessary for organic maintenance. We will undoubtedly come back and deal with the F–35 in detail at other hearings. I note today it was reported there are 883 flaws in the F–35 system. We are not going to cover all of them today, probably not even one.

Finally, we have held several hearings on the tragic ship, aviation, and ground vehicle accidents of the past several years. I note today that the U.S. Army had one death at Fort Irwin yesterday. And the Marine Corps had one death and two injuries in an accident in the UAE [United Arab Emirates] yesterday. Tragic as it is, we are going to focus on that and deal with it.

I am particularly concerned that the ground vehicle mishaps, which do not involve multi-billion dollar assets and platforms, often receive less attention. Nevertheless, they are deadly. And when they add up, the numbers are quite large.

Training safety is of paramount importance. And we need to prioritize identifying and addressing the root causes of these accidents.

I look forward to our discussion today. With that I turn to Ranking Member Lamborn of Colorado for his opening remarks.

Mr. Lamborn.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Garamendi can be found in the Appendix on page 23.]

STATEMENT OF HON. DOUG LAMBORN, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM COLORADO, RANKING MEMBER, SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS

Mr. LAMBORN. Thank you, Chairman Garamendi. Today, we will hear testimony regarding the readiness of the Navy and the Marine Corps to execute the National Defense Strategy under the President's fiscal year 2021 budget request. We find ourselves at a critical point where the need to modernize is undeniable, but I am increasingly concerned how we are going to balance modernization with our current readiness needs.

Just this week, we learned that the Navy plans to cancel the planned service life extensions for Flight I and Flight II *Arleigh Burke*-class destroyers [DDG 51s]. The impact of this decision is that the Navy will lose 27 DDG 51s between 2026 and 2034. My understanding is that this decision was driven by cost concerns, but it is unclear how the Navy will recover this capability, or how the fleet's readiness will be affected. This is a major deviation from the plan, and I am concerned that the committee was not briefed about this information before it was made public.

The Navy has made some progress in improving the cost and schedule performance for ship and submarine maintenance availabilities, mostly through more realistic scheduling by the fleet commanders, level loading work in the shipyards, improved contracting practices that all reduce administrative waste and that encourage private industry investment, as well as leveraging data to reduce the amount of unforecasted work.

That said, in each of the last 2 fiscal years, the Navy has requested reprogramming in the magnitude of $1 billion to cover shortfalls in its ship depot account. This would lead us to believe that significant improvement is still required.

Because approximately two-thirds of ship availabilities complete in the second year, the Navy is requesting $1.3 billion to continue a fiscal year 2020 pilot program that authorizes private contract ship maintenance for the Pacific Fleet through the Other Procurement, Navy account, which is 3-year money. The committee will be watching this pilot closely as it should improve performance and has the potential to bring costs down.

As I stated in the TRANSCOM hearing yesterday, I am deeply concerned about the health of the surge sealift fleet—by the mid-2030s, over half of which will be unusable. With 85 percent of the joint force based in the United States, our military readiness is potentially irrelevant without the capability and capacity to project those forces to a fight. The budget request would only fund the purchase of two used vehicles—and I want to—excuse me, vessels, and

I want to hear from our witnesses what the Navy's investment plan is to address this growing concern.

General Berger, the Commandant, has embarked the Marine Corps on a transformation effort to ensure that it is prepared to fight near-peer competitors. His guidance is that, quote, "The Marine Corps will be trained and equipped as a naval expeditionary force in readiness, and prepared to operate inside actively contested maritime spaces in support of fleet operations," unquote.

I fully support this effort, and I will be looking forward to hearing from General Thomas how the Corps will balance this transformation effort with current readiness requirements. As Chairman Garamendi has pointed out, logistics capability will determine our success or failure in a future Pacific fight. We also look forward to learning more about how the Navy and Marine Corps will sustain this future force.

Finally, the Navy and Marine Corps have made significant progress with aircraft readiness under the MC [mission capable] 80 construct that Secretary Mattis put in place. The F/A–18 and EA–18G fleets have met the 80 percent mission-capable objective.

While the F–35 has not achieved this goal, it has improved from 54 to 72 percent. The fifth-generation F–35 is a game-changing capability that our warfighters need. We owe it to them to ensure that we get the sustainment for this program right. I continue to have significant concerns about intellectual property issues in this program. We need to have better clarity on the impact that the program will have on service sustainment budgets.

So, I look forward to the testimony of our witnesses. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I yield back.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Lamborn can be found in the Appendix on page 25.]

Mr. GARAMENDI. Thank you, Mr. Lamborn. I would like now to welcome our guests: James Geurts, Assistant Secretary of Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition; Admiral Robert Burke, Vice Chief of Naval Operations; and General Gary Thomas, Assistant Commandant, United States Marine Corps.

Mr. Geurts, if you would care to start.

STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES F. GEURTS, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE NAVY FOR RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND ACQUISITION, DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

Secretary GEURTS. Chairman Garamendi, Ranking Member Lamborn, distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the readiness posture of the Department of Navy. Before I begin, I would like to express the Department's deepest condolences to the family members of the servicemen who tragically lost their lives in recent days. Their sacrifice for our Nation serves as a stark reminder of the gravity of our responsibilities to our warfighters.

Properly maintained, equipped, and manned ships and aircraft are critical to ensuring the Navy and Marine Corps are ready to respond when called. The fiscal year 2021 budget request sustains the commitments to improve readiness made in fiscal year 2017 all the way through fiscal year 2020.

With consistent funding, we have stopped the decline in readiness, and we are seeing positive indicators that our maintenance issues are making a difference. For instance, our aviation depot-level Periodic Maintenance Interval inspection cycles on the F/A–18 are over 57 percent faster. Our supply chain is more robust, and our maintenance teams are more efficient. As noted last October, we achieved an 80 percent mission-capable rate for the F/A–18 E/F's.

We are applying the same holistic reform approach to ship maintenance in both the public and private yards, making significant changes to our maintenance planning, leveraging modern commercial statistical methods, and using a wide range of contracting options with the authorities this committee has given us so we can properly plan, buy, and execute, with stable workforce, and in the process, save the Navy and the taxpayer time and money.

In the private shipyards, a combination of efforts have taken us from a 37 percent on-time completion rate to an encouraging 50 percent current on-time completion rate, and we are forecasting over 70 percent this year. In our public yards, we have reduced the maintenance backlog delays by 50 percent.

Although we have made significant gains, steady investment and close attention to this issue is required for us to recapitalize and get to where we need to. Our end goal is to deliver our ships and aircraft on time and in full.

We look forward to working closely with Congress to achieve that goal, and we thank you for the strong support this subcommittee has always provided our sailors and Marines and their families.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today, and we look forward to answering your questions.

[The joint prepared statement of Secretary Geurts, Admiral Burke, and General Thomas can be found in the Appendix on page 27.]

Mr. GARAMENDI. Thank you, Secretary Geurts.

Admiral Burke.

STATEMENT OF ADM ROBERT P. BURKE, USN, VICE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS, DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

Admiral BURKE. Good morning, Chairman Garamendi, Ranking Member Lamborn.

Mr. GARAMENDI. We are going to work on name pronunciation here. Is that Geurts? Is that correct?

Secretary GEURTS. Yes, sir.

Admiral BURKE. Good morning, Chairman Garamendi, Ranking Member Lamborn, and distinguished members of the subcommittee. On behalf of the Chief of Naval Operations and the sailors, civilians, and families of the United States Navy, thank you for inviting me to testify today.

Our Nation depends on a ready Navy-Marine Corps team, and your commitment to the training, maintenance, and modernization of our fleet will ensure not only a Navy ready for today's fight, but also a Navy ready to meet the challenges of tomorrow. We are excited about where we are headed, but we feel a sense of urgency and we know that we need to go faster.

The Navy's distributed maritime operations concept works hand in glove with the Marine Corps expeditionary amphibious-based operations concept in order to maximize our lethality and complicate things for our adversaries.

It is a new way of doing business, and we are experimenting and exercising each and every day, working together as one team, out and about with today's fleet, while at the same time carefully evaluating the details of the capabilities we are going to need to improve the execution of those concepts with a future fleet.

That said, our budget top line is essentially flat throughout the Future Years Defense Plan. And accounting for inflation, we really lose buying power. In looking back, that top line has been essentially constant in same-year dollars since about 2010. And as you have heard before, it is about enough to keep a fleet of between 305 and 310 ships properly manned, trained, equipped, and maintained. And we are not going to recommend increasing ship numbers if we can't keep them properly equipped, manned, and ready to go out and fight. So, given that reality, we prioritized with our 2021 budget the *Columbia*-class ballistic missile submarine first. It is the replacement for our Nation's primary strategic deterrent force, and we have to get that ship class out in time. There is absolutely no margin for schedule slip, as the *Trident*-class submarines originally designed for a 30-year life are reaching the end of their 40-plus-year extended lifetime.

Our next priority is unquestionably readiness. We continue investments to preserve the momentum we have established to ensure that your Navy is fully ready to fight tonight. After that, we are keeping the press on modernization. We continue to invest in those key capabilities that are going to be the game changers for the future fleet. Artificial intelligence, hypersonics, unmanned, directed energy; things of that nature. And finally, capable capacity. That is the pursuit that continues. So, shipbuilding does remain a priority.

On readiness—and I know many of you have been to sea recently and seen this firsthand—we are making good progress, and as Secretary Geurts has also just told you. But we have to keep in mind readiness is a long game, and it requires a continued and stable commitment to funding to enable us to overcome years of wartime operating tempo, the budget variability that we have seen, and, frankly, the effects of sequestration which we are still working to overcome.

Your continued dedication and attention since the supplemental funding bills in fiscal year 2017, has made an incredible difference. And fiscal year 2021 budget will continue to build on the readiness recovery we began then, and it will allow us to continue to train our force for the high-end fight, while we continue to simultaneously press to improve ship, submarine, and aircraft depot maintenance. Efforts like Secretary Geurts described, with their naval sustainment system for our F/A–18 strike fighter force, and a whole host of what we call performance-to-plan programs are being applied across the board, and we are beginning to see results. We are not there yet, but we are on a positive trajectory.

On behalf of the sailors, civilians, and families who make up our Navy team, thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Thank you, Admiral Burke.
General Thomas.

STATEMENT OF GEN GARY L. THOMAS, USMC, ASSISTANT COMMANDANT, HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

General THOMAS. Chairman Garamendi, Ranking Member Lamborn, and distinguished members of this subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you and discuss the readiness of the United States Marine Corps. Along with our Navy partners, we are ready to fight today, while at the same time preparing for the challenges outlined in the National Defense Strategy. The Marine Corps budget execution over the past 2 years prioritized readiness recovery and made key investments in lethality as we turned to great power competition. Stable and predictable funding, combined with your support during our hurricane recovery efforts, have greatly improved readiness, supported our Marines and their families, and sustained important modernization efforts.

The fiscal year 2021 budget request sustains the commitment to improve readiness made over the last few years. This request funds our major readiness accounts, allowing for more spare parts, completion of critical maintenance, increased depot throughput, and more flying hours. At the same time, the Marine Corps is focusing on the pacing threat to ensure that we are ready for the future operating environment.

Through careful analysis and war gaming, we are developing new warfighting concepts, and have identified the need to invest in additional capabilities in support of joint and naval forces. These investments reflect a pivot to a new force design which we will begin to implement this year.

With your support, your Marines will continue to maximize the precious resources that have been entrusted to us. Stable and predictable funding will ensure that the Marine Corps is a ready, modern force that is prepared for a changing strategic environment.

I look forward to answering your questions.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Thank you, General.

There are a whole series of questions that we have, so let me—Mr. Scott, you may not know it, but we are now implementing the advice of the House, and that is to limit access to—limit and suggest that people not come to the hearing but rather to watch the hearing on the television. And that is—and staff limitations.

Mr. LAMBORN. He is allowed to be here.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Members are allowed to be here, yes. And so it goes.

A whole series of questions that are out there. We should start with what we now see in this committee which is social distancing.

I want to put this to Admiral Burke and to General Thomas, could you please describe how your Navy and Marine Corps are dealing with the operations in the age of coronavirus. General Thomas, you seem prepared, so jump into it.

General THOMAS. Chairman, as you know, we are following, you know, the direction of the CDC [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] and the Department of Defense. The Secretary of Defense, just this morning, signed, you know, additional guidance

that will restrict travel for—that will hold Marines, soldiers, sailors, and airmen in place for 60 days for Level 3 countries, and then restricting travel for dependents for those Level 2 countries. Within the Marine Corps, you know, we are doing all the things that, I think, we are starting to see across the country. We are reviewing our disease, you know, containment plans. We have—we are starting to reduce, much like we are seeing here in this committee room, large gatherings.

We are implementing measures to screen and quarantine Marines when necessary. And we are also screening at places that are, you know, unique in the sense that they bring people from all over the country; for example, entry-level training. Those are the broad steps that the Marine Corps is taking in alignment with the Department of Defense, and the Centers for Disease Control.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Thank you, General.

Admiral Burke.

Admiral BURKE. Yeah, the main concern for the Navy, like, I think, all the services is the well-being of our sailors and their family members. That is our absolute top priority. We are also providing support, as are the other services, to Health and Human Services [Department] and the Centers for Disease Control, working under the coordination of the U.S. Northern Command. So, each of the services are supporting their efforts as needed.

And as General Thomas outlined, each of the services are following the CDC guidance as minimum requirements, with implementation above and beyond those requirements as necessary that meet the unique needs of the service. For example, with our ships at sea, we are very sensitive to the fact that we are moving from place to place rapidly. We do not want to be the source of, you know, transmission of the virus.

So, we put measures in place right away in the Pacific early on. And, now, it is globally, ships, once they leave a port, will stay at sea for 14 days, monitoring their crew, ensuring that no symptoms are out there. So, effectively, a self-quarantine before pulling into another nation, and then monitoring prior to pulling into ports, and things of that nature. And then basically all of the other things that General Thomas outlined as well, similar.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Secretary Geurts, anything to add?

Secretary GEURTS. Yes, sir. Certainly a little bit of a longer term, but we are taking a close look at all of our acquisition programs. We have been working for a long time on supply chain integrity. So, this plays into the supply chain, understanding our supply lines where we have got fragility, planning forward on that. So, a little longer term, but could be a longer impacting element is going to be that on all of our acquisition and sustainment programs.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Okay. A couple of things. Part of that supply chain are your medicines. Our colleague on this committee, Vicky Hartzler, and I have introduced legislation dealing with drugs, the availability of drugs. Most of which on the generic side, 90-some percent come from China. And that supply chain is already interrupted. And it could be a national strategic problem since China could decide they don't want those to come to America. So, we are looking at how to develop our own domestic production of these key

ingredients for that. And the rest of the supply chain is similarly at risk given this virus.

I think I will go into one other set of questions here, and that has to do with the accidents. I notice in the audience Kathleen, whose fiancé was killed in a rollover accident in Camp Pendleton more than a year ago, I would like all of you—I noticed also a shipboard accidental death occurred over the last couple of days, somebody falling down a stairwell. So, let's deal with that issue of accidents, General Thomas.

General THOMAS. Thank you, Chairman. Just for context, you know we have—after having 5 years of no vehicle rollovers, or serious Class A, we had a spike last year of three which included the tragic loss of Lieutenant McDowell. And then we have had also two already this year. This is not a—it is not a—this is not a resource issue. There are several things that we have done immediately to improve the safety in these instances. We have instituted additional training for the crews manning these vehicles. We have increased the use of our tactical vehicle simulators. And then, I think, perhaps most helpful would be across our entire training areas, which, as you know, are quite large, we are designating and marking, you know, hazardous terrain as a risk mitigation.

And then, finally, just in terms of training, you know, we are redoubling our efforts to mitigate risk through a crawl, walk, run approach. We are also, you know, during training, we are building in opportunities for remediation for—it could be individuals or crews that need a little bit more training time. And we are emphasizing hazard identification and assessment prior to each training opportunity.

Mr. GARAMENDI. If I recall, in previous hearings we had asked for an analysis of the accidents, and what was the cause, and what could have prevented that. I don't believe we have received that yet. So, if you could attend to that and provide us with that information. So, how is it going?

General THOMAS. Chairman, we will get you that information this week.

Mr. GARAMENDI. If you would, please.

Admiral Burke.

Admiral BURKE. Whether it is major accidents, like the *McCain* and the *Fitzgerald* or minor, you know, aviation incidents moving aircraft on the back of an aircraft carrier causing equipment damage, we treat them the same.

And, fundamentally, the root cause of both of those issues is a cultural one where people are either complacent, or there is a culture of lack of questioning attitude. People aren't inquisitive about what they are doing and what the ramifications of not doing it properly are.

So in the case of the *McCain* and *Fitzgerald,* we have talked to you—and I think Vice Admiral Brown was here a month ago talking to you in detail about the actions that came out of our Strategic Readiness Review and our Comprehensive Review.

All of those actions, though, are really designed at sort of a three-step process to, you know, first get the surface force safe to operate, and then get them to the point where they could operate effectively to get out and get the reps and sets that they needed

to build confidence with a goal of turning the corridor of reaching this goal of culture of excellence, where every watch stander, every sailor, every team member on every component of team is seeking to become a better version of themselves, seeking to make the team better all the time.

They are asking if the procedure is right, if they could optimize it, if they could make it more safe, whatever the objective of that procedure is. And we have places in the Navy where that's done very well. We have places where it just needs to improve, and we are building that culture in.

The same thing in aviation maintenance mishaps, we have put mechanisms in place. Our air boss, Vice Admiral "Bullet" Miller, has brought in outside organizations to teach this and build it into the DNA of our maintenance processes and reinforce it as we go and build it into the culture, so that it is reinforced at every step. In cases like this, when you're doing complex, technical process, sometimes slower is faster if you are being very deliberate about it and talking through these consequences before you go to the next step. So, it is elements like that.

Mr. GARAMENDI. My final question, and then I am going to turn to Mr. Lamborn. Reported in today's review of what is going on in the military is this little note: The Navy mulling taking sailors off forward-deployed ships as part of a $40 billion savings drive. Manning forward-deployed ships with fewer sailors.

We have been working the exact opposite direction, Admiral Burke. What is this all about?

Admiral BURKE. I can't speak to what that article is about. I am not aware of any initiative to reduce manning at forward-deployed naval ships. We are working the opposite direction. We've—the average destroyer right now across the Navy, but first was in FDNF [Forward Deployed Naval Forces] forces, Japan and Europe, you know, we have added 25 to 30 sailors per ship and we are adding more. We are simultaneously growing the Navy with more ships, and we are adding more sailors to every ship because of the things that we learned. I am not sure what the article is referring to.

Mr. GARAMENDI. It must have been overheard at some bar late at night and——

Admiral BURKE. Perhaps. I will look into it.

Mr. GARAMENDI [continuing]. Incorrectly reported.

Mr. Lamborn.

Admiral BURKE. But we are continuing to work towards improving manning. And we have budgeted for it, and it is a matter of the accessions coming through the training pipelines and getting there.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Thank you, Admiral.

Mr. LAMBORN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Secretary Geurts, the decision to cancel the service life extensions on the DDG 51 class is concerning—because if allowed to stand, this will cause the Navy to lose 27 destroyers between fiscal years 2026 and 2034. So, what is the business case for this decision, and how will the Navy reconstitute this capability?

Secretary GEURTS. Yes, sir, and I apologize upfront if that caught the committee off guard. And we should have communicated better with you on that. To put it in perspective, what we are talking

about is post-FYDP [Future Year Defense Plan] changes. So, none of these would be until the 2026 through 2030 area. So, that was one of the reasons it didn't get communicated clearly given the shipbuilding plan.

We had originally looked at adding service life to destroyers, if you recall, in hearings last year and the year before; that was one of the ways we were increasing the naval size. What this shows you is some of the stark choices the Navy is having to make with a relatively flat line. Service life extensions do add to the size of the fleet, but they kind of just push the cliff to the right. And so, we have got to be cautious you don't keep extending forever without building, because eventually you will run out your ability to extend.

And so, it reflected some hard choices we had to make in long-term planning. Having said that, this is a 2026 and out piece, and it is something we are going to continue to look at what is right business case. My guess as we go closer to that, we made some pretty big swings from 35- to 45-year service lives for our oldest destroyers. I think we will look at those in a little bit more micro detail as we get closer to make sure that business case is there.

As we are seeing now with cruisers, there is a point where extending these older ships does become—the cost is not worth the benefit, particularly if we don't have the ship maintenance enterprise working at full efficiency.

And, so, my other expectation is we drive ship maintenance effectiveness and efficiency higher, that may allow us to extend those ships without breaking the budget.

Mr. LAMBORN. Okay. And you brought up an important point, the shipyard availabilities. I know we are making progress on that, and I appreciate that. How is the pilot program, though, going that will use procurement funding—and have you learned any lessons at this point that might be applied to other major programs?

Secretary GEURTS. Yes, sir. One, thanks for the support of Congress to put that pilot in place. I think it will be an important pilot force. We are a little bit early in that pilot because it is just in the first year. The Navy is committed to fund that pilot in the budget. So, we moved the money commensurate with the money that was moved in last year's budget.

So, as we work through that, I think we will get efficiency. One, we won't go through the fiscal year boundary issues that we have with O&M [operation and maintenance]. And two, it gives us a little more flexibility as we gain efficiency in these availabilities. We can then reapply those funds quickly to future availabilities. My commitment after, you know, another year or two, is to report back to Congress and——

Mr. LAMBORN. Please do.

Secretary GEURTS [continuing]. We can decide whether to scale, sustain, or stop.

Mr. LAMBORN. Okay. Please do. Thank you.

Lastly, on the Ready Reserve Fleet, given that over half the sea [sealift] fleet will be unusable by the mid-2030s, I am concerned that we are not seeing a more significant investment in recapitalizing the fleet.

So, what percentage of the MARAD [United States Maritime Administration] and MSC [Military Sealift Command] fleets does it make sense to overhaul?

And Admiral Burke, do you have a perspective on this also?

Secretary GEURTS. I will say from the acquisition side, we have got to work together with Congress. The initial cost to replace those as new-build ships without some of the initiatives yet in place to revitalize our commercial shipbuilding industry, put those ships as very expensive ships. And I don't believe we want to be putting half a billion dollars into new builds. I don't think that is the right strategy.

We are doing some near-term mitigations in terms of additional service life extensions, and as spoken about earlier, some purchases of used ones. I think we have got to work together to find the right balance. New construction isn't off the table, but until we can come up with an affordable way to do that, I don't think, you know, replacing that whole fleet with brand new construction ships is going to be the answer either. We have just got work to do together to find the right balance.

Admiral BURKE. Sir, I would echo what Secretary Geurts said at—first of all, I absolutely agree that sealift is incredibly critical to our efforts. And with what we know right now, we are applying a balanced approach. We have put significant money towards operation and sustainment funding for the sealift fleet in the PB [President's budget] 2021 budget as a first measure. We are also applying the performance-to-plan types of techniques to everything that we are doing in the day-to-day efforts, and shoring up those practices.

We ran the turbo activation exercise that you referred to. That was Navy-initiated, the fourth one of the year that we put a lot of money towards to validate what we thought was a readiness deficit so that we could go after this. So, the results were not surprising. We wanted to know this so that we could go after it.

I think the balanced approach, though, consists of going after the maintenance, getting better at that, making it more cost-effective, more efficient, going after the service life extensions for the ships that have reasonable life after that. We did six last year. We are doing 10 this year. We will do more next year. We are on track to do that. And then, it is a mixed of buy used and buy new.

So, thank you for the authorities to do the incremental funding on the new ship. We have money in PB 2021 that will work towards a 2023 layout for a new construction that will deliver in 2026, the first one of a new class. And, then, the used ships, we will follow suit. We got the authorities all in place and lined up for the first purchase, and the second purchase this year, and then another one, the following year, seven in total right now.

So, I think we are in good shape down that track as we learn more about what is in the art of the possible in the new construction, and we will figure out the balance.

And Chairman Garamendi brought forward some interesting proposals of working through industry to help us with that new construction piece. And we are really looking forward to working with the committee on that.

Mr. LAMBORN. Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Thank you.

Ms. Houlahan.

Ms. HOULAHAN. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, gentlemen, for coming today. My questions have largely to do with shipbuilding, as I come from Pennsylvania and we have both private and Navy shipyards in Philadelphia and small businesses that support the naval shipbuilding industry.

The Navy has been using the engineering readiness and assessment team program for over a decade, employing retired sailors as contractors to help current crews maintain Navy ships and train their crews. These programs seem to have different requirements on the east and west coasts, and are routinely exposed to funding and contractual instabilities.

So, my question is, why are there different contracts and requirements and funding? And why are they not aligned under one command and resource sponsored to ensure more predictable funding and consistency throughout the fleet?

Secretary GEURTS. Yes, ma'am. I just became aware of that issue. So, I would like to take that for the record. I will go look at the acquisition strategy of why do we have multiple contracts and multiple standards, and if it is okay to come back with you in more detailed response and——

Ms. HOULAHAN. Absolutely.

Secretary GEURTS [continuing]. Address the issue. I agree there should not be different requirements and different performance standards.

Ms. HOULAHAN. Perfect. Thank you very much.

The Navy also has struggled to forecast ship depot maintenance costs and requested congressional approval to reprogram about $1 billion to cover shortfalls in fiscal year 2019 and 2020. What are we doing to better predict the cost of maintaining the Navy ships?

Secretary GEURTS. As we have been digging into this fairly complex system, one of the key contributors to extending both the costs and the delays in the availabilities was a poor planning on the front end. We struggled a little bit to submit a budget 2 years ahead of execution, but that is not an excuse for not planning it right from the start.

So, we have taken kind of a big data approach to that, updated our data models so that we are taking much more into account what is really driving those delays, whether it is port loading, or availability of skilled workers, or all the other associated factors. That new model so far has delivered five on five on time. For this fiscal year, that is part of what's getting us from a 30 percent to 70 percent. I would be lying if I said it was perfect. But I think that is informing, and we've rolled our 2021 budget and out using that model.

Now, it is still a dynamic thing. I would expect we may have small reprogrammings as we get through execution in year if we find something really, you know, unexpected, but a $1 billion-a-year swing should not be kind of standard business.

Ms. HOULAHAN. Excellent. My next question is that the Navy has recently met its goal of employing 37,000 public shipyard workers. Are you confident—and I believe I asked a very similar question last year—that you have the right mix between management and

skilled trades? And when do you plan to complete the next wage grade study to ensure that the balance is right?

Secretary GEURTS. Yes, ma'am. So, I think, yes, we hired ahead. So, the good news is we have got the workers here, we actually got them there using a lot of the authorities that this subcommittee and others have given us for direct hiring authority. That is good. Our challenge is they are relatively inexperienced, about 50 percent less than 5 years. But our opportunity is they are relatively inexperienced and they are digital natives. So, our main focus right now is getting them trained up and proficient.

Let me also get back to you, for the record, on when we will do the next wage grade study there, but that is something that we continually look at. We are doing the same thing on the fleet readiness center from aviation side as well.

Ms. HOULAHAN. And how does this budget invest to better leverage and expand private shipyard capacity?

Secretary GEURTS. So, again, some of that is in how we plan the contracts, which I have talked about. I have been meeting now quarterly with all the CEOs [chief executive officers] from ship repair. So, the vice and I actually sit down with them about once a quarter to really get the business environment correct. We got into a just-in-time contract award, one contract at a time, that is not efficient. So, we are trying to find the right balance of competition, yet enough planning horizon. I think one of the things that is helping is grouping maintenance so you will win, say, three destroyers back to back so that you can hire a workforce, they can get proficient. And that will help us both drive schedule efficiency as well as drive costs down through that efficiency.

Ms. HOULAHAN. And I apologize—oops, is my time up? My time is up. So many questions. Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. GARAMENDI. There is a hearing, or a briefing, going on for all Members of the House having to do with the coronavirus, and so many members of this committee are attending that.

Mr. Scott.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I think that a briefing also has to do with the economic realities of what is happening out there as well. And that is one of the things I know we as a committee will be wrestling with as we write the NDAA [National Defense Authorization Act], is what are the actual revenues going to be and what timeline is that based on, and having an election coming up in November. As much as none of us like CRs [continuing resolutions] and as much as you don't like CRs, if I were a betting man, I would bet that you end up having to operate under a CR until—until after the election is over. Well, I would rather be honest than——

Mr. GARAMENDI. Go ahead.

Mr. SCOTT. Mr. Geurts, I am going to say this. This does not apply specifically to this meeting. I did speak with Dr. Roper yesterday. I like Dr. Roper. I think he is a great man. I think we are fortunate to have people like Dr. Roper and yourself that will work for the government knowing the opportunities that are outside. It is every bit as patriotic as the people out there fighting with the guns every day, in my opinion.

I do want to mention this, though. I am concerned with some of the more advanced technologies that as we move to things like ABMS [Advanced Battle Management System], that the other branches are not engaged during the development aspect of things. Army's Future Command came out and said a couple of months ago, Hey, ABMS looks great for the Air Force, but not sure it will work for us. We understand now the Air Force is bringing the Army in in the development.

And I have a concern about as we develop these advanced weapon systems, these advanced systems as a whole, if they are going to be operated by one branch and serve the other branches, that there is not more coordination in the development of those systems.

Admiral BURKE. Representative Scott, if you don't mind, if I can take that one answer.

Mr. SCOTT. Yes, sir.

Admiral BURKE. I have been kind of leading our coordination effort for the Navy at this stage, since we are not actually quite in the acquisition phase yet. And I will tell you that the teamwork with—the Air Force, you know, initially developed the concept of the what is now being called Joint All-Domain Command and Control, which is the name of the concept that's going to give us this superhighway cell phone network, if you will, that allows us to use sensors as a service, weapons as a service, platforms as a service, any weapon system, any platform can talk to each other.

ABMS is one thing that would plug into it. And I think we have gotten Army's concerns addressed by them understanding they could plug their own command and control module into this network as well. But our teamwork has been pretty good. And actually, the management of this is going to be taken up to the joint level managed by the vice chairman so that each service has a piece of this that they are bringing into the fight.

Mr. SCOTT. Admiral, I appreciate your comments—and I hate being on a 5-minute clock—but I do want to point out that the head of Army's Future Command publicly stated, and now I understand they have walked back those comments. But just as a Member of Congress, it bothers me when I see the head of the Army's Future Command say, Hey, the Air Force is developing all this stuff and it won't work for us. And when we do these advanced things and these development of things, there has got to be the coordination of all the branches in what it is going to look like.

Admiral BURKE. Absolutely. And that coordination is taking place now. And whether the Army chooses to use this piece or not, we are going to make it so that that becomes not a major investment decision, and also, the rest of the component works. So, if that makes sense.

Mr. SCOTT. I am just saying that decision should be made earlier——

Admiral BURKE. Early, yes, sir.

Mr. SCOTT [continuing]. And all of the branches should be involved more from the conceptual development than to have—I forget exactly what—multiple generals in Future Command that are pretty high ranking, you know, made a pretty public statement about a system that is actually going to operate out of my——

Admiral BURKE. And that is the great advantage of having brought it up to the Vice Chairman of the Joint Staff level so that we can get it kind of adjudicated, make sure everyone is on board with it. So, that it works for all. So, I think we are on a good track, sir.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Mr. Scott has raised a very, very important question that we need to pay attention to, not only this committee, but in the other committee and full committee.

With that, I am going to make an ending statement here. We do have another subcommittee to which we belong that is also meeting at this same moment.

Ms. Houlahan, you had a question?

Ms. HOULAHAN. General, I just have one more question, and I want to commend you for the actions that you have done to design a force that is more suitable to deter China. And I think I am speaking for most of us when I say I am eager to figure out what the final Marine force design will look like. And one of the things that I wanted to ask is as the Corps develops the expeditionary advanced base ops [operations] concept, I am wondering what challenges you are facing for command and control in this contested environment?

General THOMAS. Thank you, Congresswoman. Just first on the force design piece, the Commandant is in the process of briefing all the committee chairs and ranking members, and so we look forward to sharing that information with you shortly.

The challenge of, you know, expeditionary advanced base operations really is—or any operation in the Pacific, has to do with the distance involved, so sustainment, and some of the points that have been made earlier are key, as well as a resilient command and control network. That gets into the Joint All-Domain Command and Control. But also, for components to have resiliency, should some of those capabilities be denied. That is to say, an overall joint capability with the ability to fall back to a secondary system that will allow those forces to continue to work at the operational level as well.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Yes, this issue of the command and control systems and the integration amongst the various branches is going to be on all of our minds here, and particularly the—what is the future Marine Corps going to look like. That brings us back to the sustainment issues, which we have had many discussions about.

I am not going to go into these in details. We have covered these in meetings and briefing sessions. The Fallon training range, we want to get that done this year. And so, pay attention to that. On the sealift, we have discussed that several times, and we will be working on that. And specific proposals will be made for the NDAA, and we are going to need feedback.

Also, Admiral Burke, the question arises as to dry-dock capacity everywhere, particularly on the west coast. And if it is in short supply, as we have heard, what are the plans to deal with that? If you can get back to us on that, it would be appreciated. F–35 will be the subject of another probably joint committee hearing a little later on as to what to do with the F–35. The depot issues, we have discussed those. Those will continue to be on our mind as we go through this coming year.

We have talked about the fleet resist—response plans, that also we want to continue to be brought, on a regular basis, up to date on the private shipyard program and how you are going to change the work orders on that. And I know that that has been discussed. You talked about it here today in brief.

Those are many of the key issues we will be in touch with you on all of that. And for all of us, we will be paying attention to the pandemic and what we need to do. This is one example of holding hearings that people can watch on TV and communicate that way and staff, similarly, social distancing. Which brings us to the next hearing. I see that our colleagues are completed here.

Thank you so very much for your testimony. We continue to look forward to working with you.

[Whereupon, at 9:56 a.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

MARCH 12, 2020

PREPARED STATEMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

MARCH 12, 2020

3/12/20 Chairman Garamendi Opening Statement

Ladies and gentlemen, I call to order this hearing of the Readiness Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee.

Today the subcommittee will hear from the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development, and Acquisition; the Vice Chief of Naval Operations; and the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps on the state of Navy and Marine Corps readiness and how the fiscal year 2021 operation and maintenance budget supports training and weapons system maintenance in alignment with the National Defense Strategy.

For the past several years, we have heard concems about the state of the Navy and Marine Corps' preparedness for great power competition. At the same time, a series of devastating accidents at sea, in the air, and on the ground have illustrated the urgent need to direct sustained attention to the training of our personnel and the maintenance of our platforms. While my colleagues on the Seapower subcommittee may have their own views on this year's smaller shipbuilding budget, I must applaud the Navy's attempt to protect readiness and the message that this budget sends about the risks of creating a hollow force.

As for the Marine Corps, I would like to also recognize the Commandant's forward-leaning and visionary planning guidance, and look forward to learning about the sustainment concepts that will support a reimagined Marine Corps.

There are several issues at the forefront of my mind. I am extremely troubled that the Department – in its wargaming, budget planning, and public narrative – seems incapable of confronting its deteriorating sealift capacity. This year, we learned that only 40% of the Ready Reserve Force was able to get underway in TRANSCOM's TURBO ACTIVATION exercise. The decline of the logistics force is an existential threat to our deterrence capability and this issue cannot be held hostage to institutional paralysis any longer. From the perspective of this subcommittee, this means that we must ensure we are appropriately investing in recapitalizing, maintaining, and manning our sealift vessels.

We must also keep our eye on the ball when it comes to ship maintenance. With only one-third of availabilities delivering on time in recent years, we are still not where we need to be. As Secretary Esper stated in his testimony to the full committee, maintenance challenges are preventing the Navy's force generation model from operating as intended. I look forward to hearing about your plans in FY2021 to improve timeliness, modernize the public shipyards, provide more stability and predictability to the private shipyards, and invest in building a skilled workforce.

This subcommittee has also focused extensively on aviation readiness. While we saw encouraging results from Secretary Mattis' 80% mission capability initiative, the Navy and Marine Corps need to avoid regressing to the mean and

demonstrate sustained commitment to remedying the problems with depot throughput, spare parts, and maintenance practices that motivated this effort in the first place. In addition, I am deeply concerned about the costs of sustaining the F-35 and the Department's lack of access to the key technical data necessary for organic maintenance.

Finally, we have held several hearings on the tragic ship, aviation, and ground vehicle accidents of the past several years. I am particularly concerned that ground vehicle mishaps – which do not involve billion-dollar platforms or numerous casualties – receive less leadership attention. Training safety is of paramount importance and we need to prioritize identifying and addressing the root causes of these accidents.

I look forward to our discussion today. With that, I turn to our Ranking Member, Congressman Doug Lamborn of Colorado, for any opening remarks he may have.

Ranking Member Lamborn Statement
HASC Readiness Subcommittee
Navy and Marine Corps Readiness Posture

Thank you, Chairman Garamendi. Today we will hear testimony regarding the readiness of the Navy and the Marine Corps to execute the National Defense Strategy under the President's fiscal year 2021 budget request. We find ourselves at a critical inflection point where the need to modernize is undeniable, but I am increasingly concerned about how we are going to balance modernization with our current readiness needs.

Just this week we learned that the Navy plans to cancel the planned Service Life Extensions for Flight 1 and Flight 2 Arleigh Burke class destroyers. The impact of this decision is that the Navy will lose 27 DDG-51s between 2026 and 2034. My understanding is that this decision was driven by cost concerns, but it is unclear how the Navy will recover this capability or how the fleet's readiness will be impacted. This is a major deviation from the plan and I am disappointed that the Committee was not briefed before the information was made public.

The Navy has made some progress in improving the cost and schedule performance for ship and submarine maintenance availabilities—mostly through more realistic scheduling by the fleet commanders, level loading work in the shipyards, improved contracting practices that reduce administrative waste and encourage private industry investment, and leveraging data to reduce the amount of unforecasted work. That said, in each of the last two fiscal years the Navy has requested reprogramming authority in the magnitude of $1 billion to cover shortfalls in its ship depot account. This would lead us to believe that significant improvement is still required.

Because approximately two-thirds of ship availabilities complete in the second year, the Navy is requesting $1.3 billion to continue a fiscal year 2020 pilot program that authorizes private contract ship maintenance for the Pacific Fleet through the Other Procurement, Navy account, which is three-year money. The Committee will be watching this pilot closely as it should improve performance and has the potential to bring costs down.

As I stated in the TRANSCOM hearing yesterday, I am deeply concerned about the health of the surge sealift fleet—by the mid-2030s, over half of which will be unusable. With 85% of the Joint Force based in the United States, our military readiness is borderline irrelevant without the capability and capacity to project those forces to a fight. The budget request would only fund the purchase of two used vessels, and I look forward to hearing from our witnesses what the Navy's investment plan is to address this growing concern.

General Berger, the Commandant, has embarked the Marine Corps on a transformation effort to ensure it is prepared to fight near peer competitors. His guidance is that "The Marine Corps will be trained and equipped as a naval expeditionary force-in-readiness and prepared to operate inside actively contested

maritime spaces in support of fleet operations." I fully support this effort, and I look forward to hearing from General Thomas how the Corps will balance this transformation effort with current readiness requirements. As Chairman Garamendi is fond of pointing out, logistics capability would determine our success or failure in future Pacific fight. We also look forward to learning more about how the Navy and Marine Corps will sustain this future force.

Finally, the Navy and Marine Corps have made significant progress with aircraft readiness under the MC 80 construct that Secretary Mattis put in place. The F/A-18 and EA-18G fleets have met the 80% mission capable objective. While the F-35 has not achieved the goal, it has improved from 54% to 72%. The 5th generation F-35 is a game changing capability that our warfighters need. We owe it to them to ensure that we get the sustainment for the program right. I continue to have significant concerns about intellectual property issues in the program and that we need to have better clarity on the impact the program will have on Service sustainment budgets.

I look forward to the testimony of our witnesses. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL RELEASED BY
THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS

STATEMENT OF

THE HONORABLE JAMES F. GEURTS
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE NAVY
RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND ACQUISITION

GENERAL GARY L. THOMAS
ASSISTANT COMMANDANT OF THE U.S. MARINE CORPS

ADMIRAL ROBERT P. BURKE
VICE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS

BEFORE THE

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS

ON

BUDGET REQUEST AND READINESS POSTURE

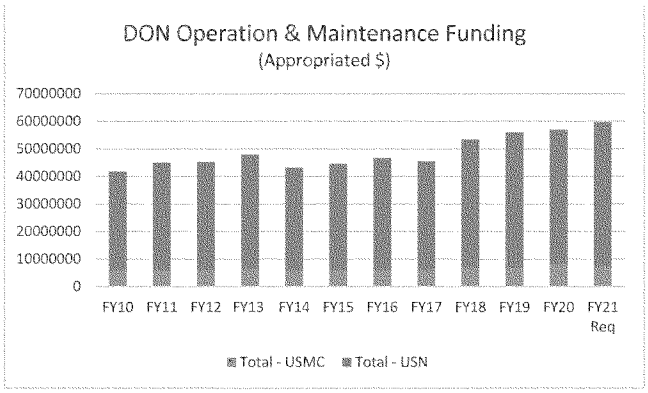
MARCH 12, 2020

NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL RELEASED BY
THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS

Chairman Garamendi, Ranking Member Lamborn, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, we are pleased to appear before you today to discuss the readiness posture of the Department of the Navy. On behalf of the Sailors, Marines, civilians, and families serving around the world, thank you for continuing to make critical readiness investments in national defense over the past three years. The steady and reliable flow of resources has made a substantial impact on our ability to maintain international order, adapt to changes in the global security environment, and deter those who challenge us.

The 2018 National Defense Strategy is the first in recent history that addresses by name America's biggest geopolitical, economic, and security threats. It identifies a historical inflection point that is occurring now, as we speak - an age of swift transformation in emerging technologies and complex threats that reduces the size and scope of our competitive edge. To regain our competitive edge and cease the erosion of power, the Department must mold the strategic environment through bold initiatives in modernization, structure, and doctrine, while ensuring American Naval Dominance today and in the future. This requires the right balance of readiness, capability and capacity as well as budget stability and predictability.

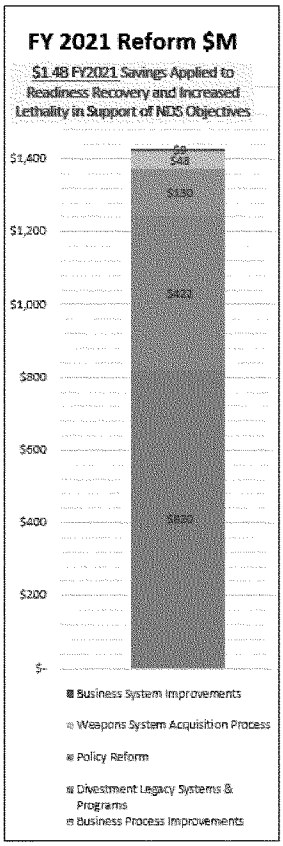
The Department's 2018 and 2019 budget execution prioritized readiness recovery and provided key down payments on lethality as we turned to Great Power Competition in alignment with the National Defense Strategy. The integrated naval power of the Navy and Marine Corps is building on that momentum. The Department will be working with the Office of the Secretary of Defense to develop a consensus perspective on our future force structure through robust analysis and wargaming and the inclusion of expertise from our academic institutions (Naval War College, Naval Postgraduate School, Marine Corps University) and independent naval experts. In order to meet the nation's national security needs and remain within budget constraints, we must consider how to shift costs away from high-end platforms to a larger number of smaller, but still highly capable ships. We will continue to iterate and refine the future force structure analysis through wargaming and experimentation and evolution of naval concepts, so that we can begin to move forward with confidence as we make difficult choices today.



We remain fully committed to a larger and more lethal force, as this is truly a national imperative. However, after accounting for inflation, the Department of the Navy's funding has been essentially flat since 2010. Therefore, the Department will be required to make deep vertical cuts of non-core missions, and continue efforts to improve processes, enhance performance and improve affordability to make up real ground.

Guided by the Department's Business Operations Plan, we are doing just that. The Department has undertaken a zero-based budget review and continued wholeness balance reviews, where we scrutinized every line of the Department of the Navy's budget to identify reform efforts such as the divestiture of less capable legacy platforms, contracting and business process improvements, and policy reforms. These reviews resulted in the realignment of nearly $15 billion in the FY 2021 budget and captured $1.4 billion in FY 2021 reform savings. These efforts will continue through the Department of the Navy's Stem-to-Stern review that is charged with finding additional savings within the Department to reinvest in the kind of decisive naval force that will provide for our nation's future economic and political security.

The resulting FY 2021 budget request prioritizes the allocation of dollars based on alignment to strategy, return on investment, relative value, portfolio optimization and specific outcome metrics in order to provide the best-balanced force in support of the National Defense Strategy, enabling us to deliver the people, platforms, and capabilities necessary to protect American interests around the world.



The Department's FY 2021 budget submission optimizes use of budget dollars in order to maximize naval power. Our investments are fully aligned with the National Defense Strategy through recapitalization of the strategic ballistic missile submarine (the preponderance of our nation's strategic nuclear deterrent force) and we are staying the course on investment in readiness recovery, and increased lethality and modernization efforts with the greatest potential to deliver non-linear warfighting advantages.

To support our focus on enduring sustainment, we established a Deputy Assistant Secretary (DASN) for Sustainment that is working to improve our ability to plan, program, budget and execute the Navy's sustainment mission. DASN Sustainment will oversee and manage Navy and Marine Corps sustainment and life-cycle management policies, allowing the Department to improve and align the complex drivers of maintenance and modernization completion – that in turn will increase output of the Sustainment system to the Fleet.

Mission one for every Sailor and Marine is the operational readiness of the force. Currently the Navy and Marine Corps are engaged in joint integrated operations around the globe, with 51,371 Sailors and 32,900 Marines deployed or underway on 94 ships, two carrier strike groups, and two expeditionary strike groups. These forward-postured sea-based forces are providing immediate response options, reassuring our allies, and deterring our adversaries.

A Navy and Marine Corps ready to fight today – with a commitment to training, maintenance and modernization – will ensure an integrated force ready to face tomorrow's challenges. Our current year activities and our FY 2021 budget request are united to deliver a - more ready - and a more lethal, resilient and rapidly innovative force – to ensure we can compete, deter and win.

U.S. NAVY READINESS PRIORITIES

Naval readiness is essential to our national security strategy. As this committee is well aware, over the past 18 years, our Navy has maintained a continuously high operational tempo with a fleet that is approximately half the size of the one we sent to sea during the Cold War. The result has been a backlog of maintenance, procurement, and modernization that we are tirelessly working to remedy now, with deliberate investments provided by Congress. The President's FY 2021 budget request sustains the commitments to improved readiness made in FY 2017 through FY 2020. With consistent funding, we have stopped the decline in readiness and are seeing measurable improvements on all fronts. Based on the assessed requirements, this budget request funds our major afloat and enabling readiness accounts, allowing for more at-sea time and more flying hours (increases corresponding to more ready ships and more mission capable aircraft), more ammunition and spare parts, and completion of critical maintenance, and the improved throughput of both our ship and aviation maintenance enterprises. For example, compared to 65 ship maintenance availabilities funded in FY 2020, the FY 2021 budget request funds 80 ship public and private maintenance availabilities, allowing us to sustain the capital investments we have made in our fleet.

However, we also understand that money alone is not the answer to sustainable readiness. In the past year, we have continued and expanded existing reform efforts, and have initiated many others, all aimed at improving our performance and maximizing the effective use of each and every available tax-payer dollar. Our leaders are thinking differently, preparing for the future, and owning readiness in new ways. For example, we are transforming the processes by which we generate naval aviation readiness. By using best practices from commercial aviation, we have corrected process flows in shops and hangars, continued to reduce variability and drive standardization across maintenance procedures, and adopted data-driven analytical methods to prioritize resources and evaluate our performance. We have worked with our industry partners to resolve supply chain limitations, and are steadily changing the culture of our deck plate aircraft maintainers to look at maintenance from the perspective of the life-cycle of the aircraft, not just the next flight. And our air crews are working together across Squadrons, Wings and even Fleets to optimally move scarce resources to ensure overall Navy readiness, vice hoarding those resources to make their own unit look better – that is real culture change. Our aviation depot-level Periodic Maintenance Interval (PMI) inspection cycles on FA-18 E/F aircraft are

over 57 percent faster, our supply chain is more robust, and our maintenance teams are more efficient. Last October, we achieved 80 percent Mission Capable Super Hornets – for the first time ever. This increased mission readiness is giving our pilots more flight hours to maintain currency while also allowing our Combatant Commanders to meet their warfighting requirements. This demonstrates that a balanced approach to maintenance and operations is possible. Stable, sufficient, and predictable funding is absolutely essential to continue on this glideslope.

We are applying this same holistic reform approach to ship maintenance in both private and public yards as well, making significant changes to our maintenance planning tools, leveraging modern commercial statistical methods, and using a range of contracting options with the authorities (such as the 3-year OPN pilot program) you have given us to properly plan ahead, buy ahead, allow the shipyards to stabilize their workforces, and in the process save the Navy maintenance time and the taxpayers money. Although less mature than our efforts in Naval Aviation, the shipyard efforts are beginning to produce results – nine of the last 10 nuclear aircraft carrier maintenance periods have completed on time in our public shipyards. In the private yards, the combination of efforts have taken us from a 37 percent on-time completion rate to an encouraging 56 percent current on-time completion rate and a projected rate of approximately 70 percent for the entire year. We are launching similar efforts in other critical areas, to include personnel and infrastructure.

We continue to invest in readiness generation improvements in our Surface Force as well. In the FY 2021 budget request, the Navy prioritized $258 million ($1.2 billion across the Future Years Defense Program) in support of all Strategic Readiness Review (SRR) and Comprehensive Review (CR) initiatives. As you heard from VADM Rich Brown, Commander, Naval Surface Forces, last month, these efforts are improving safety, manning, training, operations, equipment, governance, funding and command and control. Current and future investments in our Maritime Skills Training Program focuses on Navigation, Seamanship and Shiphandling capabilities, forging classroom and simulator improvements that enhance the development, assessment and sustainment of proficiency at individual and watch team levels. Assisted by Congress's support of SRR/CR initiatives, Navy expedited delivery of Bridge/Combat Information Center integration into our shore training facilities, achieving this integration in all worldwide Fleet Concentration Areas within a 12-month period. Construction continues on a Maritime Skills

Training Center (MSTC) in San Diego. With the $79 million Congress provided in FY 2020 Military Construction (MILCON) funding, the Navy will award a contract for an MSTC in Norfolk this spring, with construction to begin by the end of FY 2020 and complete in FY 2022. Students of the Junior Officer of the Deck course, a critical component of the revised Surface Warfare Officer training and assessment continuum are already having a positive impact upon the readiness of their ships. Altogether, we have committed $3.7 billion to individual, watch team and strike group training. Our Surface Force is committed to Fleet Training Wholeness, and broadening the use of instructor-led, immersive virtual reality training as part of our Surface Training Advanced Virtual Environment (STAVE) Program, consistent with the Navy's Ready, Relevant Learning philosophy and technologies. Future efforts will expand this training to ships underway and pier-side, as initial results illustrate the effectiveness of this concept relative to traditional methods. STAVE prepares watch teams to prevail in tomorrow's fight today, by cultivating personnel who can perform with experience and confidence in the most demanding tactical environments. These training enhancements are cornerstones of effective generation of ready forces.



While we have made significant strides in readiness, there are areas where we still need to improve. For example, our Submarine Force maintenance challenges remain one of our most pressing priorities. In FY 2020, we project 600 days of idle submarine operational time in our public shipyards, down over 50 percent from 1,347 days in FY 2019, but still clearly an unacceptable level. We have aggressively pursued this deficit, and identified three main challenges: public shipyard capacity not keeping pace with growing maintenance requirements, shipyard productivity, and parts availability. We are aggressively addressing each issue, although it will take time to resolve them. In our public yards, we are investing in modernization and optimization, work force hiring and training, and improvements in equipment and infrastructure necessary to increase capacity and performance. Working with our industry partners, we have allocated multiple submarines to private shipyards in order to narrow the gap between demand and capacity in our public

shipyards. We continue to work with the private sector to optimize workload and improve their performance. With these efforts, and at sustained levels of maintenance funding, we will continue increasing our efficiency and reducing the maintenance backlog.

Clearly, we need to do more to improve maintenance across our fleet if we are going to effectively sustain a larger, more capable fleet in the near future. In addition to the immediate improvements mentioned above, our 30-year Maintenance and Modernization Plan is an effort to capture all the requirements necessary to maintain mission-ready platforms. This plan will form the basis for predictable future industrial base capacity requirements, making us a better customer for our partners in the private and public yards. A forward-looking approach to sustainment is essential to grow the operational capacity of our Navy over time. In addition to stabilizing industrial base capacity, the 30-year Maintenance and Modernization Plan puts us on a path to optimized business processes, generating a stable demand signal for our industrial base so they can wisely invest and grow, while we do the same to ensure sufficient capacity to support our larger, more complex fleet. Incorporating these efforts across the enterprise will drive more predictable maintenance schedules resulting in improved material condition of our platforms.

The superb dedication and performance of our men and women, both civilian and uniformed, are the key, as none of these improvements in readiness would be possible without them. Their efforts ensure that we will be able to fight tonight if called upon. Last year, despite an extremely competitive employment market, we achieved our second highest active duty accession goals in the last 15 years, and will implement initiatives to mitigate similar market challenges in FY 2020. We continue to leverage our family of Sailor 2025 programs to bring choices, flexibility, and transparency to the Navy's personnel process. Our personnel system transformation system brings those processes into the Digital Age.

This past year we completed the transition of our MyNavy HR organization to a new operating model, emphasizing shared service delivery and consolidated enterprise support functions. We introduced DoD-leading digital apps – like MyPCS Mobile, as part of our new Navy Personnel and Pay system, where Sailors can receive a lean set of orders and a tailored Permanent Change of Station checklist right on their mobile device, as well as the ability to sign up for housing and childcare at their next duty station. They can upload pictures of their receipts, electronically sign and submit their travel voucher right from their smart phone. We

took the first steps towards establishing an Authoritative Date Environment to provide a Single Source of Truth across all our personnel and pay data systems.

Navy continued to implement officer personnel management reforms enacted in the John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for FY 2019 to apply greater flexibility in officer management, while also offering targeted bonuses for hard-to-fill enlisted ratings, when necessary. For our newest Sailors, we increased hands-on training opportunities in core warfighting competencies of firefighting, damage control, seamanship, watch standing, and small arms handling and marksmanship. Our Ready Relevant Learning system is here and it is working. In September 2019, the Operations Specialist rating officially began training in the fully modernized course curriculum and via fully modernized means, allowing Sailors a full virtual "hands-on" experience for the duration of their training. Last year, the Chief of Naval Personnel also put into motion the advancement-to-position program, where talented junior Sailors can negotiate for hard jobs in tough duty stations and receive an advancement, incentivizing duty to locations and jobs where we had previously been applying specialty and incentive pays. Despite the high operational tempo, morale is high and Sailors are excited about the direction of change in the personnel system, and they see evidence that their feedback is resulting in action. The sum of these efforts has resulted in record high first-term Navy-wide retention of 77 percent for the last two years, during an economy that is driving the lowest unemployment rate since 1969. This is evidence that it is not about the money.

Our Sailors and their dedicated families, together with the rest of our combined naval force, are working hard to achieve improved readiness, as you have seen from your visits at sea and ashore. They are fully aware of their vital role at this strategic inflection point. They understand that greater naval strength matters now more than ever, in order to safeguard our own way of life as well as to inspire the confidence of our allies and partners, who look to the United States and our Navy to protect the rights of our current world order by defending the seas for all.

U.S. MARINE CORPS READINESS PRIORITIES

The last three years of reliable funding has substantially impacted the readiness of the Marine Corps, and through that investment, we have made huge improvements. Traditionally, the Marine Corps has sought to balance funding for current readiness of equipment, operations, and manpower with funding to modernize the force into one ready for the future. To meet the

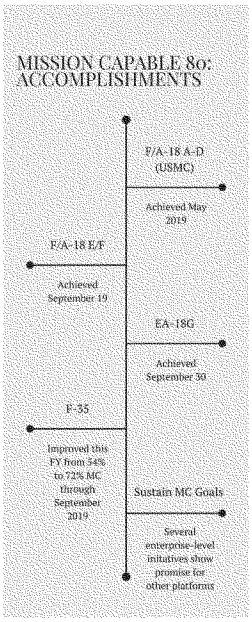
requirements of the National Defense Strategy and an era of Great Power Competition, the Marine Corps must prioritize the design of a new force capable of integrating with the Navy to compete, deter, and, if necessary, defeat our Nation's adversaries. Moving forward, we must acknowledge that we can no longer simply react to the evolving strategic environment; we must instead seek to directly influence that environment in ways that create considerable advantages for our Naval and Joint Forces and impose significant risks and costs to our adversaries. Therefore, the Marine Corps is prioritizing investments to support evolving warfighting concepts and capabilities, while ensuring the proper investment in readiness. To achieve this long-term transformation and vision of our Marine Corps, we will need the help and support of Congress through adequate, sustained, and predictable funding. Combined with stable funding, our business reform initiatives and the diligent use of resources are force multipliers and are key to long-term success. Through your efforts, the Marine Corps will continue to be the Nation's Naval Expeditionary Force in Readiness, today and into the future.

Ground Readiness

Over the last few years, ground equipment readiness rates continued to demonstrate considerable improvement while providing ready forces in a period of modernization. In 2019, the Marine Corps completed the reset of ground equipment employed in Operation IRAQI FREEDOM and Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. The reset resulted in 77 percent of retrograde equipment repaired and returned to the Fleet Marine Force, and 23 percent of legacy equipment either divested or replaced through new procurement. In addition, investments across the Marine Corps last year progressed toward two-thirds C1/C2 Active Component readiness while also maintaining ground equipment readiness of 80 percent available supply rating and 90 percent serviceable equipment. Through these efforts and other initiatives, the Fleet Marine Force increased availability to 90 percent, an 8 percent increase, and increased serviceability to 94 percent, a one percent increase, of principal end items in FY 2019. Stemming from predictable funding and process improvements, the Marine Corps continues to support forward postured naval forces critical to the Joint Force.

Aviation Readiness

Marine Aviation continues to progress through its comprehensive readiness recovery commenced in December 2014 to produce mission capable aircraft with combat ready crews. Initiatives that are designed to increase materiel readiness, improve training levels, and retain and develop talented Marines have yielded steady progress and supported in-stride modernization transitions across multiple platforms. Returns on readiness investments are apparent, made possible by Congressional funding of readiness enabler accounts to over 90 percent of executable levels. Adequate, stable, and predictable funding to Marine Aviation readiness initiatives is imperative to continue momentum across recovery objectives.



As we near the targeted date of our readiness recovery goal of 75 percent mission capable aircraft by the end of FY 2021, our four lines of effort remain: 1) reduce Non-Mission Capable Supply (NMCS) to 10 percent; 2) reduce Non-Mission Capable Maintenance (NMCM) to 10 percent; 3) reduce in-service repairs to five percent; and 4) increase depot throughput. Building off of last year's success, we remain on track to reach these goals in FY 2021. The FY 2019 fleet aircraft NMCS average of 26.4 percent is slightly below FY 2017 levels, as we are beginning to see the greater investment in spares readiness enabler accounts resulting in additional parts hitting the supply lines. The F/A-18 was able to achieve an NMCS rate less than 10 percent for two consecutive months in FY 2019, as they are one of the first platforms to benefit from the delivery of the first increased spares supply. Improvement in squadron-level maintenance practices and increased maintainer touch-time on aircraft contributed to a 3.3 percent decrease in the FY 2019 aircraft NMCM rate compared to FY 2017 (and 1.1 percent compared to FY 2018). Implementing dedicated fleet support teams and on site artisans, together with right-sizing the flight line, has reduced in-service repairs, with the Service meeting the goal of less than 5 percent with a 3.3 percent In-Service Repair rate in FY 2019. Due to the success of our Depot Readiness Initiative, 21 aircraft across three platforms returned from the depot to the flight schedule an average of 51 days faster and with a 76 percent reduction in

squadron maintenance man hours. The CH-53E Reset Program returned 29 aircraft to service by the end of FY 2019, with Reset aircraft averaging a 10 percent higher mission capable rate than non-Reset aircraft. In addition, FY 2019 average crew flight hours per months across all Type/Model/Series exceeded the goal required to achieve T-2.0, at 17.2 hours per crew per month.

The F/A-18A-D and F-35B focused on materiel readiness as a result of the Secretary of Defense's TACAIR 80 percent mission capable goal for FY 2019. F/A-18A-D operational squadron mission capable rates increased 16 percent since FY 2017, and the Service met the Active and Reserve 80 percent F/A-18A-D goal on seven separate occasions. The F-35B Active squadrons were able to achieve 80 percent mission capable on one occasion late in FY 2019, as returns on initiatives executed in concert with the Joint Program Office and industry displayed positive results. The F-35B fleet replacement squadron averaged 70 percent mission capable aircraft for FY 2019, which will be instrumental in continued pilot production to fleet squadrons. The Marine Corps' continued aviation readiness recovery will ensure that we are able to provide a lethal aviation component to deter, compete, and win in the future security environment.

Amphibious Readiness

Amphibious Readiness continues to be one of the Marine Corps' top readiness concerns. Over the past year, the amphibious fleet structure supported an average availability of 66 percent, with 31 percent of amphibious ships meeting the Optimized Fleet Response Plan. In addition to amphibious availability, extensive maintenance requirements affecting 59 percent of all amphibious warship maintenance availabilities are expected to exceed planning considerations between FY 2019 and FY 2022. While these shortfalls represent key metrics for Amphibious Readiness, they can be mitigated through a number of initiatives to support the Naval and the Joint Force with combat-credible Amphibious Forces.

Historically, the Marine Corps has looked to ground-based forces to provide crisis response in the face of amphibious shipping shortfalls. This method does not provide the flexibility, survivability, and operational reach that is required to counter adversaries equipped with emerging technologies in the Blunt Layer. The current vision of amphibious operations, in light of the growing risk of the future operating environment, can only be offset by non-traditional employment models. Together with the Navy, the Marine Corps will look to explore

alternate deployment options, to include L-class, E-class, unmanned platforms, stern landing vessels, other ocean-going littoral mobility vessels, Expeditionary Sea Base (ESB) class ships, and other platforms to fill operational requirements and mitigate the potential of future readiness deficiencies in the amphibious fleet. Informed by emerging concepts of Littoral Operations in a Contested Environment (LOCE), Distributed Maritime Operations (DMO), Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations (EABO) and the body of naval concepts, the Navy and Marine Corps team will design and project Integrated American Naval Power globally in 2030 and beyond. Through integration, we will aim to improve resilience, increase operational reach and capacity, and ensure the ability of the Joint Maritime Force to operate in contested environments. We stand committed with the Navy to increasing readiness through sustainment of necessary legacy systems, mitigating risk through alternative options, and setting the course for future amphibious architecture.

Infrastructure Readiness

The Marine Corps' installations serve as warfighting platforms that enable our Fleet Marine Forces to hone their combat readiness. Our installations complement our forward deployed naval forces and bolster our allies and partners. As we focus on Great Power Competition in the INDOPACIFIC, the modernization of our installations while focusing on defensibility, hardening and resiliency are more critical than ever to our Naval Forces and must become our priority. The Marine Corps' Facilities Sustainment, Restoration, and Modernization (FSRM) program supports the maintenance, demolition, restoration, and modernization of Marine Corps installation infrastructure to optimize warfighting, life/health/safety, training, and quality of life. As in the past, the Marine Corps had to make difficult choices in the funding of near-term readiness and long-term modernization efforts. We continue to prioritize the timing of facility investments to achieve the lowest total lifecycle cost, while aligning investments to the Marine Corps' strategic priorities. This approach, combined with a robust demolition program to eliminate obsolete facilities, has greatly reduced the total cost of ownership and will provide the Marine Corps the flexibility to meet future requirements.

Today, the infrastructure reset strategy is still feeling the long lasting effects of Hurricanes Florence and Michael's devastating impact that damaged and destroyed facilities. While we are grateful for your support in helping us recover and rebuild, the Marine Corps will

continue hurricane-related FSRM repairs, manage MILCON requirements, and restore our facilities for the foreseeable future.

The Marine Corps continues to focus on improving our Public-Private Venture housing through engaged leadership, enabling effective management, and implementing the FY 2020 NDAA requirements to ensure we provide housing of the highest quality for our Marines, Sailors, and families. Through your efforts, we are well on our way to ensuring the long-term financial sustainability of the portfolio.

Manpower

Marines, Sailors, and their families remain the foundation of Marine Corps readiness and enable us to project combat power. Without the exceptionally talented young men and women that carry the legacy of our Corps' fighting spirit, we would cease to be the premier professional warfighting organization that we are today. But we must fight every day to recruit, inspire, develop, and retain this vital talent. We must provide world class training and educational opportunities that develop the mind and imbue resilience. Most importantly, we must ensure that all are treated with dignity and respect, and have access to a culture that ensures every Marine is provided opportunity for successful service.

Previously, the Marine Corps grew the force to more than 200,000 in the Active Component (AC) to meet demand of surge and counter-insurgency operations in the Middle East. Since that time, the global situation has changed drastically and the Marine Corps' concept-based, threat-informed force design efforts confirm that we must reduce end strength to continue recovering readiness and accelerating modernization. In the FY 2021 request, the Marine Corps calls for a reduction in end strength to 184,100 AC to support our future initiatives and meet the demands of near and mid-term requirements. A reduction in Marines will generate much needed resources that could be reinvested in critical enabling capabilities against the pacing threat. This reduction in end strength is only the initial estimate. As we continue to refine and adjust the force, and with the support of Congress, the Marine Corps is fully prepared to exchange end strength for modernization dollars.

Few factors affect family readiness, unit readiness, and overall combat effectiveness as much as the operational demands and tempo of our Corps. The Marine Corps expresses operational demand through our units' Deployment-to-Dwell ratio (D2D). The Marine Corps

manages D2D through the Force Management Plan to balance near term rotational demands, near to mid-term surge and crisis response capacity, and mid- to long-term force development requirements. Currently, the D2D ratio for our Reserve Component (RC) is 1:4, and the D2D for our AC is 1:2. While this ratio supports short to mid-term requirements and is a modest increase from last year's ratio, it will be necessary to seize every opportunity to improve this ratio to facilitate adequate training and improve overall readiness. To meet the Marine Corps' goal of a D2D ratio of 1:3 without growing the force substantially, we require a decrease in operational requirements that are not in line with current combatant commander demands.

The Marine Corps is committed to exploring all options to provide our forces with the best opportunities and experiences to ensure we maintain our dedicated and highly trained talent. We are implementing new retention tools and bonuses, placing a new priority on the design and development of our Marines through Professional Military Education reform, and re-aligning senior leader programs. We are committed to exploring all options to combat suicide and sexual assault, including the most effective strategies and experiences not only from our sister services, but also across the nation in colleges and universities. In addition, our Talent Management Oversight Directorate and the Deputy Commandant for Manpower and Reserve Affairs have co-sponsored a Center for Naval Analyses study focused on developing an optimized Talent Management Framework for the Marine Corps. These initiatives are designed to strengthen the culture of the Marine Corps, re-invest in Marines and Sailors, and keep our warrior ethos and warfighting edge.

CONCLUSION

On behalf of all of our Marines and Sailors, we thank you for the opportunity to discuss the readiness of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps. The Navy and Marine Corps are working to optimize the fleet and force for the future operating environment and its emerging threats, and we stand ready and determined to answer the Nation's call. To sustain our readiness and modernization efforts for the current and future fight, we require adequate, sustained, and predictable funding that will enable the most lethal force, fully capable of deterring aggression in the shadow of Great Power Competition. With the support of Congress, Industry, and the American people, the combined naval forces will stand with the Joint Force and our Allies and Partners to protect the Nation's interests around the world.

James F. Geurts
Assistant Secretary of the Navy
(Research, Development and Acquisition)
12/5/2017 - Present

On Dec. 5, 2017, Mr. James F. Geurts was sworn in as Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development & Acquisition (ASN (RD&A)), following his confirmation by the Senate November 2017. As the Navy's acquisition executive, Mr. Geurts has oversight of an annual budget in excess of $60 billion and is responsible for equipping and supporting the finest Sailors and Marines in the world with the best platforms, systems and technology as they operate around the globe in defense of the Nation.

Mr. Geurts previously served as the Acquisition Executive, U.S.. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), at MacDill Air Force Base (AFB), Florida, where he was responsible for all special operations forces acquisition, technology and logistics. In this position his innovative leadership and technological ingenuity provided rapid and affordable acquisition that positively impacted the USSOCOM acquisition work force and the special operations forces capability on the battlefield. These contributions were recognized by both private and public institutions during his tenure to include earning the Presidential Rank Award, USSOCOM Medal, William Perry Award and Federal Times Vanguard Award for Executive of the Year.

Prior to Senior Executive Service, Mr. Geurts began his career as an Air Force officer where he served as an acquisition program manager with engineering and program management leadership positions in numerous weapon systems including intercontinental ballistic missiles, surveillance platforms, tactical fighter aircraft, advanced avionics systems, stealth cruise missiles, training systems and manned and unmanned special operations aircraft.

He has over 30 years of extensive joint acquisition experience and served in all levels of acquisition leadership positions including Acquisition Executive, Program Executive Officer and Program Manager of Major Defense Acquisition Programs.

Mr. Geurts is a distinguished 1987 ROTC graduate from Lehigh University where he received a Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering. He holds a Master of Science in Electrical Engineering from Air Force Institute of Technology, Wright-Patterson AFB and in National Security Resourcing from Industrial College of the Armed Forces, National Defense University, Washington, D.C. Mr. Geurts also attended executive leadership and international studies programs at Harvard Kennedy School and George Washington Elliot School.

General Gary L. Thomas
Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps

General Gary L. Thomas is currently serving as the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps.

A native of Austin, Texas, he graduated from the University of Texas and was commissioned in 1984. He previously served as the Deputy Commandant for Programs and Resources.

General Thomas is a Naval Aviator and has served in several F/A-18 squadrons. He commanded VMFA-323 during Operation IRAQI FREEDOM while embarked aboard the USS CONSTELLATION (CV-64). He also commanded Marine Aviation Weapons and Tactics Squadron One (MAWTS-1), and he served as the Commanding General, 2d Marine Aircraft Wing (Forward) in Afghanistan as well as the Commanding General, 2d Marine Aircraft Wing

He has also served as Assistant Wing Commander of 2d Marine Aircraft Wing, the Assistant Deputy Commandant for Aviation, and as the Marine Corps Deputy Director of Operations.

His joint assignments include service in the Joint Staff Strategic Plans Directorate (J-5) and in the Force Structure, Resources, Assessment Directorate (J-8).

General Thomas is a graduate of the Weapons and Tactics Instructor Course, the Navy Fighter Weapons School, Air Command and Staff College, and the National War College. He holds a M.S. in National Security Strategy from National Defense University.

Admiral Robert P. Burke
Vice Chief of Naval Operations
6/10/2019 - Present

Adm. Robert Burke is a native of Portage, Michigan, and holds bachelor's and master's degrees in electrical engineering from Western Michigan University and the University of Central Florida.

Burke's operational assignments include service aboard both attack and ballistic missile submarines, including USS Von Steuben (SSBN 632), USS Maryland (SSBN 738) and USS Bremerton (SSN 698). He commanded USS Hampton (SSN 767) in Norfolk, Virginia, and was commodore of Submarine Development Squadron (DEVRON) 12 in Groton, Connecticut.

His staff assignments include tours as an instructor and director for the Electrical Engineering Division at Naval Nuclear Power School, junior board member on the Pacific Fleet Nuclear Propulsion Examining Board, submarine officer community manager/nuclear officer program manager; senior Tactical Readiness Evaluation Team member at Commander, Submarine Force, U.S. Atlantic Fleet; deputy director for Operations, Strategy and Policy Directorate (J5) at United States Joint Forces Command; division director, Submarine/Nuclear Power Distribution (PERS-42); and director, Joint and Fleet Operations, N3/N5, U.S. Fleet Forces Command.

As a flag officer, Burke has served as deputy commander, U.S. 6th Fleet; director of operations (N3), U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa; commander, Submarine Group 8; director, Military Personnel Plans and Policy (OPNAV N13) and most recently as the Navy's 58th chief of naval personnel, where he served concurrently as deputy chief of naval operations (Manpower, Personnel, Training and Education) (N1).

He assumed duties as the Navy's 40th vice chief of naval operations, June 10, 2019. He is a senior naval advisor to the secretary of the Navy and the chief of naval operations.

His awards include the Distinguished Service Medal, Defense Superior Service Medal, Legion of Merit (five awards) and various campaign and unit awards. Naval Submarine League recognized Burke with the Jack Darby Award for Leadership in 2004. Burke also received the Vice Admiral James Bond Stockdale Award for Inspirational Leadership in 2005.

Updated: 11 June 2019

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