

House Seapower Subcommittee Announces Proposals for 2021



The release by Reps. Courtney and Wittman details the need for four more V-22 Ospreys. U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Vance Hand

ARLINGTON, Va. – The House Committee on Armed Services Subcommittee on Seapower and Projection Forces has announced its proposals for the mark-up of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021.

In a June 22 release, chairman Rep. Joe Courtney, D-Conn., and ranking member Rep. Rob Wittman, R-Va., released the proposals the day before the scheduled June 23 mark-up session.

Of major naval-related items, the proposal:

- Recommends the restoration of a second Virginia-class submarine and the required advanced procurement to maintain the two-per-year build rate.
- Recommends to the full committee that the Navy procure eight battle force ships, including one Columbia class fleet ballistic missile submarine; two Virginia-class submarines; two Arleigh Burke destroyers; one guided-missile frigate (FFG); and two T-ATS towing, salvage, and rescue ships.
- Prohibits the retirement of littoral combat ships LCS 3 and LCS 4 until all operational tests have been completed.
- Prohibits the retirement of any aircraft carrier before its first refueling.
- Recommends six P-8 Poseidon aircraft.
- Recommends four additional V-22 Osprey aircraft.
- Authorizes efficient construction of the first two Columbia-class ballistic-missile submarines.
- Restricts funds associated with the secretary of defense

- until the 30-year shipbuilding plan is delivered.
- In fiscal 2021, prohibits the retirement of any Navy vessel until the secretary of defense provides a Navy force structure assessment.
 - Authorizes the procurement of up to four used sealift vessels.
 - Requires the secretary of defense to provide ship requirements to implement the Commandant's Planning Guidance.
 - Establishes a Tanker Security Fleet to help fill the gap in at sea logistics.
 - Recommends funding of the fourth National Security Multi-Mission Vessel for the state maritime academies and recommends additional funds for previously authorized ships.
 - Continues to provide strict oversight of the Large Unmanned Surface Vessel.
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Navy Concerned About Labor Strike at Bath Iron Works

ARLINGTON, Va. – The decision of shipyard workers at General Dynamics Bath Iron Works (BIW) in Bath, Maine, to go on strike has U.S. Navy officials concerned about slowed delivery of new-construction guided-missile destroyers (DDGs).

With shipbuilding and ship repair troubles exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting supplier base disruption, as well as earlier budget shortfalls, the strike piles on the Navy at a bad time.

“We’re very concerned with the dispute up at BIW,” said James F. Geurts, assistant secretary of the Navy for research,

development and acquisition, said in a June 22 teleconference with reporters. “The Navy’s expectations are that the leaders of General Dynamics Bath Iron Works and the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers work very diligently and with a sense of urgency to come to agreement so that we can keep our ship construction on track. We are very dependent on Bath Iron Works for their production and support of our ships for our Sailors. My expectation is both sides will work aggressively and a sense of urgency so that we can get these programs to continue to execute.

The shipyard workers voted to strike on June 21 at BIW, a General Dynamics company. BIW is one of two shipyards that builds the Arleigh Burke-class DDGs, the other being Huntington Ingalls in Pascagoula, Mississippi. BIW is the sole builder of the Zumwalt-class DDG, the last of which is still at the shipyard and yet to be delivered to the Navy.

In a teleconference last week, Geurts said the Navy still has a pending contract award to make in 2020 for a DDG.

DoD Acts to Shore Up Shipbuilding Industrial Base Amid Pandemic



Austal USA’s shipyard in Mobile, Alabama. AUSTAL ARLINGTON, Va. – The Defense Department is taking more actions to shore up the shipbuilding industrial base, among other industrial sectors, the department said in a June 18 release.

The actions, made under the Defense Production Act Title III, are designed to “help sustain and strengthen essential domestic industrial base capabilities and defense-critical workforce in shipbuilding, aircraft manufacturing, and clothing and textiles,” said Lt. Col. Mike Andrews, Defense Department spokesman, in the release. “These actions will help to retain critical workforce capabilities throughout the disruption caused by COVID-19 and to restore some jobs lost because of the pandemic.”

DoD made a \$50 million agreement with Austal USA, a shipbuilder in Mobile, Alabama, “to maintain, protect, and expand critical domestic shipbuilding and maintenance capacity. These investments will have long-term benefits for U.S. Navy shipbuilding while accelerating pandemic recovery efforts in the Gulf Coast region,” the release said.

Austal is the builder of the Navy’s Independence-class littoral combat ships and Spearhead-class expeditionary fast transport ships.

In addition, DoD entered into a \$55 million agreement with W International, based in Goose Creek, South Carolina, “to maintain, protect and expand critical domestic industrial base capability for the U.S. Navy nuclear shipbuilding industry. These investments will have long-term benefits for Navy shipbuilding while accelerating pandemic recovery efforts in the South East region of the United States,” the release said.

W international is a fabrication corporation “that provides manufacturing, custom fabrication, project management, tooling and engineering services to clients in the aerospace, defense, automotive, energy and commercial industries,” according to the company’s website.

In both cases, the DoD actions are being taken to “ensure critical capabilities are retained in support of U.S. Navy

operational readiness,” Andrews said.

F/A-18F Crash Only Second Navy Aircraft Lost So Far in 2020



An F/A-18F Super Hornet, shown here in January 2020 as it lands on the flight deck of the aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78), was the second Navy aircraft lost so far in 2020 during a sortie from the USS Theodore Roosevelt. U.S. Navy / Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Jesus O. Aguiar ARLINGTON, Va. – The crash of a Navy F/A-18F Super Hornet strike fighter on June 18 was only the second loss of a Navy aircraft so far in 2020 – or in fiscal 2020 as well – according to an unofficial count.

The F/A-18F lost on June 18 crashed into the Philippine Sea during a sortie from the USS Theodore Roosevelt. The aircraft’s pilot and weapon system operator were rescued by an MH-60S helicopter from Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron Eight (HSC-8), according to a release from the aircraft carrier.

The F/A-18F was assigned to Fighter Squadron 154 (VF-154), according to a source.

“The incident occurred as the F/A-18F Super Hornet assigned to Carrier Air Wing 11 was conducting routine pilot proficiency training. The incident is currently under investigation,” the carrier said in its release. “Both aviators were assessed by the medical team on board Theodore Roosevelt and are in good condition.”

The other loss in 2020 so far was an MH-60S operating from the 7th Fleet command ship USS Blue Ridge on Jan. 25. The helicopter crashed into the Philippine Sea and all five personnel on board were rescued.

Block III Super Hornets Headed for Navy Flight Tests



F/A-18 Block III flight test aircraft F287 makes its first flight in May. Boeing has delivered the first two Block IIIs to the U.S. Navy. Boeing

ARLINGTON, Va. – Boeing has delivered the first two Block III Super Hornet strike fighters to the U.S. Navy. The aircraft, an F/A-18E and two-seat F/A-18F, will go through comprehensive testing by Navy air test and evaluation (VX) squadrons over the next year.

VX-23 at Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Maryland, will receive the F/A-18F (the 287th built) aircraft for “shore-based carrier testing” and will be used for testing of hardware and aeromechanical aspects, the Program Executive Office-Tactical Aircraft (PEO(T)) said in a June 17 release.

Once that testing is completed, the F/A-18F will go to VX-31 at Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake, California, to complete Block III testing. The F/A-18E (the 323rd built) will go to VX-31 for software functionality and network architecture testing.

The Block III Super Hornet features several major structural and mission system improvements over the Block II, Jennifer Tebo, Boeing’s director of development for F/A-18E/F & EA-18G

Programs, said in a June 17 teleconference with media.

The Advanced Cockpit System includes replacement of a set of displays with a single large touch-screen display for improved user interface and display of the Common Tactical Picture, the PEO said.

The Advanced Network Infrastructure will have 17 times the computing power of the mission computer of the Block II through the Distributed Targeting Processor Network and Tactical Targeting Network Technology (TTNT).

Tebo described the TTNT as a “big data pipe – low latency, high-data” for better situational awareness. The infrastructure will be open to accept third-party applications for “speed to the fleet with urgent needs,” she said.

The Block III Super Hornets will feature an improved radar cross section for better survivability.

The most distinguishable characteristic of the Block III is the addition of streamlined, low-drag conformal fuel tanks to the upper wing and fuselage junctions. These will be optional for use and will enable the Super Hornet to carry 3,500 pounds more fuel, reducing the need for underwing external fuel tanks and freeing up the pylons to carry more weapons.

When delivered, each Block III will have a service life of 10,000 flight hours, far more than the 6,000 hours of a Block II strike fighter.

“In addition to the Block III delivery, Boeing will also perform service life modification (SLM) to hundreds of Block II Super Hornets, to extend their service life and integrate Block III capabilities,” the PEO said. “SLM is key to building the capacity and capability to ensure the Navy has jets ready to fight into the mid-2040s.”

Tebo said the SLM will extend the life of Block IIs to 10,000

hours and that deliveries of Block IIIs converted from Block IIs will begin in 2023 and continue into the mid-2030s.

Tebo said the Block III Super Hornet made its first flight on May 14. Delivery of 78 full-up production Block IIIs is planned to begin in mid-2021 at a rate of two per month through early 2024.

“The first squadron deployment of Block III Super Hornet is anticipated in mid-2023, with a plan in place to have two Block III squadrons, composed of new production and Block IIs that have undergone SLM, accompanying each carrier air wing by 2027,” the PEO said in the release.

“Now it’s up to our test squadrons and our integration team to verify requirements are met and ensure the engineering behind the Block III is validated prior to full-scale production and delivery of the Block III to the fleet,” Capt. Mike Burks, F/A-18 E/F deputy program manager, said in the release.

“These new capabilities are essential for ensuring we maintain the tactical advantage in the Great Power Competition,” Capt. Jason Denney, the Navy’s F/A-18 & EA-18G Program Manager, said in the release. “Block III production and SLM for our Block IIs also demonstrate contracting efficiency and solid partnerships with industry – an all-around win for the Navy, for Boeing, and for the warfighter.”

Last Carrier Deployment for Marine Corps Legacy F/A-18

Hornets Underway



An F/A-18C Hornet of VMFA-323 lands on the flight deck of the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz on May 7. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Olivia Banmally Nichols
ARLINGTON, Va. – When the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz deployed last week for a major deployment in the Pacific Ocean, it was carrying a bit of history. On board as a unit of Carrier Air Wing 17 was Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 323 (VMFA-323), taking the F/A-18C Hornet on its last scheduled carrier deployment.

The “Death Rattlers” of VMFA-323 left with the Nimitz on June 8. The squadron is the only Marine squadron assigned to a carrier air wing, down from a peak of four VMFAs assigned a few years ago under the TACAIR Integration Concept. VMFA-314, the Corps’ first F-35C squadron, is scheduled to deploy as a unit of a carrier air wing in 2022 as a resumption of the TACAIR Integration concept.

The last Navy legacy Hornet squadron to deploy on a carrier was Strike Fighter Squadron 34 (VFA 34), which returned home in April 2018 from a deployment with Carrier Air Wing 2 on board the USS Carl Vinson. VFA-34 transferred its last F/A-18C on Feb. 1, 2019, and has upgraded to the F/A-18E Super Hornet.

Senate Bill Would Require More DDGs in Rota



The USS Roosevelt returns to Naval Station Rota, Spain, on May

16 after a scheduled underway. The Roosevelt is the first Flight IIA Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer stationed there. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Katie Cox

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Senate Armed Services Committee has marked up its version of the 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) to require a plan to increase the number of Navy destroyers based in Rota, Spain.

The mark-up, released June 11, “[r]equires the Chief of Naval Operations and Commander of U.S. European Command to submit a detailed plan to base two additional destroyers at our base in Rota, Spain, as soon as practicable.”

As part of the NDAA bill, the requirement must be approved by the full Senate, the House of Representatives and the president before it becomes policy.

The Navy currently bases four Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers (DDGs) at Naval Station Rota as units of the U.S. 6th Fleet. One of the primary roles of the ships is to conduct ballistic-missile defense patrols in the Mediterranean Sea in support of European Command.

The Navy is in the process of replacing the four DDGs originally forward-deployed in Rota with more modern versions of the Arleigh Burke class. The USS Roosevelt, a Flight IIA DDG, arrived in Rota on May 16 to replace the USS Carney, a Flight I ship. Other newer DDGs eventually will arrive to replace the USS Ross, USS Donald Cook and USS Porter in Rota.

The Roosevelt is a Flight IIA DDG that brings the Aegis Baseline 9/Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) 5.1 Advanced Capability Build upgrade to the Aegis Combat System. The system “integrates its weapons and sensors to include Cooperative Engagement Capability; Evolved Sea Sparrow Missile; Mk15 Close-In Weapons System Block 1B; and the Mk41 Vertical Launching System, capable of supporting Standard Missile (SM) 3 and newer variants. These capabilities vastly

increase the sea-based BMD force structure and contribute to NATO's robust integrated air and missile defense (IAMD) architecture," the release said.

The Roosevelt and the future replacement DDGs will operate MH-60R helicopters. The Navy plans to station a full MH-60R squadron in Rota by the time the three remaining Flight I/II DDGs are replaced in 2022.

Navy Special Projects Patrol Squadron Converting to P-8A Poseidon

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Navy's only special projects patrol squadron has moved to its new base and soon will operate a new aircraft.

Special Projects Patrol Squadron 2 (VPU-2), which flies modified P-3C Orion maritime patrol reconnaissance aircraft, "will transition to P-8A this summer," Cmdr. Jennifer Cragg, a spokeswoman for commander, Naval Air Force Atlantic, said in a statement to *Seapower*.

VPU-2 moved from Marine Corps Air Station Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii, to Naval Air Station Jacksonville, Florida, effective April 1. It was the Navy's last of four P-3 squadron to depart Kaneohe Bay. The other three squadrons – regular patrol squadrons VP-4, VP-9 and VP-47 – have moved to Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, Washington, and have already made the transition to the P-8A Poseidon.

VPU-2 originated in the late 1960s as a

special projects detachment of a patrol squadron but later became Patrol Squadron Special Projects Unit 2. It was upgraded later to a full squadron and its name was changed to Special Projects Patrol Squadron 2. VPU-2's P-3Cs were equipped with specialized sensors and other modifications for reconnaissance and special projects.

Two years ago, the Navy had planned to deactivate VPU-2 but apparently reversed the decision.

Navy Warfighting Organization Hitting Stride, Developing New Maritime Strategy



Aircraft fly in formation over the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Keenan Daniels

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Navy's new organization for warfighting development (N7) is now fully organized for its role in developing strategy and warfighters, its director said, and has joined with the U.S. Marine Corps and U.S. Coast Guard to develop a new maritime strategy.

The deputy chief of naval operations (DCNO) for warfighting development, Vice Adm. Stuart Munsch, said that N7 is making progress in fulfilling its roles and is hitting its stride and, in conjunction with the Marine Corps and Coast Guard, expects to field the new maritime strategy by late summer or early fall.

"Our North Star is warfighting advantage," Munsch said during

a June 5 teleconference with reporters, noting the Navy's focus on the current climate of Great Power Competition and the need to outpace increasingly sophisticated adversaries, renewing a focus on sea control.

The Navy directive addressing the organizational changes defined the role of N7 "with ensuring the Navy's warfighting advantage in order to deter, dissuade and deny or defeat adversaries by engaging in three broad, interrelated lines of effort: warfighter development, warfare development and warfighter corps development. It further established that CNO N7's mission and functions will be supported by a digital platform to enhance its ability to achieve a warfighting edge for the Navy."

The N7 now has four divisions: director, warfighter development; director, warfare development; director, strategic warfighting innovation cell; and director, warfare integration.

N7 is responsible for developing the strategic framework for the Navy, looking forward at longer range than N3/5, the DCNO for operations, plans and strategy, which focuses on the short term. N7 has now absorbed the functions and billets of the now disestablished Strategy Division, Naval Strategy Panel, and some billets from the Naval Warfare Group from N3/5. The Naval Analytics Office also now is aligned within N7.

Munsch said that N7 is to identify the key operational problems facing the Navy and to develop solutions.

N7 also is responsible for force employment and force development, working with the Joint Chiefs of Staff to develop the Joint Warfighting Concept and an influencing the DCNO for warfare systems (N9) with the characteristics of the capabilities needed to implement strategy.

Munsch also said his office has the role of adapting the Navy to changing circumstances, instilling adaptability into the

institutional behavior of the Navy, and instilling a lifelong habit of learning to enable that adaptability.

To enhance that learning, Munsch said that the Naval War College, Naval Postgraduate School and U.S. Naval Academy are now under the N7 umbrella, having been shifted from the chief of naval personnel (N1) organization.

Also now aligned within N7 are certain billets from the Resource Management Division and Total Force Manpower, Training, and Education Requirements Division from the N1 organization.

The admiral said that N7 will craft a wargaming schedule for the War College that will be the “most advanced and significant war gaming we’ve done since the 1930s.”

He was referring to the innovative wargaming by the Navy in the inter-war period in which the Navy developed many of the concepts that enabled the Navy to achieve victory in World War II.

Vice Adm. Lisa M. Franchetti, commander of the U.S. 6th Fleet, has been confirmed to succeed Munsch as the head of N7 this summer.

Trump Orders Review of Polar Security Cutter Program



Crew members aboard the icebreaker Polar Star secure a brow after mooring the cutter to a pier at Coast Guard Base Seattle on March 11. The PSC program is the designated replacement for the aging Polar Star. U.S. Coast Guard/Petty Officer 3rd Class

Amanda Norcross

ARLINGTON, Va. – President Trump has ordered a review of the U.S. Coast Guard’s icebreaking polar security cutter (PSC) program, with a focus on exploring options for nuclear power, heavy armament and leasing stopgap icebreakers.

In a June 9 memorandum from the White House to several federal departments, titled “Safeguarding U.S. National Interests in the Arctic and Antarctic Regions,” Trump ordered “a review of requirements for a polar security icebreaking fleet acquisition program to acquire and employ a suitable fleet of polar security icebreakers, and associated assets and resources, capable of ensuring a persistent United States presence in the Arctic and Antarctic regions in support of national interests and in furtherance of the National Security Strategy and the National Defense Strategy, as appropriate.”

“Separately, the review shall include the ability to provide a persistent United States presence in the Antarctic region, as appropriate, in accordance with the Antarctic Treaty System,” the memo said.

The Coast Guard awarded a \$745 million contract to VT Halter Marine in 2019 to build the lead PSC and has requested funds to construct a second PSC in the 2021 budget. The lead PSC is scheduled for delivery in 2024. The sea service has a requirement for six new icebreakers, including at least three PSCs.

The Coast Guard has only one serviceable heavy ice breaker, the Polar Star, which was commissioned in 1976, available. The Polar Star makes an annual voyage to Antarctica to help resupply U.S. facilities on that continent.

Trump also directed officials to study “the comparative operational and fiscal benefits and risks of a polar security icebreaking fleet that consists of at least three heavy [PSCs].”

The study is to use the full range of missions that may be executed by medium PSCs so that the optimal number and type of PSCs needed to ensure a persistent presence in the Arctic and Antarctic regions.

The study also will assess expanded capabilities for the PSCs, including unmanned systems, space systems and sensors to achieve maritime domain awareness; secure communications and data transfer systems; and intelligence-collection systems.

The study also will evaluate “defensive armament adequate to defend against threats by near-peer competitors” such as China and Russia.

The PSC is slated to be armed with .50-caliber machine guns for close-in defense, but the Coast Guard has in the past said it is open to the idea up-gunning the armament to include heavier weapons, including cruise missiles.

The study also will look at the “potential for nuclear-powered propulsion” for the PSC fleet. The study also will identify at least two optimal basing locations and at least two international basing locations for the future icebreaker fleet.

In recognition of the Polar Star’s condition, the study also will look at options to bridge a potential gap between the end of the Polar Star’s worthiness and the commissioning of the PSC fleet, considering leasing options of commercial icebreakers from partner nations.

“Further, and in advance of any bid solicitation for future polar security icebreaker acquisitions, the Secretary of State shall coordinate with the Secretary of Homeland Security to identify partner nations with proven foreign shipbuilding capability and expertise in icebreaker construction,” the memo said.

In the memo, the president directed that the secretary of

Homeland Security and the director of the Office of Management and Budget shall ensure that the Coast Guard's offshore patrol cutter acquisition program "is not adversely impacted."