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Opening Statement (As Prepared)
Chairman Joe Courtney
Subcommittee on Seapower and Projection Forces:
*"Full Committee Markup of H.R. 7900 — National
Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023"*
June 22, 2022

Click [here](#) to view the hearing.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Seapower and Projection Forces mark before us represents a lot of hard work and constructive input from all of the subcommittee Members and staff in a very compressed time frame, given the late submission of the 2023 budget. I would particularly like to thank my friend, Ranking Member Rob Wittman, for his collaboration to ensure that our subcommittee continued its tradition of bipartisan, independent work to advance the mission of the sea services and projection forces who as we speak are deployed around the clock and around the world to protect our nation.

Here are some key elements of the mark before us today.

Our baseline Seapower mark authorizes over \$27 billion for shipbuilding, supporting eight battle force ships, including full funding for a continued two-per-year cadence for the Virginia-class submarine program and full funding for the Navy's number one priority – the Columbia Ballistic Missile Submarine program. Our mark recognizes that execution of these programs requires a much bigger industrial base and invests a record \$750 million to develop a skilled workforce, increase shipyard infrastructure, and fix a brittle supply chain of small manufacturers all across the country by providing resources for new machine tools and digital technology.

The subcommittee mark also funds two DDG destroyers, a new fast frigate, a Flight II LPD, a fleet oiler, and a towing and salvage vessel. Thanks to the efforts of Mr. Golden, Vice Chair of this subcommittee, we will consider a topline amendment that includes additional ships and shipyard infrastructure investments to support an increased authorization for shipbuilding. I look forward to debate on the amendment later today and plan to vote in its favor. I urge other members to vote in support as well.

In the area of non-battle force ships, I want to highlight that for the fourth year in a row, our mark took an independent approach to address the alarming condition of our sealift fleet. It does give the Navy some authority to acquire used vessels to convert to US-flagged sealift vessels as requested. However, given the Navy's lack of a plan for new construction, our mark for the first time, designates the Maritime Administration as the lead agency to complete the design and construction in United States shipyards of up to 10 sealift vessels for use in the National Defense Reserve Fleet modeled after the National Security Multi-Mission Vessel program authored by the Seapower Subcommittee in 2014. We now know that the Multi-Mission Vessel Program administered by MARAD is executing serial production of US built ships that can do the job for the Reserve Fleet. It is imperative that a domestic new build program for sealift moves forward. It will be a growth opportunity for America's industrial base, suppliers and shipbuilders, and will reduce our dependency on the foreign used sealift market, which is far from reliable.

This mark also heeded the input of the Marine Corps' Leadership, and includes \$250 million in Advance Procurement for the LPD-33, reversing the decision to terminate the production line 10 ships early, and sets a statutory floor of 31 L-class amphibious warships for the Marine Corps – providing clear direction for the future of the fleet and supporting the Commandants objectives to deliver our warfighters with the tools needed to operate in contested environments.

Lastly, our mark prohibits retirement of five battle force ships planned for decommissioning, including the guided missile cruiser, USS Vicksburg, which has completed 85% of her modernization, as well as 4 amphibious dock landing ships – further setting clear direction for the future of the Marine Corps' fleet of amphibious warships.

For Air Force projection forces, our mark authorizes full funding for initial low-rate production of the B-21 Raider and sets statutory floors for the C-130 tactical airlift fleet and the Air Force's inventory of aerial refueling tankers needed to project power in all domains of combat.

As usual, this mark would not have been possible without the talented, professional staff who diligently worked to incorporate input into the mark and amendments from members of the entire committee. I want to thank James Vallario, Dave Sienicki, and Kelly Goggin for working to build the unanimous support the mark received at subcommittee. Lastly, I want to thank 2 members of the subcommittee for whom we know that this will be their last NDAA – Jim Langevin and Jim Cooper. Thanks for your work, but even more importantly, your sound judgement that over 20 years of service has contributed so much.

With that said, I urge all members to support this mark, and I yield to the gentleman from the Commonwealth of Virginia, Ranking Member Wittman, for his comments.

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