

Rep. Wittman Responds to CNO's 500-Ship Fleet Aspirations



U.S. Rep. Rob Wittman (R-Virginia) has lunch with Sailors aboard the Wasp-class amphibious assault ship USS Kearsarge (LHD 3) on Aug. 10, 2021. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Nick Boris*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Rep. Rob Wittman (R-Virginia), ranking member of the House Armed Services Committee's Seapower and Projection Forces subcommittee, released the following statement in response to Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Michael Gilday's recent assertion the Navy needs a 500-ship Navy to meet the Biden Administration's forthcoming National Defense Strategy:

"We are at a critical junction in our nation's history: We must decide if the United States will retain its global

primacy or concede to the Chinese. Presently, China has the largest navy in the world and if we do nothing to change our fleet trajectory, China will fully modernize its military and outpace the United States militarily.

“I am supportive of Chief of Naval Operations Gilday’s affirmation of the previous administration’s force structure objectives, and I am incredibly supportive of a larger, more robust naval fleet that will position the United States to maintain presence necessary to dissuade conflict and if necessary, win in war. However, we have heard these calls for a larger fleet before without any substantive follow through. CNO Gilday’s call for a 500-fleet navy is a welcomed aspiration, but it must be backed by President Biden’s budget request to ensure our Navy and entire military has what it needs to maintain readiness, improve our systems, and outpace our competitors. In my estimation, real world dynamics require at least 5% real growth in our national security in fiscal year 2023.

“I continue to be concerned as to how CNO Gilday’s plan aligns with the Biden Administration’s forthcoming National Defense Strategy. Last year, this administration did not even provide Congress with a five-year investment vision. Without a credible 30-year shipbuilding plan, the industrial base has no real map to invest for the future. Additionally, the ‘divest to invest’ approach of this administration presumes a benign China response in the short term. We need to be ready for conflict in five years, not in some fairy tale Battle Force 2045. The administration needs to be forthright with Congress in the fiscal year 2023 budget request and their intent to dissuade future conflict now.”