

Analysts: Congress Shifting Money to Readiness, Seems Less Willing to Boost Shipbuilding, Unmanned Systems



Fire Controlman 3rd Class Jacob Rather (left) and Quartermaster Seaman Trevor Gilchrist prepare to hoist the union jack during morning colors on the flight deck aboard the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman (CVN-75). Harry S. Truman, moored at Naval Station Norfolk conducting targeted maintenance and training, sits in the middle of a debate in Congress over whether to retire the carrier at midlife. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Apprentice Victoria Sutton

Congress this year is less willing to boost shipbuilding funding above the Trump administration's request than in recent years and has shown some skepticism over the U.S. Navy's push for rapid adoption of unmanned systems, the two top congressional analysts on naval issues said June 19.

While still generally supportive of shipbuilding and unmanned systems, Congress appears to be shifting some money to improved readiness and isn't willing to sacrifice conventional capabilities, such as the aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman, to accelerate the move to unmanned vessels, analysts Eric Labs and Ronald O'Rourke told an American Society of Naval Engineers forum.

At the same forum, a panel of senior civilian Navy officials said the emphasis in designing the future combat fleet was on greater commonality of systems to improve flexibility, interoperability and lethality and on acquiring combat systems that could be updated quicker and cheaper. Both of those priorities would help reduce the sustainment cost of the future fleet, the officials said.

Labs, the senior naval forces analyst at the Congressional Budget office, described a "leveling off" of support in Congress for funding shipbuilding above the requested levels and a willingness to "substitute their own priorities" for the Navy's push for new technologies including unmanned systems. He noted shipbuilding funding in preliminary congressional actions of about \$1 billion less than requested, compared to an average \$2 billion increase in recent years.

O'Rourke, the naval affairs analyst at the Congressional Research Service, saw similar reduction in shipbuilding funding by the panels that have acted on the fiscal 2020 budget and a reluctance to fund the third Virginia class attack submarine. He also cited congressional concern over fleet readiness following the two fatal at-sea collisions and over the delayed maintenance of attack submarines.

Responding to questions, the analysts cited congressional support for funding to bolster the shipbuilding industrial base, opposition to

the Navy's plan to retire the Truman at midlife to add funds for unmanned surface vessels and said the effort by the House Armed Services Committee to prohibit the Navy from accepting the USS John F. Kennedy, the second in the Gerald R. Ford class of carriers, until it is able to operate the F-35C could add to the cost of the ship.

The panel of four officials on the Navy staff also expressed concerns about fleet readiness and rising sustainment costs. That led to the stress on requiring the maximum possible commonality in future ships and systems, which can reduce the cost of procuring and sustaining the fleet and the cost of training sailors to operate them. A key goal was a common combat system that could be scaled to equip the future frigate, which is close to contract award, and a future large surface combatant, which still is under review. But commonality should extend to the hull, mechanical and electrical components of future ships, they said.

Top HASC Republican Says His Vote Hinges on GOP's 2020

Budget Add-Ons



An E-2D Hawkeye lands on the flight deck of the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN-72). The House Republican version of the 2020 National Defense Authorization Act calls for the purchase of two more of the early-warning aircraft. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Jeff Sherman The House Armed Services Committee's ranking Republican says his vote to pass the fiscal 2020 National Defense Authorization Act will depend on whether the final bill continues the recent progress is preparing the military to confront Russia and China or slides back into the readiness crisis that started with the 2011 Budget Control Act and sequestration.

To ensure continued gains in readiness and future capabilities, Rep. Mac Thornberry (R-Texas) said June 11 that he will offer an amendment to increase the bill's funding by \$17 billion, which includes about \$4 billion for additional U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps aircraft, ships, unmanned vessels, weapons and emergency repairs of hurricane damage to two East Coast Marine bases. Thornberry said he also will propose restoring cuts made by the majority Democrats in strategic nuclear programs, ballistic missile defense and personnel issues.

"As I look at this year's bill, the question is for me, does this continue the gains we have made in rebuilding our military and in being in a competitive position with Russia and China?"

Rep. Mac Thornberry (R-Texas), ranking member, house armed services committee

But for national defense to receive even the \$733 billion total offered by Democrats – let alone the \$750 billion Thornberry and Republicans seek – Congress and the Trump administration would have to approve a budget bill to override Budget Control Act spending caps, which would take nearly \$90 billion from 2020 defense spending.

Some conservative Republicans and Trump aides oppose raising the caps for domestic issues, which the Democrats insist must accompany higher defense spending. But in a breakfast meeting with defense writers, Thornberry said he would remind fellow Republicans that the first job of the federal government is to defend the country. And “if we are going to fulfill our duties, we will have to take some things that we don’t necessarily like or want.”

When Republicans fully controlled Congress, they agreed with the Obama administration on a bill that waived the caps for fiscal years 2018 and 2019, which allowed substantial increases in defense spending and some growth in domestic programs. So far, no such agreement has been reached for fiscal 2020 and 2021, which are the last two years covered by the Budget Control Act limits.



The aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) is maneuvered by tugboats in the James River. The Republican draft of the 2020 NDAA criticizes the Navy's handling of the Gerald R. Ford, the ship's technical and mechanical issues and its cost overruns. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Ryan Seelbach

Thornberry said one of the "greatest accomplishments" of the last two years was "to rebuild our military after it was deeply damaged by sequestration.

... We have seen the consequences of cutting our military, in accident rates and other things. It's not like these are just number on a spread sheet. These are real lives, life-and-death decisions that we make.

"As I look at this year's bill, the question is for me, does this continue the gains we have made in rebuilding our military and in being in a competitive position with Russia and China?"

Within the \$17 billion spending increase Thornberry's amendment would authorize is funding for four additional Navy F-35Cs Lightning

II strike fighters; two Marine vertical-lift F-35Bs; one more E-2D Hawkeye

early-warning aircraft; more funding for aircraft carrier construction; 38

long-range missiles and additional mission modules for Littoral Combat Ships;

the second fleet oiler and unmanned surface vessels cut by the Democrats;

\$748.8 million for Navy hypersonic research; \$211 million for the overhaul of

the aircraft carrier USS John C. Stennis (CVN-74); \$1.2 billion for various

personnel programs; and \$2.3 billion for emergency repairs of hurricane damage to

Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point and Marine Corps Base

Camp Lejeune in
North Carolina.

HASC's Mac Thornberry has geared up two amendments to thwart House Dems two big objections to new defense bill:
<https://t.co/uqLT0XUn0z>

– *Breaking Defense (@BreakingDefense) [June 11, 2019](#)*

The Republican funding plan also would restore authority to field the low-yield nuclear warhead for the submarine-launched Trident D-5 ballistic missiles and funding for modernization and expansion of the nuclear weapons production facilities.

Their draft NDAA also sharply criticizes the Navy's handling of the new USS Gerald R. Ford aircraft carrier (CVN-78), which ran far past its planned budget and production schedule and, due to numerous mechanical and technical problems, is not expected to be ready for operations until this fall – more than two years after the Navy accepted it. The NDAA protests that the Gerald R. Ford is not capable of fully supporting operations of the F-35C Lightning IIs and it would bar the Navy from accepting the second ship in the class, USS John F. Kennedy (CVN-79), currently under construction, until it is made compatible with the F-35C.

Thornberry would not say if he supports the restrictive language on the Kennedy but said: "Sometimes we need to put things in the bill to get their attention."

House Armed Services Chairman Downplays Party Differences Over 2020 Defense Spending



An artist rendering of the future Columbia-class ballistic missile submarine, which Democrats have fully funded under the proposed fiscal 2020 National Defense Authorization, says the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee. U.S. Navy illustration

The

House Armed Services Committee chairman downplayed the partisan differences

over the fiscal 2020 National Defense Authorization but said the “biggest

threat” to adequate defense funding was the failure to reach agreement on

lifting punishing spending caps.

Although

the chairman’s mark he released would ban funding for low-yield nuclear warheads

for a submarine-launched ballistic missile and defense money to build U.S.-Mexico

border barriers and provide \$17 billion less in total defense spending, which

the Republicans oppose, “the overwhelming majority of this bill, that is

incredibly important, is not controversial,” said the chairman, Rep. Adam Smith

(D-Washington).



Rep. Adam Smith (D-Washington) on June 10 downplayed partisan differences on defense spending. C-SPAN

Addressing

a Defense Writers' Group breakfast June 10, Smith cited a 3.1 percent military

pay raise, funds to continue improving readiness, efforts to fix deteriorating family

housing, funding for 11 Navy battle fleet ships, including three attack

submarines, and "countless other projects, all of which we agree on," that are in

the Democrats' proposal. "The amount of stuff that we disagree on is about 2% of

the bill."

But

in response to a Seapower question about the impact on defense funding if

Congress and the administration cannot agree on lifting caps enacted with the

Budget Control Act of 2011, which would cut nearly \$90 billion from the base

defense budget, Smith said: "You have correctly identified the biggest threat

we face." Senate Republicans were expected to plead for a deal to lift the caps

during a White House meeting on June 10.

"The amount of stuff that we disagree on is about 2% of the bill."

Rep. Adam Smith, chairman of the House Armed Services Committee

The

committee will take up the NDAA on June 12, and the debate is likely to go well

into the night as Republicans have attacked provisions that came out the subcommittee process as an unusual breach of HASC's tradition of bipartisanship.

Smith defended the proposed total defense funding of \$733 billion as the number initially recommended by the Pentagon and said the \$750 billion requested later by the Trump administration "would encourage inefficiencies." Committee Republicans, however, insisted \$750 billion was necessary to meet the 3% to 5% real growth recommended by last year's Strategic Capabilities Commission.

Please join CSIS at 2:30 pm for a discussion with House Armed Services Committee Chairman [@RepAdamSmith](#) (WA-D) on U.S. national security challenges in advance of the markup of the FY2020 National Defense Authorization Act.

Watch live: <https://t.co/Wy3LZEeNP0pic.twitter.com/z70FmorQtJ>

– CSIS (@CSIS) [June 10, 2019](#)

Although Smith repeated his long-held view that the military wants to spend too much on nuclear arms, he noted the Democrats would fully fund the new B-21 strategic bomber and the Columbia-class ballistic missile submarine to replace the aged Ohio class and would increase overall spending on strategic programs. Smith and

some arms-control advocates argue that the new W-76.2 lower-yield warhead for the submarine-launched Trident D-5 missile would reduce the strategic load of the Ohio boats and increase instability.

Other

controversial issues in the proposed NDAA are a ban on use of defense funds to build President Trump's border wall, would require that any use of troops for border security not affect combat readiness and would be paid for by the U.S.

Department of Homeland Security. It also would restrict the administration's ability to reprogram defense funds to use for border security, which the president did this year.

Although

the proposal would increase the purchase of F-35s for the Air Force, it would fence some of the funding for the Lightning II pending analysis of ways to improve the parts supply line for the fighter. Similarly, funding to buy more of the Marine Corps' CH-53K heavy-lift helicopters would be curtailed until the U.S. Navy submits reports on how it will fix technical problems hampering the program.

There

also will be debate on the nature of a future command to manage space programs, with the Democrats resisting the president's demand for a separate service, which Smith called too expensive and bureaucratic. But Smith

said he believes
the Air Force has done a poor job managing space.

HASC Subcommittee Budget Markups Bar USS Truman's Early Retirement, Provide 3.1% Pay Raise, Fund Third Virginia-Class Sub



Sailors transit the flight deck after colors aboard the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman. The carrier is scheduled for early retirement but might be spared that fate, thanks to action June 4-5 in the subcommittees of the House Armed Services Committee. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Apprentice Donovan M. Jarrett

The House Armed Services Committee (HASC) took initial steps June 4-5 toward passing a fiscal 2020 National Defense Authorization, with the HASC's six subcommittees approving the "chairmen's marks." But a partisan dispute broke out over the Strategic Forces panel's language that would block or restrict several new nuclear weapons programs called for in last year's Nuclear Posture Review.

The full House Armed Services Committee will take up the subcommittees' recommendations and other issues next week.

Other than the partisan controversy in the

Strategic Forces committee over nuclear issues, the recommendations from the six subcommittees contained generally bipartisan provisions such as a 3.1% pay raise, added support for service members and their families and approval of most of the major aircraft, ground equipment and shipbuilding procurement programs.

The Seapower and Projection Forces panel, for example, would authorize construction of 11 battle force ships, including three Virginia-class attack submarines, three Arleigh Burke destroyers, one new frigate and two towing, salvage and rescue vessels, which the U.S. Navy had requested. But it cut one of the two John Lewis-class fleet oilers requested and replaced it with incremental funding for the second of the Flight II amphibious transport docks that the U.S. Marine Corps seeks.

The Seapower mark formally barred the Navy from retiring the aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman early and restored \$17 million in advanced procurement for the carrier's refueling and overhaul. And it reauthorized the Maritime Security Program, which subsidized operations of commercial sealift ships and recommended creation of a tanker security fleet of 10 commercial tankers supported by that program. The panel also moved to force the

Navy to act on the congressionally mandated program to start building new or buying used vessels to modernize the aged reserve sealift fleet.

Seapower's mark expressed anger that the cost caps imposed on the Gerald R. Ford-class carriers prevented the Navy from including the capability for Ford to support F-35C Lightning II fighter. It orders the Navy to include F-35C capabilities before accepting delivery of the John F. Kennedy, the second ship in the class.

The subcommittees did not provide details on the numbers of aircraft they were authorizing, leaving that for the full committee. But Seapower's ranking member, Rep. Rob Wittman (R-Virginia), said its mark increased the buy of V-22s, P-8As, E-2Ds and C-130Js. Tactical Air and Land Forces adopted "economic order quantity" language allowing purchase of parts and material for future F-35s to help reduce cost. The panel ordered an independent study of the procurement and lifecycle costs and sustainability of the multiservice F-35 and the latest Block 4 software.

The panel restricted half of the authorized funding for the Marine Corps' CH-53K until the Navy provides briefings on the technical problems that have delayed operation of the heavy-lift helicopter. It also demanded

detailed plans on
modernization and sustainment of the Navy's MH-53E helos.



A CH-53K King Stallion helicopter demonstrates its capabilities at the 2018 Berlin Air Show. The Seapower and Projection Forces restricted half the authorized funding for the CH-53K until the Navy provides briefings on the technical problems that have delayed operation of the heavy-lift helicopter. U.S. Marine Corps/Cpl. Hailey D. Clay

The

Personnel subcommittee increased efforts to stop the epidemic of sexual

assaults and harassment by adding counseling support and protection for

victims, but did not make sexual harassment a crime, which Senate Armed

Services did. The panel authorized personnel increases of 5,100 for the Navy,

3,700 Air Force and 100 Marines and a cut of 7,500 for the Army. It barred the

Pentagon from cutting 18,000 uniformed medical personnel pending an independent

analysis of the impact on medical care.

The

Intelligence and Emerging Threats panel called for "comprehensive and robust"

science and technology and research and development efforts to stop the erosion

of technological advantage, requiring action of 56 specific areas including

artificial intelligence and hypersonics. It also required additional programs

to increase cybersecurity for government and defense industry systems. And it

ordered an independent assessment of the roles, missions and force structure of

the Special Operations Forces, which are shifting from counter-extremism to great power competition.

The HASC subcommittees' proposals traditionally are bipartisan documents crafted by the majority and minority staffs and passed with minimal discussion, reserving major debate and conflict for the full committee process, which is set for next week.

But the Strategic Forces subcommittee's mark clearly showed the strong opposition of HASC Chairman Adam Smith (D-Washington) to the expansion of nuclear weapons programs advocated by the Trump administration. That included blocking development of a "low-yield" nuclear warhead for submarine-launched ballistic missiles and restricting the accelerated production of the plutonium "pits" that are the explosive core of atomic arms. The mark also prevents the Navy from developing a hypersonic "conventional prompt strike" missile designed solely for submarines but leaves open work on a missile for surface warships.

The partisan nature of the proposed authorization was shown by only the name of subcommittee chairman, Rep. Jim Cooper (D-Tennessee) appearing on the draft, without the ranking Republican's name, which was on all the other

subcommittees' proposals. That was amplified by a statement from the HASC's top Republican, Rep. Mac Thornberry (R-Texas) and subcommittee ranking member, Rep. Mike Turner (R-Ohio), who called it "a partisan and irresponsible" mark "that makes us less safe, hinders our ability to defend ourselves." That ensures a prolonged fight in next week's full committee markup.

Because of the strong partisan dispute, the subcommittee had to engage in a prolonged debate over a Republican amendment that would have removed the language banning the submarine-launched low-yield weapon, opposing building a second plant to produce plutonium pits and maintaining participation in the Open Skies Treaty, which allows the United States and Russia to fly over each other's countries to confirm compliance with arms control treaties.

The amendment was defeated on an 8-10 party line vote. The Republicans then demanded unprecedented votes on adopting the mark and on sending it to the full committee, both of which passed by 10-8 party line votes. The fight will be repeated next week.

The Readiness Subcommittee completed its markup June 5, calling for action to address the recent crisis in privately managed family housing, including adopting a "tenants bill of rights." The panel also ordered

assessments and long-term plans to mitigate the threat to military installations from the extreme weather and rising oceans caused by climate change. Because of the risk to off-base water supplies, the mark would ban the use of fluoride-based firefighting foam except in actual emergencies and ordered the Navy secretary to develop requirements for nonfluoride foam by 2025. And it ordered action to improve the supply of parts for the F-35 and other actions to address the readiness impact of supply line problems.

Subcommittee

Chairman Rep. John Garamendi (D-California) made a short statement opposing the president's use of military funds for the Mexican border wall, while the ranking member, Rep. Doug Lamborn (R-Colorado), supported the action because of the "crisis" on the border. But to maintain the bipartisan nature of the mark, the panel deferred any action of the border wall money until the full committee acts next week.

Joint Chiefs Chairman Defends

Lincoln Battle Group Deployment to Deter Iran



Sailors observe an E/A-18G Growler landing on the flight deck of the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN-72) on May 28. The Abraham Lincoln carrier strike group is deployed to the Persian Gulf region. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Matt Herbst

The nation's top military officer validated the intelligence that raised concerns of possible Iranian attacks on U.S. forces in the Persian Gulf region and said the deployment of troops to the U.S.-Mexico border was legal and an appropriate mission to "fill gaps" in the Department of Homeland Security's capabilities.

In a detailed survey of global and domestic national security issues May 29, Marine Gen. Joseph F. Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, also said U.S. and South Korean forces are still "ready to go to war tonight," despite reductions in large-scale military exercises, and he defined the rising tensions with China in the South China Sea as a "rule of law" issue that must be addressed by other than military means.

Dunford said U.S. intelligence had detected Iranian actions and statements that created the appearance of a possible "campaign" against U.S. forces and allies, rather than the persistent hints of "a single action."

With his four-year term as Joint Chiefs chairman

nearing an end, Dunford advised his successors to ensure that whatever future funding the military receives emphasizes “capability” rather than just “capacity” or numbers.

Taking questions at the Brookings Institute, Dunford repeated the view he expressed at his Senate confirmation hearings in 2015 that Russia is the “existential” threat to the United States, but said he has worked hard to maintain a dialogue with his Russian counterpart to reduce the chances that President Vladimir Putin’s belligerent actions would lead to conflict.

Asked about the controversy over the alleged threats from Iran that led to dispatching the Abraham Lincoln carrier battle group and B-52 bombers to the Central Command region, Dunford said U.S. intelligence had detected Iranian actions and statements that created the appearance of a possible “campaign” against U.S. forces and allies, rather than the persistent hints of “a single action.” The intelligence also indicated that Tehran questioned U.S. willingness to hold Iran responsible for any third-party attacks on Americans in the region.

He said the initial reinforcements were part of an effort to “address that gap in perception” and to let Iran know that if

anything happened “it would be attributed to them.” The later decision to send about 1,000 additional troops and extend the deployment of a Patriot air and missile defense battery was to enhance force protection of U.S. personnel in the region.

On the politically controversial border issue, Dunford did not address the use of defense funds to build a border wall and said his focus was to ensure that the troops sent to the U.S.-Mexico border were properly equipped and trained and were performing legitimate military functions. He acknowledged that the work at the border might reduce combat readiness but said that was no different than when troops are sent on humanitarian relief missions and is addressed by rotating units to minimize any erosion of capability.

Dunford disputed the claims that the reduction in large military exercises in South Korea because of President Donald Trump’s courtship of North Korean dictator Kim Jong-Un had reduced the coalition’s combat readiness.

He said the field exercises had been reoriented to focus on ensuring the infantry battalions and Air Force squadrons were combat ready, while table-top drills kept commanders sharp. He said U.S. Army Gen. Robert Abrams, the joint forces commander in Korea, knows that if he became “uncomfortable” about his readiness all he had to do

was tell him.

On the disputes over China's creation of militarized artificial island in the South China Sea, Dunford said he does not view that as an issue of "a pile of rocks," but as violations of "the rule of law" and the need to hold the violators accountable. He stressed, however, that did not mean by military action, but the use of "other tools" such as diplomatic and economic efforts.

Looking at the overall condition of the military since he became chairman, Dunford said the increased defense budgets the last three years have helped fill depleted munitions stocks, improve the condition of aircraft and ground equipment and the combat readiness of the troops. But, he added, the U.S. technological "competitive advantage" over potential adversaries has eroded due to the earlier budget cuts and spending by Russia and China.

A detailed analysis by the Joint Chiefs showed the need for future defense budget increases of 3% to 5% a year to meet the services' drive to increase force levels. To those who will come after him, Dunford said, "if you are going to grow capacity, make sure it has capabilities. I wouldn't grow the force more than can be sustained."

Navy Secretary Says Maritime Logistical Force is Inadequate to Support the New National Defense Strategy

The Navy's current and planned maritime logistical force "is inadequate" to support the new National Defense Strategy and major military operations against China or Russia, and failure to correct that deficiency "could cause the United States to lose a war," an in-depth study by the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessment warned May 16.

Navy Secretary Richard V. Spencer praised the CSBA study and declare: "We really have to get after it."

Addressing the CSBA forum that released the study, Spencer said:

"It is key that we focus on this now. Over the past two decades, our naval logistical enterprises have performed admirably in an environment of truly expanded responsibility and resources that were constrained. But the world has changed. The National Defense Strategy (NDS) recognized that and we have to stay ahead of it."

The 120-page CSBA report said that although the NDS said "resilient and agile logistics" was one of the eight capabilities that had to

be strengthened to prepare for the return to great power competition, the Navy's latest 30-year shipbuilding plan reduced the funding for maritime logistical forces and "further reduces the logistical forces as a proportion of the fleet." It also noted that "decades of downsizing and consolidation" have left the maritime logistics forces "brittle" and contributed to the decline of the U.S. shipbuilding industry and the Merchant Marine," which is expected to carry the bulk of military material and equipment for an overseas contingency.

"Failing to remedy this situation, when adversaries have U.S. logistics networks in their crosshairs could cause the United States to lose a war and fail its allies and partners in their hour of need. An unsupported force may quickly become a defeated one," the report warned.

The report spelled out in detail the shortfalls in the size of the Navy logistical support fleet of oilers, supply and repair ships that would be necessary to support and sustain combat formations in a conflict in the western Pacific, and the even greater deficiencies in the Military Sealift Command's and Maritime Administration's fleets of aged ships that are approaching or already past a normal service life.

It also highlighted the risks that China's vastly expanded Navy and commercial fleet and its ability to interdict U.S. naval forces and forward

support stations would pose to the ability to project and sustain power in a major conflict.

The report proposed major increases in the numbers and types of logistical ships, dramatic changes in operational formations and concepts of resupplying deployed Navy and Marine Corps forces. It estimated the cost of buying the additional and different ships and capabilities at \$47.8 billion over 30 years, which it said would be \$1.6 billion a years above what the Navy plans to spend on its maritime logistics capabilities.

Spencer noted that the weakness of the Navy's maritime logistics was brought up by members of Congress during a visit to Capitol Hill the day before. He said a member of the Senate Armed Service Committee who was particularly strong on the issue told him the Navy was not funding what was needed. "And I said, 'you're exactly right, and we have to get after this'."

He promised that the audience was going to hear him and the new chief of naval operations "talking about the battle. And it's not steaming to the battle. Our first battle is getting off the pier. And we have to start addressing this in earnest."

Former Pacific Fleet Intel Director Warns of Widening Gap Between Chinese, U.S. Fleet Buildup



Chinese navy ships steam in formation as part of a replenishment-at-sea approach exercise during Rim of the Pacific. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Jason Noble

The Chinese navy already is larger than the U.S. Navy and is building ships four times as fast, with a firm goal of achieving sea control by 2030 and naval superiority by 2039, a former Pacific Fleet director of intelligence warns.

“The biggest challenge for U.S. national security leaders for the next 30 years is the speed and sustainability of the [People’s Republic of China] national effort to deploy a global navy,” retired Navy Capt. James Fanell said.

By 2220, the People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) will have more than 450 surface warships and a submarine force approaching 110, Fanell told a May 14 Hudson Institute forum. And in its rapid move from a force of small ships mainly engaged in coastal operations into a large fleet capable of extended

blue-water operations,
the PLAN now exceeds the U.S. Navy not just in numbers but in
tonnage, Fanell
said.

The U.S. Navy has
289 ships in the active battle fleet, including 80 submarines
and counting the
14 ballistic-missile subs and four guided-missile boats. Navy
leaders have set
a goal of a 355-ship battle force, but the fleet would not
reach that strength until
the 2030s at projected building rates.

*“The biggest challenge for U.S. national security leaders for
the next 30 years is the speed and sustainability of the
[People’s Republic of China] national effort to deploy a
global navy.”*

Retired Navy Capt. James Fanell

In the last
decade, China has launched more ships than any other country
in the world,
outbuilding the U.S. Navy four to one, Fanell said, displaying
a slide showing the
United States building 22 ships to the PLAN’s 85 warships from
2015 to 2018. “I
expect the [PLAN] will continue to surpass the U.S. Navy in
new ships in the
next decade.”

And the Chinese
have an even greater advantage in ship-based anti-ship
missiles, Fanell added,
with more weapons and missiles that have longer range and are
faster than what
the U.S. Navy fields. He noted that a new class of PLAN

guided-missile
destroyers has 132 vertical-launch missile tubes.

Over the last
decade, the PLAN has gained valuable experience with task
force deployments not
only in its regional waters but in the Eastern Pacific, the
Indian Ocean and
recently into the Atlantic Ocean, Fanell said. He predicted
there would be even
more operations closer to U.S. coastlines.

<https://youtu.be/BUZhxUABWpo>

A career
intelligence officer who served most of his time in the
Pacific with aviation
units, carrier strike groups and then with the Pacific Fleet
staff, Fanell said
that, for most of his time in uniform, U.S. national security
officials have
refused to acknowledge the growing threat from China and its
determination to
supplant the United States as the dominate power in the
western Pacific. He
said that changed with the new National Security and National
Defense
Strategies released last year, which recognized China – and
Russia – as
strategic rivals and acknowledged the return to “Great Power
Competition.”

The rapidly
growing PLAN “will increasingly challenge us,” and given its
ship production
projections and its experience of operating farther from
China, “we can assess
that the PLA Navy is on track to gain sea control by 2030 and
superiority by

2039,” Fanell said. The only way to prevent that is by acknowledging the threat and conducting a whole-of-government campaign to counter its power, which he said the Trump administration has shown the willingness to do.

Spencer: Navy’s Readiness Relies on Industrial Base, New Approach to Risk



Secretary of the Navy Richard V. Spencer said he’s looking to “a more cost-imposing, survivable and affordable future force.” Chuck Fazio

NATIONAL HARBOR,

Md. — The Navy Department is showing progress in its drive to increase

readiness and prepare its forces to “fight tonight and win,” Navy Secretary

Richard V. Spencer said May 8. But in a luncheon speech at the Navy League’s

annual Sea-Air-Space exposition, Spencer spoke directly to the defense industry

representatives in the audience, telling them: “We cannot do this alone.”

“We need the

support. We welcome the support of industry if we are going to increase readiness

and meet the operational demands of today and tomorrow,” he said. “Our goal is

true partnership,” based on the concept that “shared risk

produces shared
rewards.” He offered industry “a clear line of sight to our
needs and resources,
and industry understands that our security, stability and
prosperity rely on
ready and combat-capable forces that are capable of projecting
naval power. ...
We must work together to provide solutions to our challenges.”

The secretary
noted the message he has presented in congressional hearings
that the
department’s budget “we truly believe is prioritized on a
strategy-driven,
balanced approach, building on prior investments, while
sustaining the
industrial base and maintaining our competitive advantage as
we transition to a
more cost-imposing, survivable and affordable future force.”

The process is
showing results, he said, noting that when he took office the
readiness rate of
the Navy and Marine Corps F/A-18 Hornets was “abysmal. “Today,
the Navy is
tipping at 70% mission-capable rates, and the Marine Corps is
in the high 70s,”
he said. He also mentioned a major program that has been
accelerated two years
ahead of its original schedule, but he did not name the
program.

*“Our vision is for a more agile, sustainable and superior
force.”*

Secretary of the Navy Richard V. Spencer

“We are getting

after these issues and readiness is increasing daily," he said. The goal now is "to increase our velocity."

As part of its reform of the acquisition processes, Spencer said, "we're migrating from a culture of risk eradication to understanding and managing risk," while conceding that completely eliminating risk is "unaffordable." And referring to the results of the investigations into the two fatal at-sea collisions of Navy destroyers last year, he said the fleet was moving from a culture of "normalization of deviation" from standards to increased focus on performance and safety.

At the end, Spencer said, "Our vision is for a more agile, sustainable and superior force. ... We want to be able to dominate future conflicts from the seafloor to space, in blue waters, littorals, mountains and desert, and also throughout the information domain."

**Geurts: Navy Balancing
Columbia, Virginia Sub**

Production



James Geurts, the assistant Navy secretary for research, development and acquisition, at Sea-Air-Space 2019 on May 7, discussing the sea service's submarine production challenges.

Charles Fazio

NATIONAL HARBOR,

Md. – The meeting of Navy leaders with submarine shipbuilding industry

officials, planned for this month, will focus on integrating the production of

the Columbia-class ballistic missile sub and the future Virginia-class attack

boats, the Navy's top acquisition executive said May 7.

The biggest issue is removing any conflict in the production of the two classes of submarines, which will be built by the same two shipyards – Newport News and Electric Boat, James Geurts, the assistant Navy secretary for research, development and acquisition, told reporters after his luncheon speech at the Navy League's annual Sea-Air-Space exposition. The concern is the impact on Columbia if Virginia production "gets out the box," Geurts said. That issue could become acute in five years when both submarines are in serial production.

The planned

meeting was announced by Chief of Naval Operations Adm. John Richardson, who

said it would seek to add back some of the schedule margin for Columbia that

has been eroded by production problems. Maintaining the schedule for Columbia

is crucial, because the first boat must be ready for its strategic deterrence

patrol in 2031 when the first of the Ohio-class ballistic missile subs is

forced to retire.

If any conflict in production emerges, Geurts said, the priority will be Columbia.

On another

current acquisition issue, Geurts minimized the impact from President Donald

Trump's decision to reverse the Navy's budget proposal to retire the aircraft

carrier Harry S. Truman rather than put it through the planned mid-life nuclear

refueling and overhaul, which would give it 25 years of additional service

life. Geurts said the change affected very little money in the fiscal 2020

budget, which is being processed in Congress. The cost of keeping Truman in service

and paying for the refueling and overhaul will be worked into the fiscal 2021

budget, and "we'll do what needs to be done," he said.

In his speech at

the Navy League luncheon, Geurts urged the industry and Navy officials in the

audience not to focus on sequestration and other budget problems but look at

what the Navy has accomplished in the last 18 months. "I've been incredibly

impressed with how fast this organization has changed," he said.

He said the Navy

has saved about \$30 billion through acquisition reform and has accelerated some

production systems by six to eight months, and industry is saving money through

innovation. He noted that the Navy would deliver 12 ships this

year, more than it has produced in decades. "We are getting tools out to the fleet," he said.

Navy Tackling Shipyard Inefficiencies That Leave Fleet Lagging



The USS Boise, shown here in 2014, has been waiting 18 months for its required yard period. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Daniel M. Young

NATIONAL HARBOR,

Md. – The Navy is investing \$21 billion in a multiphase program to improve the

efficiency of its government shipyards, which have struggled to get ships and

submarines back into service on time. The program is called the Shipyard

Industrial Optimization Plan, said Steve Lagana, program manager for the plan

in the Naval Sea Systems Command Industrial Division.

Speaking at a NAVSEA

briefing at the Navy League's annual Sea-Air-Space exposition May 7, Lagana

said the plan was developed in response to criticism from Congress, which has

complained about ships and submarines languishing in the yards or unable to get

in for required maintenance. A prime example of the problem is the three Los

Angeles-class attack boats that have lost their certification to sail due to the overdue maintenance. The USS Boise has been waiting 18 months for its required yard period.

The plan was developed by a team of 40 engineers, Lagana said. The first two phases of the plan were surveys of the yards and detailed analysis of the problems. Those studies showed enormous inefficiencies created by the physical layout of the yards, which had facilities providing parts or services to the dry docks in some cases more than a mile apart.

Lagana showed diagrams of the existing arrangements at the major yards and the planned realignments, which would produce more compact and efficient facilities. At the Puget Sound and Norfolk yards, the facilities serving submarines and nuclear-power carriers would be separated and combined with their supporting components.

"This is a whole new way of thinking about the problem," Lagana said. Ships in the yards do not produce a lethal Navy, he said.