

**CONGRESSWOMAN MADELEINE Z. BORDALLO**  
**JOINT READINESS & SEAPOWER AND PROJECTION FORCES**  
**SUBCOMMITTEES**  
**HEARING ON**  
**“NAVY READINESS – UNDERLYING PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH THE USS**  
**FITZGERALD AND USS JOHN S. MCCAIN”**  
**STATEMENT**  
**September 7, 2017**

Thank you Chairman Wilson and Chairman Wittman for agreeing to convene this timely hearing on Navy readiness, particularly with regards to 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet operations in the Indo-Asia-Pacific region. Chairman Wittman and I recently returned from Japan where we visited Yokosuka, met with Vice Admiral Sawyer, and saw the damage to the USS Fitzgerald firsthand. Thank you to our witnesses for joining us today. Admirals Moran and Boxall, I appreciated our meeting earlier this week and look forward to continuing our discussions. Mr. Pendleton, thank you as well for your time, and your work on this subject as it is critical to aiding our oversight mission on this committee.

The recent mishaps with the USS Fitzgerald and the USS John S. McCain resulted not only in significant damage to the vessels, but also the tragic loss of life of 17 American sailors. Earlier in the year we saw two additional mishaps, avoidable as I understand it, also involving surface ships assigned to the 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet. While investigations into the specific mishaps are still ongoing, and the Navy is in the midst of conducting two separate comprehensive reviews of surface fleet operations, I am interested to learn of the initial findings and foundational challenges that need to be addressed to reverse the concerning trend we are seeing with the readiness of our Forward Deployed Naval Forces. Specifically I am interested to hear what steps may be taken to ensure appropriate time is allocated for crew training and ship maintenance in the Forward Deployed Naval Forces model and how the chain of command will be held accountable to ensure Navy standards are being met. In addition to training and maintenance time, I will be interested to hear how the Navy is investing in, developing, and utilizing next generation training systems to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of this time. This committee, and the Navy’s military and civilian leadership, owes it to our Sailors to learn from these incidents and take appropriate actions to ensure the contributing factors are properly addressed.

Points have been raised about how the Forward Deployed Forces model in the Pacific AOR has both stressed existing resources and highlighted gaps and deficiencies in the manning of our vessels, the training of our sailors, and the maintenance of the fleet. Understanding that a balance needs to be struck, and a review of posture in the region is underway, let me note that I believe maintaining a forward presence in the Indo-Asia-Pacific is critical to our security in the region. Whether it be for deterrence, power projection, humanitarian assistance, bilateral and multilateral exercises or myriad other critical missions the Navy is able to rapidly react to contingencies only with forward deployed forces. However, these missions, and our credibility, are undermined if we are not able to effectively manage and operate the fleet.

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The Navy’s deployment of significant capabilities overseas didn’t occur overnight, and the Pacific did not become a heavy traffic theater overnight, so I am concerned that the request for resources, and the strategic prioritization of where to spend those resources, has not properly reflected the operations, maintenance, and training needs of the fleet.

Finally, I’ll conclude by stating that today’s hearing, and the Navy’s ongoing investigations and reviews, should be viewed as just the starting point. I hope we will have a continuous dialogue between this committee and the Navy on the issues, lessons learned, and specific actions that need to be taken to ensure the readiness of the surface fleet. Thank you again to the witnesses and I look forward to the discussion. Mr. Chairman, I yield back.