# House Panel Questions Navy Shipbuilding, Unmanned Systems, Submarine Acquisition

The Virginia-class fast-attack submarine USS Washington returns to Naval Station Norfolk on Feb. 11 after its maiden deployment. Lawmakers continue to criticize the Navy's plan to fund just one Virginia-class sub – not two – in fiscal year 2021. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Alfred A. Coffield

WASHINGTON –

Lawmakers challenged U.S. Navy leaders at a fiscal year 2021 budget hearing on how long it will take to acquire a 355-ship fleet, how many vessels will be unmanned and why more ships of the fleet aren't submarines.

Acting Navy Secretary Thomas B. Modly, Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Michael Gilday and Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen. David Berger acknowledged the Navy Department's relatively flat budget request of $207.1 billion – $161 billion for the Navy and $46 billion for the Marines – had forced hard choices in procurement and end strength.

The budget request slows the trajectory toward a fleet of 355 or more ships, but "it does not arrest" that goal, Modly told the House Armed Services Committee on Feb.

27, offering his personal assurance that the Navy is “deeply committed” to building a larger, more capable, more distributed force within a time frame of no more than 10 years.

Both the committee chairman, Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.), and the ranking member, Rep. Mach Thornberry (R-Texas), said they are more interested in ships’ capabilities than numbers. “The 355 number kind of offends me,” Smith added. “You know, you can have 355 rowboats, theoretically, and you would have 355 ships.” Rep. Robert Wittman (R-Va.) called getting to 355 ships by 2030 “an impossible task based on the current pace.”

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Modly disagreed, but he said two things are required for the goal to become reality: a reasonable plan and the political will. Modly’s plan starts with finding ways to wring between $5 billion and $8 billion per year out of the existing Navy budget, and he’s conducting a 45-day stem-to-stern review to find outdated or unnecessary expenses for elimination. He said he would do what he could to stir political will.

Several

lawmakers were concerned about the size and numbers planned for air, surface and underwater unmanned vehicles.

“We have to really accelerate our investment in unmanned platforms,” Modly said, explaining why the Navy is seeking funding for the serial production of a large unmanned surface vessel before prototyping and testing are complete. It would be hard to experiment with concepts to understand how the technology will work with others without an existing platform, he said.

Regarding lethal unmanned aircraft, Berger said he didn’t yet know how they would operate in cooperation with manned aircraft. He did know “we have got to move faster than we have in the past three or four years,” he said. “We can cover a lot more ground if it is a mix of manned and unmanned. It is also more survivable,” by complicating targeting for enemy air defense systems, Berger said.

Rep. Joe Courtney (D-Conn.), chairman of the House Seapower and Projection Forces subcommittee, complained about the Defense Department’s last-minute reduction in shipbuilding accounts that led to the elimination of one of two planned Virginia-class attack submarines from the proposed 2021 budget.

Courtney noted that Gilday’s predecessor as CNO, Adm. John Richardson,

said there was no
greater need in warfighting requirement and current inventory than the attack
submarine. With older subs scheduled to retire in coming years, the Navy will
be down to 42 attack boats by 2028. Modly said he wasn't part of the discussion
about shifting shipbuilding money, but the elimination wasn't helpful "because
it takes a ship out of a plan that we are driving toward."

Gilday said
his first objective is to fully fund the new Columbia-class ballistic missile sub.
Noting the Ohio-class subs, "the nuclear seaborne deterrent that this nation
depends upon" is aging out. "We need to deliver Columbia on time for its first
patrol in 2031," he said.

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# Navy Crew Begins Training in Completed Spaces Aboard JFK

Aircraft carrier John F. Kennedy program director Mike Butler (left) and Capt. Todd Marzano (right), the ship's commanding officer, cut a ribbon inside a classroom on the ship to mark the completion and turnover of the first of 2,700 compartments to the ship's crew. Matt Hildreth/Huntington Ingalls Industries

NEWPORT NEWS, Va. – Huntington Ingalls Industries has reached an
important milestone in the construction of the aircraft

carrier John F.
Kennedy as the first of 2,700 compartments were turned over to the ship’s crew,
the company announced.

The completed spaces allow Sailors to begin training on the carrier
while final outfitting and testing progresses at the company’s Newport News
Shipbuilding division.

Earlier this month, Sailors assigned to the pre-commissioning unit began coming onboard the ship and working in some of the compartments,
which include a training facility, offices and habitability spaces.

Turning over crew training areas earlier in Kennedy’s construction was a lesson learned from the construction of the USS Gerald
R. Ford. As a result, the Kennedy’s construction team was able to
complete and turn over 63 compartments to the ship’s crew over four months
earlier than on Ford.

“The first Sailors coming onboard is a significant step in the life of the ship,” said Mike Butler, program director for Kennedy. “Our
completing and turning over these spaces to the crew will allow them to start
on-hands, shipboard training, and learn the systems and components they will
operate when the ship joins the fleet.”

Over the next two and a half years, other spaces, such as berthing and mess areas, will be completed, and distributive, mechanical and

combat systems, such as catapults and radar arrays, will be tested.

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# Navy UISS Program Achieves Milestone C

HUNT VALLEY, Md. – Textron Systems Corp. announced that the U.S. Navy's Unmanned Influence Sweep System (UISS) program, which is based on Textron's Common Unmanned Surface Vehicle (CUSV), has achieved a Milestone C decision. The decision allows the program to enter low-rate initial production (LRIP), with the Navy planning to award three UISS systems to Textron under their existing contract.

"The Textron and U.S. Navy teams have worked diligently to reach this Milestone C decision," said Wayne Prender, senior vice president of applied technologies and advanced programs at Textron. "We recognize the time on the water and dedication of the testing teams which enabled us to enter this phase of the program."

UISS is the Navy's first unmanned surface vehicle (USV) program of record, designed for the demanding maritime environment. It provides unmanned mine counter-measure and capabilities using interchangeable payloads and advanced sensors.

UISS completed Navy developmental test and operational assessment in November. The UISS is the first in the Navy's USV portfolio to reach this milestone. UISS is part of a comprehensive Mine Counter Measure Unmanned Surface Vehicle (MCM USV) mission and is designed to be deployed from the littoral combat ship and vessels of opportunity.

Textron is the prime contractor and system integrator for the UISS and MCM USV programs. The company designed CUSV as a multi-mission unmanned surface vehicle, capability of carrying multiple payloads including side-scan sonar, mine neutralization, non-lethal weapons, and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) sensors.

Production will be completed at Textron's Hunt Valley, Maryland, and New Orleans locations.

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# Coast Guard Cutter Valiant Returns Home After 9-Week Caribbean Patrol

A family member holds up a welcome home sign as she awaits the arrival of the Coast Guard Cutter Valiant crew on Feb. 27 to their homeport at Naval Station Mayport, Florida. U.S. Coast Guard/Petty Officer 2nd Class Ryan Dickinson

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. – The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Valiant returned home on Feb. 27 to Naval Station Mayport

after completing a nine-week patrol in the Caribbean Sea, according to the Coast Guard 7th District.

The Valiant crew patrolled more than 11,000 nautical miles in the Caribbean supporting Joint Interagency Task Force South (JIATF-S) conducting humanitarian and law-enforcement operations, ultimately saving 23 lives.

While underway, the Valiant crew interdicted a 30-foot disabled and adrift migrant vessel attempting an illegal voyage to Puerto Rico, about 37 nautical miles south of Isla Saona, Dominican Republic.

A Coast Guard HC-144 Ocean Sentry Maritime Patrol Aircraft crew spotted the vessel and directed Valiant to its location. This interdiction rescued 19 migrants whose vessel would not have had enough fuel to reach its U.S. destination. The crew later transferred the Dominican migrants to a Dominican navy vessel for a safe return home.

Previously, the Cutter Richard Dixon crew transferred 50 migrants to Valiant from two separate interdictions. The Valiant crew transported six of the migrants to Ramey Sector Border Patrol Agents in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico, for federal prosecution on charges of attempting to illegally re-enter the United States. The crew then repatriated the remaining 44 migrants to the Dominican Republic.

In addition to interdicting migrant vessels, the Valiant crew conducted joint law-enforcement operations with the Belize coast guard and hosted a Belize coast guard officer aboard.

This opportunity gave both nations the chance to communicate

and learn from each other while sharing different law-enforcement techniques. As a result of the exercise, Belize was able to establish a presence further offshore in a suspected drug smuggling area. Throughout their patrol, the crew conducted law-enforcement operations with an embarked MH-65 Dolphin helicopter crew from the U.S. Coast Guard's Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron (HITRON) from Jacksonville, Florida.

Near the end of the patrol, the Valiant crew located two disabled vessels in a known drug smuggling area within a 24-hour period. The first was experiencing engine troubles and the other was out of fuel, and both crews claimed they had been adrift and without food or water for days. The Valiant crew rescued all four from their stricken vessels, embarked them onboard the cutter as search-and-rescue survivors, and transferred them to the Colombian navy for transport back to land.

"I couldn't be prouder of our crew this patrol as we plied the waters of the Caribbean for illicit maritime drug smugglers over the past two months in support of JIATF-S counterdrug operations, interdicting two logistics supply vessels," said Cmdr. Matthew Waldron, Valiant's commanding officer.

"Additionally, the crew demonstrated exceptional flexibility by quickly shifting gears from counter-drug to migrant operations and interdicting a disabled yola with 19 Dominican migrants bound for Puerto Rico in the middle of the night. Had it not been for the combined efforts of a forward-deployed Coast Guard Air Station Miami HC-144 crew, the Dominican Republic navy and Valiant, the individuals on that yola would have likely been lost at sea. … That's 19 lives saved."

# House Committee Levels Broadside at Navy's 2021 Shipbuilding Budget

Gen. Mark A. Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Defense Secretary Mark T. Esper visit Capitol Hill on Feb. 26 for a House Armed Service Committee hearing on the Pentagon's fiscal 2021 budget. U.S. Army/Sgt. 1st Class Chuck Burden

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Navy's plan to procure only eight battle force ships in the 2021 budget came under expected fire from lawmakers during a Feb. 26 hearing on Capitol Hill.

Defense Secretary Mark Esper and Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Mark Milley testified at the hearing of the House Armed Services Committee to defend the Defense Department's proposed fiscal 2021 budget.

Rep. Joe Courtney (D-Conn.), in whose district the Electric Boat submarine construction yard is located, addressing the plan to procure only eight ships – including just one Virginia-class attack submarine – attacked the 2021 plan as deficient for several reasons.

He noted that a Congressional Research Service report confirmed that one of the eight ships in the 2021 budget – LPD 31, a San Antonio-class amphibious transport dock ship – was authorized and partially paid for via the 2020 defense bill and as such is being double-counted. He said that the real

ship procurement proposed for 2021 is only seven ships.

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>
> *Rep. Joe Courtney (D-Conn.)*

"Two of those seven are tugboats – they're salvage ships," Courtney said in his remarks. "We are not getting briefings in this committee about Russian tugboats or Chinese tugboats. We, in fact, then are left with really five combatant ships."

Courtney also criticized the decision to request only one Virginia-class attack submarine versus the two planned, a decision that he said will exacerbate the Navy's shortage of attack subs.

"Just for the record, we are at 52 attack submarines today," Courtney said to Esper. "With the retirement of Los Angeles-class submarines, which is going to accelerate over the next four or five years, that fleet is going to shrink to 44 subs. Your budget keeps us in that trough into the 2030s. It defies any analysis in terms of something that comports with the National Defense Strategy."

Courtney also pointed out to Esper that a 30-year shipbuilding plan – required by law – was not submitted with the 2021 budget submission. Esper said he hadn't seen the 30-year plan but would send it to Congress after he reviewed it.

"At the appropriate point I will share with you what I believe our future force structure should look like," Esper said. "I am a big believer in attack submarines. … My gut tells me we need more than we planned for."

"But there are two competing pressures we have right now: a topline budget which actually gives us 2% less buying power,"

he said. “But the second thing – and importantly – is I support what the Navy did in terms of moving $4 billion from shipbuilding to maintenance. A concern that the [chief of naval operations] has, that the acting secretary has, and I have is that we have a hollow Navy.”

Esper cited a December Government Accountability Office report, which said that over the last five years, 75% of U.S. surface ships left maintenance late.

“Half of those ships took over three months to get to sea,” he said. “What that equates to is that 19 in 2019 unavailable to go to sea. We cannot have a hollow Navy. I agree we need to build a 355-plus-ship Navy, but we cannot have a hollow Navy at the same time.”

Rep. Rob Wittman (R-Va.) pointed out that the budget plan to decommission four littoral combat ships, four cruisers and three dock landing ships seemed like math that “doesn’t add up to me to get to 355. In fact, we’re heading south on that.”

Courtney also characterized the shipbuilding request as a “gut punch” to the welders, electricians and carpenters who build ships and to the supply chain that provides the materiel and components.

“Lastly, it’s a punch in the gut to the combatant commanders,” he added.

“In the last few days, we’ve had [Gen. Tod Wolters, commander, U.S. European Command] talk about a 50% increase in Russian submarine patrol operations. We’ve had [Adm. Woody Lewis, commander, U.S. 2nd Fleet] talking about the ever-increasing number of submarines [and Adm. Phil Davidson, commander, Indo-Pacific Command] saying that his ‘day-to-day submarine requirement is met by slightly only 50% of what I’ve asked for.’”

# Marine Corps Orders More Amphibious Combat Vehicles From BAE Systems

Marines and Sailors watch on Jan. 28 as Marines maneuver an ACV onto the well deck of the amphibious transport dock ship USS Somerset as part of the vehicle's developmental testing off the shore of Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, California. U.S. Marine Corps/Lance Cpl. Drake Nickels

STAFFORD, Va. – BAE Systems has received a $113.5 million contract from the U.S. Marine Corps for an additional 26 Amphibious Combat Vehicles (ACV) under the low-rate initial production (LRIP) phase of the program, the company said in a release. This award brings the total vehicle orders for the ACV to 116 and moves the program closer to full-rate production.

The ACV is a mobile, survivable and adaptable platform for conducting rapid ship-to-shore operations and brings enhanced combat power to the battlefield. BAE has been in low-rate production since 2018 on the personnel carrier variant in the ACV family, which is envisioned to consist of additional variants such as command and control, 30 mm medium caliber turret and recovery.

"The ACV provides the most survivable and mobile amphibious vehicle to the U.S. Marines Corps for supporting the warfighters' ability to successfully execute their unique expeditionary missions," said John Swift, director of amphibious programs at BAE Systems.

The BAE team and the Marines have made significant strides to

reach full-rate production, including the completion of logistics demonstration as a critical enabler for the program to move into initial operational test and evaluation (IOT&E) with trained Marine maintainers. This and other major milestones such as operator training and additional testing will take place before full-rate production.

The Marine Corps selected BAE along with teammate Iveco Defence Vehicles for the ACV program to replace its legacy fleet of Assault Amphibious Vehicles, which have been in service for decades and also were built by BAE Systems.

ACV production and support is taking place at BAE locations in Stafford, Virginia; San Jose, California; Sterling Heights, Michigan; Aiken, South Carolina; and York, Pennsylvania.

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# Aerojet Rocketdyne to Develop Advanced Propulsion for Navy's Advanced Lightweight Torpedo

HUNTSVILLE, Ala. – Aerojet Rocketdyne has been awarded a $63.2 million "other transaction authority" by the U.S. Navy to develop an advanced propulsion system for the Mk54 Mod 2 Advanced Lightweight Torpedo (ALWT), the company said in a release.

"We have developed mission-critical propulsion and power systems for the U.S. Navy for more than 60 years," said Eileen Drake, Aerojet Rocketdyne's president and CEO. "Aerojet Rocketdyne is a world-class developer of high-performance

propulsion systems, and we look forward to applying our expertise to support the development of the Advanced Lightweight Torpedo."

For the authority, Aerojet Rocketdyne will develop a prototype Stored Chemical Energy Propulsion System (SCEPS) power plant and afterbody/tailcone that ultimately would be integrated into the ALWT. The SCEPS improves the capabilities of the Mk54 torpedo.

The Mk54 Lightweight Torpedo, an anti-submarine warfare weapon, is used by U.S. surface ships, fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters.

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# Coast Guard Interdicts Illegal Foreign Fishers in Pacific

A Coast Guard HC-130 Hercules aircrew from Air Station Barbers Point returns to Hawaii following a maritime domain awareness patrol in the Pacific Ocean on Feb. 20. The Coast Guard conducts MDA patrols routinely throughout the region. U.S. Coast Guard/Petty Officer 2nd Class Shane Christian

HONOLULU – The U.S. Coast Guard interdicted several foreign vessels whose crews were fishing inside the U.S. exclusive economic zone (EEZ) on two separate occasions in the first two months of 2020, according to the Coast Guard's 14th District.

"While we've seen incursions into the EEZs of partners and illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing on the high

seas, these are the first interdictions we've had in the U.S EEZ since 2012," said Lt. Jason Holstead of 14th District Response Enforcement. "The combination of partnerships, electronic methods and putting assets on the scene to catch violators in the act is essential to deterring IUU fishing in Oceania."

In both cases, the Coast Guard was conducting maritime domain awareness flights in the zones off Guam and Hawaii with Coast Guard HC-130 Hercules aircraft crews based at Air Station Barbers Point.

Case packages were forwarded to the NOAA Office of Law Enforcement for further actions. The investigations are pending.

The living marine resources (LMR) mission is one of two Coast Guard missions devoted to protecting fisheries inside and outside U.S. waters. While LMR focuses on domestic fisheries, other law enforcement focuses on illegal incursions by foreign fishing vessels into the U.S. EEZ. An EEZ is defined as the region extending 200 miles beyond a nation's shores. The Coast Guard leverages partnerships and 13 bilateral agreements between the U.S. and other nations in the Pacific to enforce fisheries regulations and combat IUU fishing.

Fishing within the United States generates more than $200 billion and employs 1.7 million people annually. IUU fishing represents an estimated monetary loss of $10 billion to $23 billion for legitimate fishers. Globally, commercially landed tuna and tuna products have a value of $10 billion to $12 billion per year to the fishermen who target these species and more than $42 billion per year at the final point of sale. These conservative totals do not account for noncommercial tuna activity including sport fishing and tourism.

According to the Pew Charitable Trusts, the Pacific Ocean – also known as the "tuna belt" – represents 65% to

70% percent of globally harvested tuna.

According to the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC), the international body that manages tuna fishing in the same waters, state fishers caught nearly 2.85 million metric tons of the primary commercial tuna species in 2014. This catch's worth was valued at more than $5 billion to fishers in the region and more than $22.68 billion at the final point of sale. Tuna caught in the WCPFC convention area accounts for more than half of the landings, dock value and end value of all commercial tuna fisheries.

While the Coast Guard is not the only agency responsible for protecting fisheries, it plays a significant role. The Coast Guard has enforcement authority over 202 separate commercial fisheries.

"While regulation compliance among U.S. fishers is near 97%, some of the lowest policed areas, such as the waters in the western and central Pacific, are responsible for the highest percentage of significant violations. This is where the efforts of the Coast Guard 14th District and partners are so important," Holstead said. "In 2019, we conducted numerous routine and analysis-based patrols throughout the region in support of IUU fishing detection and deterrence."

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# Navy E-2 Hawkeye Squadrons Renamed to Reflect Expanded Capabilities

A E-2D Hawkeye approaches the aircraft carrier USS Gerald R.

Ford. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Ryan Carter

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Navy has given its E-2 Hawkeye squadrons a new designation to more accurately reflect the aircraft's expanded capabilities and missions.

The service has changed the name from Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron to Airborne Command and Control Squadron, effective Jan. 1, said Lt. Travis Callaghan, a spokesman for commander, Naval Air Forces, in response to a query from *Seapower*.

The E-2 was fielded in 1965 during the Vietnam War as a radar early warning aircraft that was able to detect and track airborne targets and provide radio voice commands and data link tracks to enable fighters to intercept enemy aircraft or cruise missiles. Over the succeeding decades and as the sophistication of the E-2's radar increased and other sensors were added, the aircraft added to its portfolio battle management, strike control, land force support, rescue coordination, drug-interdiction operations and other tasks that went beyond simple early warning.

The current version in production, the E-2D Advanced Hawkeye, built by Northrop Grumman and equipped with Lockheed Martin's APY-9 radar, includes modern capabilities such as Cooperative Engagement Capability and Navy Integrated Fire Control, which enhance its role as the Navy's "quarterback in the sky."

Each of the Navy's nine carrier air wings is equipped with one E-2C or E-2D squadron. Four squadrons are based at Naval Air Station Point Mugu, California, and one is based at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan, while five are stationed at Naval Station Norfolk, Virginia, one being a replacement training squadron.

The airborne command and control squadrons will retain the VAW

acronym that has been in use since the 1950s.

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# USS Delbert D. Black Completes Builder's Trials

Ingalls Shipbuilding launches the USS Delbert D. Black in September 2017. Andrew Young/Huntington Ingalls Industries

PASCAGOULA, Miss. – The future guided-missile destroyer USS Delbert D. Black successfully completed builder's trials on Feb. 22 after spending three days underway in the Gulf of Mexico, according to the Navy's Program Executive Office (PEO)-Ships. The trials were conducted by the shipbuilder, Huntington Ingalls Industries, Ingalls Shipbuilding Division.

The ship was previously underway for Alpha trials in December and will be underway again in March for acceptance trials, which will be conducted by the U.S. Navy's Board of Inspection and Survey.

"The Navy and our dedicated shipbuilders have continued to make strides towards delivering this exceptional capability to the fleet and performed well during builder's trials," said Capt. Seth Miller, DDG 51 class program manager, PEO-Ships. "This ship continues the proud Aegis shipbuilding legacy and will provide the Navy with a 21st-century fighting edge."

Delbert D. Black is configured as a Flight IIA destroyer, which enables power projection, forward presence and escort operations at sea in support of low intensity conflict/coastal and littoral offshore sarfare as well as open ocean conflict. DDG 119 will be equipped with the Navy's Aegis Combat

System.

HII’s Pascagoula shipyard also is producing the future destroyers Frank E. Petersen Jr (DDG 121), Lenah H. Sutcliffe Higbee (DDG 123) and Jack H. Lucas (DDG 125), the first ship to be built in the Flight III configuration.

Ima Black, wife of the first MCPON Delbert “Del” Black and sponsor of the USS Delbert D. Black, signs her name on a memorial plaque during a 2016 keel-laying ceremony. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class (EXW) Timothy Wilson