HASC, SASC GOP Leaders Concerned over Possible Cancellation of Navy's Nuclear SLCM

The nuclear-powered Virginia-class attack submarine USS New Mexico (SSN 779) is tugged to the pier for a brief stop for fuel and supplies in Souda Bay, Greece, on May 30, 2021. SSN 779 is one of the submarines that could deploy a Nuclear Sea-Launched Cruise Missile. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Kelly M. Agee*

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Representative Mike Rogers (R-Alabama) and U.S. Senator Jim Inhofe (R-Oklahoma), the ranking members of the House and Senate Armed Services Committees, have expressed deep concern following reports that the acting secretary of the Navy plans to cancel a Nuclear Sea-Launched Cruise Missile (SLCM-N).

The lawmakers noted the decision comes "after submission of the fiscal 2022 budget and before the completion of a Nuclear Posture Review (NPR)."

Their statement reads:

"Reports that an Acting Secretary of the Navy would cancel a new Nuclear Sea Launched Cruise Missile after submission of the FY22 budget, and before a Nuclear Posture Review has been started – much less completed – is bewildering and short-sighted. The Biden administration has decided to project weakness ahead of a summit with Vladimir Putin – another gift to our adversaries. We have serious questions for senior Pentagon leaders on this reported decision and how it was reached."

Rogers, speaking March 22 during a webinar of the Defense Writers Group, was asked by *Seapower* about the future of the planned SLCM-N called for in the Defense Department's 2018 NPR.

The NPR said "SLCM will not require or rely on host nation support to provide deterrent effect. They will provide additional diversity in platforms, range, and survivability, and a valuable hedge against future nuclear 'break out' scenarios."

The review said the "SLCM will provide a needed non-strategic regional presence, an assured response capability. It also will provide an arms-control-compliant response to Russia's noncompliance with the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces Treaty, its nonstrategic nuclear arsenal, and its other destabilizing behaviors."

The HASC chairman, Rep. Adam Smith, D-Washington, has stated his opposition to the low-yield warhead and SLCM as being destabilizing to the nuclear balance.