

Representative Suggests Including Lawmakers in Navy War Gaming to Help Inform Advocacy



Naval Postgraduate School students participate in analytic wargames they designed to explore solutions for some of the Defense Department's most pressing national security concerns. Rep. Mike Gallagher (R-Wisconsin) says he'd like to see some congressional participation in Navy wargaming allowed this year. *NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL / Javier Chagoya*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Department of the Navy (DoN) should invite supporters in Congress to the wargaming process “so we can better advocate for the Navy,” a House Armed Services Committee member has suggested.

During a Washington think tank event June 28 on the state of the U.S. maritime industrial base and competition with China, Rep. Mike Gallagher (R-Wisconsin) said he would like to see Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Mike Gilday, Marine Corps Commandant Gen. David Berger and other Pentagon officials “join a few of us navalists in Congress,” in a room with just a map “and just in simple terms, have them walk us through their theory of the case for what they think the PLA [People's Liberation Army] is trying to do. What we need to do to counter.”

Irritated by the limited time lawmakers get to question military leaders during public committee hearings, Gallagher called for better communication between Navy and Marine Corps leaders and congressional supporters during a virtual joint appearance with fellow HASC member, Rep. Rob Wittman (R-Virginia), presented by the Hudson Institute. “So, I'm an advocate for allowing some congressional participation in Navy

wargaming this year,” Gallagher said.

Without directly commenting on Gallagher’s idea, Wittman acknowledged “folks want to know and hear more, especially, as Rep. Gallagher said, outside the committee hearing side.”

Wittman and Gallagher joined several senators in introducing the Supplying Help to Infrastructure in Ports, Yards, and America’s Repair Docks (SHIPYARD) Act of 2021 in April. The proposed legislation would provide \$25 billion to make investments needed to optimize, improve, and rebuild shipyard facilities, electrical infrastructure, environmental systems, and the equipment of public and private shipyards in the U.S. that support the U.S. Navy fleet.

The act would designate \$21 billion for the Navy’s four public shipyards in Virginia, Maine, Hawaii, and Washington, \$2 billion for major Navy private new construction shipyards, and \$2 billion for Navy private repair shipyards.

Wittman and Gallagher noted U.S. shipyards were having trouble servicing the current 296-ship fleet and would be insufficient to maintain a 355-ship needed to counter the PLA Navy (PLAN) in China, which now has the world’s largest navy with an overall battle force of 350 ships and submarines.

“We are far behind China in the trajectory of building our Navy. We are far behind China in the shipyard infrastructure that we need,” Wittman said.

He noted the U.S. Navy’s fiscal 2022 budget request seeks only eight ships, but plans to retire 15 ships, seven of them cruisers. “The question is, if you’re going to be reducing the number of ships you build, how do you sustain an industrial base – not just the physical facilities but also the manpower?”

Gallagher said PLAN has grown its battle force by 117 ships since 2005 and over the same period, the U.S. Navy battle

force has grown by just five ships.

“That is not the right trendline,” he said.