Continuing Resolution Already Taking Toll on Navy Readiness, Geurts Says



James F. Geurts, assistant secretary of the Navy for research, development and acquisition, says the continuing resolution has forced the Navy to postpone indefinitely the overhaul of the guided-missile destroyer USS Bainbridge, scheduled to start on Nov. 7. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Joshua D. Sheppard

ARLINGTON, Va. — The continuing resolution currently in effect instead of an enacted fiscal 2020 budget already is taking a toll on the readiness of U.S. Navy units and acquisition plans, with two ship overhauls delayed indefinitely and more to come unless Congress acts soon, Navy officials said.

Seven weeks into fiscal 2020, a CR is limiting Navy budget expenditures to 2019 levels, the sole year in the last decade in which the defense budget was enacted on time. When a CR is in effect, not only are expenditures and production orders limited but no new programs can be started.

Inefficiencies also are induced that complicate government and industry planning, cause cash-flow problems and add costs to programs. The cascading effects include uncertainty in hiring workers and ordering materials. The uncertainty of the duration of the CR magnifies the problems for planners.

"The No. 1 impact of a CR is instability," said James F. Geurts, assistant secretary of the Navy for research, development and acquisition, who spoke with Thomas W. Harker, assistant secretary of the Navy for financial management and comptroller, at a Nov. 15 media roundtable in the Pentagon. "It makes all your work unstable and inefficient."

Geurts said the Navy has had to postpone indefinitely the overhauls – called "availabilities" by the Navy – of two Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers, USS Bainbridge and USS Gonzalez, which were supposed to start on Nov. 7 and Nov. 8, respectively.


Geurts says the Navy is working on plans to keep the Columbia ballistic-missile submarine program from being delayed from its 2021 construction start by the budgetary effects of the continuing resolution. Columbia is the Navy's top procurement priority. U.S. Navy

Burned by many years of CRs, the Navy has learned to plan few new program starts for the first quarter of a fiscal year to reduce the impact of a CR.

Geurts presented an analysis of the effects of the six-month CR and a year-long CR to reporters. A six-month CR would force the Navy to delay the procurement of one Virginia-class submarine, one Navajo-class towing, salvage and rescue ship and two utility landing craft and the start of the refueling and complex overhaul (RCOH) of the aircraft carrier USS John C. Stennis. It also would delay the production of 32 new training helicopter systems, 22 F-5 adversary jets, five F-35C strike fighters and three MQ-9 Reaper UAVs, the latter for the Marine Corps. The CR also would create a cash shortfall of $1 billion for maintenance, equipment and spare parts and delay 17 new-start research, development, test and evaluation (RDT&E) projects.

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A year-long CR would delay all of the above plus the completion of five ships; the start of the FFG(X) frigate program; the procurement of a KC-130J tanker aircraft; more

than 500 weapons; and another seven RDT&E projects, plus 33 military construction projects.

The RDT&E projects delayed would include new unmanned systems planned for the fleet such as the Large Unmanned Surface Vessel, Conventional Prompt Strike, Artificial Intelligence development, surface and shallow-water mine countermeasures development, and digital warfare.

The one-year CR would restrict operations and maintenance with a shortfall of about $5.6 billion, which would result in the cancellation of 14 ship availabilities; shut down nondeployed carrier air wings and expeditionary squadrons; reduced flight hours for aircraft and steaming days for ships; delays in repairs of hurricane-damaged bases; and delays in Marine Corps unit training and exercises.

Geurts said the top three procurement programs that would be impacted by a CR would be the new Advanced Helicopter Training System, the FFG(X) and the RCOH of the USS John C. Stennis.

Geurts said the Navy has some flexibility to deal with anomalies in the budget to shore up some programs. The sea service is working on plans to keep the Columbia ballistic-missile submarine program from being affected and to start the construction program in 2021 on time despite the CR.

The Columbia is the Navy’s top procurement priority.