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NAVY FORCE STRUCTURE AND READINESS: PERSPECTIVES FROM THE FLEET

JOINT HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON SEAPOWER AND PROJECTION FORCES

MEETING JOINTLY WITH

SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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NAVY FORCE STRUCTURE AND READINESS: PERSPECTIVES FROM THE FLEET

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES, SUBCOMMITTEE ON SEAPOWER AND PROJECTION FORCES, MEETING JOINTLY WITH THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS, *Washington, DC, Thursday, May 26, 2016.*

The subcommittees met, pursuant to call, at 10:00 a.m., in room 2118, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. J. Randy Forbes (chairman of the Seapower and Projection Forces Subcommittee) presiding.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. J. RANDY FORBES, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM VIRGINIA, CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON SEAPOWER AND PROJECTION FORCES

Mr. FORBES. Good morning and I want to welcome members of the Seapower and Projection Forces and Readiness Subcommittees to our hearing today.

Before we begin, we just have two logistical matters that I would like to take care of. The first one is I would like to ask unanimous consent that nonsubcommittee members be allowed to participate in today's hearing after all subcommittee members have had an opportunity to ask questions.

Is there any objection?

Without objection, nonsubcommittee members will be recognized at the appropriate time for 5 minutes.

In addition to that, I would like to ask unanimous consent that Admiral Davidson be allowed to make an opening statement on behalf of the Navy and the respective Navy witnesses.

Is there objection?

Without objection, it so ordered.

As I mentioned, we welcome everyone here today to this joint subcommittee on Seapower and Projection Forces and Readiness Subcommittees at our hearing today.

I want to offer a special welcome to our full committee chairman, Mr. Thornberry. As everyone knows, Chairman Thornberry has been the leader of our ongoing efforts to mitigate our military readiness challenges and I want to thank him for his leadership and for being here today to hear about the United States Navy.

This hearing follows a congressional delegation and listening session that members of our committee conducted on Monday aboard Naval Station Norfolk, the aircraft carrier *Dwight D. Eisenhower* and the destroyer, the USS *McFaul.*

While in Norfolk we had a chance to meet with a number of Navy sailors, including the witnesses that are testifying before us today.

Today we will have Captain Scott F. Robertson, the commanding officer of the USS *Normandy*. Captain, thank you for being here.

We have Captain Randy Stearns, the commodore and Strike Fighter for Wing Atlantic. Captain, thank you for joining us.

We have Captain Gregory McRae, the deputy commander of Submarine Squadron 6. And Captain, thank you for joining us.

And Captain Paul Odenthal, commander of the Naval Construction Group 2. Captain, we thank you for joining us today.

I am also particularly delighted to have Admiral Davidson, the commander of the U.S. Fleet Forces Command, who will make an opening statement this morning.

We have a special guest with us here in the audience. That is Captain Robertson's wife, Kelly. Last year Captain Robertson and his crew went away for a whopping 313 days, including their wedding anniversary and likely many other important family events.

Today his duty once again called him away from home on his anniversary, and at least on this anniversary I want to get him out of the doghouse a little bit, and I want to thank Kelly for her service and her support for her husband and to recognize all the sacrifices she and our other Navy spouses and families make for our country.

I am grateful to everyone for being here, but I want to thank the captains in particular for first giving us their perspectives in Norfolk and then coming up to Washington to share them with additional members.

I think it is very important that we hear not just from senior Navy leaders, but from the operators and warfighters like yourselves, who are dealing with readiness challenges firsthand.

When we met with our witnesses down in Norfolk, one of them characterized his current role and responsibility as the commander of a Navy unit as, quote: "managing scarcity."

Our sailors do not sign up to manage scarcity. They sign up to defend their families, their homes, their country. They sign up to defend our families, our home, and our country.

Every day our sailors have a duty to defend America. It is time that we as Americans realize we have a duty to defend them. Hopefully, we take a major step in that this morning.

I think that the term is a very good description of the challenges that our men and women in uniform and the civilians that support them are dealing with across the fleet and in the Navy sister services.

While I firmly believe that the United States Navy is still the world's best, I am concerned about shortfalls in force structure and readiness and the trend lines that we can see.

Over the past year we have heard from the Chief of Naval Operations that we are returning to an era of great power competition in which our maritime superiority will be contested by other countries.

We have heard about ship deployments growing from 5½ to as many as 10 months in length.

We have heard about carrier gaps in Asia and the Middle East. We have heard that shortfalls in the number of amphibious ships are driving the Marines to consider deploying aboard foreign ships.

And we have heard that only one in four of our strike fighters is fully mission capable and ready for combat.

And finally, we have received data showing that next year around the world we will only be able to fulfill 56 percent of our commanders' requests for carriers, 54 percent of the requests for amphibious groups, 42 percent of the requests for submarines, and 39 percent of the requests for cruisers and destroyers.

The conclusion that I think we should all be drawing from what we hear is that we are not currently providing our Navy with the resources it needs to do what we ask, at least not without burning out our ships and our planes and our sailors and undermining our long-term readiness.

As members of these subcommittees know, the Navy will always answer the Nation's call. It always has.

If we require it, the Navy can and will run its ships and sailors ragged and send them into battle without all the weapons and training and maintenance they should have.

But we do not want to do that. We want to take care of our men and women in uniform and maintain peace through strength with a Navy that is robust and ready to deter potential aggressors. We never ever want a fair fight.

In our witnesses' prepared statement, it says that we are recovering from our lowest readiness point in many years. As a Congress, we have the responsibility to provide and maintain a Navy, but I believe that the resources we have been allocating to that critical function of government have been woefully inadequate.

Today I hope to hear from both senior Navy leaders and our operators and warfighters what that means for our Navy and for our national security so that our perspectives and insights can guide our decisions in days and years ahead.

With that, I now turn things over to the gentleman from Virginia, the chairman of the Readiness Subcommittee, my good friend, Chairman Wittman, for any opening remarks that he might have.

Rob.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Forbes can be found in the Appendix on page 43.]

STATEMENT OF HON. ROBERT J. WITTMAN, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM VIRGINIA, CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS

Mr. WITTMAN. Well thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate your leadership. Chairman Thornberry, thank you. Ranking Member Courtney and Ranking Member Bordallo, we deeply appreciate all the efforts here.

Gentlemen, thank you. Thanks so much for your leadership and your distinguished service to our Nation and all of the things that you do to make sure that our Navy and our Marine Corps have the things that they need when asked to go into harm's way.

Every service branch we know today is suffering from readiness deficits and we know that those shortfalls in training and equipment have serious consequences for our warfighters.

This hearing will give us the opportunity to hear from the men and women on the ground, in the air, and on the water who deal with the devastating effects of our readiness shortfalls on a daily basis.

If Congress is to address the obstacles that successive cuts in defense spending have posed, we need a clear, unadulterated view of the challenges our forces are facing.

The testimony that you will provide today will give us an invaluable view in that regard.

We are looking into the challenges ahead and these are the ones we see as our fleets dwindle and as our sailors and their families suffer under the strain of less training and longer deployments.

In March, Vice Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Michelle Howard testified before the Readiness Subcommittee that the Navy is still paying down the readiness debt we accrued over the last decade. And to the Senate Armed Services Committee, she said that sequestration is the greatest threat to our future readiness. It has a ripple effect for us throughout the years.

Today our subcommittees would like to hear from you, our Nation's operational leaders, about maintenance, status of our equipment, the operational availability of our ships, aircraft and weapons systems and, perhaps the most importantly, the obstacles you face as you train our sailors to meet the challenges ahead.

Gentlemen I thank you for your service. As a reminder of what we all are faced with, tomorrow at the United States Naval Academy, we will commission over 1,000 new naval officers, both as ensigns in the Navy and as second lieutenants in the Marine Corps. All of us have an obligation, not only for those officers but those that enlist in the Navy and Marine Corps to make sure that we never forget what it takes to provide for them the proper training, the proper equipment that they need to, as Chairman Forbes said, to have overwhelming superiority so they can fight to victory and come home safe.

That is our unending obligation both here as elected leaders and for you as our military leaders. We all take that challenge seriously and I know, I know and am confident that we will face that challenge. Gentlemen, thank you so much for joining us, and Mr. Chairman, with that I yield back.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Wittman can be found in the Appendix on page 45.]

Mr. FORBES. Thank you, Congressman Whitman. Now it is my privilege to recognize my partner on the Seapower and Projection Forces Subcommittee the ranking member, Mr. Joe Courtney.

STATEMENT OF HON. JOE COURTNEY, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM CONNECTICUT, RANKING MEMBER, SUBCOMMITTEE ON SEAPOWER AND PROJECTION FORCES

Mr. COURTNEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Mr. Wittman, for holding today's hearing on Navy force structure and readiness and for both of your leadership in terms of what has been a very strong

bipartisan effort both in Seapower and Readiness that became part of the House defense authorization bill.

I have a written statement which I am going to enter for the record because we want to hear from the witnesses this morning. In quick summary—this year we have heard a refrain from combatant commanders, whether in the Pacific, whether it is Admiral Harris, General Breedlove, in the North Atlantic—again, really stressing the need for more Navy assets to be deployed. Admiral Harris with no prompting said he needs more ships and submarines, period. General Breedlove said it best, "We are playing zone defense in terms of what is happening with a resurgent Russian navy."

This year we came out with a very strong mark in terms of shipbuilding. Ten ships as the chairman noted, the largest boost since the Reagan era in terms of investment in shipbuilding, but as all the witnesses know, that is the long game. You don't build a sub overnight or a carrier overnight or a destroyer. And in the meantime we have got to focus on what is really the focus of today's hearing, which is that we have got to have the operational availability and that means looking at something that sometimes doesn't get quite the banner headlines in the way that maybe shipbuilding does. And that is obviously, making sure that the readiness investments and systems are in place so that when Admiral Harris or General Breedlove is putting out a demand signal that the country can respond to it.

Again, there is no better testimony than the folks that are here at the table this morning. Admiral Davidson it is good to see you again after our visit last year, earlier. Captain Stearns, thank you again for the CODEL [congressional delegation] that we organized. And again, Congress has some skin in this game as well. CRs [continuing resolutions] do not make this problem any easier and I hope we are going to hear from the witnesses about ways that we can help from the legislative branch in terms of making sure there is that horizon, so that, again, these critical needs are gonna be satisfied.

Again, I want to thank both chairmen for organizing this important hearing today. Ask that my written statement be entered for the record and I yield back.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Courtney can be found in the Appendix on page 46.]

Mr. FORBES. Without objection, all the written statements will be entered as part of the record, and with that we are privileged to recognize now the gentleman from California, Mr. Peters, who is standing in as the ranking member for the Readiness Subcommittee today. Scott, thank you.

STATEMENT OF HON. SCOTT H. PETERS, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM CALIFORNIA, SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS

Mr. PETERS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thank you, Chairman Wittman as well, and Mr. Courtney. I thank you all for making yourselves available again today.

In July, 2010 these two same subcommittees convened to discuss Navy readiness and 2 years have passed since the USS *Chosin,* which is now homeported in San Diego undergoing modernization,

and the *Stout* had been deemed unfit for combat operation because of the readiness condition.

In March 2009, the Readiness Subcommittee examined issues the Navy faced in sustaining its surface warships with their expected life and beyond. The Navy reported at that hearing that it had been taking material steps to address gaps in ship maintenance funding and to assess ship material conditions.

So today, over 6 years later, we are continuing to discuss not only the readiness concerns of the Navy's non-nuclear service ships, but also shortfalls in naval aviation, expeditionary forces, and other aspects of readiness. As members of the subcommittees heard on Monday in Norfolk, the Navy now faces readiness concerns with its submarine force as well. A lack of readiness resonates with our ability to keep Americans safe and confront new and dynamic threats across the globe. And as our Navy executes its pivot to the Pacific, while still carrying out operations against the Islamic State, there has never been a more crucial time to have a well-equipped, well-trained force.

These readiness issues of course as Mr. Courtney said did not arise overnight. What the Navy is experiencing now, and what the subcommittees are attempting to fix in the 2017 defense bill, are the consequences of years of high operational tempo experienced by a smaller fleet—again, happy anniversary. I think it is an appropriate time to recognize high operational tempo—and fewer aircraft with experienced sailors and civilian employees to sustain them.

The Navy is grappling with these past decisions that reduce waterfront maintenance organizations and shore infrastructure, process changes to force-wide ship maintenance practices and training processes, and the failed Optimum Manning Initiative in efforts to derive efficiencies instead of pursuing and insisting upon effectiveness.

So the Navy began responding to declining material readiness conditions by increasing manning, improving training, providing enduring technical oversight of maintenance, and reestablishing clear lines of authority and accountability, but the efforts were rendered less effective as Mr. Courtney suggested by the sequestration in 2013.

So when coupled with reductions in skilled personnel at aviation depots and fleet shipyards, severe challenges in obtaining spare parts for legacy systems, late receipt of funds due to the failure of Congress to reach a budget agreement, and high operational tempo required by the complex security environment, to put it lightly, it is not surprising we are dealing with what some call a readiness crisis.

In an era of new and dynamic threats it is our responsibility to navigate these challenges and provide for a 21st century force that has the tools and capabilities to respond to security threats anywhere, anytime, and I welcome the opportunity today to hear from our witnesses about some of the challenges you are facing. And I encourage my colleagues to seriously consider the long-term financial commitments that accompany the readiness solutions that we are proposing in the fiscal year 2017 authorization bill, which will soon go to conference with the Senate.

Thank you again for being here gentlemen, and thank you Mr. Chairman.

Mr. FORBES. Thank you Congressman Peters and Admiral Davidson, you have got a lot on your shoulders. The whole Fleet Forces Command, a lot of men and women that are depending upon you, including the entire country. We appreciate so much all that you do and we appreciate being here today and we would love to turn the floor over to you now for any comments that you can offer to the committee.

STATEMENT OF ADM PHILLIP S. DAVIDSON, USN, COMMANDER, U.S. FLEET FORCES COMMAND; CAPT RANDY STEARNS, USN, COMMODORE, STRIKE FIGHTER WING, ATLANTIC; CAPT SCOTT ROBERTSON, USN, COMMANDER, USS NORMANDY (CG–60); CAPT GREG McRAE, USN, DEPUTY COMMANDER, SUBMARINE SQUADRON 6; AND CAPT PAUL ODENTHAL, USN, COMMODORE, NAVAL CONSTRUCTION GROUP 2

Admiral DAVIDSON. Thank you Chairman Forbes. Chairman Thornberry, Chairman Wittman, Ranking Member Courtney, Ranking Member Peters——

Mr. FORBES. Admiral, these mikes are a little funny. You might want to pull it up close so that everybody can hear.

Admiral DAVIDSON [continuing]. And distinguished members of the Seapower and Projection Forces and Readiness Subcommittees, good morning, and thank you for your active interest in fleet readiness. I appreciate your comments very, very much. It is my distinct pleasure to introduce these witnesses today, these exceptional captains you see before you here to testify about our Navy.

These are just a very few of the extraordinary men and women we call upon to lead our Navy at the tactical level, and I think you will be impressed. Most importantly, they are in the front lines of fleet readiness. As a fleet commander I am charged by the Chief of Naval Operations to make the fleet ready. That is to say, prepared. To do the mission the Congress has given us in law, "To be prepared for prompt and sustained combat incident to operations at sea."

In my book there can only be one standard for that. It has to be ready, prepared to fight and win. We know the American people expect nothing less, and frankly, we expect nothing less of ourselves. I won't belabor adversary and threat details as testified to you by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, the CNO [Chief of Naval Operations], and numerous other experts. They have made clear the evolving international security environment, the nations and actors who would challenge the world order—Russia, China, North Korea, Iran, and terror groups like ISIS [Islamic State of Iraq and Syria] and Al Qaeda. These countries and entities, in different forms, are developing and procuring advanced and/or asymmetric systems to hold allies and partners at risk, to deny us our sea control in the Navy, and to threaten our homeland and our interests.

In that light, the business of making the fleet ready to fight and win is much more difficult than the bumper sticker allows. Key to it is the prompt and sustained standard we receive from the law. To truly understand whether the fleet is ready, it must be understood that the Navy has to be able to do three things. First, we

have to be able to rotate the fleet out on routine deployments around the globe. Second, we have to be able to surge the fleet in crisis. That means conflict, war. That means more ships, more squadrons, more submarines, and more groups forward in times of significant contingency or war, and then we have to be able to fix it and reset it after that. That means re-equip it and get it ready for the next possible contingency and at the same time continue to rotate it out on routine deployments.

And third, we have to be able to maintain and modernize the fleet to ensure it is functional, viable, indeed credible, meaning ready to fight and win, until its expected end of service life. Sometimes that is decades in the future.

These three components of our readiness are all intertwined, and yet all in tension with one another. If we keep too many of our capabilities forward on routine deployments, we may not have the numbers we need to surge in crisis or the time to maintain and modernize these capabilities necessary for future success and future generations of sailors.

Conversely, if too many of our ships and aircraft are in maintenance and modernization then the combatant commanders do not have the credible combat power needed to deter and dissuade potential adversaries and competitors to assure our allies and partners or to protect our maritime security and the homeland.

Too much of one thing typically results in too little of another. Nevertheless, we must do those three things to meet the prompt and sustained standard established by title 10. That said, if there are not enough resources to do all three at once, we will typically favor our readiness for deployment over the two priorities. I owe that to our sailors today, and I am doing precisely that this year, 2016.

Let me give you an example.

Earlier this week many of you visited the aircraft carrier USS *Dwight D. Eisenhower.* It is 39 years old. In just a few days it will be on its way for its fifth routine deployment in the last 7½ years. In just a few weeks, they will be flying strikes in combat against ISIS.

It is the fleet's job to ensure those sailors in *Ike* and her escorts go on deployment with everything they might possibly need: food, fuel, repair parts, ordnance, the aircraft, the medical support, and, most importantly, the training to succeed in their mission and return home safely, and that is the mandatory metric, to succeed on the mission.

Our first priority is to make sure our deployed and deploying forces like *Ike* are fully ready, that they have everything they need to execute combat operations and succeed. We do a good job at this, but it is not without cost.

For example, if I have to ensure that 10 like strike fighters are in a single squadron on that aircraft carrier and they need the same capability, I will tax units that are back here at home—those designed to be later in for surge or those in maintenance and modernization of aircraft to make sure that we have the requisite aircraft forward. If I need 10 forward, I do routinely operate 4 aircraft in squadrons in the rear.

If a ship forward with *Ike* strike group, for example,—as would any of the forward-deployed ships either homeported, overseas or deployed from CONUS [continental United States], if they need a part that is not immediately available in their stores or not immediately available in their supply system, I will tax a ship back in CONUS for that part, either out of their stores or, if I have to, I will take it directly out of a combat system to deliver to that ship forward.

Ike strike group is ready to go, and I am committed to ensure that they are ready while they are forward. And all of it—the equipment, the ordnance, the sailors and their training to make them ready for deployment—that is investing in the "prompt" part of the mission that you have given us in law.

The "sustained" part—sustainment means building deep preparedness. Our ships, squadrons, and other tactical units must be ready to be surged in time of conflict as I said or maintaining and modernizing for the threats of the future and to deliver on the exceptional return of investment in your Navy.

Ideally, the fleet maintains reliability in its platforms and proficiency in its sailors by sustaining readiness in its forces fresh off deployment. Additionally, we would endeavor to build readiness for full-spectrum conflict, great power competitors, as the CNO cited earlier this year, by doing more intense training for longer throughout the life of any ship or squadron.

After all, these are the forces we would use to surge in conflict and war. Maintenance and modernization is just as important. *Ike* provides relevant combat power today 39 years after her commissioning because we invested in maintenance and upgrades throughout the years including refueling the reactors, modernizing the combat systems aboard, and putting new aircraft in its air wing.

My favorite metric: during *Ike*'s nuclear refueling overhaul more than a dozen years ago, we removed more than 5,000 tons of wire—5,000 tons of wire—and replaced it with fiber relevant to the capabilities needed in our combat systems for today and tomorrow. That investment in time and money is important.

For me, in 2016, the fleet is challenged to provide that kind of sustained mission. We are $848 million short between Admiral Swift and the Pacific Fleet and myself of the operations and maintenance requirements. That is just 2 percent of the readiness requirement across the whole of Navy readiness and the fleet will have to make—take action to meet our financial responsibilities.

The shortfall developed based on a handful of emerging challenges this calendar year—this fiscal year. Excuse me. First, we extended *Truman* strike group on deployment to support strike operations against ISIS. Second, we have observed increased costs with several aircraft: older F/A–18 A through D Hornets, both in the Navy and Marine Corps, and Marine Corps CH–53s and MV–22 Ospreys.

The cost to maintain these aircraft this year is higher than modeled and anticipated. These aircraft are simply older than we anticipated when we bought them. We have been using them longer. Also, we are working hard to improve the supply and availability of repair parts with Navy F/A–18E/F Super Hornets to improve their flight line readiness this year.

Third, ship maintenance growth and execution has exceeded the planned and budgeted costs over a year ago. As a result, the fleet will have to take some risk. That is to say, incur consequences, if they are not mitigated later, for the longer term. Across both the Atlantic and Pacific Fleets we will delay four surface ship availabilities and one submarine major maintenance availability from the fourth quarter of this fiscal year into next year.

We will also reduce three smaller, less intensive maintenance periods for two amphibious ready groups and one carrier strike group. That is an additional dozen ships. We will reduce the flying hours associated with one of our carrier air wings that is not expected to deploy in the next 2 years as well.

Delaying these maintenance periods and pressing them into the next fiscal year—fiscal year 2017—the budget currently under consideration is not optimal, but it affects the smaller number of ships. I will not embark on a path that partially accomplishes all availabilities across the entire fleet. That is a dangerous practice that rapidly builds maintenance and capability backlogs that are difficult to recover.

Indeed, we are digging out from that sort of policy more than a decade ago.

As you can see, readiness in the Navy is a very complex discussion. Some of the risks, the consequences, if not mitigated later, are borne out with reduced training and readiness levels for our surge forces. Some of our risk is carried in longer-term sustainment with maintenance delayed for our ships and our submarines.

Accepting these risks means accepting less readiness across the whole of the Navy, less capacity to surge in crisis and wartime, and perhaps living with the reduced readiness on our ships and submarines that would keep them from reaching the end of their service lives. In either case, recovering from these situations will cost us more in time and money in the future.

These are the fleet readiness challenges and our plans to execute today in fiscal year 2016. To provide the additional context from fleet operators, we have assembled before you a panel of our—four of our commanders: Captain Stearns, commanding officer of Strike Fighter Wing Atlantic. He leads all F/A–18 Hornet and Super Hornet training and readiness on the East Coast.

Captain McRae, he is the deputy commodore of Submarine Squadron 6. He oversees the training and preparation of seven attack submarines and their crews.

Captain Odenthal, commodore of Naval Construction Group 2. He heads up our Atlantic Seabees and underwater construction teams.

And Captain Robertson is the commanding officer of USS *Normandy,* fresh off an around-the-world deployment last year—the Navy's first with our Navy's integrated fire control-counter air capability—an extraordinary capability; and his ship is in maintenance today.

Like all of us, they are committed to ensuring the best possible readiness in the fleet for today and for our future. Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

[The joint prepared statement of Admiral Davidson, Captain Stearns, Captain Robertson, Captain McRae, and Captain Odenthal can be found in the Appendix on page 48.]

Mr. FORBES. Admiral Davidson, we thank you again for your service. Thank you for your opening remarks and now the subcommittee can address our questions to each of our four witnesses that are here. And Captain Stearns, I would like to start with you.

We all know that sometimes we talk in a lot of military-ese. We use terms and I remember one time coming home from dinner with the CNO my wife looked at me and she said, "Do you guys ever talk in English?"

Well, we want to try and talk a little bit in English today and one of the things that you are the commander of a strike fighter wing. A lot of power under your control and what you are doing but I want to—oftentimes we realize that when you go places you are trying to train and prepare in good times so that you are able to fight in bad times if they occur.

I am very concerned about the statistic that I am hearing that only one out of four of our aircraft are capable—fully mission capable and ready for combat. I know in the good times you can say we have got enough out there. You heard Admiral Davidson talk about surge.

A lot of people listening to this at home don't know what surge means but if you have to go into that fight, what does it mean to you when you only have one out of four of your backups ready for combat?

Captain STEARNS. One of—that number fully mission capable and just to define the term here as we use it in the Hornet community is—means that jet has everything it needs to go to war. So that one-in-four number that you put out now, that is our—that is our deployed forces like Admiral Davidson said as well. So that is the—that one in four is currently deployed right now. That other three in four are the aircraft that are back in the maintenance phase or going through another FRP [Fleet Response Plan].

So what that means is if you wanted to surge more than what we have, and we talked about our four air wings that are out right now including one on the West Coast and we have one in work-ups now and then one ready to go, which was the *Ike* down there and the *Truman*—those are fully manned. But if you wanted to pull back it would take me over 6 to 12 months to get another air wing back here of that three in four aircraft backup ready to go.

Mr. FORBES. So explain the impact of that and the risk that it has to you. If you are in a conflict—obviously if you are not in a conflict it is not going to matter that much—but if you are in a conflict based on our op plans, how important are those planes to you and how risky is it that you would have to wait 6 to 12 months to get them?

Captain STEARNS. It is—at the bottom of the—there is no chance of getting those ready. The metric I had when I was a department head, just to put it into context, was about a 90-day surge. We could have the parts and aircraft to get an air wing out and a squadron up if we actually resourced them out in 90 to 120 days. It is going to take three times as long to get that out now.

So it means that there is nothing to pull from in the back. We have already pulled everything forward. There is nothing left in the——

Mr. FORBES. So if you are in a fight, you do not have anything to pull from in the back right now and it would be 6 to 12 months before you would have it ready to——

Captain STEARNS. As of today, we don't have that surge capacity right now.

Mr. FORBES. The other thing that I would like to talk about and Admiral Davidson mentioned taxing planes back here, taxing ships and another word for that is I think you sometimes use the term cannibalization of our aircraft, which is basically taking parts off of one aircraft to be able to use to fix the other ones to fight.

Well we already have a situation where three out of four of our aircraft are not fully mission capable to back you up if you need it. Tell me about this term we use is "hangar queens" or cannibalization. Are you using a plane in the hangar now that you are taking parts off of to put on other parts to fly?

Captain STEARNS. That is a regular occurrence and cannibalization, or taking parts off that, is our last resort. We work through the supply system and, as you know, our A through Ds are stuck in the depot because of unforeseen utilization. Our Super Hornets—we have had parts problems over the past 3 years, starting in 2012 with sequestration and there were other—some other factors that played into that as well.

But we have never caught up and absolutely—so what that means to you is that that is the last resort. We are pulling that off an aircraft and I was the one talking about managing scarcity and that is exactly what I am talking about, managing scarcity.

I have to decide what squadron—I have three squadrons right now that I had to call and tell, "Hey, be ready; you are the donors for the *Truman* extension." That was not paid for. That was unforeseen. That is a tax back here on the system as well.

Mr. FORBES. So, Captain, let me be clear, three out of four of your strike fighters not capable of—fully mission capable right now, takes 6 to 12 months to get them there. But in addition to that, what you have to do is, as the last resort, go in planes that you have, take parts off of those planes instead of coming from the depots or where you would have parts, so that you can keep the planes flying that you need to keep flying. Fair?

Captain STEARNS. Fair. Fair assessment on that.

Mr. FORBES. And you are having to do that now?

Captain STEARNS. Yes, sir.

Mr. FORBES. Captain McRae, one of the things that we are very concerned about, Mr. Courtney and I, looking at the number of attack submarines we have. We know we are going down from 52 to 41 in 2029, and I am very concerned about some of the work that has to be done on some of our submarines.

You told us a story, I believe, about the USS *Albany* that was so—and we call them availabilities, but basically it was so—needed so much work on it, broke so much that it—the crew never actually got to deploy. They stayed in the shipyard basically the whole time. Is that a reference to that? Or am I incorrect on that?

Captain MCRAE. Yes, sir. So what I was speaking of specifically was the maintenance overruns that we are experiencing in our shipyards and those overruns and depot-level maintenance that cause us, when the ship does not return to the fleet on time as expected, that causes us to lose what we call operational days for that submarine and it is that loss of operational days that has the direct impact on our ability to execute our mission and provide the readiness that we are required to provide.

Mr. FORBES. So during that period of time, as I understand it, that submarine stayed in the shipyard its entire time for that crew. Is that fair?

Captain MCRAE. Yes, sir. So they entered the shipyard. They originally were scheduled to enter the shipyard, this is USS *Albany* we are talking about, in October of 2013. Back at that time we were going through sequestration and budgetary concerns and there was a lot of instability in our funding levels moving forward, so the decision was made to push the start of the overhaul off 3 months, and that we actually commenced that overhaul at Norfolk Naval Shipyard in January 2014.

Originally the overhaul was scheduled to be 28.5 months and that estimate is based on previous execution by that shipyard doing similar platforms, so it is an estimated calculation as far as how long it should take based on execution—recent execution. Prior to that, *Newport News* had come out in about 28 months, which is why that was selected.

Since entering the shipyard, due to resource challenges that the shipyard has experienced due to prioritization, due to the workforce challenges that I think you all have been briefed on, the schedule—and I am seeing this from the squadron perspective—the schedule continued to slide to the right, meaning they weren't meeting their key events.

And so about every 3 months or so we would get a new schedule that essentially continued to push timelines to the right throughout the last 2½ years. So today, we are looking at a 43-month overhaul for a maintenance period that was supposed to last 28 months and the impact of that is significant in a lot of different ways, certainly the operational days that are lost. Those are days that we will never recover because the hull life on that submarine is finite and so we will never be able to recapture those days.

But it also has an impact on the other submarines that we have and the other crews that we have and the mission that we have to meet every day to be able to provide that resource to the Nation. So that is what we are talking about in terms of the overruns——

Mr. FORBES. And Captain, what was the impact of that on the commanding officer of the *Albany*?

Captain MCRAE. So one of the stories that I had relayed was—and I just talked to Wade just a couple days ago, actually. So one of the tertiary effects of overruns like this that people don't often talk about are the impact to crew and their families.

So we are responsible for maintaining crew readiness in terms of professional development, experience at sea, developing them as operators, as warfighters, as leaders, and we put a lot of focus, obviously, and emphasis on that. For a submariner to really get

trained and certified and qualified and be war-ready, he needs to be at sea and he needs to be operating at sea.

Many—because of the delays on *Albany,* many of the sailors that have been reported—have reported in for their first sea tour on the *Albany* will start and end their sea tour in the shipyard. And what I had relayed was that sailors don't join the submarine force to sit on a barge in a shipyard. They really want to be on a submarine at sea. And I have seen that throughout the last 24 years.

And so—so the impact specifically for the commanding officer because he was in a similar situation. He began his tour thinking that he was going to carry the ship through the shipyard period, come out on the back end, execute all the required certifications, inspections, prove that his team was—was warfighting ready, execute sea trials, and then restore that submarine to full operational capability and he was excited to do that.

But because of the delays now, he will actually be relieved and have his change of command with the ship still in the shipyard. Because of that, as a part of that, he has decided to submit his resignation and retire from the Navy rather than continue service.

Mr. FORBES. So we lost the commanding officer of that submarine because basically the most water he saw was probably at the water fountains around where the ship was being fixed and—if it has an impact on him, would it be fair to conclude it is having an impact on the crew as well?

Captain MCRAE. It absolutely is. And that was one of the things in talking to some of the officers and men that I confirmed, was that there are other effects. So for example, the executive officer that carried them through much of the shipyard period did not select for—for command at sea.

The engineer that they previously had, he was by all measure a great performer but in—at the shipyard doesn't really have that capacity to demonstrate his warfighting expertise. It is a challenging environment to rank against your peers and we are a very competitive force, also did not select for executive officer.

So I am not saying that that is the only reason they didn't select, but I can certainly tell you that inhibiting their ability to execute their warfighting mission at sea and become fully proficient and qualified, certified, and run those crews and do those missions certainly inhibits their professional development and their advancement in the service.

Mr. FORBES. Captain Robertson, I want to ask you a personal question and we get to do that here, you know, fortunately. If Admiral Davidson asked you to do something, I know based on your professionalism, you are going to salute and say, yes, sir, and you are going to go do it.

If you have to go do it, my suspicion is Kelly is going to be a supportive wife and say, you know, go do it and I am going to keep the home fires burning. You have missed a lot of anniversaries. We talked about some of them today.

Even aside from you, tell me the impact on the men and women who serve under you when we stretch these deployments from 5 months, as they were about 8 years ago, to 7, 8, 9, 10 months where some of them are going.

What is the real life impact to them, and just as Captain McRae talked about people at some point in time saying I have got enough, whether it is the officer of the submarine or whether it is the crew.

What is the real life impact to those men and women, both that serve under you, but you have served with throughout these years when they are asked to give up another anniversary, another baseball game, another birthday?

Captain ROBERTSON. Sure. Happy to answer that question. It is kind of complex strictly because, you know, when you talk about a junior sailor experiencing a deployment for the very first time, there is no expectation of what it——

Mr. FORBES. And include in that the impact to their family, too.

Captain ROBERTSON. Absolutely. Absolutely. There is no doubt and actually Kelly and I were just talking about this very fact yesterday how we have seen as our deployments have gotten longer where they originally were 6 months and now just finishing a 9½-month on deployment.

We felt very fortunate we were mature enough to be able to absorb that and—but our junior sailors certainly, you know, wind up taking the brunt of that. It is a lot of missed birthdays and anniversaries and sporting events and recitals.

So there is no doubt that there certainly is a personal, a real personal challenge with these long deployments and it certainly stresses the families. But I have to also add, though, that our sailors, when they know in advance what their deployment length is going to be, they can prepare for it and my—my crew knew in advance we were doing a long deployment. So we were really able to condition the families, make sure the infrastructure was there for them to best prepare them as much as we could for this extra long deployment.

So—and as such, I was rewarded with good morale on my ship and a pretty good morale back home. But you can't overstate, you know, you can't make—forget the humanistic impact of everything that they do miss.

Mr. FORBES. We were told when we actually had lunch on Monday with some of the individuals there that, you know, their families actually get ribbons that they start putting up and cutting as they are looking 60 days out and 30 days out and then when all of a sudden those deployments are changed, that it has an enormous impact on the children and the families. Is that your experience or——

Captain ROBERTSON. Absolutely. I do have—I do have experience with a short notice extension on deployment and when I was a commander in command we were scheduled for a 6½ month deployment. And just prior to us departing, out-chopping or leaving the theater of operation to return home, we were extended for another 4 weeks.

So—and that was a challenge from a morale perspective. Certainly it was easier for me to build morale on the ship, hey, our Navy needs us, our country needs us on mission. I certainly know that it was much bigger impact back home. Return parties, vacations planned, reunions, so that was—so a change in schedule is really hard on our families.

Mr. FORBES. Chairman Wittman.

Mr. WITTMAN. Thank you, Chairman Forbes. I want to drill down a little bit more on Chairman Forbes' question, Captain Stearns, about aircraft.

We talked about the availability of those aircraft, but what I want to look is how we generate that availability and obviously there at Oceana you deal not only with the aircraft availability, but also with depots and we have gone from a backlog in the depots of about 11 aircraft now up to 200 aircraft. So that pipeline is a significant issue.

Throughput hasn't changed. I know that we have made a lot of plans to try to manage that, but if that capacity and throughput hasn't changed, that still creates a situation that we are dealing with that we have E–2Ds that don't have spare parts, so we are going through all of those machinations trying to figure out a way through this, you know, great recovery plans in place.

But I think as you pointed out, you know, time is the limiting factor there. But time is not only a limiting factor, but—but the throughput, the capacity there in our depots. How do we—well first of all, how does that backlog in aircraft affect operational readiness? And you pointed to that a little bit. But I want to know how—how does it affect things in the long term and what do we have to do to be able to shorten that time period?

You pointed out to it—to now it being three times as long as it would otherwise have been. How does it affect things today? Let's say a scenario where we have to push the button and it is more than just those forces forward deployed and—and I want to understand a little bit more about that—you alluded to earlier—but then what do we need to do to make sure that we are able to generate the throughput to as quickly as we can recover this lost readiness in these—availability of these aircraft?

Captain STEARNS. And—thanks for the question. So there are two reasons why the depots are—are backlogged now and that is wartime utilization and also the fact of the delay in our JSF [Joint Strike Fighter] that we had planned on having here as well.

So that forced us into an extension of our A through Ds. So to put it into perspective, Navy has 35 F–18 squadrons, east, west coast, Japan. Five of those are of the older legacy aircraft, the A through Ds as well, and the other 30 are Super Hornets.

So they are in the—they are backlogged. It is—the depots were never set up to do what we call high flight hour which means essentially we are extending them past the 6-hour—8,000-hour to 10,000-hour life that they were ever expected to fly, just to meet the operational demand.

So now they are forced into a 3-year lead time just to make the parts for these kits to get in there and it is all a capacity problem. The jets coming out the back side are a great product that our civilian workforce puts out. They can only do so much because they were never set up to do that.

So that is the risk for that and right now I have four of my legacy—four of my five legacy squadrons in a FRP right now—in a cycle to be deployed or not and I have to make some of those older aircraft that are—probably don't have enough hours on. We are not going to use them for deployment anymore into that squadron so

they don't have the capability as they go through there. Our goal is to get them prior to advanced phase Air Wing Fallon.

But that leads into the Super Hornet problem that we have transitioned about 10 squadrons of Super Hornets unexpectedly into our—to get out of legacy and also to meet the gap for the JSF—just to meet operational demand. So now we are taxing hours and utilization on our attrition aircraft. Those were meant for our attrition aircraft and Super Hornet. Now we are utilizing that.

So when those start going into the depot in a year and a half for normal maintenance—6,000-hour maintenance, we got to get that legacy out of the depot right now. So it is a capacity problem that is right back there so we will have even less available surge force.

It translates to less available surge force to send out the door and I am not so much worried about the A through D right now. We have got that. It is the Super Hornet coming that as Admiral Manazir testified I think in March we are chewing up about 40 hours—or 40 aircraft worth of hours a month and if we are not either buying that much or putting that much through the depot, we are falling behind.

Mr. WITTMAN. How does that affect the Fleet Replacement Squadron where you go to get aircraft and the flying hours that have to be accrued there to make sure our pilots have the sea time so that when they do their pre-deployment work-ups and they get to the point to go on deployment, that they have the full complement of flight hours to make sure? Because as you know experience there—if you are missing it on the front end you never can make it up on the back end. So kind of give me your perspective on that.

Captain STEARNS. Exactly right. So our Fleet Replacement Squadron almost has the same priority as our deployed squadrons because if we lose a day of training we are never going to get that back so that is kind of what we call our seed corn—our investment in the naval aviation of the future. So we—if that stops, the train wreck happens behind it because the fleet doesn't have pilots to get out there.

So between the east and west coast we are behind on pilot production and WSO [weapons systems officer] production to the fleet. So some of the fleet squadrons in the maintenance phase are short because we got to get those guys out the door.

So it absolutely pays the price but those squadrons are also the ones that will rob from the maintenance phase to make sure that they have what they need to keep the training going. But that is a very important part of the entire readiness train is producing new folks.

Mr. WITTMAN. Very good. Thanks, Captain Stearns. Captain Robertson, I want to go back to you. I noticed in your bio that you had—you had served earlier in your career as a young lieutenant also on the USS *Normandy*. So I wanted to get your perspective.

I think you are in a unique position to give your viewpoint on where you saw that cruiser early on—early in your career but also younger in the life of the USS *Normandy*—and operational availability, readiness elements, at that point as of today. Give us your perspective—kind of give us a historical perspective about what

you saw then, what you saw today, and the differences, good or bad, in what we need to look at going into the future.

Captain ROBERTSON. Absolutely. Thank you for the question. It is really a night-and-day story. Returning to *Normandy* as a fully modernized cruiser including the Navy integrated fire control capability—just from a kinetic reach capability, it is really a night-and-day story.

The current modernized cruiser comes with not only impressive kinetic surface-to-air capability but also a huge increase in undersea warfare for hunting or searching for submarines or certainly for self-defense in a close-in fight with a gun weapons system.

There is also a big difference I noticed in the hull strengthening that comes with modernization of these cruisers. When I was previously on *Normandy* out for storm evasion, we wound up actually with a number of superstructure cracks just to due to known flexing points in the superstructure. I just finished an around-the-world cruise with some very significant seas and we didn't have any of those because of the modernization hull stiffening really reinforced those flex points.

So it really, truly is a night-and-day difference and just one of the point of this is, we have taken a 26-year-old ship, and through modernization, it is currently the most powerful ship that you have in our Navy right now so——

Mr. WITTMAN. Very good. Thank you, Captain Robertson and Kelly, thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. FORBES. As we warned you at the beginning, the bells are tolling and they are tolling for us to go vote. We—I do not want to interrupt Mr. Courtney's questioning, so rather than have him start, if it is okay, Joe, we will go ahead and take a break and we are going to go vote and then we will be back and we will begin with Mr. Courtney at that time.

Mr. COURTNEY. Okay.

[Recess.]

Mr. FORBES. When we left, we were getting ready to start with Congressman Courtney's questions. And so we will recognize Mr. Courtney now for any questions he may have.

Mr. COURTNEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And again, just to go back over a couple of items that came up in the first round.

Captain McRae, I wanted to just kind of drill down a little bit deeper on your point about the *Albany* delay and, you know, what that means in terms of the submarine fleet long term.

Again, we spend a lot of time in the committee looking at the tile charts in terms of the size of the fleet throughout the 20s and 30s, and obviously we are going to have this bathtub that we are doing our best to try and mitigate with some of the shipbuilding, you know, provisions in the defense bill this year.

But your point was is that, you know, having an extra 15 months in availability, it is not like, you know, having your car in the garage for 15 months with a, you know, tarp over it. But, you know, the year doesn't matter so much in that context, you know, because it is the mileage that—you are saving on the mileage.

But with a submarine, you don't really save on the mileage because of just the hull life, as you mentioned. I was wondering if you could just sort of explain that a little bit more. So again, the record is clear about the fact that this is just pure wasted time.

Captain MCRAE. Yes, sir. So, as you said, you know, the hull lives of our submarines are carefully managed by the Submarine Force and the Naval Sea Systems Command. And we have varying intervals—op cycle, operational cycle intervals, and operating intervals that we manage to ensure that those lives—that they make it effectively to the end of life that is designed. And as we have with some of our submarines, that we are even capable of potentially extending those lives, depending on what we see in our certifications as they continue through their life cycle.

Maintenance periods, major maintenance periods we use to reset those op intervals and op cycles. And again, it is just something—those come with—whether it be maintenance that is done on the submarines themselves, or if it is just inspections and certifications that occur to certify that the material is holding up as expected, we don't find anything surprising such as cracks or improper welds or those types of things, and that the submarine is—is doing the things we need it to do and meeting its end of life.

So we will reset those periodically. The major depot avails are obviously part of the lifecycle maintenance. And those come at specific times in order to reset those—those intervals. It is all very finely tuned, kind of like gears in the turbine, if you will.

So, as the submarine maintenance period is delayed and that cycle gets off, we start impacting not only the life cycle for that particular submarine, but we also impact the life cycle of the other submarines around it. So for example, USS *Boise* is scheduled, because of her operating cycle and operating interval, to enter the shipyard this past October—because of delays to the *Albany*—she is lined up to go into the Norfolk Naval Shipyard.

Because of delays on *Albany,* we have been extending *Boise*'s operational time in 3-month increments, just as we have been doing with *Albany* and trying to get her out of the shipyard and back to the fleet. As we do that, we run up against these op cycle and op interval limits to the point where now we are no longer capable of operating *Boise* at sea after this summer.

So any delays after that in her start date will be days that *Boise* will sit tied up to the pier, not in depot maintenance availability as she should be, but frankly just waiting on the depot maintenance to begin. And so, it is almost double the lost days if you think of it in that perspective.

We do everything we can locally to maximize the use of that time. We have been tasked to judiciously use all resources provided to us. And we take that charge very seriously.

And so, for example, when *Albany* was delayed, we pulled in maintenance that we could get done outside of the overhaul package into that period before she went into overhaul so that that would just help with executing the timeline of the depot maintenance and hopefully get her out on time. We will do the same thing with *Boise* while she sits tied to the pier, waiting on the overhaul to start.

But clearly, it is a significant impact and it is not as simple as saying, you know, well, I have lost one submarine day because one submarine is extended in the dry dock and in the shipyard. It is actually much more than that.

Mr. COURTNEY. Right. Thank you.

And so, again, it is just—that 15-month delay is just, again, it is just lost time for, you know, a vessel that cost roughly about $800 million or $900 million to build back in the day, and they are now about $2 billion a pop these days. I mean, this is—I mean, this is a really big cost to the country and to the taxpayer.

Captain MCRAE. Yes, sir. And the other thing that I would mention is the operational aspect of that. Clearly, it affects the operations of the *Albany* and the people, as we talked about before. But again, now, the duties and requirements leveraged on the submarine force for operational time, which is everything from forward deployments to local operations, to sub-on-sub certifications and training that we do to hone our warfighting skills.

All of those things now have to be levied on the other submarines that are available. So it crunches their schedules such that then they lose out on what we call commanding officer's discretionary time, the amount of time a commanding officer has to take his ship and his crew to sea and improve them and train them and get them up to the standards that he needs them to be.

You know, we constantly execute, assess and improve. And the assessment part is important. But the improvement part, the time to go to sea and fix your ship, if you will, raise the standards on board, that is even more important. And when we crunch the schedules, many times that is what we see being compressed is that commanding officer's discretionary time.

So we as a force do everything we can to defend it. But I will tell you, we are not 100 percent successful and we many times can't achieve the levels of commanding officer's discretionary time that we would prefer.

Mr. COURTNEY. Great. Thank you, Captain. And I was going to ask Captain Odenthal some questions, but I think my friend to the left here is going to take over that. So thank you again for being here today. I know your testimony is important to us.

And with that, I will yield back.

Mr. FORBES. Thank you, Mr. Courtney.

And now we recognize Congressman Peters for any questions he may have.

Mr. PETERS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And Mr. Courtney, they don't always say I am to your left.

[Laughter.]

That is hard to do

I want to, I did have a quick question for Captain Odenthal about the MILCON [military construction] budget. In your written testimony, there were some—some issues that you made about the decreases, and maybe you could tell us where you are feeling those decreases the most. And in particular, preparing for new ships like the LCS [littoral combat ship]—maybe you can give us a little thumbnail about how MILCON decreases are affecting you.

Captain ODENTHAL. Thank you for your question.

I am really here representing the Naval Construction Force, and I don't have—can't really speak to the overall MILCON budget of the Navy and how that is affecting the LCS platform.

Mr. PETERS. Well, maybe then within your purview, you could tell us kind of how the MILCON——

Mr. FORBES. Would the gentleman yield?

Mr. PETERS. Yes, sure.

Mr. FORBES. Maybe what we could do is have that submitted for the record, so you could get that answer, if that is okay——

Mr. PETERS. Sure. Okay. All right.

Mr. FORBES. We will do that and see if you can get us an answer back on that for the record. Thanks.

[The information referred to can be found in the Appendix on page 63.]

Mr. PETERS. Right. And then I guess I would also reference the Career Intermission Program [CIP], the innovative program for retention. And maybe Captains Robertson and McRae might talk a little bit about what you are hearing. Maybe you touched on this before with the OPTEMPO [operations tempo] and all that, but what are some of the issues that you are having, what do you hear from your crew about the reason that they—maybe the number one reason that they don't serve longer?

Captain ROBERTSON. Well, thank you for your question.

Speaking just from within my own lifelines, within the ship, you know, we are really starting to groom a very competitive force with the sailors that we do have. And so, we—we weigh performance very heavily. And so there is really an onus on the sailors and a desire to really perform. Because if you don't perform, you are not even going to have the option to actually be able to stay in.

We are looking for sailors that perform at a high level. That really goes to making sure we have a very talented and very capable force.

So, the sailors that do want to get out, you know, I have actually done a number of these over the last couple of months, interviewing them. And none of them are getting out due to dissatisfaction with what they do. They love being in the Navy, but they have other aspirations outside the Navy, or for possible family reasons that they want to get out.

But out of all the interviews, again, within my lifelines, I have done onboard my ship, no one is getting out because they are unhappy with what they do.

Captain MCRAE. Yes, sir.

From my perspective on the submarine force, I would say first and foremost, this is a difficult business that we do. We ask a lot of our sailors and of our officers and we ask a lot of our families.

But everyone, most everyone, that I encounter understands that when they sign up. They recognize the challenge. Frankly, for many of them that is why they choose the service, so they can come in and essentially test themselves and provide everything they can in support of the Nation, to really see how they fall out when ranked against some very competitive people.

So many of us are attracted to that challenge. But over the years it does take a toll as you know. And it does start to have an impact on both the individual and the family. In terms of biggest impact,

though, I would tell you, at the deck-plate level, my perspective is uncertainty and instability, whether it be in operational schedules, whether it be in budgets and continuing resolutions, whether it be in shifts in locations of depot availabilities, homeport changes, last-minute modifications, and frankly our permanent change of station orders process, where we used to be able to get sailors' orders a minimum of 6 months prior to their transfer, and now we are routinely seeing that inside 3 months that they have for themselves and their families to prepare to move, many times cross-country—that has a significant impact and causes significant strain for the family and the sailor.

In some cases it seems as if we write that off as a cost of doing business based on the current fiscal uncertainty and instability but I would argue that that shouldn't be placed on the backs of our sailors and their families. So it is the uncertainty and instability I think that really has the biggest detrimental impact.

Mr. PETERS. I think that is a consistent response we hear to the budget issues and the way we have handled the budget over the past few years, from across the spectrum of people dealing with the military and inside the military.

I guess maybe—Captain Odenthal—just ask you, invite you to give, sir, your take on your readiness challenges in your particular field and also maybe comment specifically on the overall Seabee force. It has been cut by quite a bit. Maybe you can tell us what deployment locations are not being supported, the cuts, how they are affecting your ability to train effectively, retain critical skill sets.

Captain ODENTHAL. Thank you very much. You mentioned our reduction in the force. So we have gone over coming out of 15 years of war, we have reduced the size of the Seabee force from what was 21 Naval Mobile Construction Battalions, which is our main—our main unit of action is a Naval Mobile Construction Battalion, an NMCB. We had 21; we have reduced over the last 5 years down to 11.

Of that, nine were Active Duty battalions. We are down to 6 on the Active side, and we went from 12 down to 5 on the Reserve side as well. So that is close to a 50 percent reduction of the force and what we have available in Seabee units. With that, today, the size of our force at 11 battalions is sized properly for our response to operational plans and we have that ability to support the plans required in major conflict.

We also, with those units, support the combatant commanders [COCOMs] with forward forces as well. We have gone down to—right now we have deployed 2 battalions of Active Duty Seabees that are always forward deployed out of the force of 6 battalions as well as about 200 Reserve Seabees that we have mobilized at this point now, and that we use for OCO [overseas contingency operation] missions as well in the Central Command and Africa Command area as well.

So with that we have gone from—our ability was we would maintain three Active Duty battalions forward deployed at any one time as well as, during the war effort, usually a full Reserve battalion forward for four; we are down to that 2.3 as we say now, 2.3 battalions we keep forward.

With that we still maintain those forces across the globe. We support those perhaps at the same sites that we did in the past but at reduced numbers, and when it comes to the requirements that we are asked for, for the COCOMs and the global force management, we are supporting about 80 percent of what is requested from the COCOMs—that additional piece goes back to the combatant commanders and they have the ability to look at other services as well for engineer resources.

I can't really speak to what the impact is of that unable to support the last 20 percent that the combatant commanders take.

Mr. ROGERS. Okay. Thank you, thank you all of you for being here.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. FORBES. Since I mentioned at the outset that we have been privileged to have the chairman of the full committee with us throughout this hearing, and I would like to now recognize Chairman Thornberry for any comments or questions he may have.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you Mr. Chairman, and first I want to thank both subcommittees, not only for today's hearing, but for taking the time and effort to go to Norfolk and ask questions, listen, and see for yourselves.

It is significant 10 members were concerned enough to go do that this week. Having visited some military installations myself, asking these questions, I believe there is no substitute for that, so thank you for doing that and then bringing the witnesses here. And thank you all for making the time and effort so some of the rest of us could hear.

I am struck by the secondary effects that you all have been describing. So you get a backlog of overhauling this ship, and then another ship runs out of time-life while you have got it tied up to the dock, and it is those secondary and tertiary effects that I think are not obvious unless you ask the questions, so that has been very helpful.

Captain Stearns, I want to ask a couple things, because a lot of what I have done has been talking to pilots and mechanics and so forth, a lot of whom deal with the F–18s. Admiral Davidson said *Eisenhower* is about ready and it is ready to go. At the same time, you made the point that for those carriers that are not just about to go, they are not getting the training that they need. I have talked to Marine pilots who are getting less than half the number of training hours they were supposed to get.

Some of us think about that like cramming for an exam. You can do it the night before. Sometimes you can get by, it is probably not the best way to study. But explain to us what that means for pilots. Can you catch up, in the last month or two before you deploy, for the training that you missed for the previous months? How does that work?

Captain STEARNS. Thanks for the question. How that works—the Navy as you know works under kind of a tiered training system. So we like to kind of feed the hours and then ramp them all the way up to deployment. The Marines are at what is called a T–2 level, at a constant level as well, so there are some differences. But I will speak to the Navy's point, is absolutely—sir, if you are not feeding the hours and letting them fly the hours in the mainte-

nance phase—I call it, is the difference between currency and proficiency.

Currency we talk about 11 hours a month baseline just to be safe to fly the aircraft. Proficiency means you are getting the 14 hours a month in maintenance phase and all the way up to deployed phase which folks are getting. But if they are sitting in a lengthy maintenance phase—sometimes 1, 2, 3 years waiting for the carrier to come out—and they are getting reduced hours, that net effect over time absolutely plays into their experience level.

Once they get into an increased OPTEMPO, for example the *Bush* coming out probably will be under a compressed cycle as well—it takes a little bit of learning curve and there is some risk involved in going from a slower OPTEMPO as it speeds up to a higher OPTEMPO as the pilots get put through the training regime.

The commanding officers, the carrier air group commanders, the CSG [carrier strike group] admirals—they, all that is mitigated in what we call ORM, operational risk management, and if the skippers are told that they absolutely are not ready to go with their pilots, in a crawl, walk or run is what you are talking about—if they are not able to crawl first, and then walk first, and then run—they are not going to just come out of the gates running, so we assess that risk all the time as well.

The CHAIRMAN. The other thing that has occurred to me as I ask these questions is I think of readiness too narrowly. I tend to think of it as operations and maintenance [O&M] accounts, you train, you repair the aircraft or the ships or whatever. But I have talked to mechanics who are working 7 days a week trying to keep old aircraft going, and I am convinced, and I am inviting your comment, see if you agree or disagree—that we can cut so many people in end strength or particularly in some specialties, that we can never get ready.

I watch the numbers as the average experience of mechanics in the Marine Corps has been going like this. Because they are leaving. And yet we are asking them to do more complicated things to keep 1980s aircraft with lots of hours flying on them. So I guess my point is end strength, or the number of people at least, plays a role in readiness as does modernization. Because in some ways the only way we are going to fix some of these helicopters and airplanes is get new ones. We can only use duct tape and baling wire so long. And so I would invite—as you have looked at these problems, do you agree with me, or do you have other comments, that readiness is not just about putting more money into O&M accounts, it is about this bigger picture?

Captain STEARNS. It is absolutely correct, and what concerns me is the maintenance phase units. We are down to people, the people here are experienced and they are doing it but we are at the point now where if I lose one experienced maintenance chief or one experienced first-class—they get sick or he has been down for some reason or leaving on deployment—I have no reach-back. So I have to reach back into not only parts and planes, I reach back into people. There is last-minute saves just to get the *Ike* out the door of people who are—whatever issue it is there is no depth with people.

The other part of that is maintenance phase—my squadrons, because the depots are backed up, or they send it out earlier than normal—these maintenance phase squadrons—it is all on the backs of the sailors to fix these jets that should already show up ready to go for them to train with.

So we are seeing that with the backs, and also, we talked about cannibalization, moving parts around. Sailors are getting really good at that now. But that is not their main job, to show up at that, so they are forced into cannibalization, doing parts, they are getting good at it and all but again that is more time spent like my compatriot said, grabbing that part from another aircraft, bringing it across that side of the base, instead of just doing the phase maintenance for itself.

So there is a backlog. And there is a cost for all that in maintenance phase if they spend a lot of time just building to get their three or four jets and they use them in that phase to train with. And I don't know if that answers your question——

The CHAIRMAN. So thank you and——

Captain MCRAE. Mr. Chairman, I know you directed that question to Captain Stearns but I——

The CHAIRMAN. No, I would appreciate because—it is just because I have spent a lot of time talking to pilots and aircraft but obviously with submarines and ships I would like to know.

Captain MCRAE. Yes, sir. I think your comments are spot on. I absolutely agree that readiness is much bigger than maintenance budgets and maintenance execution and modernization and those types of things.

Maintenance also—I am sorry, the readiness also depends on personnel obviously and you talked about end strength and for the submarine force in particular I would tell you that our overall submarine force health is good.

So our submarines are—manning our submarines is our priority and we man at about 100 to 103 percent fill, which means number of bodies on board. And we are at about 95, 96 percent fit which means that those bodies have the exact amount of training, the proper Navy enlisted classification codes to do the jobs that they are in, they're at the right rate rank, those kind of things.

So we—we are doing a pretty good at that but if you look at the submarine force billet structure over the last 15 years, what you will see is we have reduced our ultimate number of people in the submarine force by about 35 percent. Now we have done that with no change in our ability to deploy submarines and no change in the number of patrols—strategic deterrent patrols that we execute.

And so when I was at Naval Submarine Support Center in Kings Bay, I used to tell all the new incoming submariners that I would argue that each of them is more important today than any submariner ever has been to submarine readiness because if I lose one of those members, as Captain Stearns said, I have less and less of an ability to provide a ready spare if you will if something happens to that individual.

So in our effort to lean the force over the last 15 years, which we have done a very good job of that—much of that coming from shore and so we have leaned much of our shore staffs, which is not necessarily a bad thing. But in our effort to do that we have gotten

to the point where our bench depth—our ability to respond to what we call unplanned losses is severely limited.

An unplanned loss is when a sailor that reports on board a submarine for permanent duty has to leave that submarine before his planned rotation date due to any number of reasons. The primary drivers in the submarine force are medical reasons because of our stringent medical requirements; that is about 39 percent of our unplanned losses.

The second is mental health issues, ability to cope with the stressors that come with submarine life and duty in the submarine force.

And the third leading cause is disciplinary but that is only about 12 percent. So much smaller.

So those three are about 82 or so percent of our total unplanned losses. Unplanned losses in the entire submarine force number over 700 a year from our active, operational submarines. We lose about 700 people per year force-wide and so we recognized many years ago that is a lot of people.

And so we really started taking a vested interest in going after how can we improve that? Now, one of the things that we have done—I have heard Captain Odenthal talk about the mental health pilot program—embedded mental health. So Submarine Squadron 6 we have generated an embedded mental health program over the past 2 years.

The reason for that is because what we were seeing was many of our sailors that were having difficulties adjusting to submarine life whether it be them, their families, or anything else, would often not talk to anybody about their issues until they became so significant that it was too late to really help them. And at that point they had to become a loss to the force.

We have a stress continuum. It goes from green to yellow to orange to red and many of those sailors were presenting, and for much of my career, sailors would present to the medical community after they were in the orange or red sector. So it was really too late. At that point you are in casualty control.

By embedding the mental health pilot program at the waterfront, we have one mental health professional—a psychiatrist and we have two corpsmen—staff members with him. So it is a staff of three.

But by doing that what we have been able to do is develop that trust with the command leadership, with the sailors themselves and with that office to understand the complexities associated with submarine life and to have those folks present what their issues much, much earlier. When they are trending toward yellow, possibly trending toward orange, but plenty of time left to do something about it and continue to keep a sailor at sea on a submarine.

The program thus far, in 2½ years, has been highly successful and we have taken our unplanned losses in the squadron—this is due to psychological reasons only. We had 26 in fiscal year 2012. In fiscal year 2015, we had five, so we have reduced that number about 80 percent simply by having that embedded mental health pilot.

And so for us, as a force, that is something that we were pursuing establishing funding for in every submarine homeport again

to go after those unplanned losses that we can go after. But we are doing that and we are taking all this effort because we recognize we don't have the bench depth that we have had 10, 15 years ago to respond. And in fact, as Captain Stearns said, we are in fact cannibalizing people just like we cannibalize parts to get the mission done.

Captain ROBERTSON. And if I may again just give you a single unit perspective from my ship right now. So we have already talked about the cannibalization. Just to give you numbers, currently *Normandy* is in a maintenance phase right now, but I have 13 parts that have been cannibalized from my ship to support the current strike group getting ready for deployment.

And we don't cannibalize parts that aren't mission critical. These are all mission items that have very specific critical function on board these ships. So 13 of those parts have been taken from my ship over the last month and a half just to get the strike group ready to go. Just like Admiral Davidson says, we are going to do everything we can to make sure that strike group is going out.

But even if I wasn't in a maintenance phase, I could not possibly surge right now. I have had, for example, one of the parts I had to give up was a cable harness from my SPY [SPY–1] radar. Obviously a very critical function for an air defense ship, so without that capability right now, I am impacted significantly mission-wise.

Cannibalizing people—even though my manning is—I have good fit and fill numbers on board my ship currently, I am still having to support the deployers right now. I have four sailors that are currently identified to go out with this deploying strike group right now to fit—or to fill some of those gaps right now.

So we are cannibalizing parts and people so therefore our surge capability is certainly impacted. Last thing just real briefly as you had highlighted what truly is readiness and you are suggesting there is another perspective to it. There is certainly a readiness from a readiness to take on that high-end fight that we referenced. That training, that very specific training that we need, to make sure that we have the confidence and thus readiness to engage in that high-end fight is—it needs to be developed further.

Mr. FORBES. You have all been very patient with us and we have to impose on your patience just a little bit longer. We have just a few more questions. Let me just be clear about one thing. Your duty is to defend our country, but our duty—the duty of the members sitting on this subcommittee and this full committee—is to defend you.

The least we should be doing is getting you the resources that you need. The least we may be able to do is to describe to the American people what you need, and that, you have helped us with tremendously here today.

And I want to try to just bring a little more clarification to that, and Captain McRae, you talked a little bit earlier today about the importance of a captain being able to take his ship out and then to do the improvements, I think were your words that you had—raising the standards.

Would it be fair to call that the "edge"? As he takes it from what you would say were the minimum things that you would check off to go and in that period of time that he is taking that ship out, that

is where he really develops that "edge" that he would have if we were in a fight?

Captain MCRAE. Yes, sir, in my personal opinion I believe that you would call that the "edge.' We have—so to be clear, we train every day in the submarine force and we are very serious about our training. And we have the perspective that our submarines have to be capable at all times, whether in a deployed status, a non-deployed status, in a maintenance availability—it does not matter.

We are ready to execute, if called upon, given the amount of resources and the time to get ourselves there. But our commanding officers are tasked with making sure their ships are fully ready to provide the readiness required of them no matter what part of the cycle that they are in.

So we maintain that constant focus on readiness and an example of that is when I was on the USS *Pittsburgh* back in 2002, 2003—I am sorry—2001. I apologize. After the attack of—on 9/11 we were—we had just started maintenance avail [availability], and without any direction or guidance, we immediately—another department head and I who I was also department head at the time—began putting that ship back together and getting ready to go to sea.

Because we didn't know what was coming, but we wanted to be ready for it. And I use that as my personal example, that example applies to all of our submarines and all of our submarine leadership. So we do pay attention to that every day.

However, as you said, many times certifications and inspections provide the command a list and a host of corrective actions—things that they can do better, things that they can go and work on, things that they can improve on, and that time alone at sea—to be able to operate and really stress the ship is really working on how are they going to go after those identified deficiencies.

How are they going to solve those problems that have been identified, whether internally, by their own assessment programs, or externally, by other riders that may have more experience and have seen better things and be able to point them in the right direction to steer their training and their performance.

But when does all that really get put together so that it is usable and so that it makes an impact on the ship's performance—it is during those times when they are alone at sea. And I have seen that several times during my tour at Squadron 6, where a submarine comes through the deployment preparation program, they continue to have many things that they need to go work on, and then if we give them some time at sea and guess what? They do a great job and they work on those things, and then when they go overseas and they get ridden by forward deployed commanders, all we hear are what a great job they are doing and how fantastic the crews are performing. So we have seen that time and time again with our deploying submarines.

Mr. FORBES. Well, I had one of—captains of one of our subs who described it exactly like you did. He said that period of time is their—when they develop their "edge" and he said, obviously they can sail the sub out, they can do the things they need to do, but if they had to get in a high-end fight with a peer competitor, that is when they desperately need that "edge."

And what he worried about was whether or not he was losing that time to create the edge. So I worry that some of our readiness may be losing that edge that we may need in a high-end fight and then the second thing I hear you telling me is just what Captain Stearns is saying. We worry about our bench too that you have to reach back to get.

And then the other thing I would ask you about is this. You look at this every day. You see the needs and what our subs can do. We now worry because we are only able to meet 39 percent of our combatant commanders' needs for attack subs around the globe. What does that mean in terms of the 61 percent we are not meeting?

And I know you can't talk about all of that, but what you can talk about here, what is the risk that puts on the table?

Captain MCRAE. Yes, sir.

So, clearly I am not a geographic combatant commander, but from my perspective, again, we deploy our submarines to be plug-and-play. They can operate in any environment, they can accomplish all submarine force missions and all capabilities and provide those to the combatant commander when tasked, and they can do it on very short notice.

And we have seen that happen since my time at the squadron repeatedly, where submarines will start with one mission and skill set in mind, and will be shifted—which is one of the reasons that we do robust training. It covers all possible missions, not just those we expect them to be tasked with.

So, as you reduce the number of submarines available for the combatant commanders, as you said, and again, I am kind of speaking out of turn here because I am speaking for their perspective, but there are clearly things that are occurring in the world that we would not have coverage on. It can be a myriad of things. It can be the continued Chinese you know, build-up, and the continued deployment of their submarines further and further with farther and farther reaches to different parts of the world.

It can be intelligence, reconnaissance, and surveillance missions to gain valuable intelligence to provide the Congress and the Nation, so that we can make decisions about the right courses of action moving forward. It can be interdiction operations, it can be monitoring operations. There are lots of things.

And it could be just having the right number of missiles, if you will, shooters available for a particular mission area, a particular time in our Nation's life. And so—so there are a number of unfunded requirements, if you will, that there is just no one there to cover.

And at that point, you get down to prioritizing based on the most critical of what we assume are the most critical, recognizing that there will be a gap there on what we are able to maintain coverage on and awareness of—which would then make our efforts, well a little more inefficient.

Mr. FORBES. Captain Stearns, you, I think, would agree that the ability of your pilots to fly gives them that "edge." And when they don't have that flying time, we lose that "edge." You talked about the lack of a bench as well, I think, that you might have.

One of the things that has concerned me is the Navy has proposed to limit the Carrier Air Wing One for up to 4 months without any flying time at all. What would that mean?

Captain STEARNS. That means you save maybe a quarter, $9 to $13 million for an air wing to fund that a quarter. So, by bringing down an air wing, we know after 3 months the cold—we call it cold iron. You shut it down, and it means that the maintenance troops aren't training on those jets, it means the pilots are losing 3 to 4 months of flight hours that, normally, we worry if those pilots are going to make the next deployment that feeds into that.

But also, those pilots, they are going to train are future pilots that are building those hours. So, now I have got a gap there as a guy shows up to an instructor role who maybe doesn't have as many hours.

Mr. FORBES. So you are not only losing your "edge," but you are kind of losing your ability to backfill, by additional——

Captain STEARNS. Never going to get those hours, never get it done.

Mr. FORBES. Never get it back.

Captain STEARNS. And then, so on the back side of that, losing an air wing for 4 months not flying, which we did back in 2009, 2010, it is going to take me three times the amount and three times the cost to get them back up to speed.

Mr. FORBES. What do your pilots think of that?

Captain STEARNS. There are some rumblings of that coming down, and that will just drive morale straight down into the—down to the bottom, down there.

Mr. FORBES. Captain Odenthal, we all know, but can you tell people who are listening to this perhaps at home what the Seabees do? And I think you did say that you were down to half that force.

Tell us how this is impacting the deployments for our sailors that have experienced them, what that tempo has been like over the last few years for them.

Captain ODENTHAL. Yes, sir. Thank you for that question.

So, the Seabees, simply to put our mission, we are a construction unit military. "We build, we fight," is our logo, and that is what we do. We are able to do high-end construction in any environment out there, defend it ourselves, and take care of ourselves.

I would like to think of our mission, really is about these gentlemen to my right. My job is to build, maintain, repair, and defend as necessary those forward operating bases in a time of conflict, that allows, again, these gentlemen to my right, the Marine Corps, Navy Special Warfare, to operate forward, stay—keep their presence forward, and be able to replenish, rearm, and refuel close to the fight and get back into the fight.

That is the heart of what we do as Seabees.

As far as the OPSTEMPO with the reduction there, we look at the—certainly with the reduction in the number of units, we are very quickly into the Reserve when we talk about response to a conflict. Where I, again, bench depth is something that reflects well with me there.

We much quicker get to requiring those Reserve units to operate forward and come to a fight, if we need them, as well. And there are concerns with the timeline we have for getting those units pre-

pared, when we mobilize them as well, and our ability to move more of that training to their pre-mobilization timeframe to get them forward.

So, certainly on a Reserve side, we worry about the training hours, the contact time we have with them, both on a funding level, but also from the fact that we realize when we—the more time I have with the Reserve that requires training takes away from that civilian employer piece, and it stresses out that individual as well.

On the Active side and both the Reserve, our OPSTEMPO, coming off of a time of war, if you talk to an average E–6, a first class petty officer in one of my commands, most likely has done five or six combat or high-stress deployments to a austere environment, along with others.

So, as we go forward, we certainly—we spoke about embedded mental health. We work resiliency issues quite hard, have invested in those things to help our sailors, our Seabees, be full-up round and be prepared for those next deployments.

Mr. FORBES. Yes, thank you. And the last question I have for each of you is this.

Last night, I was talking to a former Secretary of the Navy. And he told me that one of the things that he did when he would come on a ship or carriers, he would go get the chief, and he would say, "You carry me around and show me what is going on."

Because he said—two things. He said, "The chief is going to hear everything and probably see everything," you know, on that ship.

If I could ask you this, if I went to any of the chiefs, if I went to someone who you could say, yeah, this guy hears all the stories from the guys, and he sees what is happening—what would be the thing they would tell us about readiness concerns that they would be saying, I want to tell this committee this. Or what is the story they would tell us about the impact this readiness is having on one of the men or women serving under them?

Captain ROBERTSON. Thank you for the question. I have a high degree of confidence that any of the chiefs in my mess would—would say that their biggest concern right now is our ability to be able to get out of my current maintenance phase on time.

The—the cascading impact of—and just for reference, *Normandy* is just at the end of our second month of a 7-month maintenance period right now. Their concern, as is mine, is that if we are extended in any way, due to possible lack of resources, or unable to get any new or growth work completed on time has a cascading impact that winds up compressing—which I am sure everyone is aware of and has heard of the compression of training cycles and what that cascading impact is.

A late delivery from my maintenance period winds up with taking away—and all those training requirements I still need to do to get to my intermediate and advanced level training still need to occur, but they get compressed.

And so, Congressman Thornberry had mentioned it—it is just like cramming for a test. And the chiefs were very much an integral part of this; if we take away their ability to influence and help train, and make sure maintenance is getting done on these ships, because we have compressed it all because of a late delivery of a

ship from its maintenance period, that is a significant problem to our readiness.

Mr. FORBES. Captain McRae.

Captain MCRAE. Yes, sir, Chairman. So, from a submarine perspective, I would tell you the chiefs in the Submarine Squadron 6 on our units have all suffered the impact of these depot maintenance delays that we talked about.

And they can all tell you the story of the *Albany,* they can tell you the impacts that are occurring on *Boise,* because they see and they feel that.

The next thing I think they see and feel quite a bit are spare parts availability. And we didn't talk about that a lot in terms of submarines, but that is something that we certainly wrestle with as well. Cannibalizations are relatively frequent in the submarine force. In the submarine force total, we do about 1.5 cannibalizations every single day to keep our submarines at sea.

Mr. FORBES. Explain what that means.

Captain MCRAE. So, basically, that is where we have a critical need, a part fails on a unit that is operational, either at sea already, or needs to get underway to accomplish a mission.

And we look in the supply system, and the supply system either says there are no parts available at all, or if there is one, it is not going to be able to be here for a few months or so, well outside the timeline required.

And so, in that case, then the only resort we are left to is to look for a boat that has a similar piece of equipment that is not as high on the priority scale for operations, and we pull that piece from that boat and install it on the boat that is about to conduct operations.

That results in a subsequent back-fit on the previous boat that had been—that had lost that capability, and it also decrements that boat's ability to go out and operate in that surge capacity that we talked about, and that surge tank, in responding to emergent threats as they come up or to tasking as it comes up, as the world situation changes.

And so, it does, you know, hurt our longer-term readiness from that perspective.

The other thing I would tell you is—is bench depth. I think they feel the impacts of the bench depth, and I think every submariner would tell you that certainly, when we lose someone, we are challenged. But quite frankly, many times, the manning and distribution system is even challenged to get the appropriate sailor, a chief petty officer for example, to relieve on board at the planned rotation date—which has been on the books for a couple of years, maybe 3 years.

But they can't—they don't have an available chief to go and relieve the chief that is onboard, and everybody understands if you don't have a relief, you don't leave.

So now, when I have been expecting to transfer in, let's say, March of 2016, my transfer is held up indefinitely until they can find a suitable replacement, get him onboard, and we can conduct turnover.

That is good for the command, but it is terrible for the family. And I think they would tell you, they could give you several exam-

ples of that occurring on their ships and with people that they know.

Mr. FORBES. Stearns.

Captain STEARNS. My VFA [strike fighter squadron] chiefs, Hornet chiefs, are going to have to tell you, where are my parts? They are going to walk right in there—when am I getting my—is my aircraft going to come out of the depot on time? Because they are not coming out on time, just due to the capacity. Not that the product coming out is poor, but it is just that they are overloaded with capacity.

They are going to ask about, when am I getting more chiefs, supervisory chiefs to help build these jets that I am now burdened with out here as well. And then also, when are you going to—comment of when are you going to quit taking jets from me, not only to feed the deployed forces, but we also feed our test and eval [evaluation] units, and our high-end fighting out in Air Wing Fallon.

So, we are—we are donating jets out to them as well to train for that high-end fight. Right now, those guys don't have jets, because everything gets pulled from them forward. So I have fleet jets right now supporting test and evaluation for future software changes upgrades, just to keep feeding that high-end fight. So they are going to ask for parts, people, when am I getting my jets out, and then quit taking my jets.

Mr. FORBES. Captain Odenthal.

Captain ODENTHAL. Yes, sir. So Seabee chiefs are normally shy. That would be a joke. But the—they would most likely, with my chiefs, our technical skills and proficiency is a concern as we come out of the war era. We have done a lot of contingency-type construction and we need to—we are working on a proficiency to make sure we have those high-end skills to do any construction.

And so our constant need for more time to train to those missions and prepare for that construction mission certainly is one of their highest concerns as well as the maintenance and upkeep of our equipment.

With the reduction in the size of the force, we actually are fairly well-equipped today with the equipment we have—reduced sizes. But we continue to use that in austere environments, keeping up with the maintenance of that equipment and thinking of the future 3 to 5 years down the road what the replacement is, is a concern we have across the force and being able to maintain the equipment ready to go to war.

Mr. FORBES. Mr. Wittman, any more questions?

Mr. WITTMAN. Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Captain Odenthal, I wanted to drill down a little bit. You had made some mention earlier and with the numbers within the Naval Construction Group 2 force, but overall, you spoke about 60 percent of your force now is in the Reserve element.

But within that 60 percent, 30 percent of those are the skilled tradesmen and now being part of the Reserve unit, they take the skills that they learn in C School and now they practice those for a couple of weeks out of the year.

And on a normal demand basis, that is probably okay. But let's say we get into a situation, let's say in PACOM [Pacific Command],

where we have to surge and we have to do a lot there in spinning up or to support whatever may be going on in that theater.

The question then becomes is—where does the surge capacity come in and where does the ability for us to be able to function with that large a level of Reserve Component keep us where we need to be as far as capability and not—not necessarily from the immediate readiness element, but the ability to surge in the event of a conflict in areas like that. I would like to get your perspective on that.

Captain ODENTHAL. Thank you for the question. So as you mentioned, our Reserve force now with Seabees, historically we think of most of our Reserve Seabees coming from the construction industry.

Today we find ourselves in today's environment that about 30 percent of our Reserve force are actually in the construction industry. The others are in other career fields. Which means, from my side is, I have—rather than counting, assuming that experience level that comes from the civilian trades, I have to teach those skills to my Seabees that come in.

We have developed what we call the Readiness Training Platform, where we have relocated those units to Gulfport, Mississippi, Port Hueneme, California, which is our two hubs for Seabees across the fleet. From—rather than having them go to their drill sites, local drill sites, for every drill period, they come to our sites where we have the equipment, the tools, the instructors to teach those skills and to work with them.

That has been successful, but it is somewhat limited again because of the time and the contact time we have as well.

What happens—and we talk about mobilization of those forces—anything that I can't do in that regular pre-mobilization training period falls into the post-mobilization period

So we add those classes, we factor in that timeline to prepare them to go, whether it's that conflict or others, to make sure that we have that. We will not field those Seabees, one, if they are not prepared for combat, and two, if they are not proficient in their mission to be able to perform that. We won't put them forward. But it does add—adds time to our post-mobilization training for those Reserves and able to get them out to the fleet as an effective member of the force.

Mr. WITTMAN. Let me ask a couple questions about the budget. In light of sequestration, the budget cuts there, I know the Navy has transitioned to having contract work for naval facilities. So the question then becomes, again, what happens in a surge scenario, what happens with being able to generate consistent readiness.

On top of that, too, now with OCO being a larger element of the budget and, again, trying to generate readiness within the OCO element, give me your perspective both previously and where we are with sequester and that has kind of—fanned out a little bit now, but it is coming back again.

But also in how you generate readiness in that realm of contracting out a fair amount of work and then how does OCO, in those dollars, affect you in your needs going forward with what you have to generate within that current budget realm?

Captain ODENTHAL. Right. Thank you. So across any COCOM, currently 22 percent of this year's budget is funded by OCO. We are heavily leveraged in OCO. Last year it was 47 percent. So moving in the right direction overall funding.

With the forces I have deployed today, those 200 reservists I have, are all funded by OCO and that is how we get them forward and use them to meet those demands from the COCOMs. The, as far as construction, we, and work that is contracted, the forward piece, we take on those missions, we have got our units fully employed forward as well. In homeport our normal, our first choice, for training for construction is to pick up projects from the Navy, smaller projects that our units can employ, whether it is on the base in Gulfport, across the Southeast/East region, or even up to Norfolk where I put troops to build extensions to the galley, and those sort of things.

So we try to leverage other people's money, other pieces of the budget to—one, to, one, to support the maintenance backlog across the Navy, but then also to get that training as best we can for our Seabees.

Mr. WITTMAN. Very good. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Mr. FORBES. Mr. Courtney now promised all of you at the beginning that at the end we would give you time if there is anything you need to clarify or anything you felt we needed to put on the record about our readiness now, this is the time to do that.

And—Captain Odenthal, why don't we start with you and work backwards because we have been doing it the opposite way and we just want to thank you all for being here and look forward to any wrap-up remarks you may have.

Captain ODENTHAL. Thank you, sir. It is an honor to be here and I have nothing further for the record.

Mr. FORBES. Thank you. Captain Stearns.

Captain STEARNS. Thanks for the opportunity to be here and talk about our readiness. The only thing I would have to finalize and add is after being a commanding officer and then the job I had after that was Aviation Training Readiness and now as the commodore job, we have gone kind of full spectrum of—cost-wise readiness, we were down to the bone of exactly what we needed.

And then what I have noticed after sequestration in the CR, after being in the man, train, and equip business basically for the past 5 years, is that we are kind of now just looking to get to the finish line with—especially with our A through D F–18s. They were never going to fly here, so it is not about—it is not about cost-wise readiness, it is about getting to the finish line and the gap in the capability here as well.

So it is just getting more expensive to maintain older airframes out there and then I would just say the platforms we have are extraordinary and what we have coming is extraordinary but we have, we are tasked now with maintaining that and extending that life in a—there is a cost to that that is just beyond cost-wise readiness.

But I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the forum.

Mr. FORBES. Thank you, Captain.

Captain Robertson.

Captain ROBERTSON. I also appreciate the opportunity. I shared a very short story with you with an exercise I executed right before I deployed last year in early 2015. I would like to put it on record here, the value it was to me as a commanding officer.

In this particular exercise, all of the cruiser-destroyer units assigned to the *Theodore Roosevelt* Strike Group participated in an integrative, live-fire exercise. Within this exercise, we had eight high-speed target vessels that were attempting to penetrate the battle space around our strike group.

We were able to employ layer defense using F–18s dropping live ordnance. And then, helicopters employing live ordnance. And then, finally getting into the—within the vital area and all the ships being able to employ their self-defense measures. Five-inch CIWS [close-in weapon system] and then also, small arms; was some of the best training that I had experienced.

And very realistic. And one of the things it gave me as a soon-to-deploy commander, absolute confidence that I was ready. That my team was ready. That my weapons systems were ready for that type of fight. We truly need to start to get to that level here when we are talking about anti-ship cruise missiles.

We need to make sure that we have the infrastructure that can flex strike groups to give them. And we need to have the targets, we need to have the ordnance. We need to have the facilities to be able to train to this and exercise this. So we can truly make sure that we have the confidence in our weapon systems to go out and perform at that high end that we need to. So I just want to share as far as our readiness piece, we have got to make sure that we are ready for that high-end, anti-ship cruise missile capability.

On the lethality, I know that my leadership team certainly has been working here within this body here to make sure that we are getting the right lethality out to the ships as fast as we can. The only other comment to that is ensuring that we have the sufficient volume of that lethality capability. No one is ever going to shoot just one at United States, at a strike group, okay. And if we are going to be ready for a high-end threat, we need to make sure we have sufficient bat to go out there with.

And then the last thing that I would like to just address real quickly is, is just the predictability and stability of resources. To really optimize this, the Fleet Response Plan, we need the predictability and stability of consistent resources that we can plan to and really get the gains that are designed within the Optimized Fleet Response Plan. Thank you for the opportunity.

Mr. FORBES. Captain McRae.

Captain MCRAE. Sir, thank you, sir. As my colleagues stated, I really appreciate the opportunity to be here and discuss our challenges that we face every day from our readiness perspective with you all. We appreciate your interest and your concerns.

From my perspective, the insufficient funding levels that we receive to meet all of our requirements, coupled with the budgetary uncertainty and instability that we have seen over the last several years, are having detrimental effects on our readiness.

And we have discussed a lot of the specifics today. There are many more out there that we haven't had an opportunity to discuss today. It is a very complex problem with a very complex impact

that permeates our forces. So, as I think Mr. Wittman captured earlier, it is a complex situation. And those secondary and tertiary effects and impacts are much more significant, I think, than many people realize.

So, the opportunity to shed light on those, I think, is important. And moving forward, we would just appreciate the continued support of not only the committee, but also the Congress in meeting our needs so that we can meet your requirements. Thank you, sir.

Mr. FORBES. We want to thank you for, again, your service to our country. Thank you for what you are getting ready to do and thank you for taking time to come up here and enlighten us.

Admiral Davidson, thank you for being here and for your service.

And if no one has any additional questions—Kelly, Zach, thank you for coming up and for being supportive of your families.

And with that we are done.

[Whereupon, at 12:28 p.m., the subcommittees were adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

MAY 26, 2016

PREPARED STATEMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

MAY 26, 2016

Opening Remarks of the Honorable J. Randy Forbes
for the
Seapower and Projection Forces and Readiness Subcommittee Hearing on
Navy Force Structure and Readiness: Perspectives from the Fleet

May 26, 2016

I want to welcome members of the Seapower and Projection Forces and Readiness subcommittees to our hearing today

This hearing follows a congressional delegation and listening session that members of our committee conducted on Monday aboard Naval Station Norfolk, the aircraft carrier Dwight D. Eisenhower, and destroyer USS McFaul.

While in Norfolk, we had a chance to meet with a number of Navy sailors including the witnesses that are testifying before us today:

Captain Scott F. Robertson, Commanding Officer, USS Normandy

Captain Randy Stearns, Commodore, Strike Fighter Wing Atlantic

Captain Gregory McRae, Deputy Commander, Submarine Squadron Six

Captain Paul Odenthal, Commander, Naval Construction Group Two

I am particularly delighted to have Admiral Davidson, Commander, U.S. Fleet Forces Command, who will be making an opening statement.

We also have a special guest with us here in the audience: Captain Robertson's wife, Kellie. Last year, Captain Robertson and his crew were underway for a whopping 313 days, including their wedding anniversary and likely many other important family events. Today, his duties once again called him away from home on his anniversary. At least on this anniversary, I want to thank her for her service, her support to her husband, and recognize all the sacrifices she and other Navy spouses and families make for our country.

I am grateful to everyone for being here, but I want to thank the captains in particular for first giving us their perspectives in Norfolk, and then coming up to Washington to share them with additional members. I think it is very important that we hear not just from senior Navy leaders, but from the operators and warfighters like yourselves who are dealing with readiness challenges first hand.

When we met with our witnesses down in Norfolk, one of them characterized his current role and responsibility as the commander of a Navy unit as "managing scarcity."

I think that term is a very good description of the challenges that our men and women in uniform and the civilians that support them are dealing with across the fleet, and in the Navy's sister services.

While I firmly believe that the United States Navy is still the world's best, I am concerned about shortfalls in force structure and readiness, and the trend lines that we see.

Over the past year we have heard from the Chief of Naval Operations that we are returning to an era of "great power competition" in which our maritime superiority will be contested by other countries.

We have heard about ship deployments growing from 5-and-a-half to as many as 10 months in length.

We have heard about carrier gaps in Asia and the Middle East.

We have heard that shortfalls in the number of amphibious ships are driving the Marines to consider deploying aboard foreign ships.

We have heard that only 1 in 4 of our strike fighters is "fully mission capable" and ready for combat.

And, finally, we have received data showing that, next year, around the world, we will only be able to fulfill:

56% of our commanders' requests for carriers,
54% of the requests for amphibious groups,
42% of the requests for submarines, and
39% of the requests for cruisers and destroyers.

The conclusion that I think we should all be drawing from what we hear is that we are not currently providing our Navy with the resources it needs to do what we ask—at least not without burning out our ships and our planes and our sailors and undermining our long-term readiness.

As members of these subcommittees know, the Navy will always answer the nation's call.

If we require it, the Navy can and will run its ships and sailors ragged, and send them into battle without all the weapons and training and maintenance they should have.

But we don't want to do that. We want to take care of our men and women in uniform, and maintain peace through strength with a Navy that is robust and ready to deter potential aggressors.

In our witnesses' prepared statement, it says that we are recovering from "our lowest readiness point in many years." As a Congress, we have the responsibility to "provide and maintain a Navy," but I believe that the resources we have been allocating to that critical function of government have been woefully inadequate.

Today, I hope to hear from both senior Navy leaders and our operators and warfighters what that means for our Navy and for our national security, so that their perspectives and insights can guide our decisions in the days and years ahead.

With that, I turn things over to the gentleman from Virginia and Chairman of the Readiness Subcommittee, Chairman Wittman for any opening remarks that he might have.

Statement of the Honorable Robert J. Wittman
Chairman, Readiness Subcommittee

"Navy Force Structure and Readiness: Perspectives from the Fleet"

May 26, 2016

Good morning, and welcome! Before we begin, I'd also like to thank Admiral Davidson and our distinguished panel of operational Navy leaders for their testimony today, as well as for your insights last Monday on the Ike.

Every service branch is suffering from readiness deficits, and we know that those shortfalls in training and equipment have serious consequences for our war fighters. This timely hearing will give us the opportunity to hear from the men and women on the ground, in the air, and on the water who deal with the devastating effects of our readiness shortfalls on a daily basis. If Congress is to address the obstacles that successive cuts in defense spending have posed, we need a clear, unadulterated view of the challenges our forces are facing. The testimony that these officers will give is absolutely invaluable in that regard. They are looking on as our fleet dwindles and as our sailors and their families suffer under the strain of less training and longer deployments.

In March, Vice Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Michelle Howard, testified before the Readiness Subcommittee, that the Navy is "still paying down the readiness debt we accrued over the last decade" and to the Senate Armed Services Committee that "Sequestration is the greatest threat to our future readiness, it has a ripple effect for us through the years." Today, our subcommittees would like to hear from you, our nation's operational leaders, about the maintenance status of your equipment, the operational availability of your ships, aircraft, and weapons systems, and perhaps most importantly, the obstacles you face as you train your sailors.

Once again, I want to thank our witnesses for participating in our hearing this morning. I look forward to discussing these important topics and gaining on understanding of what resources the Navy needs to improve its state of readiness.

Chairman Forbes, I yield back.

Ranking Member Joe Courtney's Opening Remarks for Seapower and Projection Forces Subcommittee Hearing on
Navy Force Structure and Readiness: Perspectives from the Fleet
May 26, 2016

Thank you Chairman Forbes and Chairman Wittman for holding today's hearing on Navy Force Structure and Readiness.

Admiral Davidson, it is a pleasure to see you again. You and your entire team did an incredible job hosting me and my staff in Norfolk earlier this year. It was a great chance to see firsthand many of the same issues we will talk about here today.

Most importantly, thank you the witnesses here to share their deck plate perspective on the challenges that our Navy faces in operations and readiness. I know we will benefit greatly to get the on the ground view of the challenges facing our Naval forces.

As recent events around the world clearly demonstrate, the presence and capabilities of our forces on, below and above the seas are in higher demand than at any other time in recent history. From the north Atlantic to the South China Sea, from the Mediterranean to the arctic, our naval forces are deployed globally every day in the defense of our nation's interests.

At the same time, these forces are under significant pressure in meeting growing operational needs and keeping pace with developments around the world in the face of limited resources. As our witnesses can surely attest, their operational tempo is high and trending higher for the foreseeable future.

Over the last few years we have made significant progress towards fulfilling the current force structure goal of 308 ships. Thanks to the efforts of this panel and the leadership of the Navy, we are on track to hit this mark within the next five years. Given the resources and effort that goes into building each new ship, this is not an insignificant milestone.

However, it is starting point, not a finish line. Even when we meet the 308 ship goal, key shortfalls will remain. For example, we will face shortages in small and large surface combatants, as well as attack submarines, over the next three decades. Additional shortfalls remain in fighter aircraft and other capabilities that will be key to combating the challenges of the future.

That is why I was pleased that the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral John Richardson, shared with our committee in March that Navy is undergoing a review of its force structure assessment. Given the changing dynamics around the world, the growing demand for our ships and the increasing strain on our naval fleet, I welcome this reassessment of our force structure requirements. It would not shock any of us on this panel if this assessment showed the need for more ships to keep up with the demand and mitigate shortfalls in key areas like undersea forces.

Identifying the problem and setting a goal, however, are just two pieces of the larger puzzle. Resources still need to be applied, ships and aircraft still need to be built, and those same ships and aircraft need to be maintained. A ship that cannot deploy

because it is in an unplanned extended maintenance availability does not help address the operational shortfalls we are struggling with today. An extended deployment due those shortfalls puts strain on a sailor and their family. And, most importantly, a force that falls short of the levels of both capacity and capability needed cannot fully support our nation's security interests or our objectives at home and around the world.

Many factors over many years have led us to where we are today. However, we must all recognize the role that Congress has played, in part, in creating the churn that we will hear about in this hearing. As the CNO told us in his March appearance before the committee, the Navy has started the last six years with a continuing resolution of some length, weathered a government shutdown and lingering uncertainty over the long term budget picture they have to plan under.

As Admiral Richardson told us in March, *"the fiscal uncertainty sends ripples through the entire system - the industrial base is hesitant to invest, and our people remain concerned about the next furlough or hiring freeze or overtime cap. This unpredictability adds to the burden on our Navy team and drives prices up."*

These are factors that Congress, on a bipartisan basis, can and must deal with if we are going to start reversing the troubling trends in Navy operations and readiness.

That is why hearings like this one is so important – we need to build a public record of what is happening today and what needs to happen in the budget debates to come. Chairman Forbes and I often share with witnesses that when they testify, they are not just talking to each of us here before you – you are helping to build a record that we can share with colleagues that are not on this panel. We hear and see these issues every day, but most of our colleagues do not – and when it comes time to make crucial decisions that impact the ability to properly resource the Navy, we need to show clearly the need that exists and the consequences of our decisions.

Thank you all again for being here. I yield back my time.

NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL
RELEASED BY THE HOUSE
ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

STATEMENT OF

ADMIRAL PHILIP S. DAVIDSON
COMMANDER, U.S. FLEET FORCES COMMAND

ON NAVY READINESS

SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF

CAPTAIN RANDY STEARNS
COMMODORE, STRIKE FIGHTER WING, ATLANTIC

AND

CAPTAIN SCOTT ROBERTSON
COMMANDER, USS NORMANDY (CG-60)

AND

CAPTAIN GREG MCRAE
DEPUTY COMMANDER, SUBMARINE SQUADRON 6

AND

CAPTAIN PAUL ODENTHAL
COMMODORE, NAVAL CONSTRUCTION GROUP 2

BEFORE THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEES ON
SEAPOWER AND PROJECTION FORCES
AND READINESS

MAY 26, 2016

NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL
RELEASED BY THE HOUSE
ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

Chairman Forbes, Chairman Wittman, Ranking Member Courtney, Ranking Member Bordallo, and distinguished members of the House Armed Services Subcommittees on Seapower and Projection and Readiness, and other distinguished members, we appreciate the opportunity to testify on the current state of Navy readiness and the challenges to that readiness in the Fleet of the Future.

Internationally, the 21st century has seen a proliferation of diverse threats to our national security. For the first time in twenty-five years, the Navy is facing a return to great power competition at sea. Russia and China have a growing arsenal of high-end warfighting capabilities, engage in coercion and competition and have global reach. Provocation from Iran and North Korea continue to create instability in the Middle East and the Western Pacific. Terrorist organizations such as ISIS remain a significant threat to U.S. interests, our allies and the homeland. Domestically, we are operating in a resource-constrained environment, under an uncertain and unpredictable budget process.

In these conditions, all of us share a duty to make our Fleet, and the Sailors who serve, ready to fight and win, both today and in the future. Powered by the exceptional Sailors and Civilian Professionals we are proud to represent here today, your Navy is the world's finest, and we are committed to retaining our margin of advantage over our adversaries, but that margin could be lost if we do not achieve stable budgets and make deliberate investments in future readiness. We will only maintain our status as the world's greatest Navy if we are vigilant around the globe and dedicated to restoring our future readiness and capability. Our testimony today will focus on the current readiness of your Fleet, as well as some of the key challenges we face in delivering future readiness.

Ready to Deploy Today

The demand for naval assets by Geographic Combatant Commanders (GCCs) remains high, and Navy continues to provide the maximum sustainable global presence it can generate to support a diverse array of GCC missions. Today, we have three aircraft carriers forward deployed – *Harry S Truman, John C Stennis,* and *Ronald Reagan* – with one, *Dwight D Eisenhower*, about to deploy. The *Stennis* Carrier Strike Group (CSG) will also support the Rim of the Pacific Exercise (RIMPAC) 2016 this summer. This is the first year since 2009 that Navy has been able to provide a CSG to U.S. Pacific Command while the forward-deployed CSG was

in maintenance. Over the past twelve months, three CSGs conducted strike missions against ISIS in support of Operation INHERENT RESOLVE. Four Amphibious Readiness Groups (ARGs) with embarked Marine Expeditionary Units (MEUs) supported a wide range of missions including maritime security operations, strike missions against ISIS, and maritime interdiction support off the coast of Yemen as part of Operation RESTORE HOPE. Closer to home, Fleet Ocean Tug *USNS Apache* embarked a deep-water search and salvage team and successfully located the U.S. flagged merchant vessel El Faro after her sinking off the coast of the Bahamas during Hurricane Joaquin. Across the globe, the Navy supported other critical GCC missions such as theater security cooperation, counter-piracy, counter-drug, ballistic missile defense, freedom of navigation, strategic deterrence patrols, and Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance missions. These missions not only demonstrate our responsiveness and warfighting prowess, but also maintain our Sailor proficiency, a key aspect of readiness bought only with time at sea.

The Optimized Fleet Response Plan (OFRP), in conjunction with ongoing Fleet material condition reset efforts, is designed to support Navy's overall readiness recovery goals and maximize the employability of our operational units for both presence and contingency response. To date, three CSGs and four ARGs have been inducted into OFRP. Very shortly, the *Eisenhower* CSG will be the first to deploy under the OFRP construct. Fleet implementation of OFRP for CSGs is scheduled to be complete in Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 with the deployment of the *Gerald R Ford* CSG. While it is difficult to pinpoint an exact readiness recovery timeframe for each of our force elements given the array of factors involved, we predict CSG readiness recovery will occur slightly outside of the Future Year Defense Program (FYDP). ARG recovery will remain constrained until we complete modernization of our large deck amphibious ships to include the capability to operate the F-35B. Key to our success is operating the battle force at a sustainable level over the long term. Readiness recovery requires a commitment to protect the time needed to properly maintain and modernize our capital-intensive force and to conduct full-spectrum training. Achieving full readiness also requires us to restore capacity and throughput at our public shipyards and aviation depots, primarily through hiring and workforce development. Successful efforts in meeting hiring goals have been largely achieved.

OFRP has to do three things for the Fleet to be ready to fight and win: (1) it has to ready Fleet units for routine deployments, (2) it has to surge much of the Fleet in times of war or

significant crisis and then reset it in stride after that crisis, (3) it has to maintain and modernize Fleet units so they are viable until the end of their planned service lives. And it has to do all three of these things within the resources that the nation provides. After more than a decade of high operational tempo, sequestration, and workforce challenges, we are aggressively addressing the resultant maintenance and modernization backlog through this evolutionary process.

Future Readiness Challenge – Ship and Aircraft Maintenance

As you have heard in recent testimony from the Vice Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Michelle Howard, the Navy maintenance budget requests are built upon independently certified models, reflecting engineered maintenance plans for each ship class and aviation type/model/series. Our shipyards and aviation depots have been challenged by emergent work beyond that expected, associated with a decade of high tempo operations and additional wear on assets. The workforce behind our public and private depots is no longer sufficient for these emergent projects and is still in the midst of rebuilding and training new workers.

Resetting our surface ships and aircraft carriers after more than a decade of war led to significant growth in public and private shipyard workload. The Navy baseline budget request funds 70% of the ship maintenance requirement across the force, addressing both depot and intermediate level maintenance for aircraft carriers, submarines and surface ships. Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) funding provides the remaining 30% of the baseline requirement and allows for the continued reduction of surface ship life-cycle maintenance backlogs. The FY 2017 budget relies slightly more on OCO than our traditional 80% base, 20% OCO allocation. For the second year, the additional OCO request to support Navy's maintenance reset ($625M) includes funding for aircraft carriers in addition to other surface Fleet assets, to address increased wear and tear outside of the propulsion plant. Since much of this reset work can only be accomplished in a drydock, the maintenance schedule needs to be closely managed, as reset is expected to continue across the FYDP.

To address the increased workload in our public shipyards and improve on-time delivery of ships and submarines back to the Fleet, the FY 2017 budget promotes growth in our shipyard workforce, sustaining 33,500 Full Time Equivalents (FTE) in FY 2017, with additional investments for workforce training and development. Additionally, two attack submarine (SSN) availabilities were moved to the private sector in FY 2017 to help level load shipyard workload.

The Fleet Readiness Centers (FRCs) and Navy's aviation depots have been challenged to recover full productivity after hiring freezes, furloughs, and overtime restrictions in FY 2013. Through a concerted hiring effort with the support of congressional budgetary increases, the recovery in maintenance capacity is in progress. However, the FRCs face a significant backlog of work, particularly for the service life extension of our legacy F/A-18 Hornets. FRCs hiring progress returned to pre-sequestration manning levels in FY 2015 and they continue to adjust hiring in order to ensure the workforce can meet the workload demand. In an effort to improve throughput, FRCs are increasing engineering support to address the work required to reach as high as 10,000 hours of service life, reallocating some of the existing workforce, and contracting additional private sector support. Navy has increased its number of field teams to improve flight line maintenance and ensure there is a clear understanding of the material condition of airframes heading to the depots. FRCs have also developed repair kits that ensure long-lead parts are readily available as repair parts are identified.

The Aviation Depot Maintenance program is funded to 76% in baseline and 85% with OCO for new work inducted in FY 2017. This funding level supports repairs for 583 airframes and 1,684 engines/engine modules. Ensuring the Aviation Maintenance Depots are adequately funded will support Navy and Marine Corps' ongoing effort to deliver sufficient aircraft inventory. Currently, over 50% of our F/A-18A-D aircraft inventory is out of reporting due to needed service life extensions to ensure adequate numbers of aircraft are available to meet operational requirements.

Today's Readiness Challenge – Operating and Maintenance Accounts

Following midyear analysis of overall Navy FY 2016 funding execution and requirements, the Navy identified unfunded readiness requirements totaling $848M, 2% of the enacted readiness accounts ($46B). Root causes for the shortfall include FY 2016 Bipartisan Budget Act fiscal pressure resulting in a $400M reduction in readiness buying power; unbudgeted cost growth in the resetting of ships following sustained wartime operational tempo and in funding cyber programs to address an evolving threat; and extending the deployment of the *Truman* CSG.

The Navy will closely manage the shortfall throughout the remaining four and a half months of FY 2016, be prepared to execute additional funds should they become available, and be prepared to remain within enacted funding levels as necessary by:

- Restricting flying hours associated with Carrier Air Wing 1 (up to four months no fly, deploys in 2019) and constraining other Flying Hour Program costs
- Deferring into FY 2017 five ship maintenance availabilities planned for the Fourth Quarter of FY 2016
- Deferring into FY 2017 continuous maintenance for the *Makin Island* ARG, the *America* ARG, and the *Vinson* CSG
- Deferring various other operating and maintenance contracts

The $848M shortfall will have no impact to our forces currently deployed, but deferring depot and continuous maintenance availabilities would likely delay a number of deployments. The overall mitigation actions reduce our ability to respond to crisis as recovery from our lowest readiness point in many years is slowed.

Future Readiness Challenge – Shore Infrastructure

The Navy's seventy installations worldwide provide the platform to train and prepare our Sailors, deploy our ships and aircraft, and support our military families. Nevertheless, fiscal constraints over the past several years have caused Navy to take deliberate risk in shore infrastructure in order to sustain Fleet readiness today.

As you have heard from other Navy leaders, the Navy's Military Construction program is resourced at the lowest level since 1999. It is prioritized to support Combatant Commander requirements, and it is shaped to enable new platforms/missions, upgrade utility infrastructure, and recapitalize our Naval Shipyards. Navy is still taking some risk in the sustainment, restoration, and modernization of our existing buildings, piers, runways, hangars, utilities systems, and support facilities. Our FY 2017 facilities sustainment account is resourced at 70% of the OSD facilities sustainment model, which falls short of DOD's goal of 90% for the sixth year in a row. Navy's FY 2017 request for restoration and modernization funding is roughly half of FY 2016 levels. This is only enough to address the most critical deficiencies for the naval shipyards, nuclear enterprise, piers and runways, and to renovate a small portion of inadequate barracks for our junior Sailors. We are mitigating the risk in our infrastructure sustainment by

prioritizing life/safety deficiencies and repairs for our mission-critical buildings and structures. At the same time, we are deferring less-critical repairs, and upgrades for the vast majority of our infrastructure, including utilities systems, waterfront structures, airfields, laboratories, administrative buildings academic institutions, warehouses, ordnance storage, roads, and other shore infrastructure. Long term underinvestment in these facilities will take an eventual toll on our ability to support deploying forces.

Despite these challenges, the Navy is committed to improving the condition of our Naval Shipyards, which are critical to maintaining the warfighting readiness of our force. The Department of the Navy will again exceed the mandated capital investment of 6% across our shipyards and depots described in 10 USC 2476 with an 8.1% total investment in FY 2017. We focus our shipyard investments to address the most critical safety and productivity deficiencies in Controlled Industrial Areas, which primarily include production shops, piers, wharfs, and dry docks.

Conclusion

We are still paying down the readiness debt we accrued over the last decade of combat operations, and those effects have been compounded by the cumulative effect of budget reductions and four consecutive years of continuing resolutions. The Navy continues readiness recovery through the implementation of OFRP, but continued shortfalls in ship and aircraft maintenance and shore facilities sustainment will eventually have effects on our long-term readiness, and failing to plan for these necessary investments will prevent our future recovery.

Admiral Philip S. Davidson
Commander, U.S. Fleet Forces Command

Adm. Phil Davidson is from St. Louis, Missouri. He is a 1982 graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy. He assumed command of U.S. Fleet Forces Command/Naval Forces U.S. Northern Command on December 19, 2014.

A surface warfare officer, he has deployed across the globe in frigates, destroyers, cruisers and aircraft carriers.

In his most recent assignment, he was the commander, U.S. 6th Fleet and the commander, Naval Striking and Support Forces NATO, while simultaneously serving as the deputy commander, U.S. Naval Forces Europe and U.S. Naval Forces Africa.

His previous command assignments include command of Carrier Strike Group 8/Eisenhower Carrier Strike Group, USS Gettysburg (CG 64) and USS Taylor (FFG 50).

Ashore, Davidson has served in fleet, interagency and joint tours as a flag officer; he was previously the director, Maritime Operations, U. S. Fleet Forces Command, the senior military advisor to the Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan (SRAP) at the State Department, and the deputy director for Strategy and Policy in the Joint Staff/J-5.

He served earlier in his career in policy, strategy and operations billets on multiple tours with the U.S. Pacific Fleet staff, the Navy staff and the Joint Staff, and as the Navy's military aide to the vice president of the United States.

Davidson is a distinguished graduate of the U.S. Naval War College. He has a Master of Arts in National Security and Strategic Studies, and a Bachelor of Science in Physics.

His decorations include the Distinguished Service Medal, the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal with Combat "V," a Superior Honor Award from the U.S. Department of State, and other personal, service, unit and campaign awards.

Captain Randy Stearns
Commodore, Strike Fighter Wing Atlantic

Captain Randy C. Stearns is a native of Mansfield, Massachusetts and a 1987 graduate of Mansfield High School. He received his commission through The George Washington University NROTC program in May 1991.

Captain Stearns was designated a Naval Flight Officer in March 1993 and received orders to the "Grim Reapers" of VF-101 at Naval Air Station Oceana for F-14 Tomcat training. His first fleet assignment was with the "Ghostriders" of VF-142 aboard the USS George Washington (CVN-73). There he deployed in support of operations DENY FLIGHT and SOUTHERN WATCH over Bosnia and Iraq from Apr-Nov 1994. In 1995, after the decommissioning of VF-142, he reported to the "Pukin' Dogs" of VF-143 aboard the USS George Washington (CVN-73) and deployed again in support of Operations DENY FLIGHT and SOUTHERN WATCH from Jan-July 1996.

In July 1997 he was selected to attend the Naval Fighter Weapons School (TOPGUN) in Fallon, Nevada. Upon graduation from "Topgun", Commander Stearns reported to the Strike Fighter Weapons School, Atlantic as a Strike Fighter Tactics Instructor (SFTI).

In March 2000 he reported to the "Jolly Rogers" of VF-103 as the Training Officer and deployed aboard the USS George Washington (CVN-73) in support of Operations JOINT GUARDIAN and SOUTHERN WATCH over Kosovo and Iraq. During this tour he was awarded the 2000 Navy/Marine Association Leadership Award for F-14 Community Lieutenant of the Year.

In Sept 2001, he reported to the Naval Personnel Command (NPC), in Millington, TN as the VF/VFA aviation detailer. In December 2002 Captain Stearns reported to the "Swordsmen" of VF-32 as a Department Head and served as both Operations Officer and Maintenance Officer. He deployed twice aboard the USS Harry S. Truman (CVN-75) in support of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM in 2003, and again in 2004-2005. During this tour he was awarded the 2004 AIRLANT NFO of the Year. In June 2005 he reported to NATO Headquarters, Supreme Allied Commander, Transformation (SACT) for his Joint Tour. In November 2008, Captain Stearns reported as Executive Officer to the "Red Rippers" of VFA-11 He assumed command in March 2010, and deployed aboard the USS Enterprise (CVN-65) in support of OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM in January 2011. In May 2011, he reported to Commander Naval Air Forces, Atlantic as the Airwing Training and Readiness (N40) Assistant Chief of Staff.

Captain Stearns has accumulated over 3800 flight hours and 850 arrested landings. His personal decorations include the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, 2 Meritorious Service Medals, 9 Air Medals (2 Individual with Combat "V"), 6 Navy Commendation Medals (2 individual with Combat "V"), 1 Navy Achievement Medal, and numerous campaign and unit awards.

Captain Scott F. Robertson
Commanding Officer, USS NORMANDY (CG 60)

Captain Robertson attended Boot Camp at Naval Training Station, San Diego, in 1986 as a non-designated Seaman. Shortly after graduation, he attended the Broadened Opportunity for Officer Selection and Training (BOOST) program, earning a four-year NROTC scholarship.

Captain Robertson attended Norwich University the Military College of Vermont and earned a Bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering in 1991.

Captain Robertson's sea tours include: USS GEORGE WASHINGTON (CVN 73) as the 1st Division Officer, USS NORMANDY (CG 60) as the Fire Control Officer, USS PORT ROYAL (CG 73) as the Weapons & Combat Systems Officer, USS JOHN C. STENNIS (CVN 74) as the Engineering Department Auxiliaries Officer, USS GETTYSBURG (CG 64) as the Executive Officer, and he commanded USS RODNEY M. DAVIS (FFG 60).

Robertson's ashore assignments include: Aegis Training and Readiness Center (ATRC) where he was Course Supervisor and lead instructor for the Force Air Defense Warfare Commanders Course, and on the Joint Staff in the J-8 Directorate as the Resources and Acquisition Manager.

Following his assignment at ATRC in 1999, Robertson spent two years away from naval service and worked as a defense weapon systems engineer before voluntarily returning to active duty following the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

Captain Robertson holds a Master of Science degree in Systems Engineering from George Mason University.

Captain Gregory E. McRae, United States Navy
Deputy Commander, Submarine Squadron SIX

Captain McRae is a native of Dalton, Georgia and a 1993 graduate of Georgia Tech where he earned a Bachelor's degree in Textile and Fiber Engineering. Later the same year, he was commissioned at the Officer Candidate School in Newport, Rhode Island through the Nuclear Propulsion Officer Candidate Program. He holds a Master of Aerospace and Mechanical Engineering (2000) from the Illinois Institute of Technology and a Master of Strategic Studies from the U.S. Army War College (2009).

A career submarine officer, his sea tours include serving as Executive Officer onboard both USS LOUISIANA (BLUE) and USS HENRY M. JACKSON (GOLD) in Bangor, Washington, earning the 2006 Omaha Trophy for Strategic Excellence and the 2007 Battle Efficiency 'E'. He served as Navigator/Operations Officer onboard USS PITTSBURGH in Groton, Connecticut from 2001 to 2004, earning the Navy Unit Commendation, Meritorious Unit Commendation, and the Squadron TWO Communications 'C' and Navigation 'N' for operational excellence. During this tour he participated in tomahawk strike operations in support of the opening days of Operation Iraqi Freedom while deployed to the U.S. Fifth Fleet AOR. His first sea tour was aboard USS TENNESSEE (BLUE) in Kings Bay, Georgia where he served as Assistant Engineer and Damage Control Assistant from 1995 to 1998, earning the Squadron TWENTY Engineering 'E' and Damage Control 'DC' for excellence.

Captain McRae has served ashore in command of the Naval Submarine Support Center in Kings Bay, Georgia; as Strategic Plans and Policy Officer on the staff of U.S. Strategic Command Task Force 144 and Commander, Submarine Force Atlantic in Norfolk, Virginia; Assistant Branch Head of Navy Personnel Command (PERS 403) in Millington, Tennessee; and Nuclear Power Officer at the Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps Unit, Chicago Consortium in Chicago, Illinois. He also completed an Individual Augmentee assignment to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba in 2005 where he assisted in the conduct of over 60 Military Tribunals and Administrative Review Boards for detainees captured during the Global War on Terror.

Captain McRae is currently serving as Deputy Commander of Submarine Squadron SIX in Norfolk, Virginia. His personal awards include the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Navy Meritorious Service Medal, Navy Commendation Medal (six awards), Joint Service Achievement Medal, and the Navy Achievement Medal (four awards), as well as many campaign and unit awards.

Captain Paul Odenthal
Civil Engineer Corps (CEC)
Commander, Naval Construction Group TWO, Gulfport

Captain Odenthal became the commodore of Naval Construction Group TWO in Gulfport, Miss., on July 30, 2015. He was the previous the 29th commanding officer of Naval Construction Battalion Center Gulfport.

Captain Odenthal is a native of Oregon. He holds a Bachelors and Masters of Science in Civil Engineering from Oregon State University, a Masters of Art in Military Operations from Air University and completed the Advanced Executive Program at the Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern University. He was commissioned an Ensign in the Civil Engineer Corps through the Navy ROTC program in 1989.

Early assignments include Assistant Resident Officer in Charge of Construction, Naval Weapons Center, China Lake, Calif.; Staff Civil Engineer, Combat Systems Technical Schools Command, Mare Island, Calif.; ALFA Company Commander and Training Department Head, Naval Mobile Construction Battalion FIVE, homeported in Port Hueneme, Calif.; Operations Officer, THIRTY-FIRST Naval Construction Regiment, Port Hueneme, Calif.; and Public Works Officer, Naval Air Station Whiting Field, Milton, Fla.

In 2002, he reported to the NATO Headquarters South Atlantic, Lisbon, Portugal, as the Infrastructure Branch Head. In 2004, this command transformed into Joint Headquarters LISBON and he became the first Chief Engineer. Returning from Europe in 2005, he transferred to Naval Facilities Engineering Command Atlantic in Norfolk, Va., for duty as the Director of Contingency Engineering. His activities during this tour included deploying in support of Hurricane Katrina relief. In 2007, he took command of Naval Mobile Construction Battalion ONE THIRTY-THREE, homeported in Gulfport, Miss., completing deployments to CENTCOM and PACOM. In 2009, he was assigned as the Assistant Chief of Staff for Logistics at the FIRST Naval Construction Division in Virginia Beach, Va. and then served as the Executive Officer of Naval Facilities Engineering Command Mid-Atlantic, Norfolk, Va. from June 2011 until his transfer to NCBC Gulfport.

He is a Seabee Combat Warfare Officer, a registered Professional Engineer in California, a Certified Energy Manager, and a member of the Defense Acquisition Corps. His military decorations include the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, five Navy Meritorious Service Medals, three Navy Commendation Medals, and the Navy Achievement Medal.

WITNESS RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ASKED DURING THE HEARING

MAY 26, 2016

RESPONSE TO QUESTION SUBMITTED BY MR. PETERS

Captain ODENTHAL. Navy's Military Construction budget request for 2017, which is at its lowest level since 1999, is prioritized to support Combatant Commander requirements, enable new platforms/missions, upgrade utility infrastructure, and recapitalize Naval Shipyards. While we are able to fund projects vital to the initial operating capability of the Littoral Combat Ship and other new platforms and systems, fiscal constraints compel us to defer much-needed repairs and upgrades for the vast majority of our infrastructure, including waterfront structures, airfields, laboratories, administrative buildings, academic institutions, warehouses, ordnance storage and utilities systems. Long term underinvestment in these facilities will take an eventual toll on our ability to support deploying forces. [See page 21.]