



**Opening Statement (As Prepared)**  
**Chairman Adam Smith**  
House Armed Services Committee Hearing:  
*"Fiscal Year 2023 Defense Budget Request from the  
Department of the Navy"*  
May 11, 2022

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Thank you to each of the witnesses for joining us today. I'd like to welcome the Honorable Carlos Del Toro, Secretary of the Navy; Admiral Michael Gilday, Chief of Naval Operations (CNO); and General David Berger, Commandant of the Marine Corps (CMC). I look forward to all three of your testimonies.

As I review the details of the Fiscal Year 2023 President's Budget Request, I see signs of encouragement as well as signs of concern. On the encouraging side, I was pleased to see an increased investment in readiness, whether that is fully funding ship depot availabilities or aviation depot maintenance. Too often are these accounts bill payers for other priorities, and the fleet's overall readiness suffers in the end. I was also pleased to see the under-sea capabilities of the Navy fully funded both on the new construction side as well as the repair side.

I fully support the Administration's decision not to fund the development of a nuclear variant of a sea-launched cruise missile. The United States has a robust and survivable nuclear deterrent, which relies heavily on the under-sea capability of the SSBN fleet and the Trident D5 missile. The Navy rightfully retired the Tomahawk land attack cruise missile nuclear variant earlier last decade, a move that was applauded by both sides of the aisle due to the intense strain that maintaining the nuclear mission put on the fast-attack submarine fleet. Over the past ten years, we've only asked those boats to do more, so I fear if we make the mistake of pursuing this weapon again, we will break the entire fleet from a readiness and sustainment perspective for minimal operational gain as these weapons would be redundant to the planned air-leg of the nuclear triad. As I understand it, Secretary Del Toro, there is also a rather sizable cost to the Navy associated with the development, fielding, and sustainment of this weapon, so I'd ask you to please articulate the impact that would have on your ability to field other necessary capabilities.

I am also pleased to see significant resourcing for the shipyard infrastructure optimization plan (SIOP). The four public shipyards in the United States are national treasures, but their infrastructure date back over a hundred of years in some cases. The Navy's organic industrial base facilities are part of a national insurance policy that guarantees we maintain the critical government competencies to sustain our weapon systems for current or surge operations. It is imperative that Navy and Department leadership continue to prioritize funding SIOP, as well as the Navy's aviation depot improvement plan and the Marine Corps' plan to modernize its production plants. The Navy must not only ensure sufficient funding for these "once-in-a-generation" modernization projects but must also shift its mindset and stop treating these facilities' sustainment accounts as billpayers. We must continuously resource our depot facilities at a high level to ensure our competitiveness and to attract top talent.

I also believe the reduction in end strength will challenge the Navy to fill current at sea billet gaps, especially in the forward deployed fleet. I am interested in and very concerned about the Navy's plan to keep the fleet fully manned and yet reduce your overall end strength this year.

On the Marine Corps side, I remain encouraged by what I have seen in the Commandant's Planning Guidance (CPG) and its subsequent implementation. Moving back to the Corps' roots as an expeditionary force closely tied with its Navy family is the right move. I applaud General Berger for being willing to take bold moves that have not always been popular. A lighter more operationally mobile expeditionary force aligns with the Navy's distributed lethality concept, and I believe they will complement each other well. I look forward to hearing about the next steps in further implementing the Commandant's guidance, to include the Marine Corps' plans for developing new logistics and sustainment concepts to support a more expeditionary force. Effective leadership requires clear and achievable vision, and I believe General Berger's vision for the Marine Corps is on the right track.

I have concerns about the Navy's plan for amphibious ships. Early retirement of LSDs, truncating the LPD buy 10-ships early, moving LHA-10 outside of the FYDP, and sliding the Light Amphibious Warship one year to the right – in the aggregate I don't see how this meets the Commandant's requirement for 31-L Class ships, and I don't see how this supports the Commandant's Force Design overall.

Additionally, while I generally support retiring legacy capabilities that provide minimal value to the high-end fight, we need to hear more about the Navy's plan to retire 16-ships before the end of their expected service life. This is the forum for the Navy to publicly make its case for why these retirements make sense, so I'd ask the Secretary and the CNO to clearly articulate the rationale for these decisions, the risk associated with divesting these capabilities, and the plan to harvest any savings into new capabilities.

Importantly, the *USS George Washington* has been in the news with a number of suicides. 200 members were taken off of the vessel, and there have been widespread complaints about the living conditions on board that ship – and not just on that ship, but more widely. We are concerned on this Committee about how our sailors – and service members in general – are being taken care of and how responsive, in this case, the Navy is to concerns when they are raised. We have lost lives and seen a major disruption for the sailors who are serving. It is about the people. The people are what make us the best military in the world. We must take care of our people. I definitely want to hear more about what the Navy is doing to correct that situation going forward.

Further, I continue to be concerned with the acquisition of the F-35 and, more specifically, the sustainment costs associated with operating and maintaining the primary fighter of the Navy and Marine Corps. It does not matter how advanced or capable a weapons system is if we can't afford to operate and maintain it. I believe it is imperative that the Department prioritize sustainment much earlier in the acquisition process so that we can avoid vendor lock and restricted access to data rights in the future.

I want to thank all of you for your service and I look forward to your testimony.  
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