

[H.A.S.C. No. 117-66]

STATE OF THE SURFACE NAVY

JOINT HEARING
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON SEAPOWER AND
PROJECTION FORCES
MEETING JOINTLY WITH THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS
SECOND SESSION

HEARING HELD
MARCH 3, 2022



U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

48-446

WASHINGTON : 2023

SUBCOMMITTEE ON SEAPOWER AND PROJECTION FORCES

JOE COURTNEY, Connecticut, *Chairman*

JAMES R. LANGEVIN, Rhode Island	ROBERT J. WITTMAN, Virginia
JIM COOPER, Tennessee	VICKY HARTZLER, Missouri
DONALD NORCROSS, New Jersey	SAM GRAVES, Missouri
ANTHONY G. BROWN, Maryland	TRENT KELLY, Mississippi
JARED F. GOLDEN, Maine, <i>Vice Chair</i>	MIKE GALLAGHER, Wisconsin
ELAINE G. LURIA, Virginia	JIM BANKS, Indiana
SARA JACOBS, California	JACK BERGMAN, Michigan
SYLVIA R. GARCIA, Texas	JERRY L. CARL, Alabama

PHIL MACNAUGHTON, *Professional Staff Member*
DAVID SIENICKI, *Professional Staff Member*
NAAJIDAH KHAN, *Clerk*

SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS

JOHN GARAMENDI, California, *Chairman*

JOE COURTNEY, Connecticut	MIKE WALTZ, Florida
JACKIE SPEIER, California	JOE WILSON, South Carolina
JASON CROW, Colorado	AUSTIN SCOTT, Georgia
ELISSA SLOTKIN, Michigan, <i>Vice Chair</i>	JACK BERGMAN, Michigan
JARED F. GOLDEN, Maine	MIKE JOHNSON, Louisiana
ELAINE G. LURIA, Virginia	MARK E. GREEN, Tennessee
KAIALI'Ī KAHÉLE, Hawaii	LISA C. McCLAIN, Michigan
MARILYN STRICKLAND, Washington	BLAKE D. MOORE, Utah

MELANIE HARRIS, *Professional Staff Member*
IAN BENNITT, *Professional Staff Member*
NAAJIDAH KHAN, *Clerk*

CONTENTS

	Page
STATEMENTS PRESENTED BY MEMBERS OF CONGRESS	
Courtney, Hon. Joe, a Representative from Connecticut, Chairman, Subcommittee on Seapower and Projection Forces	1
Garamendi, Hon. John, a Representative from California, Chairman, Subcommittee on Readiness	4
Waltz, Hon. Mike, a Representative from Florida, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Readiness	5
Wittman, Hon. Robert J., a Representative from Virginia, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Seapower and Projection Forces	2
WITNESSES	
Kitchener, VADM Roy, USN, Commander, Naval Surface Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet, Department of the Navy	8
Lescher, ADM William K., USN, Vice Chief of Naval Operations, Department of the Navy	6
APPENDIX	
PREPARED STATEMENTS:	
Courtney, Hon. Joe	41
Garamendi, Hon. John	45
Lescher, ADM William K., joint with VADM Roy Kitchener	46
Wittman, Hon. Robert J.	43
DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD:	
[There were no Documents submitted.]	
WITNESS RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ASKED DURING THE HEARING:	
[There were no Questions submitted during the hearing.]	
QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS POST HEARING:	
Mr. Banks	62
Mr. Carl	63
Mr. Langevin	61
Mrs. Luria	63
Mr. Scott	61

STATE OF THE SURFACE NAVY

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON SEAPOWER AND PROJECTION FORCES,
MEETING JOINTLY WITH THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS,
Washington, DC, Thursday, March 3, 2022.

The subcommittees met, pursuant to call, at 11:03 a.m., in room 2118, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Joe Courtney (chairman of the Subcommittee on Seapower and Projection Forces) presiding.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JOE COURTNEY, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM CONNECTICUT, CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON SEAPOWER AND PROJECTION FORCES

Mr. COURTNEY. Good morning, everyone. Call the joint hearing to order.

And, again, because we are doing this hybrid, just have to make a quick announcement that, as we all know, is part of these events.

First, some administrative and technical notes. Members are reminded that they must be visible on screen within the software platform for the purposes of identity verification. Members must continue to use the software platform's video function while attending the hearing unless they experience connectivity issues or other technical problems that render the member unable to fully participate on camera. If you experience technical difficulties, please contact committee staff for assistance.

When you are recognized, video will be broadcast via television and internet feeds. You will be recognized as normal for questions, but if you want to speak at another time, you must seek recognition verbally.

Please mute your microphone when you are not speaking and remember to unmute prior to speaking. Please be aware that there is a slight lag between when you start speaking and when the camera shot switches to you.

Please remember to keep the software platform's video function on for the entirety of the time that you are attending this hearing.

If you leave for a short period for reasons other than joining a different proceeding, please remove your video function—sorry—leave your video function on. If you are leaving to join a different proceeding or will be absent for a significant period of time, you should exit the software platform entirely and then rejoin if you return.

Please be advised I have designated a committee staff member to mute unrecognized members' microphones if necessary.

Please use the platform's chat feature to communicate with staff regarding technical or logistical support issues.

Finally, you will see a 5-minute countdown clock on the software platform's display, but, if necessary, I will remind you when your time is up.

With that said, I have opening remarks, which I am going to submit for the record, just make a couple quick comments, and then turn it over to my fellow leaders here from Seapower and from Readiness.

Again, thank you, Admiral Lescher and Admiral Kitchener, for joining us this morning. Again, the topic today, which is the state of the Surface Navy, we have had classified briefings in, you know, the last couple months or so to talk about, again, events surrounding *Bonhomme Richard*, also in the context of *McCain* and *Fitzgerald* and, you know, really about the fact that, you know, the entire enterprise of the Navy, you know, really, I think, needs congressional input to really make sure that, you know, the country's investment is being utilized efficiently and competently.

And I would just say, you know, obviously, all of us up on the dais here, we have been going to briefings nonstop in terms of the situation in Ukraine. A lot of the focus is on the land warfare aspect, you know, with obviously the invasion in the northern part of the country.

But as we saw this morning, there is definitely a seapower aspect to this, with, you know, the battle going around Mariupol, in the coastal region there. And I think a lot of us know that the U.S. Navy is not absent from this, but it really reinforces the fact that what we are talking about here today is really not sort of a, you know, an issue that is sort of in normal peacetime context.

You know, what we are talking about here is really making sure that in the world we are living in, that the Navy is going to be able to, again, participate without any unforced errors, in terms of its own readiness. And that is really why I think it is just so important that, you know, the two of you are here today to help us achieve that goal.

With that, I will yield to my ranking member, Rob Wittman, for his opening remarks.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Courtney can be found in the Appendix on page 41.]

STATEMENT OF HON. ROBERT J. WITTMAN, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM VIRGINIA, RANKING MEMBER, SUBCOMMITTEE ON SEAPOWER AND PROJECTION FORCES

Mr. WITTMAN. Well, thank you, Chairman Courtney, for yielding.

I want to specially thank Chairman Garamendi, Ranking Member Waltz, for participating in this detailed review of our Navy surface posture. Incredibly important.

Friends, great power competition is already here, and we are currently not set up to prevail. With President Biden's inept withdrawal from Afghanistan, Putin's invasion of Ukraine, and Xi's continued Chinese expansion both in terms of military size and political will, we have arrived at a new period of international instability.

Our desire to maintain strategic advantage and tactical overmatch is being challenged on a daily basis. A change in our National Security Strategy is sorely needed, one that prioritizes war-

fighting in the near term. And yet as I look at the Department of Defense priorities of tackling COVID [coronavirus disease], building diversity, and elevating climate change as a national priority, our warfighting focus appears to be particularly askew.

Even the Navy continues to advocate for a divest-to-reinvest strategy that at its core presumes that maritime conflict will not occur this decade. I categorically reject this notion. I ascribe to the warnings of our PACOM [U.S. Indo-Pacific Command] commanders who believe that conflict will likely occur in the near term. To accomplish this reality, we need to adjust our strategic priorities to ensure that our Nation is not ready to support battle force 2045, but, rather, ready to support a conflict now.

The lack of urgency in national security planning is particularly disheartening. Last year, the Navy requested that one destroyer, no amphib, and proposed to retire seven large surface combatants whose firepower exceeded that of the entire British Navy. The Navy provided a 30-year shipbuilding plan that was only good for 1 year. The Navy submitted a shipyard recapitalization plan with little financial backing. And the Navy continues to underman our Surface Navy, who is currently lacking over 5,000 sailors.

And while I am glad that Congress rebuffed a series of Navy proposals last year, this lack of national security planning unsettles our allies and unnerves the industrial base that craves real leadership. Our Navy needs to wake up, change their calculus, and support a new strategic reality.

I remain committed toward providing a Surface Navy that meets the combatant commander's requirements. And while I am pleased that the Flight III destroyer with a new radar and a new multimission frigate, I am concerned that the CNO's [Chief of Naval Operations'] stretch goal of deploying large, unmanned, surface vessels alongside an aircraft carrier in the next 5 years is too much too soon. And I am particularly troubled by the purported amphibious ship reductions. Commandant Berger's vision should be fully embraced and resourced.

As to the Surface Navy culture, I want to thank our witnesses for supporting an independent review of a new surface warfare officer career path and training alternatives that align with the merchant marine. Additionally, I am pleased that we specifically included an assessment in last year's defense bill to specifically review female retention rates. I think all of these assessments are essential for a more effective surface warfare culture.

In closing, I am reminded of one of my favorite Navy quotes by George Washington, where he said: It follows then as certain as the night succeeds the day, that without a decisive naval force we can do nothing definitive, and with it, everything honorable and glorious.

It is time that we relearn the lessons of the past.

Again, I appreciate Chairman Courtney for his leadership, Chairman Garamendi for his leadership, and Ranking Member Waltz for their support and efforts in having this important hearing. And, with that, I yield back the balance of my time.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Wittman can be found in the Appendix on page 43.]

Mr. COURTNEY. Thank you, Mr. Wittman.

I will now recognize the chair of the House Readiness Subcommittee, Mr. Garamendi.

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

Mr. GARAMENDI. I thank you, Mr. Courtney.

Even as we grow more distance from many of the events, let us say at the outset that we continue to grieve and remember the 17 sailors who died on the USS *McCain* and *Fitzgerald* in the collisions of 2017.

We also honor the over 60 sailors and civilians that were injured while battling the fire on the USS *Bonhomme Richard*.

And we are holding this hearing today because, unfortunately, as the Navy itself has concluded, these tragedies in the Surface Navy were avoidable.

Ensuring that they never happen again requires consistent attention. I very much appreciate the Navy's attention to manning, training, maintenance, and cultural issues that contributed to the losses, and, today, our witnesses' continued willingness to engage with our subcommittees.

I also recognize the institutional, significant reforms will take time.

However, I remain haunted by some of the turns of phrases that appear consistently throughout the investigation of the accidents: cascade of failures, accumulation of risk, and on and on.

While I know that this slate of Navy leadership takes these issues extremely seriously and has given deep thought to improving the readiness and well-being of the surface forces, a GAO [Government Accountability Office] report released just last month contains very troubling testimony from the sailors of the fleet today. They report being overworked, understaffed, sleep deprived, insufficiently trained, and ill-equipped to perform basic maintenance tasks.

I worry that the Navy's progress in implementing findings from these accident investigations might mostly be on paper and that, in practice, they are not translated into lasting change.

I don't see the evidence today that the Surface Navy has yet achieved sufficient progress, reversing the entrenched habits of inadequate manning and training, delayed maintenance, and chronic overuse of the force. I do recognize that chronic overuse of the force is not the Surface Navy's—does not come from the Surface Navy but rather from the combatant commanders.

I worry that the Surface Navy is not thinking deeply enough about how to change the culture to evaluate morale and to employ—and to empower officers and sailors to voice concerns when they see problems.

Finally, as we consider the sources of these problems and their potential solutions, I must ask our witnesses to consider whether they could do more to constrain the combatant commanders and their insatiable appetite to use the force, so much so that the force is degraded.

We are experiencing unprecedented challenges today, and we must consider whether the combatant commanders' requests

should be prioritized or deprioritized to ensure that our ships and sailors get the adequate time in port, in training, and in preparation to prepare for any contingency.

I also want to compliment our two witnesses today that have taken all that I have said and all that others have said into action. And I expect today that we will hear about how you intend to address these issues.

Thank you so very much. I yield back my time.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Garamendi can be found in the Appendix on page 45.]

Mr. COURTNEY. Thank you, Mr. Garamendi.

I will now recognize the new ranking member on the Readiness Subcommittee, Mike Waltz, who, this is his, I guess, maiden voyage as ranking member. Congratulations on that—

Mr. WALTZ. Thank you. In the Army, we say that is a case of beer that I owe everyone, but—

Mr. COURTNEY. That might be arranged.

Mr. WALTZ. Yeah.

STATEMENT OF HON. MIKE WALTZ, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM FLORIDA, RANKING MEMBER, SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS

Thank you, both of our witnesses, for coming. Thank you for the conversation over the last few days. And I certainly associate myself with the comments of the chairman and—both chairmen and ranking members, and I think you are absolutely seeing the bipartisan concern and how critically important this committee takes the health, strength, and readiness of our surface fleet.

I do want to recognize much has been done since 2017. Numerous investigations in the aftermath of those incidents have pointed to some common themes, some common threads and challenges across the organization. Rightly in many cases, most cases, the finger was pointed at fatigue, increased demand, high OPTEMPO [operations tempo], undermanning, poor material condition, lack of training, low priority on maintenance, among some other core problems.

Over the past several years, Congress has acted—frankly, many times we haven't acted in time in terms of the continuing resolutions. However, Congress has acted, reports were issued, recommendations implemented within the Navy to drive reform into a system that was creating unsafe conditions and eroding our readiness. Yet as we sit here today, I am concerned, and I share my colleagues' concern, that the Navy, to be candid, hasn't sufficiently addressed some of these chronic problems.

I was incredibly disheartened to hear—and I read the entire report—to hear from the GAO report that was issued last month that painted a picture of a fleet that remains overworked and understaffed, and that sailors, at their level, continue to cite some of the exact same issues and conditions that led to the 2017 disasters is concerning, to say the least.

That same report also detailed a lack of planning and performance data, which I found really troubling and surprising, the lack of data in our intermediate level of maintenance. And as I shared with you, you know, having managed large Army fleets, what the operator does affects what the intermediate level maintenance

does, greatly affects what happens at the depot level and, therefore, the readiness of that fleet and our naval fleet.

So as we are confronted with the challenges my colleagues have laid out for high-end conflict, and as we discussed, you know, we are overlaying what we are getting briefed by the intelligence community of what is imminent and what is around the corner, versus these longer term problems. I think we have a timeline disconnect, and I look forward to hearing how you are going to address that. We just can't afford to talk about the issues anymore. We need to talk about real solutions and when they are going to be implemented and what kind of impact they are going to have.

I do understand some of these are going to take time, but here we are, almost 5 years from the *McCain/Fitzgerald*. That was a wake-up call then, and I think we are getting a wake-up call in Europe right now, that this type of high-end conflict isn't a thing of the past.

And so, today, I do hope to hear those concrete steps. I look forward to your candor on how we can work together to improve the Navy surface readiness.

Mr. Chairman, I yield.

Mr. COURTNEY. Thank you, Mr. Waltz.

It is now time to recognize our witnesses. And I assume, Vice CNO Admiral William Lescher, Vice Chief of Naval Operations from the Department of the Navy, will lead off. And the floor is yours, Admiral.

STATEMENT OF ADM WILLIAM K. LESCHER, USN, VICE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS, DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

Admiral LESCHER. Thank you, Chairman.

Chairman Courtney, Chairman Garamendi, Ranking Member Wittman, Ranking Member Waltz, distinguished members of the House Armed Services Subcommittees on Seapower and Readiness, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the actions we are taking to deliver consistently strong performance across the surface force and the broader Navy.

The imperative for us to work together to deliver the warfighting advantage that American security requires has never been clearer, as just talked about here, given Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine and an authoritarian China bent on military growth, allied with Russia.

In this security context today, the U.S. Navy is the world's most ready and lethal Navy, and that is not happy talk, that is proven performance, demonstrated and consistently meeting combatant commanders' objectives across the globe, while completing, just last year, more than a million flying hours, 22,000 steaming days, 59 major maintenance availabilities.

As we speak, the Navy has increased our forward posture in response to the European commander's assurance and deterrence requirement with a deployed naval force sufficient to deter and defeat, if necessary, any aggression in the European maritime theater. This force includes the *Harry S. Truman* Carrier Strike Group, which continues to demonstrate integrated, high-end maritime strike capabilities with our NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] allies.

An important element of our conversation today will be the actions we are taking to accelerate capabilities and performance beyond this advantage. We are bringing a strong sense of urgency in improving today's baseline performance, given China's clearly stated intent to become the world's preeminent military and Russia's sustained threats and unprovoked aggression. This urgency also reflects the imperative and the opportunity to deliver more consistently strong Navy performance in service of accelerating that advantage.

Today's Navy features many strong teams with great culture and exceptional performance. Yet we also see instances of teams with poor culture and weak performance. The unacceptable loss of the *Bonhomme Richard* is a stark reminder of the gap between our strongest and our weakest performers, and this gap must be eliminated.

Our appreciation of the systemic causes underlying this variability has deepened as we study the similarities and root causes leading to tragic outcomes, such as the *Fitzgerald* and *McCain* collisions and the Major Fires Review events, as well as from studying the best practices that we consistently see in high-performing Navy units.

We have learned that the root causes of the unacceptable variability in Navy performance stem primarily from an outdated approach to institutional learning, and this has led to inconsistent use across the Navy of those Navy best leadership and problem-solving practices.

Our institutional learning approach has too often treated poor performance as isolated failures and overemphasized instructions, checklists, and rules as a fix, while undervaluing the human element, the development and training of our people, a learning mindset, problem ownership, critical thinking.

The inconsistent use of Navy best-learning and problem-solving practices results from this weak institutional learning which has failed to consistently implement across the Navy the best practices routinely seen in areas such as the impressive self-critical learning of our air wing and surface warfare teams during Fallon Integrated Training, which generates the most combat-capable strike groups in the world, or the transparently "embrace the red" learning in Performance to Plan efforts that have driven the highest F-18 mission-capable levels in 10 years, or the strongest self-assessment and learning that underpins Naval Reactors' world-class safety record.

Building on this deeper appreciation of root cause, in January, the Chief of Naval Operations issued a new Charge of Command and a call to action for every Navy leader to apply the Navy proven best practices that empower our people to achieve exceptional performance. We are teaching and leading implementation of these self-assessing, self-correcting practices, which we call Get Real, Get Better, through our type commanders and other community senior leaders.

The call to action also provides specific countermeasures to the institutional learning weakness with key organizational changes that ensure it is enduring, and they include the four-star Learning to Action Board, which tests whether prior corrective measures re-

main in effect and are delivering their intended effect, and the Naval Safety Command, which will now not only assess frontline unit safety performance, but also evaluate and hold accountable the entire chain of command for how it supports subordinate units in managing risk and building a strong safety culture.

With these changes, the Navy is making clear that we will reward and promote leaders based not only on the strong outcomes they achieve, but also on the teams they build and the learning culture they develop.

I am confident that this approach, in concert with the initiatives that Vice Admiral Kitchener will highlight, is the best path to accelerating warfighting advantage, and I look forward to partnering with the committees to make this advance in Navy culture come fully alive. Thank you.

[The joint prepared statement of Admiral Lescher and Admiral Kitchener can be found in the Appendix on page 46.]

Mr. COURTNEY. Thank you, Admiral.

And he is joined today by Admiral Kitchener, who is Commander Naval Surface Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet. Again, thank you for joining us again, Admiral Kitchener, you have been here before, and the floor is yours.

**STATEMENT OF VADM ROY KITCHENER, USN, COMMANDER,
NAVAL SURFACE FORCE, U.S. PACIFIC FLEET, DEPARTMENT
OF THE NAVY**

Admiral KITCHENER. Thank you, sir.

Chairman Courtney, Chairman Garamendi, Ranking Member Wittman, Ranking Member Waltz, and members of the Seapower and Readiness Subcommittees, I thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding the state of the Surface Navy.

Today, your ships are underway across the globe and stand ready to win at sea against any opponent. Sixty-seven surface combatants are deployed worldwide in support of our Nation's strategic interests. Daily, our ships are postured forward where it matters to foster partnerships, bolster ally defenses, and ensure free sea lanes.

As we approach 5 years since the 2017 collisions, the surface force has taken essential steps toward improving the way we produce more ready ships. We have made a lot of progress, but as a learning organization, it is prudent to self-assess and continue to find ways to improve our methods and practices.

The surface force, in line with the Chief of Naval Operations' call to Get Real, Get Better, is taking urgent action to analyze our processes, reduce variability, and refine our methods of producing more ready ships with tactically sound crews, prepared to deter in competition and win in conflict.

Warfighting at sea is our identity as surface warriors. In January, I released a strategic alignment document to the surface force, focusing our efforts across the enterprise to increase the readiness of the force we have today and prepare the force of tomorrow. These efforts focus across five lines of effort, each serving as a pillar to support the most capable surface force in the world.

The lines of effort include developing the leader—warrior, mariner, and manager; producing more ready ships; achieving excellence in fleet introduction; create clear and innovative operational

concepts; and establishing the infrastructure for the future fleet. The dynamic environment we face today and in the future demands bold action with urgency now.

Our investments in manning and training the force have improved our warfighting advantage. Sailors remain our critical component of that advantage, and we are committed to honing both their tactical competence and technical proficiency to keep our ships ready.

Through Ready Relevant Learning on the Surface Training Advanced Virtual Environment, we modernized the way our sailors learn the technical and tactical skill sets necessary to fight and win. We continue to improve our trainers, capitalizing on live, virtual construct of simulators, to provide complex warfighting scenarios. The continued develop of our surface warfighting experts, our WTIs, our warfare tactic instructors, lead the charge in sharpening our competitive edge and serve as a means to drive out variability and tactical proficiency across the force.

The surface force is also improving maintenance and committed to delivering new ships and weapon systems to the fleet. We are applying data analytics and leveraging derived insights to produce more ready ships for tasking.

Since 2019, we have reduced our days of maintenance delay and CNO availabilities by 41 percent, and our on-time completion steadily increased from 34 percent in fiscal year 2019 to 59 percent for all 2021 availabilities.

While we have made progress, many challenges lie ahead as we modernize our force. Our DDG [guided-missile destroyer] modernization program is online, and the systems we are bringing to the fleet ensure we will maintain our competitive edge over our adversaries. Next year, we will commission the first Flight III DDG, USS *Jack Lucas*. Today, the captain and the crew are on board and preparing to deliver enhanced warfighting capability to the force.

We are using our energy, our activity, and our industry to prepare for a complex and challenging future. Everything we do as an enterprise focuses on producing ships and crews ready to fight and win.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

Mr. COURTNEY. Thank you to both the witnesses.

Again, I just have one question, and I will, again, yield to other members.

First of all, I just would say that I would note that the comments of both witnesses where you are acknowledging that something is going on here that is systemic and that it is not a one-off type of event, as you said in page 3 of your testimony, Admiral Lescher, I think actually is significant that, you know, that we are not going to sort of just sort of brush this off on an ad hoc, you know, one time and, you know, nothing to see here kind of approach.

And the—it seemed like one of the levers that you identified in your testimony in terms of how you are going to get to that sort of systemic change is the Learning to Action Board, which is, again, trying to get this new approach sort of, you know, pushing it down throughout, you know, the entire enterprise.

But I guess what I was wondering, if you could describe how the Navy is, you know, going to implement that new type of learning

at every level in the organization, not just at the Pentagon, but at waterfronts and aboard individual ships and maybe even, you know, at Great Lakes in terms of just, you know, at the very, you know, origination of our Navy.

So, again, the floor is yours.

Admiral LESCHER. Yeah. Thank you, sir. The Learning to Action Board is not aspirational. It has met three times already. And to your point, it is providing the structure that is closing the feedback loop that I think was absent before.

We had things such as the Readiness Reform Oversight Council that implemented 111 recommendations from the *Fitz/McCain* reviews. The Learning to Action Board is that, but it stays, it is enduring, and it not only implements and verifies implementation, but it goes back now and it tests after implementation, are those recommendations still in effect, are the fixes making a difference.

Chairman, part of the insight for that was, in 2012, the USS *Miami* had an arsonist start a fire, and that ship burned to an irreparable state. The Navy believed we were a learning organization and implemented fixes for that that largely revolved around the NAVSEA [Naval Sea Systems Command] Instruction 8010. In 2020, the USS *Bonhomme Richard* has an alleged arsonist start a fire. That ship burns to an irreparable state. We are still learning there.

And so what we have learned, as part of the very strong conversation we had in November, was that that instruction, those policies, were not coming alive in the private shipyards and were not coming alive with the triad of the USS *Bonhomme Richard*.

So we had unacknowledged risk, unseen risk, in terms of self-talk, have we put a fix in place, but it was not widely being, in the private shipyards, effective. And so Learning to Action Board is a specific countermeasure to that effect.

The L2AB has met three times. It is laser-focused on bringing velocity to *Bonhomme Richard* implementation. It also, at the last board, took as its first feedback look to go back and look at the *Fitz* and *McCain* 111 implementations, are those still in effect, are they delivering the intended effect.

Chairman, to your question on how do we scale that down vertically, that is the other structure, so the Naval Safety Command. And in the interest of time, I perhaps won't go into that in great detail, but the Naval Safety Command is a reorientation fundamental of the Naval Safety Center to down echelon. Where Naval Safety Center never looked at the fleet, the TYCOM [type commander], or the ISIC commander, it always looked at the Ech [Echelon] 5 unit as an assist visit; Naval Safety Command audit the fleet, the TYCOM, the ISIC, the immediate superior in command. How are you executing your safety oversight? Audit that, feedback, transfer best practices at the Ech 5 level, at the unit.

What is new is it will be an evaluation. It will come up echelon to take our blinders off about what we are seeing broadly across the fleet, and it will include in the same best practice as INSURV [Board of Inspection and Survey] does, an assessment of the unit's ability to self-assess, which is fundamental to this Get Real, Get Better orientation that will scale the learning.

INSURV evaluates a unit and a unit commander's ability to self-assess material condition. Safety Command will assess that for safety performance.

Mr. COURTNEY. Well, thank you, Admiral.

The chair now recognizes Mr. Wittman.

Mr. WITTMAN. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. And, gentlemen, thank you so much for your service to our Nation, and thanks for joining us today.

Admiral Lescher, today's hearing is about the state of the Surface Navy. I want to go to the words of both the former and present PACOM commander as they look at the threats that they face, saying that China is indeed the pacing threat, that they look towards an action by China within this decade, within the next 6 years. And from that standpoint, I want to ask a series of questions.

First of all, do you agree with their assessment as far as China being the pacing threat? Do you agree with the timing of where the threat would manifest itself? And, if so, what is the contradiction then on what they are saying with Battle Force 2045 and what we would be facing in 2025?

And going from there, if we are focused on 2025, the question then is, shouldn't our entire force structure be focused on the near term? And that calls into question the divest-to-invest or divest-to-reinvest strategy whose benefit is probably going to be 20 years out in the future. In fact, the investing doesn't take place until well outside the FYDP [Future Years Defense Program]. As I tell folks, all of our dreams to build the Navy of the future come outside the FYDP.

I want to also put in that perspective, last year's budget request from the Navy requested retiring 15 vessels. Those, I think, are incredibly important to our fleet, especially these large surface combatants. I understand all the issues with the CGs [guided-missile cruisers], but that would retire a missile capability bigger than the entire British Navy.

So I am just trying to reconcile where the combatant commanders say we are today, the threats at our doorstep, is China the pacing threat. If it is, and you agree with both combatant commanders in the near term of that threat, then how does that position itself with the 2045 vision versus 2025, and how the Navy reconciles where we need to be with the divest-to-reinvest strategy?

Admiral LESCHER. Yes, sir. And I appreciate the question. Pacing threat is clearly China. It is stated in the National Defense Strategy. I know of no thoughtful observer who thinks otherwise. The one caveat to that is we do recognize pacing elements, for example, in Russia undersea, because they have the pacing technology there. But the pacing overarching threat is clearly China.

Navy brings a strong view that the decade of concern is 2020, and in some respects, that is not a universal view in the Department, but we consistently believe and have thought that that is the decade that we see of peak risk and that we are going to be ready for.

You highlight so what does that mean in terms of how we size and shape the force, is it 2025, is it 2045. This is the fundamental dilemma of every budget submission, which is how much in current

readiness versus future overmatch, and how do you think about that and how do you get that right.

The way the Navy has consistently delivered our budgets to size and shape the Navy to deliver the most ready and lethal Navy possible is with the following prioritization.

Columbia, number one, fact of life, once-in-a-generation recap of our strategic deterrent, nondiscretionary, time pressured. Number two priority, readiness today. Number three is modernization. Modernization is what delivers lethality and survivability. And number four is capacity.

And our view is, and I believe the committees bring that same view—it has been our approach for a number of years now—our view is readiness and modernization, i.e., lethality and survivability, are table stakes for any capacity we buy. I know we have the same view of the committees, we are not going to buy capacity that cannot be properly manned, spared, maintained, and trained to.

So, in that context, what is the understanding of a budget that divests? And it is an important question. It fundamentally revolves around the best judgment, driven, Ranking Member, by strong analysis. And I know we have shared with the committees not only the Integrated Naval Force Structure Analysis but capability analysis.

So making these hard choices about *Columbia*, readiness, capability, and capacity, revolves around not only what the campaign analysis shows is the capacity required to win a distributed maritime operations fight against China, but also what is the mix of that force. And, again, I know you and the committees pay attention to this well.

When CNO talked about a 500-ship Navy, he didn't talk about 500 tug and pallet ships. Talking about a specific mix, which is to say there is other attributes that we look at very closely that drive that mix and those choices.

Some of the key attributes that start to indicate why, in making hard choices, we would divest 30-year-old cruisers, include our ability to put long-range fires down range, our ability to maneuver in the adversary weapon engagement zone, our ability to operate our ships without frequent resupply in a contested logistics environment, and our ability to defend against incoming raids and attrite them with hard-kill and soft-kill capabilities.

So in that context, beyond capacity, bringing these other important measures and attributes to the force is what leads to our best judgment that the most ready and lethal force against the pacing threat of China looks like what was delivered with the budget.

Mr. WITTMAN. Very good. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Mr. COURTNEY. Thank you, Mr. Wittman.

The chair now recognizes Mr. Garamendi, chairman of the Readiness Subcommittee.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Admiral Lescher, thank you for your discussion about the necessity to balance today, tomorrow, and the next decade. Obviously very complex. We will spend a lot of time working through that. Today, I want to really get into how to make the existing fleet operate more effectively, more efficiently, more safely.

You have put three different programs before us: the Get Real, Get Better program, the Safety Program, and the Learn to Action Board program. Could you speak about the integration of these three, and also how that integration, assuming they are to be integrated, how that reduces the paperwork, and how you would assess the effectiveness?

Admiral LESCHER. Thank you for that question, Chairman. This idea of simplify, streamline, and align is critical, right? It can't be additive and just—we actually recognize that as a causal factor for weak performance, where our former view of what it meant to be a learning organization was to write an instruction, a guideline, a regulation. And we are overwhelming our triads and our leadership's ability to process all of that.

So an absolute foundation of this approach as we work forward and roll it out across the Navy is to simplify, streamline, align a bunch of existing activity, existing related work. Let's make it clearer, let's bring it up—elevate to principles and playbooks.

In terms of the integration, one of the things I think it is important to highlight is Get Real, Get Better, which is scaling existing Navy best practice, is not something interesting that was read out of a book. It is not—didn't come out of a powerful Harvard Business School case study or some consultant. It is real Navy learning. And so for 3½ years now, we have been attacking systemic, weak Navy performance, head down, build a little, test a little, learn a lot, scale it.

This was the journey that I would highlight as the initial instantiation of F-18s. We had 250 mission-capable F-18 jets from 2008 to 2018. We had a decade of 250 mission-capable jets. The mission-capable rate in 2018 was 55 percent because the inventory was over 500.

So 2018, 2019, we need to think, act, operate differently. This was the start of the first Get Real engine, because the self-talk of the Naval Aviation enterprise, of which I am a member, was sequestration is killing us, I need more parts, I need more people, and I need to hire more component repair.

When we got in with a thoughtful new approach called Perform to Plan, first of all, we made it not work by a committee, we made an accountable leader, the Air Boss. We brought in the driver-based performance and we brought in digital tools and we brought in a cadence of accountability for learning. That illuminated the foundation of Navy learning, of what it means to be self-assessing, self-correcting.

In 2019, after a decade of 250 jets, we drove it to the 341 target, and we have sustained it ever since in COVID. The number today is 350.

So that was the kernel of learning that then scaled into the private shipyards; 7,000 days of maintenance delay in 2019, 4,000 in 2020. Admiral Kitchener talked about it has been down, you know, 50 percent. Brought it into supply.

That foundation—and so how do we integrate it? That illuminated the building on a strong Navy culture—honor, courage, commitment—but how are we going to change our behavior in concert. And what really brought velocity to this rollout was seeing things like *Fitz/McCain* and *Bonhomme Richard*, and we said, hey, we are

seeing the same things there, and so let's bring velocity to it. CNO made the call to the call to action.

We have to teach this, Chairman, because when I have been out doing listening tours, if you talk to many people throughout the Navy, they will say, we are already doing this. And when I talk to the triads, they said, no, we are not. We need to have specific understanding of what it means to be self-assessing, self-correcting.

So I don't want to take more time. Recognizing the need to simplify, streamline, and align. Recognize the need for the Learning to Action Board with the Naval Safety Command and this broader teaching on being self-assessing, self-correcting, they are all mutually reinforcing.

And I will be happy to perhaps come by when convenient—

Mr. GARAMENDI. And I would presume that all of that is for getting at the problems that have been identified: manning, training, maintenance, overuse of the force, and the like. I would appreciate a more detailed description of the integration of these three major tasks that you have undertaken and then how you intend to judge the successfulness of that integration of those three major tasks.

Also, if you would please make sure that we know what you need to carry out these tasks. I am hesitant, in fact, I refuse to insert my low level of knowledge and overwrite and overrun what you propose to do, but I will use our position to observe and hold you accountable for the implementation of what you intend to do to address the known problems here.

One other point is—and this goes to my colleague who talks about the Navy of the future and the Navy of today—we added \$24.5 billion to the NDAA [National Defense Authorization Act]. And the question for us is, did we spend that additional \$24 billion to achieve the goal that our colleague, Mr. Wittman, has put before us? If we did, good. If we did not use that money to address the problem that he has identified, then shame on us. I will let it go at that.

I do have the list of where that money was spent, and precious little of it was spent to address the problem that he has identified. That is our problem.

Mr. COURTNEY. Thank you, Mr. Garamendi.

Next, the chair will now recognize Mr. Wilson from South Carolina.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And, Admirals, again, as a grateful Navy dad, I am just so honored for your service and your dedication and commitment to our country.

And, General—excuse me—Admiral Kitchener, as we discuss weapons systems, what is the Harpoon missile system capable of as to its placement, portability, range, lethality?

Mr. COURTNEY. Microphone. Yep, yep, yep.

Admiral KITCHENER. The Harpoon weapon system is one of our legacy weapon systems that we are actually phasing out. It is one of our surface-to-surface weapons. It has got about a 75-nautical-mile range, but it is scheduled to be phased out and replaced by more capable systems.

We could probably have a more robust discussion in a proper setting. Over.

Mr. WILSON. And can it be placed on land?

Admiral KITCHENER. It can be configured in some sort of—we have experimented with some land options and capability with Harpoon in the past. That is true.

Mr. WILSON. And as to other missile systems, are they being in place now to replace the Harpoon, or what is the status?

Admiral KITCHENER. We do. We have several different systems that we are developing. One that we have outfitted on our littoral combat ships is the Naval Strike Missile, which is a very capable weapon that has also being utilized by the Marine Corps in their littoral regiments.

And then we have a Maritime Strike Tomahawk weapon that we are developing as well, and then some variants of our SM branch of weapons that we have configured for different missions that probably we need to change our setting to discuss those.

Mr. WILSON. And, you know, this may be beyond, but can a Javelin missile be used as a missile to attack a vessel or a landing craft?

Admiral KITCHENER. I would not rule out using any weapon to attack any type of craft or vehicle. Its limited range and, you know, some of the maritime environment is a little bit more unforgiving on certain weapons that were designed for land use. But, yes, sir, if—I am not going to tell you that, no, we couldn't use it in a short-range—

Mr. WILSON. Well, indeed, as I am thinking of range, we have seen Putin's Black Sea Fleet moving toward the incredible city of Odessa and the horror of the mass murder that Putin, the war criminal, is planning. And just any way that that could be interrupted, stopped, is my interest, and I certainly hope that every effort is being made, working with our Ukrainian allies and our Black Sea allies of Romania and Bulgaria and Turkey.

And then with Turkey, Admiral Lescher, I am grateful that there has been a commitment from our Turkish partners to restrict the Russian access to the Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits.

Putin's war against innocent people of Ukraine certainly justifies the decision under the Montreux Convention. How does the Montreux Convention limitation of warships from non-Black Sea nations limit our ability for regional naval power projection? Are there efforts underway to work with the Turkish Ministry of Defense to permit American naval transit in the event of crises?

Admiral LESCHER. Yeah. Thanks for that question, sir. The investments we have made—and I will keep it at a fairly high level for classification—provide the reach that give our combatant commander opportunity to deliver the effects we need from multiple bodies of water. So don't necessarily have to be in the Black Sea, the Ionian, the Adriatic. There is capability certainly with our current laydown, without doubt, to defend our NATO allies. So not an issue.

What it does highlight, in a very positive sense, is not only the applicability of that treaty, but from a strategic perspective, where we are focused on integrated deterrence by the U.S. Navy, by the joint force, by the whole of government that you see being done very incredibly well, and through our allies and partners. And so that closure is influencing obviously the ability of Russian ships to

flow to the Black Sea in a way that is much more impactful on them than our combatant commanders.

Mr. WILSON. And I want to point out too, I was really grateful with the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe working with Congressman Steve Cohen, Senator Ben Cardin, Senator Roger Wicker. We visited Varna, Bulgaria, last year. And the incredible people of Bulgaria would love to have naval facilities, U.S., to go along with their other military facilities of Novo Selo, as Bulgaria stands up as a great part of NATO.

I yield back.

Mr. COURTNEY. Thank you, Mr. Wilson.

Again, I would just note, in terms of the Montreux Convention and also the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, in 2018, Putin just totally violated every single principle of maritime law when he seized three Ukrainian Navy ships, imprisoned the crew in Moscow for a year, completely incommunicado.

The U.N. [United Nations] Convention for Law of the Sea treaty tribunal convicted Russia of complete violation of UNCLOS. And, you know, I would just note, I think, frankly, it is a perfect example why I think the U.S. should ratify UNCLOS and get part of the structure of enforcing that type of illegal behavior. So, anyway, that is my little ad hominem comment and followup.

Our next member up is Mr. Norcross from New Jersey.

Mr. NORCROSS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We started out this morning having a quote from General and President Washington talking about how important a Navy is, and certainly we couldn't agree more. But something that is remarkably different from the 1700s to where we are today is air threats and space threats. And any decisions we make are made in a very different formula and—where we assess those choices and the risk. And in many ways, it would be great if we just had to choose between land and sea. It would make our job much easier. But the fact of the matter is we are in a very challenging environment.

And you discussed some of the mishaps, the accidents we have had over the course of the last decade, and some of the issues that have been recommended, had been put into place. We are coming off a 2-year COVID period that has challenged everybody on this planet but particularly in our Armed Forces.

Admiral Lescher, talk to me about how we are recruiting that next generation of sailor. How are we getting he or her to not only join but to stay in the Navy? Because we know it costs so much more money and time to train somebody new than to retain somebody who is experienced. Could you touch base on that?

Admiral LESCHER. Yeah. I appreciate the question, sir. Absolutely. I would highlight a couple of what I think are best practices and structure we have in the Navy that is making a real difference on that dimension.

At boot camp, in terms of how we influence the individuals, one of the key elements is warrior toughness and resiliency training. And I highlight that not only because it is such a success at boot camp in Great Lakes, but we are scaling that now on a continuum across the Navy.

So from the day you come into the Navy, whatever your accession source is, through milestone events, to the day you leave, a consistent focus on warrior toughness and resilience is key.

In terms of with that foundational, cultural orientation, behavioral orientation, warrior focus, how do we make come alive their ability to contribute in an important way? And Ready Relevant Learning is our new approach to improve and address a number of the training deficiencies that have been noticed in the GAO report and elsewhere.

And I would ask Admiral Kitchener to give you some specific detail in the surface force of how Ready Relevant Learning is making a difference.

The one thing I would highlight, again, before I turn it over to Admiral Kitchener, sir, that you point, we are very focused on retention, and it is strong right now, it is at a very strong level. But part of the reason we are focused on it is because recruiting is becoming increasingly difficult for all the services and really even more broadly.

The last data I showed showed that that portion of the U.S. population that is eligible to serve, their propensity to serve from 2018 was 13 percent. In 2021, it is down to 10 percent.

I think all the service recruiters are seeing symptoms of the great resignation and/or a labor market that is so tough that our new construction shipyards, our repair shipyards, our aviation depots, all are struggling to bring in—we are all competing for the same talented group. And so we are laser-focused on that, strong retention.

And in terms of Ready Relevant Learning, Roy, other thoughts you might have on that.

Admiral KITCHENER. Yes, sir. To answer your question on some of the things we have done with training, particularly in the surface force, but I think this applies, writ large, across the Navy, is, you know, getting that training to the right sailor at the right time.

And so one of our focus has been really to develop, you know, from the apprentice to the journeyman to the master, which is something we got unfocused on over the years. And so now we have been able to come back, and we are beginning to measure our ability to—on that training that we have given to that sailor.

So if you come aboard a ship and you do a tour in an engineering department, then you would go back to shore to refine those skills, so when you came back out, you would be either that strong journeyman or perhaps that master, where what we found before we embarked on what we call our SURFMEX [Surface Manning Experience] program, which allows us to measure these things, is that we certainly had the right people on the ship, but they didn't have the right expertise, or they didn't have the years of training that we would require for that level.

If you look back at how we apply the training to our new force, to our new sailors, to this generation, it really has gone back to, you know, focus on a virtual training. If you look at the engineering training that we conduct at Great Lakes, 10 years ago, we maybe had one old engine that we would allow sailors to work on. Today, every engineering course has a virtual trainer that they can take things apart and look at things.

We have proliferated that to the waterfront to the point of need where our sailors can come off ships and go and work on these things, particularly in the area of tactical training. I think our investments and our enlisted tactical training is very significant, and it resonates with our sailors, and we are able to maintain that proficiency.

Because what we have learned through all the data that we have collected on all the training initiatives we have is that it is doing it time and time again is very critical, but it is also when was the last time you did it. The currency is very significant. And so putting these trainers at the waterfront has allowed us to do that.

Mr. NORCROSS. Thank you. And my time expired, but just want to express gratitude for those who served during the pandemic. Regardless of their individual health, they kept our country running. I yield back.

Mr. COURTNEY. Thank you, Mr. Norcross.

I now recognize Mr. Waltz.

Mr. WALTZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Gentlemen, as I mentioned in my opening statement, I was particularly disturbed by last month's GAO report which detailed the comments of sailors from 16 different ships. And I think it is important to note, one of the reasons the GAO went to sailor interviews so heavily was because of a lack of data in intermediate maintenance.

And, you know, these sailors discussed their experiences, and basically they were discussing the same root problems that led to the disasters of 2017. We are 5 years away from that, as I mentioned. But I think we could go back as far as the Balisle report, I believe that was in 2010, and find similar themes and challenges as to what was now being reported in 2020—or 2022.

So despite your actions—and I want to give credit for many of those actions—we are still receiving these troubling reports and comments from sailors reporting—pointing at the same old problems. So there seems to be a disconnect between the initiatives and what we are hearing on the ground.

Were you surprised—and to either one of you—were you surprised by what you were hearing from the sailors in that report?

Admiral LESCHER. Yeah, let me take that. And, Roy, please pile on.

I was not surprised, partly because of this journey I alluded to earlier about Navy taking a hard look at systemically weak performance is very much focused in two ways on shipyards and maintenance.

What you highlighted as particularly troubling, this absence of data, is true. And in this case, I can, on an upside, report to you that is in the intermediate phase now and we are on it. That used to also be in the depot phase. It took two four-stars, myself and Admiral Caldwell, to break free the data in our public shipyards and get that released out of control so we can use it to drive this Perform to Plan/Get Real engine, which then is married with our Get Better engine.

So the GAO report talked about a number of issues. It talked about manning. Let me offer you a few thoughts on that. The Navy

from *Fitz/McCain* era has recognized that as an issue, and the Navy has pulled that lever hard.

And so let's talk about why it was still manifest with those sailors. From January 2017 to today, 10,000 more sailors at sea; 23,000 increase in end strength since 2017. Crewed as billets being increased relentlessly, gaps at sea decreasing.

But still, the way we approach, partly as a learning from *Fitz/McCain*, is we allocate risk in manpower to the maintenance phase. And so we have to be eyes wide open about that. And as we still continue to close the manpower lever, that is what—and Admiral Kitchener can talk about how we manage that risk in the maintenance phase.

The related element I would like to highlight is, partly because of what I talked about in the recruiting context, we are not going to just solve this by recurrently pulling the more accessions lever. We need to be thoughtful about demand reduction.

And I don't mean demand reduction in the context of Chairman Garamendi said about less COCOMs [combatant commands], although that is a lever we are pulling to make that a supply-based discussion we can talk about. But I am talking about in terms of condition-based maintenance and using our data and our AI [artificial intelligence] in a best practice, for example, that Maersk does, to design our maintenance system on the ship to not oversubscribe the sailors.

Mr. WALTZ. Not to jump in, just for the interest of time, I am all for pulling in private sector best practices, but I have to tell you, the fact that we didn't have data at the depot level, we don't have data at the intermediate level, do you find that acceptable?

Admiral LESCHER. It is completely unacceptable. But, Ranking Member, I can tell you these initiatives broadly that we have been scaling for 4 years now are absolutely driving data. If you look in the aviation enterprise and what Air Boss is doing, it is phenomenally impressive.

The fleet readiness analytic group—and Roy has created a surface action analytics group that is completely data-driven. The shipyards now, the public shipyards, absolutely data-driven. Private shipyards, we need to work as well to make that richer.

Intermediate maintenance, just as an example, we did use intermediate maintenance data in some of the earlier Perform to Plan initiatives in undersea and in the private shipyards. It is just not as rich as it needs to be. But, Ranking Member, I will tell you there is no lack of understanding of the power of data.

And the other thing I would like to highlight, we have an exceptional data scientist group at Center for Naval Analyses that uses data in incredibly powerful ways. And, in fact, when I benchmark personally with senior executives at world-class companies outside the DOD [Department of Defense] ecosphere in search of best practice for large-velocity, high-volume deckplate problem solving, when they see how the Navy has used large data to leverage and move outcome, they are the ones that are asking for the next meeting.

Mr. WALTZ. Thank you for that. We are running out of time to do better, and you are going to hear that from me every single chance. The threat briefs versus the systems that we are getting in place doesn't line up.

Admiral Kitchener, just in the—I don't see the clock going so I don't—we are good. All right. Thanks. So I am a little thrown off on that.

But—we talked yesterday about your 10-year horizon on the modernization piece, but yet overlaid with probably what I believe is a 4- to 7-year horizon where we may go to high-end conflict in the Pacific. Talk to me about that disconnect in terms of timing.

I just—I feel like we have to get out of this mode of asking for what we think we can get versus what we need. And then talk to us about the gaps, what we get to you or then what we get to you too late. We need to understand those gaps. How do you accelerate? And do you have to ask for more resources, both either internally or to us, to accelerate that modernization?

Admiral KITCHENER. Thank you for the question.

Mr. WALTZ. And I would ask you to be brief. I don't want to monopolize the time.

Admiral KITCHENER. Okay. Thank you for the question. When we put together the strategy or when I put together the competitive edge strategy, it was to not only make what we have now more ready and produce more ready ships that I have, and that was mostly an analytics-driven adventure that we have been running, and it is producing really good results, so that now we know.

Because what we have done, to kind of go back to the last question a little bit, is we do a very good job of deploying our ships and making them ready when they go forward. They are manned, they are certified to the missions we decide they are certified to, and they are trained to a very high level. That is done very well.

In the maintenance phase and in the initial parts of our training phase, we take risk because—

Mr. WALTZ. We are robbing from Peter to pay Paul.

Admiral KITCHENER. Yes, sir. That is where we take our risk, consciously. And I watch that very carefully. It is particularly in the maintenance phase, because as a ship comes out of maintenance and transitions to start its work-up training, it is a very critical point. You know, it is a high failure point is what we look at.

And if you don't have the right people on deck and you don't have the right people certifying to the right standard, then you could get in trouble. So we pay, I pay very close attention to that. And so then—

Mr. WALTZ. Thank you for that. If you could send the rest of that for the record, I would appreciate it. I look forward to having that conversation with you.

Just one quick statement or final point. I want to mention that we have been made aware of an issue regarding inoperable ovens on CVN 77 after a lengthy availability, and it is our hope we can get those fixed. We got to feed the sailors. Nutrition before mission, as my first platoon sergeant told me. That came to us at a recent visit, and we wanted to make you aware of it.

And, again, we are paying close attention to what the sailors are telling us and what is motivating them to stay in the Navy and continue to serve this great Nation.

Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman. I yield my time.

Mr. COURTNEY. Thank you, Mr. Waltz.

I now recognize Mr. Langevin for 5 minutes.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Very good. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Can you hear me okay?

Mr. COURTNEY. Loud and clear.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Very good. Thank you.

I want to thank our witnesses for their testimony today. Thank you for your service.

Let me begin with this, and this is for both of our witnesses. So I have been told that there is a chronic overuse of the surface force, causing fatigue, low morale, and safety concerns. I know we touched on this a bit already this morning. So the question is: Is the Navy fleet leadership empowered to relay concerns of fatigue and overwork when a mission is requested, especially a nonessential mission, and does the current culture allow fleet leadership to communicate these concerns?

Admiral LESCHER. Yes, sir. So those—I alluded to it in an earlier answer. Very direct opportunity for the Chief of Naval Operations to influence requests for forces above the baseline plan for the year. Obviously, the world gets a vote and it is a risk decision but with the Navy having a very strong voice.

One element of that that I would highlight, if you look at, for example, steaming days, in fiscal year 2020, the Navy executed well above the plan. In fiscal year 2021, last year, the decrease in the annual steaming days was about 7,000 to 22,000, so a nontrivial substantial decrease, reflecting the Navy voice that the force was being oversubscribed.

Nonetheless, the concern remains. It is real. The tension is real between the need for combatant commanders and the ability to deliver ready, lethal, properly trained and equipped naval forces.

One other thing I would highlight very quickly before turning it over to Admiral Kitchener, besides that demand lever, some of the other actions I talked about, we are very focused on this fatigue issue within the way a unit is manned today, to pull workload off the sailor. Clearly, I had mentioned condition-based maintenance and using AI. In aviation, we did a maintenance program reset that took 30 percent of the scheduled maintenance out of a VFA [strike fighter] squadron by giving a homework assignment to NAVAIRSYSCOM [Naval Air Systems Command] to go back and look at the totality of maintenance requirements that have been added over the life of the Hornet. And we learned that they had all been added and never pulled out. We reduced scheduled maintenance by 30 percent.

I directed Naval Sea Systems Command to do the same homework assignment for our ships. And so, again, looking to see if we can, in terms of the 67-hour designed workweek for our sailors when deployed, to pull off unnecessary unvalue-added work.

The last item I would highlight in there, there is also the opportunity to adjust mission. So OPNAV [Office of the Chief of Naval Operations] N9 has a homework assignment right now to look at the required operational capabilities, the mission assignments which drives the manning requirements for all our surface ships.

And an example of an actual case, a cruiser that, based on where it was ordered, did not have the need to do a maritime interdiction operation, visit, board, search and seizure, and pull that workload

off the sailors. All elements of us thinking how do you both pull work off as well as bring additional supply on.

Roy, your——

Mr. LANGEVIN. When will they be reporting back to you, Admiral, on those requests that you have made and those changes? Do you have a time certain as to when they will be reporting back to you?

Admiral LESCHER. I am sorry, sir, I didn't catch the question.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Is there a time certain when they will be reporting back to you on those findings, the things that you have laid out in terms of changes?

Admiral LESCHER. I believe you are asking about the homework assignment to NAVSEA to report on the ability analytically, not just to remove but analytically to remove maintenance requirements, is that the question?

Mr. LANGEVIN. Yes.

Admiral LESCHER. I don't have a solid estimate for that, but I am happy to close the loop for you when I get that.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Okay, thank you.

Admiral Kitchener.

Admiral KITCHENER. I will speak at a very kind of strategic level here, sir, but I think, to answer your question, we do a very good job, in my opinion, between myself and the numbered fleet commander, on ensuring that ships are manned, trained, and certified for the mission.

I can give you examples of cases where we needed to accomplish the maintenance or if an entitlement, a training entitlement wasn't completed, where we delayed a ship from proceeding on to the next phase of its maintenance.

The one I would tell you that is most recent to me is a group that just came back, the *Essex* ARG [Amphibious Ready Group]. They were going out and they needed to go to the Middle East to support operations there. And we had to do some critical repairs to the ship. And I said, hey, this is what we need to do. It took us a little bit longer than we thought. We delayed the deployment. We still got there on time and executed the mission, but we made sure they were ready for it.

We do the same thing with training. So we don't put sailors in positions or ships in positions where they are not ready to execute the mission. I think that works very well. If I don't agree on it with the numbered fleet commander or there is a disagreement with us, then we go to the four-star fleet commander and it is adjudicated at that level. It is a robust C2 [command and control]. It came out of the *McCain/Fitz*——

Mr. COURTNEY. Thank you, Admiral Kitchener. I mean, we got the gist, I think, of the answer, so that was good. Thank you.

And thank you, Mr. Langevin.

Next up is Mr. Scott.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you.

And, Admirals, Mr. Wilson and Chairman Courtney both alluded to the Black Sea area, and you—certainly timely, maybe not for the specific subject matter but very timely. And while you discussed the capabilities that we have in the Black Sea region, it is my understanding that we do not have a strategy for the Black Sea region. Is that correct?

Admiral LESCHER. Maybe you could amplify more. I don't understand.

Mr. SCOTT. My understanding is that NATO nor the U.S. has developed a strategy for the Black Sea region.

Admiral LESCHER. I am unaware of a specific Navy strategy for the Black Sea.

Mr. SCOTT. So I have kind of a suggestion, Mr. Courtney, and this is not a suggestion for admirals, but for the people that are watching around the world.

I think that the U.N. should declare a no-go zone in the Black Sea for Russian warships and for the skies above Ukraine. And I think that the U.N. should ask the world to enforce those no-go zones.

The Ukrainian people and President Zelensky have done a tremendous job putting up a fight against superior forces. I have very serious reservations whether or not they can hold on if the Russians are hitting them from the air, the land, and the sea. The world has an obligation, and perhaps it is the U.N. that should propose the no-go zones and have that vote, and that the world needs to be prepared to enforce those.

With that said, how much coordination is there with our NATO allies with regard to procurement, maintenance, material conditioning, and training? Our NATO allies now recognize, including Germany, that they are going to have to spend 2 percent. How much coordination is there with the purchase of the ships and the weapons and the training that we need to defend the world from people like Vladimir Putin?

Admiral LESCHER. You know, I am thinking of specific examples that might come to mind there. And I am not—I don't have a lot of detail at my fingertips, so I am happy to take that for the record as well.

The Foreign Military Sales program, nonetheless, of the U.S. is robust globally, and my sight picture, it is at a very strong level. So without being able to provide specific elements of our NATO allies today, I would offer that as a baseline context and then offer to get back to you with more detail.

Mr. SCOTT. I suppose my point for the committee and for the admirals is that it is a whole lot cheaper to buy the second than it is to develop the first of a weapon system. And it seems to me that perhaps coordination among NATO countries might get us all more of the weapons and the equipment that we need for a lot less money.

And so if we are going to buy two and the Brits are going to buy two and the Germans are going to buy two, then purchasing six at one time would give the U.S. and our NATO allies and the world a better deal on what it takes to secure the world from people like Vladimir Putin.

What are the crews being trained on today with regard to the combat at sea, potential combat at sea? What specific areas are you training the most for?

Admiral KITCHENER. Sir, we train them at integrated air and missile defense, you know, against not only ballistic missile defense threats, but also against air-launched and surface-launched and sub-launched cruise missiles. We actually share a facility with the

NAWDC [Naval Aviation Warfighting Development Center] team, my air colleagues up in Fallon, Nevada, where we integrate our destroyers and our cruiser crews in with pilots sitting in tubs, and then we network out to the air wing on the Fallon range. So that is pretty sophisticated.

Our WTIs [warfare tactics instructors] at the Surface and Mine Warfare Development Center have been working extensively on a SAG [surface action group] tactics, how to defeat high-end Chinese surface ships, so we can take those down and allow our other precision fires to interdict. And then, of course, anti-submarine warfare, which we continue to get better and better at as we get more and more practice.

Mr. SCOTT. If I could ask one quick question, Admiral. Do you feel like you have enough weapons in your wartime reserve right now?

Admiral KITCHENER. In our wartime reserve? We have enough weapons going on on our deployed ships, sir, and we are ready to take the fight there.

Mr. SCOTT. I yield.

Mr. COURTNEY. Thank you, Mr. Scott.

The chair now recognizes Mr. Golden.

Mr. GOLDEN. Thank you.

Last year, we had some testimony to the subcommittee about Conventional Prompt Strike. And I have seen some reports recently that the timeline might have slipped on deploying that on the *Zumwalt* away from fiscal year 2025. I was just curious for any kind of update you can provide.

Admiral LESCHER. Thank you for that question. My sight line is that Conventional Prompt Strike on the *Zumwalt* is still targeted in fiscal year 2025 timeframe and on *Virginia* Block V fiscal year 2028. I would put an immense caveat to that, however, which is we need your partnership to enact the funding to do that. If the CR [continuing resolution] continues this year, those timelines will absolutely slide.

Mr. GOLDEN. Thank you. That is helpful.

We have had a lot of support testimony from the Navy over the last couple of years about follow-on multiyear procurement related to the DDG Flight III. Of course, this subcommittee included a provision to tell the Navy to go ahead and do that, give it the authority to do that last year. We didn't land there with the Senate, but there was a reporting requirement to the Navy to get back to Congress about the value of a follow-on multiyear procurement financially, et cetera.

Do you know anything about the status of that get back and when we might be able to expect something back from the Navy?

Admiral LESCHER. I am not familiar with the status, but we will get that back to you.

Mr. GOLDEN. Yeah, if we could get that back for the record, I would appreciate it very much. Thank you.

That is it. Thanks.

Mr. COURTNEY. The chair now recognizes Mr. Gallagher.

Mr. GALLAGHER. I keep getting demoted on this committee, by the way. I have to wait longer, but—

In response to Representative Wilson's questions, Admiral Lescher, about Ukraine working with Turkey, you said, quote: What it does highlight in a positive sense from a strategic perspective, we are focused on integrated deterrence that you see being done very incredibly well.

I am intrigued by this concept of integrated deterrence. I am eagerly awaiting the publication of the National Security Strategy and then the National Defense Strategy, and assume integrated deterrence will be the cornerstone of it.

But in this context and in light of your comments, two questions about integrated deterrence. What do you see being integrated into deterrence that wasn't there before?

Admiral LESCHER. So the concept, as I was highlighting it, is integrating across all domains. So you see an increased focus in the joint warfighting concept multidomain, integrating the domains, which is not to say they weren't before. It is an evolution for sure.

And then the broader, again, evolution to focus and deliver, as part of a joint force, as part of whole of government, and working in particular with allies and partners, all an evolution and an emphasis I think that you are familiar with.

Mr. GALLAGHER. But if we are doing integrated deterrence very incredibly well in Ukraine, it raises a second question, which is, what did we deter?

Admiral LESCHER. An excellent question, I suppose. So we are deterring any expansion into the NATO territories that we are committed to defend.

Mr. GALLAGHER. But in a very real sense, I think, would it be fair to say deterrence—we failed to deter Putin from invading, correct?

Admiral LESCHER. Oh, absolutely. Yeah.

Mr. GALLAGHER. So there was a deterrence failure. I don't mean this to, like, score a cheap point. I just think that is interesting. That is something we should study. We should understand why it happened.

My own view—and this gets to integrated deterrence and part of why I am skeptical of the concept—is that if it is used to suggest that we can rely on nonmilitary tools, specifically sanctions, or hashtag diplomacy in order to deter, uncoupled from a credible military threat, then we will have further deterrence failures. My bias is that you have to put hard power in the path of people like Putin or Xi Jinping in order to have a hope of deterrence.

I would go further and say this is the first test, real world test of integrated deterrence, and it failed. We need to learn from that, right? I want to deter. We all want to deter. We don't want to deal with an incursion into NATO. We certainly don't want to deal with a conflict over Taiwan.

But if integrated deterrence is a smokescreen for cutting our investments in hard power and somehow believing that untested technology which won't be fielded until the end of the decade or the next decade or allies or statements coming out of Davos or the U.N. can substitute for hard power, I think we are going to see further deterrence failures. Now, I understand there are many in the building who disagree with me, and I am open to the counterargument, but it is a matter of fact that deterrence failed in this case.

I welcome the stiffening of the Europeans' position, the shift that I perceive in Germany, the unification of the West. These are great developments that we should build upon. But deterrence still failed. And so I would argue, perhaps we didn't do integrated deterrence, whatever that means, very incredibly well.

And I think it would help—usually I actually ask questions, I don't do speeches like this. But you have touched a nerve for me.

One way I think—the best lesson I think we can learn from this is actually in a different theater. It is in INDOPACOM [U.S. Indo-Pacific Command]. I think the lesson is we need to think about how we arm Taiwan yesterday, right? After things start going boom, it is going to be hard to surge support.

And we are engaged in a process of trying to deter the PLA [People's Liberation Army] by denial. And the threat of sanctions and the threat of a sternly worded mean tweet from the State Department press secretary is not going to deter Xi Jinping.

I yield my remaining second.

Mr. COURTNEY. Thank you, Mr. Gallagher.

Actually, just one response, which, again, I think you raised a really excellent question there. But there is examples of integrated deterrence that is happening out there, particularly in the ASW [anti-submarine warfare] domain, where our allies are very integrated, in terms of the U.S. Navy, as far as dealing with that specific threat.

And I don't know if you want to—

Admiral LESCHER. No, I appreciate the opportunity to amplify. It is almost a straw man to say integrated deterrence would somehow be divorced from a comprehensive integrated approach that relies on military power. I would be, equally with you, Representative, if that somehow decoded as a stovepipe device comprehensive approach.

And to your point, is it successful or not? The context of the U.S. approach here would be in defense of the NATO allies, and—well, I believe we will see how that—

Mr. COURTNEY. Thank you, Admiral.

The chair now recognizes Congresswoman Luria.

Mrs. LURIA. Yes. I was going to shift back, Admiral Lescher, to some things that you mentioned in your statement. So I will just quote what you wrote. You said: "Too often, from an institutional perspective, we have viewed poor performance as one-off failures, made short-term adjustments, and focused on administrative solutions, adding burdensome regulations and guidance over developing our people," end quote.

But then you go on to talk about all the administrative solutions and guidance that you have put in place to fix this problem, such as Get Real, Get Better; Learning to Action Board; Safety Management System; Performance to Plan; Navy Sustainment System; additional fire safety inspections and requirements; more requirements for training officers. And the list is pretty long.

So just looking at the *Bonhomme Richard* as an example, and you have talked about different causes for these types of incidents, would you say that that was cultural? Was it training? Was it programmatic? Can you describe where you think that failed?

Admiral LESCHER. Yeah. My fundamental diagnosis of *Bonhomme Richard* was remarkable organizational drift and an insufficiently intrusive ISIC. That is a bad combination.

So the question that then emerges is why. What drove that? I believe our sight picture on—we hadn't properly trained our individuals going into these maintenance depots necessarily. So the damage control industrial certification being one remedy for that.

It is a very fair question on whether we are not, where by proliferating guidelines, regulations, instructions as our primary method of learning, if that is not oversubscribing the ability of our triads and our people to process them.

There is a really interesting learning example in Naval Reactors, which you might say is the exemplar of that culture. And they are on a strong push to step back from 100-page instructions and really start making that knowledge come alive with a principles-based approach, where the principles are very logical.

Mrs. LURIA. Perhaps in the—the time we have is limited, so I would love to follow up and learn more about, you know, how they are evolving that and perhaps learn from Admiral Caldwell as well.

So none of the things that we talked about, you know, specifically within this statement and the problems within the surface fleet involve warfighting. They involve basic routine navigation, for example, and in-port maintenance operations.

But if you look at warfighting, for example—and I asked Admiral Aquilino this question a few years ago in a similar hearing when he was still the commander of Pacific Fleet—just want to know where you assess and are we taking appropriate and equal actions to evaluate our proficiency in the warfighting realm?

Admiral LESCHER. Yeah. I think there is very strong—particularly in the surface community, very strong progress on warfighting.

If you want to amplify it a bit, Roy.

Admiral KITCHENER. Yes, ma'am. I think one of the—what we have done is we are trying to emulate what we did with developing our maritime skills continuum. You know, we did a really good job of, after the collisions, in saying, okay, here is what we need to be, how we need to be proficient, and here is how we get there and what we need to measure.

We have taken the same approach to tactical proficiency, and we have sort of turned our WTIs loose at our Surface and, you know, Mine Warfare Development Center to come up with this program. The initial results are we have gone in and we are looking and measuring through a series of tests where our students are coming out of, say, department head school or some of our milestone schools. And then we have a methodology for evaluating them during exercises and building that expertise, getting them into those trainers and then integrating them. But I think what is essential to it has been the ability to measure, so that now we can actually get them into a trainer, understand where their deficiencies are and correct those.

And so it is something that we have embarked on over the last year and utilizing those trainers we developed and collecting that data, and that is the trajectory we are on. And I would be happy to talk to you about it further.

Mrs. LURIA. Sure. And, you know, you talked about this is for ship handling, these go/no-go checkpoints. So some data I would like to know is, you know, how many officers have been through these checkpoints? How many have been a no-go? Specifically, how many prospective commanding officers have been no-goes and not passed that milestone in order to go to command?

And, moreover, this kind of ties back into my question about warfighting is, why is the surface fleet not doing something similar to the submarine commanders course, where all of these elements are evaluated before someone can actually take command?

Admiral KITCHENER. I think that is the journey that we were on. I think that that is eventually what we want to do. We want to get to a tactical course, a capstone course that they go through that they do before a command.

To answer your question directly on the number of COs [commanding officers] that have been through, I will have to come back to you on that, but I believe the number is about 13 that have not been able to proceed on to command, that were no-go at their command assessment.

Mrs. LURIA. And for scale sake, what percentage, or 13 out of several hundred or—

Admiral KITCHENER. It is probably—I will come back to you on that one, because I don't want to speculate, but it is—

Mrs. LURIA. Okay. Just kind of want to understand the scope. But, I mean, it is good to hear that it is actually a checkpoint and that the people who are not meeting that are actually not progressing on.

Admiral KITCHENER. And that is at both the commander—the command level and at the major command level.

Mrs. LURIA. Thank you. And I yield back.

Mr. COURTNEY. Great. Thank you.

The chair now recognizes Mr. Bergman.

Mr. BERGMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Admirals, you have touched a nerve in several of us. I was sitting up in my office. I am a pretty fast writer, sometimes not legible, but I was writing as fast as I could when the acronyms and the buzzwords started to flow, Admiral Lescher.

L2AB. Okay. Simplify, streamline, and design. Get Real, Get Better; Perform to Plan; self-assessing, self-correcting.

I am not sure what year you got your wings, but did Benny Suggs and Anymouse exist? As a naval aviator, we used to have—and this was not just to the aviation units, but Anymouse, which was an acronym for anonymous at the time. You had your little box in the squadron ready room or in the maintenance spaces where you could actually—anybody, whether you were that newest sailor or Marine in that unit or that, you know, someone below—the CO and the XO [executive officer] and the NATOPS [Naval Air Training and Operating Procedures Standardization officer], and the safety, can sit there and get real-time feedback from those under your command about just, hey, anonymous, this is what is going on. Benny Suggs, Beneficial Suggestions, you know.

Those were two very simple feedback loops that were used 50-plus years ago. I don't know if they worked. I do know that as a former NATOPS and safety officer at the squadron level that the

only thing I feared is if I ever had a perfect flight, I would never ever get into an aircraft ever again, because that would mean the next one was going to be a real bear. All right.

So the point is—and, again, not to dwell on aviation here, but I think it is a comparative example that we continue to learn from. There was a time in naval aviation that aviators didn't really fear a sim [simulator] ride. Ah, it is just another—I will take my chances in the aircraft itself. Well, as a commercial airline pilot, if we didn't pass our check ride, we didn't have a paycheck or a job.

So that culture, I believe, has changed over the last few decades, because of what we can do in simulators for all of our—you know, all of our service men and women, regardless of your—you know, regardless of your service.

I guess what concerns me is that we at the higher levels have spent too much time playing with words rather than challenging people, our young folks who come into our services at this day and age, come in with maybe different skill sets, different levels of maturity. Because an 18-year-old in our country today, according to the data that is out there by some very good social scientists, the average 18-year-old in our country today is performing emotionally at about 16½ to 17. So think about that when those young recruits enter boot camp at Great Lakes.

By the way, the Navy—and thanks to Vern Clark for what he did in his vision of that new basic training center up at Great Lakes. I was a guest there a long time ago and had a chance to tour it. Because you are getting in the minds and the heads of those young trainees. I was even impressed with the Dr. Scholl's little machine you stood on there to see if your shoes, your boots were going to fit right. You know, as Marines, that never really happened. You know, you were lucky to have, you know, things that didn't leak or didn't create fungus on your feet. But that is a different story.

But you have done so much, but we are not there. We are not there, and we need to be there. And we need to stop with the acronyms to a point, get back to things like Anymouse or Bennys, whatever we are going to call it. Create a feedback loop that gives it to you immediately.

And I am going to give you one acronym that, if you want to use it, great. We have all heard about tough love, right? You get nothing done out of hate. It is all out of love. So in this case, the tough—as a Marine, I am spelling challenged, so I am just going to say T-U-F, and that is train until failure. Because if you fail in your training, you learn.

And, with that, I yield back. And I thank you for never quitting on those sailors, Marines, and civilians under your command. And set the expectations high, and don't try to BS this group, because we are here to help you. Thank you.

Mr. COURTNEY. Thank you, Mr. Bergman.

The chair now recognizes Ms. Jacobs.

Ms. JACOBS. Well, thank you, Mr. Chair.

Admiral Lescher, a lot of my colleagues have already brought up the findings of the recent GAO report, but I want to focus on one specific issue that I believe deserves extra focus. GAO found that the surface fleet is 15 percent undermanned compared to required levels.

Since undermanning was part of the reason for the *Fitzgerald* and *McCain* disasters, why has more not been done to fix this in the last 5 years? What is the Navy doing to increase manning? And when will surface ships be fully manned with the proper fit?

Admiral LESCHER. Thanks for that question. A couple of dimensions on which to answer it. I talked about the remarkable growth in end strength in the Navy since 2017 and the GAO report. So, very much getting after it. And part of the reason that it remains undermanned is because we have been adding billets as well.

So as we have added—you know, the end strength of the Navy has grown 23,000, as we have talked about, since 2017. As we add billets to address the overwork issue and make sure the crew is sized for everything that is expected on that ship, we are then chasing that with our accessions. So we are closing the gaps across the Navy.

The other element is we have very strong certification and focus on what the manpower, the manning that we deploy our ships with. And so the remaining work for us to get after with a strong sense of urgency is across the full OFRP [Optimized Fleet Response Plan] cycle as well.

There is an element—and I see that Ranking Member Waltz has left—where he was talking about, hey, where is data being used by Navy? And I would like Admiral Kitchener to talk about the surface maintenance experience point, which shows another way, ma'am, which the Navy is bringing a sense of urgency to not only bring in more sailors, to get the proper requirements level on the destroyers, but also to allocate that scarce resource in the most data-driven powerful way.

And, Roy, if you would care to talk about that.

Admiral KITCHENER. Yes, sir. And so what we found as we man our ships to the 92/95 fit/fill was that we weren't necessarily getting the right combination of people. I talked a little bit about it earlier with the apprentice/journeyman/supervisor thing.

So I did not have a vote on where to send certain people. And so we stood up a SURFMEX. We looked at the aviation model, where they look at tracking, expertise, and proficiency. So we did it with six rates in the Navy, and most of it was in engineering and some warfighting rates as well.

And what we do now is we track each individual and what their proficiency and experience is, and then we are able to put them where we think we need them. For example, you know, if a ship is down in a number of years of experience in an engineering work center or an Aegis fire control system, we can actually make sure we send the right person there that increases the proficiency.

It is a much better measure of fit. We have been doing it for a year now. Right now, it is part of the manning process, but we are using it extensively to sort of fill those gaps at sea that we talked about, making sure we have the right people to go there.

So very encouraging results to date, and I think it is a metric that we are going to continue to go after and allow us to make sure we have that manning right on the ship.

Ms. JACOBS. Perfect. Well, I appreciate that, especially because we had a hearing on the effectiveness of suicide prevention programs yesterday. And it was extremely disheartening to hear re-

ports that ships' crew members reported that they have lost at least one service member to suicide and dozens of others due to mental health issues over a 7-month period.

And so I really hope that you are working on, you know, addressing the unsafe conditions and the safety measures and the hours and leave and all of that so that we are addressing that issue.

In my last minute, I also wanted to ask that the GAO has also found that the Navy is not enforcing its fatigue policies in the surface fleet, with most sailors receiving 5 hours or less of sleep. Why has the Navy failed to fix this, and what are you doing to ensure sailors receive the required amount of sleep?

Admiral KITCHENER. About a year ago, we finally came up in the Surface Navy with a pretty rigorous policy for what we want to do for fatigue management. We set our goal as 7.5 hours of sleep a night. Today, I can tell you we get to about 6 hours, so clearly some more work to be done.

We are teamed up with the National Health Center, ONR [Office of Naval Research], the Naval Postgraduate School, a bunch of other groups, some fitness experts that we work with, measuring actual—you know, giving people wearables on ship so we can measure how much time, so we actually have the data to understand it.

We have introduced some watch station tools, and we have also—so a CO can manage his people as he tracks their fatigue. So I am encouraged, but we still have a lot of work to do. And I could talk about it at another time on how we monitor how well we are doing at it. Over.

Ms. JACOBS. Well, thank you so much. As a Representative of San Diego, these issues are deeply personal to me and my constituents. So I will continue pushing you to do better for our surface warfare officers.

And, with that, Mr. Chairman, I will yield back.

Mr. COURTNEY. Thank you. And thank you for those questions, Ms. Jacobs.

Next up is Mr. Moore. Is he still on Webex?

Mr. MOORE. Yeah, I am on Webex. I am here. Thank you.

Can you hear me okay?

Mr. COURTNEY. Hear you fine.

Mr. MOORE. Great. I want to—I am a little distracted today. I wanted to personally apologize to both of you, to Admiral and Vice Admiral. The House of Representatives failed the military and veteran community today.

There is a bill about toxic burn pits that passed unanimously out of the Senate, and then Speaker Pelosi puts a different bill that she knows Republicans won't broadly support. We have delayed this for too long.

There are numerous Republicans that have been very supportive. I have cosponsored legislation on this. This is just one of the most frustrating things that I have seen in my time here related to our veteran community, and I wanted to just personally apologize to you and take that few moments to do.

I am not trying to be political about this. I have shared my thoughts with other Members. We owe it to our veterans to not play partisan political games with your lives. If we truly care about toxic burn pits, we would have passed and put on the floor the

version that passed unanimously in the Senate. There is no way around that. That is a sheer partisan game, and it is the most frustrating thing that I have seen.

But dealing with the topic at hand, there has been a lot that has been highlighted about the detrimental and toxic impacts of insufficient manning, inadequate training, and low morale. I applaud the Navy for having the foresight and humility to take an introspective look at how we can do better to avoid these tragic accidents.

The reforms discussed today will certainly save lives, from your testimonies, and improve lethality and effectiveness of our Surface Navy. As co-chair of the Depot Caucus, I would like to use my time to discuss the degraded material condition, delayed maintenance, and expired training certificates of our forward-deployed ships.

Again, depot work is very important to my district and to many across the country and vital for our readiness. I pose these questions to both of you gentlemen, either of you or one of you wants to respond.

Investigation into these incidents revealed that fleet leadership often properly reported on material deficiencies, only to be ignored or relieved. Were these reports ignored due, in part, to deficiencies or lack of capacity at our shipyards and the Navy organic industrial base? Can you shed a little light on that?

Admiral LESCHER. Sir, I am unfamiliar with the details of what you described. Is there a source or can you help me understand better?

Mr. MOORE. I don't have any particular source on it right now. And I am happy to submit something more specific, more substantive via written if you would prefer.

Admiral LESCHER. That would be helpful. I will say, again, we have been swarming, I would say, very intensely the depot maintenance issues, since 2018 in particular, to look at this. In the private shipyards, Admiral Kitchener leads the effort to Perform to Plan to drive improvements there. And it is focused on being very radically transparent about what we see. Again, it was the genesis, the kernel of what it means to Get Real.

Public shipyards as well, my view, we are approaching an inflection point in the performance of the public shipyards. And so I will be eager to see and address the issues that you highlight.

Mr. MOORE. Even if we just make it about delayed maintenance, has delayed maintenance, just in general without any specifics, played a role in these training mishaps? Would you be able to pinpoint any examples there?

Admiral KITCHENER. I can talk about it. I think in the past what we found, particularly in the forward deployed naval force, was that we did not have a good record of doing our continuous maintenance. As we came out of that incident, we have corrected that, and so now all the maintenance gets done. We still struggle a little bit in one of the ports out there, in Sasebo, because of a capacity issue.

But overall, in general, we are not deferring maintenance. And if we do defer any kind of maintenance on a ship, it is done at the highest level, that decision is made. But that perhaps is what you are referring to. In the past, there was an issue, particularly in the forward deployed naval force.

Admiral LESCHER. The one thing I might add very quickly, sir, is—and it gets back to the earlier comment about the impact of a CR—we will be deferring maintenance nontrivially if we—I am just looking at the numbers, in terms of a continuing resolution for the balance of this year.

Mr. MOORE. I appreciate your comments on the continuing resolution. Again, another example of my apologies to you about how ineffective and decrepit our House of Representatives is. And we are playing games, partisan games, and not providing our military what they need. It is a frustrating thing.

So I have a whole other question on being fully funded. I am out of time. And I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today. Thank you.

Mr. COURTNEY. Thank you.

The chair now recognizes Mrs. McClain.

Mrs. MCCLAIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Vice Admiral Kitchener, I am sure you are familiar with the retired Vice Admiral Balisle's 2010 report on the health of the Surface Navy. The report was pretty scathing in which I read the Navy's declining surface readiness. This committee has conducted several investigations since his report and still has grave concerns facing the fleet.

In the simplest of terms—I don't have a military background and I am a layman—so if you could explain to me in layman's terms and, really, the American people in layman's terms, we had four accidents in 2017, where, if my data is correct, three collisions and one ran aground. One ship ran aground, which seems crazy to me with how big the ocean is and, I mean, to have three accidents, three ships hit each other. They are pretty big vessels. It is not like you can't see them.

So if you can explain to me, in layman's terms, without—and I would echo Mr. Bergman's, I don't know all the acronyms. Just in layman's terms, how does that happen? I am sorry. Is it a training? Is it equipment? Just in the simplest terms.

Admiral KITCHENER. When we looked at those incidents that you referred to, ma'am, we kind of focused on two specific areas. One was on the training, which you brought up. And we found that, at the time, a surface junior officer, one of our newest people coming to, you know, control the ship, drive the ship, their training—we weren't giving them enough time. We weren't giving them enough time in simulators, giving them the fundamentals.

So we focused on the training, and we developed a continuum that now—you know, back then—

Mrs. MCCLAIN. Has that been corrected then?

Admiral KITCHENER. Yes. And so when an ensign reported aboard a ship back in 2017, they got about 150 hours in a simulator, which we just had a discussion on. Today, they get 750 hours of training. And so that was one of the areas we approached.

Another one was we looked at maintenance, which we just had a discussion on. And in the forward deployed naval force at the time, we weren't doing all of our continuous maintenance. And so—

Mrs. MCCLAIN. They weren't doing it why?

Admiral KITCHENER. We weren't doing it because of that the ships were required to be operational. There wasn't that balance we have now, where we have a tension between the operational team and the maintenance.

Mrs. MCCLAIN. There was no slack in the system. They had to be deployed?

Admiral KITCHENER. There was a demand signal for ships to be operational. And so what we did is we went back and we looked at that, and we corrected the maintenance that we did. And at the same time, we looked at, are they certified to do the missions? Are we taking these people that are trained, putting them on ships, and putting them in a situation that they are not trained for? We corrected that.

So, now, all the certifications are completed before we send a ship out on a mission. I described a little bit earlier as the type commander, the individual responsible for man, training, and equipping those ships, I have a good, healthy tension with that fleet commander out there who wants to use them for operations. And if they are not ready, then we have a discussion. And if we can't agree to it, then it is resolved at the four-star command level.

Mrs. MCCLAIN. And, again, forgive my newness.

Admiral KITCHENER. That is okay.

Mrs. MCCLAIN. But when you say we have a discussion if they are not ready, I will assume, if they are not ready, we are not going to deploy them?

Admiral KITCHENER. They do not go.

Mrs. MCCLAIN. Okay. Thank you, sir.

With that, I will yield my time back.

Mr. COURTNEY. Thank you, Mrs. McClain. Thank you for asking that question, because that was sort of the debate after *McCain* and *Fitzgerald* about whether we should put a safety brake on the system, which Admiral Richardson, who was CNO at the time, you know, described. And, again, I think, you know, that really is one of the real accomplishments. Still we are not perfect yet, but, you know, that helped, right?

Mrs. MCCLAIN. I appreciate [inaudible].

Mr. COURTNEY. Great. Thank you.

Congresswoman Luria requested about a minute and a half or so just for another followup question. The chair recognizes Mrs. Luria.

Mrs. LURIA. Thank you for the additional time.

And I just wanted to follow up to my previous question, and it was really about the effectiveness of our warfighting. So you have done a good job today, and I have had separate conversations with Admiral Lescher many times about, you know, how you are improving in the basic things. And you have metrics for that, and you can say it for the ship driving, for navigation. You can show it in things with maintenance, where you have done a very analytical basis.

But, I mean, the bottom line is, what do we have to show that we are ready and we are ready to fight a peer competitor, as far as our warfighting skills and capabilities? So that is really, you know, where my question lies. And we can follow up, and I would love to learn more in-depth information about, you know, how you

are measuring that. I think that that is the next step and the most important step as we face what we are facing in the Pacific.

But the next thing is language. You know, reading your statements, hearing you speak, you seem to choose your words very carefully, but they don't really sound like, you know, normal people in the Navy speak. They don't sound like, you know, the normal public would listen to.

And even, you know, some of the things that have been put out, you know, by the Navy and various commands within the Navy on social media that are trying to reach the broader public to explain, you know, the purpose of your mission and why we have a Navy and why these investments are so important and really have never been more critical.

So I just urge you a lot, like my colleague maybe did, in all forums to just look at the language you are using and make sure it is clear and concise and to the point. Like, you are getting a message out there. You want the public to know that a Navy is absolutely essential to our national defense and especially in the environment that we are in today.

So I think that would be helpful, not only in coming to us to let us as Congress know why you are asking for the things you are asking in the budget, for the broader public to know why it is a good investment of their tax dollars.

So thank you.

Mr. COURTNEY. Thank you.

I now recognize Mr. Garamendi for final comments.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The comment is very, very quick.

Today's testimony, the questions and the answers lead me to believe that the Navy is in the process of addressing the manifold problems that have been brought—highlighted in this hearing.

I look forward to seeing the specific plan, the integration of the four different elements that you have described, and then also how you intend to drive those activities down onto each and every ship and then how to monitor the success of that. I look forward to that. We will be following up.

And my final point is, if it takes direction, money beyond the current little problem of the continuing resolution, we need to know.

With that, I yield back, and thank the witnesses. Thank you.

Mr. COURTNEY. Great. Thank you.

To both my colleagues, again, and to the witnesses, we covered actually a broader range today, but, obviously, with events going on, that is not unexpected. Obviously, we will be seeing you soon, I am sure, once we get the President's budget and the posture hearings. Thank you again for, you know, again, the followup from our classified briefing and today's public hearing.

And, with that, the hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:55 p.m., the subcommittees were adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

MARCH 3, 2022

PREPARED STATEMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

MARCH 3, 2022

**Opening Statement of Hon. Joe Courtney
Chairman, Subcommittee on Seapower and Projection Forces
Hearing on
“State of the Surface Navy
March 3, 2022**

I'd like to start by thanking our two witnesses for appearing before the joint subcommittees today:

- Admiral Bill Lescher, Vice Chief of Naval Operations,
and
- Vice Admiral Roy Kitchener, Commander, U.S. Naval Surface Forces, who
also hails from the great State of Connecticut.

We gather today to address the State of the Surface Navy, and in particular, the culture of the Surface Navy with regards to mishaps and mishap prevention. In the past five years, we have seen an alarming number of high-profile mishaps within the Surface Fleet.

In 2017 alone, the Navy suffered two collisions, one allision, and one grounding – most notably, the incidents involving the USS Fitzgerald and USS John McCain, which resulted in the deaths of 17 sailors, injured 51, and caused many months of operational and maintenance delays.

Furthermore, in July of 2020, while conducting a maintenance availability, the USS Bonhomme Richard suffered a devastating fire that the crew was ill prepared to fight, ultimately resulting in the loss of the ship.

Now, the goal of this hearing is not to rehash the details of these tragic events, but rather to discuss how the Navy is using the lessons learned from these mishaps to shape how it trains ... how it fights ... in order assure the American people that these mishaps will not happen again.

In publishing the 2017 Comprehensive Review of Recent Surface Force Incidents, and the 2020 Major Fires Review, I recognize the considerable effort that the Navy has put towards finding the root causes of these mishaps, and I am pleased with the Navy's ownership and transparency in communicating their shortcomings. But identification alone is not enough. Many of the underlying issues identified are cultural: they require both action and oversight to ensure that corrective measures are effective and enduring.

So today, I encourage the witnesses to illustrate for the committees how the Surface Fleet is changing to incorporate lessons learned from its Comprehensive Review and Major Fires Review –

How we are assessing risk and making informed risk decisions, at both the deck plate and the organizational level;

How we are ensuring that lessons learned in 2017 don't become investigation root causes in 2025 or 2045;

And how the Surface Navy is leveraging institutional learning to ensure tragedies like the Fitzgerald or Bonhomme Richard do not happen again.

Thank you again to our witnesses, and I now turn it over to Ranking Member Wittman for his opening remarks.

**Opening Remarks of the Honorable Robert J. Wittman
for the
Seapower and Projection Forces and Readiness Joint Hearing on
State of the Surface Navy
March 3, 2022**

I want to thank Chairman Courtney for yielding and especially thank Chairman Garamendi and Ranking Member Waltz for participating in this detailed review of our surface navy posture.

My friends, Great Power Competition is already here and we're currently not setup to prevail. With President Biden's inept withdrawal from Afghanistan, Putin's invasion of Ukraine and Xi's continued Chinese expansion both in terms of military size and political will, we have arrived at a new period of international instability. Our desire to maintain strategic advantage and tactical overmatch is being challenged. A change in our national security strategy is solely needed that prioritizes warfighting IN the near term.

Yet, as I look at the Department of Defense's priorities of tackling COVID, building diversity and elevating climate change as a "national priority", our warfighting focus appears to be particularly askew.

Even the Navy continues to advocate for a divest to invest strategy that, at its core, presumes that maritime conflict will not occur this decade. I categorically reject this notion. I ascribe to the warnings of our PACOM commanders who believe that conflict will likely occur in the near term.

To accomplish this reality, we need to adjust our strategic priorities to ensure that our nation is not ready to support Battle Force 2045 but rather ready to support a conflict now.

The lack of urgency in national security planning is particularly disheartening. Last year, the Navy requested only one destroyer, no amphibians and proposed to retire 7 large surface combatants whose firepower exceeded that of the entire British Navy. The Navy provided a "30 year shipbuilding plan" that was only good for one year. The Navy submitted a shipyard recapitalization plan with little financial backing. And the Navy continues to underman our surface Navy who currently is lacking over 5,000 sailors.

While I am glad that Congress rebuffed a series of Navy proposals last year, this lack of national security planning unsettles our allies and unnerves the industrial base that craves real leadership. Our Navy needs to wake up and change their calculus to support our new strategic reality.

I remain committed toward providing a surface navy that meet the combatant commander's requirements. While I am pleased about the flight III destroyer with a new radar and the new multi mission Frigate, I am concerned that the CNO's stretch goal of deploying large unmanned surface vessels alongside an aircraft carrier in the next 5 years is premature. And, I am particularly troubled

about purported amphibious ship reductions. Commandant Berger's vision should be fully embraced and resourced.

As to surface navy culture, I want to thank our witnesses for supporting an independent review of a new surface warfare officer career path and training alternatives that align with the merchant marine. Additionally, I am pleased that we specifically included an assessment in last year's defense bill to specifically review female retention rates. I think all of these assessments are essential for a more effective surface warfare culture.

In closing, I am reminded of one of my favorite Navy quotes by George Washington, "It follows then as certain as that night succeeds the day, that without a decisive naval force we can do nothing definitive, and with it, everything honorable and glorious." It is time that we relearn the lessons of our past.

Again, I appreciate Chairman Courtney, Chairman Garamendi, and Ranking Member Waltz's support for having this important hearing and I yield back the balance of my time.

Statement of the Honorable John Garamendi
Chairman, Readiness Subcommittee
“The State of the Surface Navy”
March 3, 2022

Thank you, Chairman Courtney.

Even as we grow more distant from these events, let us say at the outset that we continue to grieve and remember the seventeen sailors who died in the USS McCain and USS Fitzgerald collisions of 2017. We also honor the over sixty sailors and civilians who were injured while battling the fire on the USS Bonhomme Richard.

We are holding this hearing today because, unfortunately – as the Navy itself has concluded – these tragedies in the surface Navy were avoidable. Ensuring that they never happen again requires consistent oversight. I very much appreciate the Navy’s attention to the manning, training, maintenance, and cultural issues that contributed to these losses and our witnesses’ continued willingness to engage with our subcommittees. I also recognize that institutionalizing significant reforms takes time.

However, I remain haunted by some of the turns of phrase that appeared consistently throughout the investigations of these accidents. “Cascade of failures.” “Accumulation of risk.” While I know that this slate of Navy leadership takes these issues extremely seriously and has given deep thought to improving the readiness and well-being of the surface force, a GAO report released just last month contains troubling testimony from sailors in the fleet today. They report being overworked, understaffed, sleep-deprived, insufficiently trained, and ill-equipped to perform basic maintenance tasks.

I worry that the Navy’s progress in implementing findings from these accidents’ investigations might be mostly “on paper,” and that in practice they are not translating into lasting change. I do not see evidence that the surface Navy has yet achieved sufficient progress reversing the entrenched habits of inadequate manning and training, delayed maintenance, and chronic overuse of the force. I worry that the surface Navy is not thinking deeply enough about how to change its culture to elevate morale and to empower officers and sailors to voice concerns when they see problems.

Finally, as we consider the sources of these problems and their potential solutions, I must ask our witnesses to consider whether they could be doing more to constrain combatant commander demand for use of the surface force. We are experiencing unprecedented challenges and must consider whether some combatant commander requests should be deprioritized to ensure our ships and sailors get the adequate time in port to be prepared for any contingency.

With that, I turn it over to Ranking Member Waltz.

NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL RELEASED BY
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON SEAPOWER AND PROJECTION FORCES

STATEMENT OF

ADMIRAL WILLIAM K. LESCHER
VICE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS

AND

VICE ADMIRAL ROY I. KITCHENER
COMMANDER, NAVAL SURFACE FORCES

BEFORE THE

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON SEAPOWER AND PROJECTION FORCES

JOINTLY MEETING WITH

SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS

ON

STATE OF THE SURFACE NAVY

MARCH 3, 2022

Chairman Courtney, Ranking Member Wittman, Chairman Garamendi, Ranking Member Waltz, and distinguished members of the House Armed Services Subcommittees on Seapower and Readiness, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the state of our Surface Navy. We look forward to updating you on the actions the Navy is taking at speed to deliver consistently strong performance in the Surface Navy, and across the Navy more broadly, as we accelerate the warfighting advantage of the most lethal maritime force in the world.

American security rests upon our ability to control the seas and project power in a maritime domain which is growing rapidly in lethality and complexity; the Surface Navy is a centerpiece of these missions. Our adversaries today seek to challenge our warfighting advantage and, through military buildup and aggressive behavior, undermine the existing international rules-based order. In countering this threat, the men and women of the United States Navy work hard every day to deliver sustained excellence, maintaining a competitive edge that keeps America safe and the global economy working. As China invests in increased naval capability and capacity with a clearly stated intent to become the world's preeminent military, and Russia invests strongly in asymmetric capabilities to enable military aggression, we will continue to work closely with our oversight committees to deliver warfighting advantage through the capabilities and platforms with which we fight, and most consequentially, through leaders and teams trained to think, learn, and solve problems better than any adversary.

What We've Learned

The Navy has teams with great culture and great performance, evidenced by the critical Combatant Commander outcomes our Navy enabled in 2021 while steaming 22,000 days, flying 1,000,000 hours, and completing 59 complex maintenance availabilities. Yet, we also see examples of teams with poor culture and weak performance. The loss of the *USS Bonhomme*

Richard was a stark reminder that the gap between our best and our worst performers is too great. To remain the world's strongest Navy in an era of strategic competition, we must have consistently strong performance.

The command investigation of the *Bonhomme Richard* fire, and the Major Fires Review completed in its wake, gave us a deeper appreciation of the systemic causes of variability in the Surface Navy and more broadly across our force. These systemic causes include an outdated approach to institutional learning and problem-solving that overemphasizes instructions, checklists and rules, while undervaluing the human element—the development of people, a learning mindset and critical thinking. Too often, from an institutional perspective, we have viewed poor performance as one-off failures, made short term adjustments, and focused on administrative solutions, adding burdensome regulations and guidance, over developing our people.

This institutional learning weakness has resulted in inconsistent application of the Navy-best leadership behaviors demonstrated in our highest-performing Navy units and organizations. These best practices emphasize empowering our people; engaging in rigorous self-assessing, self-correcting, and learning behaviors to identify problems before they grow large; and effectively collaborating across organizations and echelons to solve problems and control risk. These best practices align closely with our Navy core values of honor, courage, and commitment — values that place people squarely at the center of our work, reward doing what is right in the face of adversity, and lead us to never stop focusing on learning and doing better with the resources entrusted to us.

Get Real, Get Better

In January, the Chief of Naval Operations issued a call to action for every Navy leader to learn and apply this set of Navy-proven leadership and problem solving best practices consistently across the force. The Get Real, Get Better call to action leverages our greatest advantages—our people and culture—and is informed by years of Navy learning from exceptional enterprise improvement, strategic assessments, and deckplate best practices from all Navy communities.

Our best units and organizations today consistently “Get Real” with strong *self-assessment* competencies: they are honest and transparent about actual capabilities and limitations; challenge beliefs using data, analysis, and diverse input; and “embrace the red” by taking pride in illuminating constraints to improvement and fixing them. Our best units build on this exceptional self-assessment competency with “Get Better” *self-correcting* behavior: fixing small problems before they become larger issues; addressing root causes, not symptoms, of problems; applying world-class problem-solving tools and best practices; setting clear accountability; working collaboratively; and quickly elevating barriers to progress that cannot be resolved at their level.

The Navy is implementing the Get Real, Get Better call to action by, with, and through our Type Commanders and the other community Flag Officer and Senior Executive leaders. We are reorienting organizational elements to teach the foundational cultural attributes and problem-solving skills in a continuum of leadership education. We are taking action to simplify, streamline, and align bureaucratic processes to reduce burdens on our people and better support our warfighters. And we are making changes to the Navy’s talent management processes in order

to make it clear that we are rewarding and promoting leaders based not only on strong outcomes achieved, but also on the teams they build and the learning culture they develop.

Learning-to-Action Board

One of the key organizational changes implemented to counter weak institutional learning is the Learning to Action Board (L2AB), formed in October 2021 and co-chaired by the Vice Chief of Naval Operations and Under Secretary of the Navy. The L2AB is similar to the Readiness Reform Oversight Council which successfully drove comprehensive implementation of the Fitzgerald and McCain collision recommendations; however, it has a broader and more enduring scope designed to provide sustained assessment and awareness, at all levels of the Navy, of ongoing compliance and the effectiveness of actions taken in response to reports, investigations and reviews—to include GAO reports. The L2AB will test whether recommended actions and corrective measures *remain in effect* over time – is our force complying with them – and whether they are providing the *intended effect* – are these measures making a difference in how our Navy performs.

The L2AB assigns ownership of corrective actions to accountable commanders, tracks implementation to provide transparency up echelon on status, and identifies any barriers to implementation that need to be resolved. This proven approach mirrors the structure and cadence of accountability for learning that the Navy has used with strong success in Performance to Plan enterprise improvement initiatives spanning aviation readiness to supply chain effectiveness.

The initial L2AB sessions focused on effectively implementing the most consequential recommendations of the *Bonhomme Richard* investigation and the Major Fires Review. These include: clarifying command and control relationships in the training, readiness, and

maintenance of ships; simplifying, streamlining, and aligning Fleet guidance on fire protection standards; reviewing the adequacy of fire protection and suppression systems; and reviewing the effectiveness of current damage control training.

The L2AB's initial work on the related vector of improving the institutional learning *feedback loop* is to evaluate how *consistently* across the Navy the recommendations of the 2018 Comprehensive Review (CR) and Strategic Readiness Review (SRR) have been implemented, and how *effective* the recommendations have been in correcting the root causes of the *Fitzgerald* and *John S McCain* collisions.

Naval Safety Command

Another key organizational improvement has been to elevate our Naval Safety Center to the Naval Safety Command, establishing a new mission and mandate on February 4, 2022. In response to a primary recommendation from the Major Fires Review, the Naval Safety Command will now serve as the naval enterprise lead for non-nuclear safety standards, expertise, and oversight of a new Safety Management System (SMS).

This design facilitates a Get Real, Get Better focus on safety by expanding the role of the Naval Safety Command to include: assessing the effectiveness of Fleet, Type Command, Systems Command, and Major Command safety *oversight* of their subordinate units; no-notice assessments of individual units in place of the former assist visits, with results passed up to the Fleet level; and checking prior Navy learning and recommendations as directed by the L2AB. Naval Safety Command unit evaluations will now include evaluation of the unit's ability to self-assess their own safety culture, similar to Board of Inspection and Survey (INSURV) approach in evaluating a unit's ability to self-assess material condition. This high-leverage change in the

Naval Safety Command's approach acts on the insight that the inability to strongly self-assess was a foundational causal factor for the *Bonhomme Richard* fire and other incidents. An equally high-leverage change is that the Naval Safety Command will not only assess front-line units on their safety performance, but will evaluate and hold accountable *the entire chain of command* for how it supports subordinate units in managing risk and building a strong safety culture.

The ongoing Naval Safety Command task to lead deployment of a revised Navy Safety Management System (SMS) this year is equally consequential. The SMS represents a fundamental shift from reacting to mishaps to proactively and transparently identifying, owning, and controlling risk. At its core, the new SMS reinforces risk-management, problem-solving, and critical thinking at all levels of the Navy; ensures that accountability for risk is held at the appropriate level; and verifies that assurance and regulatory requirements are met. Building on best practice from the military and industry, the SMS is a top-down refocus of the Navy's practice of safety, a principles-based approach to managing risk and building a strong safety culture throughout the fleet.

Overall, the Learning to Action Board and Naval Safety Command are designed to be sustained, long-term mechanisms that ensure we are learning, implementing, and evaluating lessons across the Navy – from the deckplate up and the Fleet down – so that we attain the world class safety standard our Sailors and families deserve.

Fire Safety Efforts

In addition to Navy actions to attain consistently strong performance across the entire force, we are taking actions to improve fire safety specifically. Fleet and Type Commanders are improving fire protection standards onboard our ships and in our shipyards. U.S. Fleet Forces is

working to streamline industrial fire safety practices, instructions and requirements for the Navy so that they can be more effectively executed on the deck plates and more easily understood. In the shipyards, Naval Sea Systems Command has established the Industrial Fire Safety Assurance Group, a team focused on being *predictive* about identifying the greatest fire safety risk using industrial shipboard metrics and disseminating best practices and lessons learned throughout the shipyards.

The commanders of Naval Surface Forces Atlantic and Pacific have conducted over 250 no-notice, off-hours Fire Safety Assessments onboard ships to measure both our as-is fire preparedness and our ability to self-assess fire preparedness. Connecting this effort to learning, a monthly roll-up of common errors and trends in deficiencies is published and disseminated to the fleet, with follow-up from the Type Commander to verify lessons are broadly implemented. We have seen improved compliance and deckplate knowledge of firefighting skills through this assessment and lessons dissemination work. The development of the Damage Control-Industrial certification has also been key to enable Type Commanders to assess a ship's readiness to enter the shipyards and combat fire, flooding and other casualties in this hazardous work environments. Eleven ships have gone through this certification and are better prepared to meet fire prevention and safety standards.

Surface Navy Efforts

Beyond fire safety, the Surface Navy has continued with a strong focus on self-assessing and self-correcting in areas highlighted as gaps in the Comprehensive Readiness Review, Strategic Readiness Review, and other reports. In manning, we reduced gaps at sea in 2021 from almost 11,000 billets authorized to less than 6,000 billets authorized. We have more work to do

to meet the full manpower requirement on our surface ships, but we have a better understanding of the most effective levers to reach our manning targets.

We are also improving maintenance completion in our private shipyards. Together with industry partners, we reduced the days of maintenance delay on large CNO availabilities in our private shipyards by nearly 20 percent in Fiscal Year 2021. We have brought data and advanced analytics to inform the plan for each availability period, and improved our processes to better scope work and structure each availability.

The lynchpin of Surface Navy improvement is the modernization of training for both officers and enlisted personnel. We are developing Sailors who are better mariners, better warfighters, and better critical thinkers and problem solvers. Since 2017, we have increased Surface Warfare Officer (SWO) maritime skills training to nine weeks as part of a continuum of learning consisting of challenging scenarios in simulators, and honest feedback to Surface Warfare junior officers to accelerate learning and proficiency. This learning continuum includes 535 hours of ship-handling training for Junior Officers – a threefold increase since 2017. We have developed 10 “Go/No-Go” ship-handling assessment checkpoints throughout a SWO career to ensure the Navy produces professional mariners who meet community standards. Milestone assessments and feedback from the Fleet indicates that these men and women are demonstrating a high degree of proficiency and succeeding in high-stress, complex maritime environments around the world.

Through Ready Relevant Learning and the Surface Training Advanced Virtual Environment, we have modernized how our enlisted force learns the technical skillsets required to fight and maintain ships today. Realistic virtual trainers and combat simulators like the Combined Integrated Air and Missile Defense (IAMD) and Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW)

Trainers, known as CIAT, are improving the performance of Sailors and teams in high-end combat. CIAT facilitates realistic, high-fidelity training in Fleet Concentration Areas for Sailors who operate our most technically complicated systems. CIAT includes a thorough, integrated, debrief capability for both individual and team analysis. This cutting-edge technology records scenario ground truth, instructor/watch stander console displays, and all scenario audio for post exercise analysis. Fleet Training Wholeness efforts now integrate ships, aircraft, and simulators with ranges in a common strike group training environment that realistically replicates the complex operational environment and high end threats.

Conclusion

The implementation of Get Real, Get Better principles – combined with the actions of our Fleet, Type, and Systems commanders, the transformative Navy enterprise learning accruing from the Performance to Plan and Naval Sustainment System improvement processes, and the actions of the Surface Navy community as a whole – are accelerating our efforts to reduce performance variability and achieve continuously strong Navy performance. We are moving forward rapidly to become a *consistently* self-assessing, self-correcting, and learning Navy which demonstrates exceptional performance every day. We are confident our approach will result in an even more ready and lethal Navy, capable of defending United States interests around the world, and we look forward to partnering with the committees to accelerate the Navy's warfighting advantage.

Admiral William Lescher
Vice Chief of Naval Operations

Adm. Bill Lescher is a native of Highland Park, Illinois. He holds systems and aeronautical engineering degrees from the Naval Academy and Naval Postgraduate School, respectively, and a Master of Business Administration degree from the Harvard Business School.

Lescher commanded the Vipers of Helicopter Anti-Submarine Light (HSL) Squadron-48, the Airwolves of HSL-40 and the Atlantic Fleet Helicopter Maritime Strike Wing. Between command of the Vipers and Airwolves, he was the executive officer of Mine Countermeasures Command and Control Ship USS Inchon (MCS 12).

As a flag officer, he commanded Expeditionary Strike Group 5 and Task Forces 51/59 in Bahrain, leading multiple Amphibious Ready Groups, Marine Expeditionary Units and the afloat forward staging base USS Ponce (AFSB(I)-15) in execution of contingency response and counter-terrorism missions spanning the Middle East/Central Command region.

Lescher's initial operational tours were with the Lamplighters and Swampfoxes of HSL-36 and 44, deploying primarily to the Middle East region aboard USS O'Bannon (DD 987), USS Clark (FFG 11), USS Capodanno (FF 1093) and USS Elrod (FFG 55).

Ashore, his assignments included leading the SH-60B Seahawk developmental test team as an engineering test pilot at the Naval Air Warfare Center, where he launched the first guided missiles from a Navy helicopter. His staff assignments include resource, acquisition and strategy assignments on the staffs of the Chief of Naval Operations, Secretary of the Navy, Secretary of Defense and the Joint Staff. As a flag officer, he served as the Joint Staff deputy director for resources and acquisition, deputy assistant Secretary of the Navy for budget, and Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for integration of capabilities and resources.

Lescher graduated with distinction from fixed wing, rotary wing and Naval Test Pilot School training. He has been recognized as the Association of Naval Aviation's HSL Pilot of the Year, the Naval Helicopter Association's Regional Pilot of the Year and the Naval Air Warfare Center's Rotary Wing Test Pilot of the Year. The units in which he has served have earned the Joint Meritorious Unit Award, Navy Unit Commendation, Navy Meritorious Unit Commendation, Navy "E" Ribbons and Theodore Ellyson award.

Vice Admiral Roy Kitchener
Commander, Naval Surface Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet

Vice Adm. Roy Kitchener is a native of Trumbull, Connecticut and a 1984 graduate of Unity College with a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science. He attended the Navy Officer Candidate School in Newport, Rhode Island, and received his commission in 1985. He also attended the Naval Post Graduate School where he specialized in Western Hemisphere studies and earned a Master of Arts in National Security Affairs.

As a surface warfare officer, he deployed around the world and commanded destroyers, cruisers, and an expeditionary strike group. At sea he served as a division officer aboard USS Dewey (DDG 45); operations and training officer for Special Boat Unit 26, Republic of Panama; combat systems and weapons officer aboard USS San Jacinto (CG 56); executive officer aboard USS Cowpens (CG 63); and operations officer and chief of staff for Commander, Carrier Strike Group 11. He commanded USS John Paul Jones (DDG 53) and USS Higgins (DDG 76), during the Navy's Sea Swap Initiative, and also commanded USS Princeton (CG59) and Expeditionary Strike Group 2.

Ashore, Kitchener served as the Surface Warfare Directorate's Naval Surface Fire Support program officer on the staff of the Chief of Naval Operations; combat systems instructor at Surface Warfare Officers School; ballistic missile defense operations chief at the Cheyenne Mountain directorate at Commander, U.S. Northern Command; and vice commander of Naval Mine and Anti-Submarine Warfare Command. He served as the chief of staff at numerous commands, to include Commander, U.S. 3rd Fleet; Commander, Naval Surface Forces; Naval Striking and Support Forces North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO); and U.S. deputy military representative to the NATO Military Committee. Most recently, he was commander, Naval Surface Force, U.S. Atlantic Fleet.

Kitchener assumed the duties as commander, Naval Surface Forces/Naval Surface Force U.S. Pacific Fleet on August 3, 2020.

His decorations include the Defense Superior Service Medal (three awards), Legion of Merit (five awards), Defense Meritorious Service Medal, and various service and campaign awards.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS POST HEARING

MARCH 3, 2022

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. LANGEVIN

Mr. LANGEVIN. When will the “homework assignment” to Naval Sea Systems Command report to analytically, pull off non value work, adjust mission, and remove maintenance requirements be completed?

Admiral LESCHER. [No answer was available at the time of printing.]

Mr. LANGEVIN. How are you going to change the culture for the Surface Navy so that fleet leadership and all sailors are empowered to report deficiencies and how will you make sure these concerns are acted upon, not ignored or punished?

Admiral LESCHER. [No answer was available at the time of printing.]

Mr. LANGEVIN. How are you going to change the culture for the Surface Navy so that fleet leadership and all sailors are empowered to report deficiencies and how will you make sure these concerns are acted upon, not ignored or punished?

Admiral KITCHENER. [No answer was available at the time of printing.]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. SCOTT

Mr. SCOTT. When can we expect IOC of hypersonics onboard U.S. Navy warships? Are hypersonics a priority for the U.S. Navy’s surface fleet?

Admiral LESCHER. [No answer was available at the time of printing.]

Mr. SCOTT. What are the leaders of the Navy’s surface force doing to harness the creative potential of service members to achieve a common purpose like they did in the years before World War II?

Admiral LESCHER. [No answer was available at the time of printing.]

Mr. SCOTT. Is there a role for aggressor surface squadrons in the Surface Navy?

Admiral LESCHER. [No answer was available at the time of printing.]

Mr. SCOTT. Do the crews of the surface fleet receive the difficult and realistic training needed on how to fight in a mine warfare environment and how to support minesweeping/hunting efforts? If not, why not?

Admiral LESCHER. [No answer was available at the time of printing.]

Mr. SCOTT. What steps have you taken to enhance the focus of the Surface Navy’s warfighting skills? What steps do you plan to take in the next 12 months?

Admiral LESCHER. [No answer was available at the time of printing.]

Mr. SCOTT. Would today’s sailors still find that their leadership is distracted, captive to bureaucratic excess, and rewarded for the successful execution of administrative functions rather than their skills as a warfighter? What needs to be done for the Surface Navy’s leadership to focus on warfighting?

Admiral LESCHER. [No answer was available at the time of printing.]

Mr. SCOTT. Does the Surface Navy do enough to cultivate and retain talent? What more needs to be done?

Admiral LESCHER. [No answer was available at the time of printing.]

Mr. SCOTT. Does the surface fleet still suffer from a dominant and paralyzing zero-defect mentality?

Admiral LESCHER. [No answer was available at the time of printing.]

Mr. SCOTT. Does the surface fleet have a corrosive over-responsiveness to the media culture?

Admiral LESCHER. [No answer was available at the time of printing.]

Mr. SCOTT. Does the Navy’s surface fleet still suffer from an expanding culture of micromanagement?

Admiral LESCHER. [No answer was available at the time of printing.]

Mr. SCOTT. What is the minimum number of deployed days per quarter surface ships need to be fully combat ready?

Admiral LESCHER. [No answer was available at the time of printing.]

Mr. SCOTT. When can we expect IOC of hypersonics onboard U.S. Navy warships? Are hypersonics a priority for the U.S. Navy’s surface fleet?

Admiral KITCHENER. [No answer was available at the time of printing.]

Mr. SCOTT. What are the leaders of the Navy’s surface force doing to harness the creative potential of service members to achieve a common purpose like they did in the years before World War II?

Admiral KITCHENER. [No answer was available at the time of printing.]

Mr. SCOTT. Is there a role for aggressor surface squadrons in the Surface Navy?
 Admiral KITCHENER. [No answer was available at the time of printing.]

Mr. SCOTT. Do the crews of the surface fleet receive the difficult and realistic training needed on how to fight in a mine warfare environment and how to support minesweeping/hunting efforts? If not, why not?
 Admiral KITCHENER. [No answer was available at the time of printing.]

Mr. SCOTT. What steps have you taken to enhance the focus of the Surface Navy's warfighting skills? What steps do you plan to take in the next 12 months?
 Admiral KITCHENER. [No answer was available at the time of printing.]

Mr. SCOTT. Would today's sailors still find that their leadership is distracted, captive to bureaucratic excess, and rewarded for the successful execution of administrative functions rather than their skills as a warfighter? What needs to be done for the Surface Navy's leadership to focus on warfighting?
 Admiral KITCHENER. [No answer was available at the time of printing.]

Mr. SCOTT. Does the Surface Navy do enough to cultivate and retain talent? What more needs to be done?
 Admiral KITCHENER. [No answer was available at the time of printing.]

Mr. SCOTT. Does the surface fleet still suffer from a dominant and paralyzing zero-defect mentality?
 Admiral KITCHENER. [No answer was available at the time of printing.]

Mr. SCOTT. Does the surface fleet have a corrosive over-responsiveness to the media culture?
 Admiral KITCHENER. [No answer was available at the time of printing.]

Mr. SCOTT. Does the Navy's surface fleet still suffer from an expanding culture of micromanagement?
 Admiral KITCHENER. [No answer was available at the time of printing.]

Mr. SCOTT. What is the minimum number of deployed days per quarter surface ships need to be fully combat ready?
 Admiral KITCHENER. [No answer was available at the time of printing.]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. BANKS

Mr. BANKS. Who was held accountable for the USS Bonhomme Richard fire? Have they been fired?
 Admiral LESCHER. [No answer was available at the time of printing.]

Mr. BANKS. A key recommendation of the Navy's 2017 Comprehensive Review of the USS Fitzgerald and USS John S. McCain collisions was to accelerate deployment and fully fund the replacement of our aging surface search radar and navigation systems with the new Next Generation Surface Search Radar, referred to as NGSSR. It is reassuring to hear that the NGSSR has transitioned to a mature program with multiple units rolling off the production line and beginning to be delivered to shipyards. It's imperative for the Navy to prioritize the full fleet integration of NGSSR, including training and sparing.
 Vice Admiral Kitchener, in light of the Fitzgerald and McCain collisions, is the Navy committed to ensuring uninterrupted production of this radar to enable timely outfitting of the fleet?

Are you taking steps in your role as the Surface Warfare Type Commander to ensure the NAVSEA Commander understands the need to prioritize and accelerate NGSSR's fielding across the fleet?
 Admiral KITCHENER. [No answer was available at the time of printing.]

Mr. BANKS. Admiral Kitchener, as the Navy's top Surface Warfare Commander responsible for manning, training, and equipping our surface ship sailors, and in light of the Fitzgerald and McCain collisions:

1. What steps are you taking to ensure the NAVSEA Commander prioritizes NGSSR and accelerates deployment of the Next Generation Surface Search Radar's (NGSSR's) fielding across the fleet for which you are responsible.
2. Since the Next Generation Surface Search Radar (NGSSR) is a key element to ensuring the safety of our fleet, is the Navy committed to ensuring uninterrupted production of this radar to enable timely outfitting of the fleet? Please explain.
3. Please explain how the Navy's current plan for fielding of the Next Generation Surface Search Radar (NGSSR) is in line with the CNO's fielding plan for a 500 ship Navy?
4. The Next Generation Surface Search Radar (NGSSR) uses a software defined architecture to allow adaption to evolving threats. Does the current funding plan enable the Navy to leverage the radar's full range of software adaption capabilities as threats evolve? Please explain.

5. How is the Navy ensuring that proper sparing is being funded to ensure that the Next Generation Surface Search Radar (NGSSR) is fielded and available for the fleet?

6. Is the Navy confident that the appropriate funding and timelines have been made available to ensure adequate training is in place for the Next Generation Surface Search Radar (NGSSR) program ahead of fleet integration?

7. One of the large benefits of the Next Generation Surface Search Radar (NGSSR) is its ability to integrate with the Aegis and SSDS combat systems. What is the Navy doing to ensure this radar can interface with all required combat systems for the various ship classes

Admiral KITCHENER. [No answer was available at the time of printing.]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MRS. LURIA

Mrs. LURIA. How many total surface warfare officers have been through the new "Go/No-Go" checkpoint system? And how many of those resulted in a No-Go status?

Admiral LESCHER. [No answer was available at the time of printing.]

Mrs. LURIA. What progress has the Navy made to establishing a capstone course for Surface Warfare Commanders' Course, similar to the Submarine Commanders' course? Does the surface fleet have a corrosive over-responsiveness to the media culture?

Admiral LESCHER. [No answer was available at the time of printing.]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. CARL

Mr. CARL. We discussed many vital topics during this hearing, such as maintenance, crew strength, communications, and leveraging growth in technology. In your effort to deter adversaries and assure allies, can you elaborate on how unmanned ships and advances being made in autonomy and artificial intelligence will be a part of helping you achieve your requirements of readiness, communications capability, and potentially lethality?

Admiral LESCHER. [No answer was available at the time of printing.]

Mr. CARL. In regard to naval maintenance needs, how does the Navy plan to address the lack of dry-dock capacity in the Western Pacific? What is the status of placing a dry dock in Guam and Subic Bay to provide repair capability for forward deployed ships?

Admiral LESCHER. [No answer was available at the time of printing.]

Mr. CARL. We discussed many vital topics during this hearing, such as maintenance, crew strength, communications, and leveraging growth in technology. In your effort to deter adversaries and assure allies, can you elaborate on how unmanned ships and advances being made in autonomy and artificial intelligence will be a part of helping you achieve your requirements of readiness, communications capability, and potentially lethality?

Admiral KITCHENER. [No answer was available at the time of printing.]