Geurts: Navy Looking at Money-Saving Strategies in Procurement of Four Amphibs



The amphibious assault ship USS America receives cargo from the dry cargo and ammunition ship USNS Cesar Chavez during a replenishment-at-sea on March 1. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Vincent E. Zline

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Navy is looking at acquisition strategies for procuring four amphibious warfare ships over the next few years to achieve economies, the Navy's top acquisition official said.

During March 4 testimony about the fiscal 2021 shipbuilding proposal before the Seapower subcommittee of the Senate Armed Services Committee by James F. Geurts, assistant secretary of the Navy for research, development and acquisition, Sen. Roger Wicker (R-Miss.) said he was pleased that the 2021 proposal had accelerated the planned procurement of amphibious assault ship LHA 9 from fiscal 2024 to fiscal 2023.

Geurts said that the acceleration was enabled because Congress had appropriated funds and given incremental funding authority "relatively early to that need."

"Our challenge in the future budgets will be to place that money back in the program so we can deliver that LHA," he said.

Wicker asked about the possibility of a multiyear procurement for three Block II San Antonio-class amphibious transport dock ships (LPDs 31, 32 and 33) and LHA 9. He referred to a request last year from the Seapower subcommittee to "review alternative acquisition strategies for amphibious ships to

leverage multiple-ship contracts, which have saved billions of dollars. In this review, the Navy reported that significant savings could be achieved by procuring various combinations of amphibious ships."

"There is tremendous potential as [said] in our report to Congress, and as we've looked at it even further to doing a block buy of the three LPDs and the LHA," Geurts said.

"We see that savings to be in that 8% to 12% range, which would be a billion dollars back in taxpayer savings. So, we're looking at that closely. We're also executing that advance procurement, long-lead funding that's been appropriated with the incremental authority. The things that I've seen in the draft of the SHIPS Implementation Act in terms of giving us more authorities to do smart procurement will be tremendously beneficial."

The Huntington Ingalls shipyard where the Navy's amphibious warfare ships are built is in Pascagoula, Mississippi.