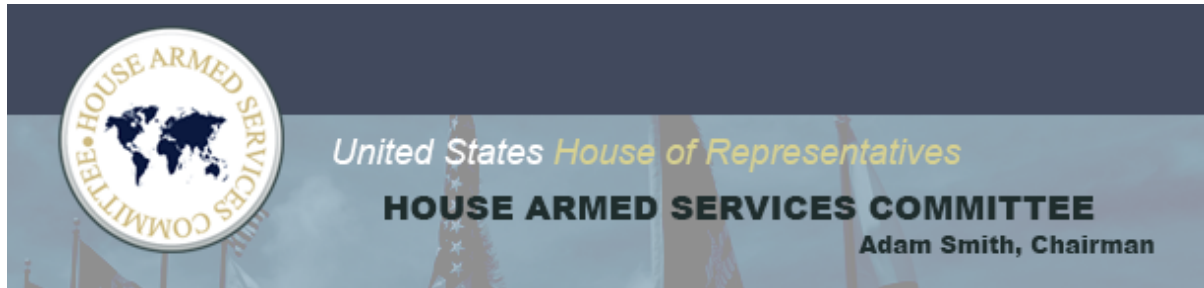


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Opening Statement (As Prepared)
Chairman Joe Courtney
Subcommittee on Seapower and Projection Forces:
*"Markup of H.R. 7900 - National Defense Authorization
Act for Fiscal Year 2023"*
June 8, 2022

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

Good afternoon. Thank you to all our members joining us today in person and remotely as we consider the Seapower and Projection Forces Subcommittee mark for the Fiscal Year 2023 National Defense Authorization Act.

Before we begin, I want to start by thanking our members and staff on both sides of the aisle for their tireless engagement to help get us here today. Thank you to Ranking Member Rob Wittman for your input and assistance in this process.

With the help and input of our members on both sides of the aisle, our mark makes substantive and constructive changes to build on the budget and support the critical missions we oversee on, under and above the seas.

To that end, I will take a few moments to highlight some of the key elements of this year's budget request that led us to the product we have before us.

First, the mark recommends sustaining the two-per-year cadence for Virginia-class submarine construction, keeps the Columbia program continuing pace, and makes critical investments to strengthen the submarine industrial base and workforce development efforts.

I had the privilege of attending the Keel Laying Ceremony this past weekend for the first boat in the Columbia-class program and witnessed firsthand the impressive work being done to ensure scheduled delivery of the Navy's number one acquisition priority.

Our mark also reflects an in-depth review of some of the long-term shipbuilding planning

assumptions that were proposed in the budget. That includes authorizing up to 15 new DDG-51 destroyers in the next multi-year contract, which, if fully utilized, would provide critical stability to the industrial base and meet force structure requirements.

In addition, this mark reflects an in-depth look at the proposed retirements of vessels essential to our force structure requirements with useful service life left. To that end, this mark recommends retention of the Guided-missile cruiser USS Vicksburg, which has completed 85% of her modernization, and prohibiting the retirement of 4 Dock Landing Ships (LSDs).

Additionally, this mark recommends an increase of \$250 million in Advanced Procurement for the LPD-34 – reversing the proposal to shut down the line 10-ships early. And it sets a statutory floor of 31 L-class amphibious ships, setting clear direction for the future of the Navy's fleet of amphibious ships.

On sealift recapitalization, our subcommittee has consistently expressed our support for used ship acquisition as a temporary bridge towards a domestic new-build program. However, the Navy has continued to prioritize purchasing used vessels despite drastically changing market conditions for militarily useful ships.

With the progress we have seen on the National Security Multi-mission vessel under construction right now in the revitalized Philly Shipyard, a domestic new build plan is also an unparalleled opportunity to boost our domestic shipbuilding industry and supply chain – and, with it, good American jobs.

To that end, our mark directs the Maritime Administrator 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 that this subcommittee authored in 2014.

In regards to Air Force projection forces, we worked to ensure that we could meet the combatant commanders' requirements and sustain a fleet of capable tactical airlifters and tankers.

To this end, the mark establishes statutory floors for the C-130 tactical airlift fleet and the Air Force's inventory of aerial refueling tankers to support TRANSCOM as they have further proven their criticality in supporting operations to our allies and partners in Europe in the wake of Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine.

It is also worth noting that the Air Force has made critical investments to begin low-rate initial production of the B-21 Raider as well as research and development efforts to continue to push for a modernized airframe suited with advanced technologies capable of providing global strike capabilities.

Finally, our mark continues our bipartisan focus on crucial programs under the jurisdiction of the Maritime Administration, authorizing the second year of full appropriations for the Tanker Security Program and ongoing support for the Maritime Security Program. This year, we are eagerly anticipating the implementation of the new Tanker Security Program that this panel led the way in creating to meet our at-sea refueling requirements. We expect to see it stood up by MARAD without delay.

This mark before us today could not happen without the tireless work of our subcommittee staff. I want to thank Jay Vallario, Kelly Goggin, Dave Sienicki, and Naajidah Khan for their

work on our behalf.

Thank you, and with that I yield to Ranking Member Wittman for any remarks.

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