Aircraft Carrier Suppliers Alarmed at Navy's Planned Delay of CVN 82



STRAIT OF GIBRALTAR (Jan. 5, 2024) The world's largest aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) transits the Strait of Gibraltar, Jan. 5, 2024. (USN photo by MC2 Jacob Mattingly)

By Richard R. Burgess, Senior Editor

ARLINGTON, Va. — The coalition of suppliers of components, parts, and services for the construction of the U.S. Navy's aircraft carriers (CVNs) is alarmed at the proposed two-year delay of authorization for CVN 82 — the fifth Gerald R. Ford-class CVN — and the potential disruption to the supplier base for the ships.

Lisa Dante Papini, chair of the Aircraft Carrier Industrial Base Coalition (ACIBC), which represents more than 2,000

businesses, said she is “extremely concerned” about the proposed delay for CVN 82 from 2028 to 2030, noting that 40% of the suppliers said in a survey that they would be negatively affected by the delay.

Papini said the delay likely would involve worker layoffs, production lines going cold, and suppliers de-prioritizing military requirements and seeking more work in other sectors. She noted that re-starting cold production lines and hiring or re-hiring workers is a lengthy and expensive process. The skills needed – such as welding – are in high demand in other industries as well, complicating the attraction of new workers.

“That’s why we’re concerned about going cold,” she said.

She also explained the need for advance funding for supplying aircraft carrier construction three years in advance of construction start.

“We’re so far to the left of those delivery dates,” she said. That’s why we ask for advance funding.”

Papini, like her counterparts in the Amphibious Warfare Industrial Base Coalition and the Submarine Industrial Base Coalition, emphasizes that stability and predictability of shipbuilding helps the supplier base “level-load their work;” recruit, train, and retain their workers; reduce costs, and deliver products on time.

The ACIBC met with senators and congressmen on March 20 on Capitol Hill to explain its concerns and priorities.