

Statement of the Honorable John Garamendi
Chairman, Readiness Subcommittee
“Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Request for Military Readiness”
April 19, 2023

Thank you, Mike, and thank you to our five witnesses for your decades of distinguished service to our nation.

Each year, as I prepare for this hearing, I am struck anew by the vast jurisdiction of this subcommittee. Other subcommittees get to buy, what I call, the new and shiny, and then the rest is left to us. It is this subcommittee’s remit to maintain the facilities that support this equipment; sustain and modernize the weapon’s systems themselves; and, train the people who will operate these weapons in service of our country. Over the years, I’ve learned that it’s hard to get people, both Members of Congress and decision makers in the Pentagon, to focus on the less glamorous work of maintaining and sustaining what we have.

However, Putin’s immoral invasion of Ukraine has brought many of these issues to the forefront of our national attention. We have been forced to think about the organic industrial base and how we can surge more efficiently to meet emerging requirements. In this budget request, I am finally seeing evidence that we are getting serious about modernizing the depot and shipyard infrastructure that ensures our ships, ground vehicles, and aircraft are ready to go back to the fight. But there is still more work to do.

Since the start of the invasion, we have also watched the cost of Russia’s many readiness failures. We’ve watched its equipment fail because it was poorly sustained. We’ve witnessed Russia fail to supply its force due to poor logistics planning and shoddy infrastructure. And we see that poorly trained forces do not perform well in battle. Paraphrasing Napoleon, one should never interrupt one’s adversary while they are making a mistake. However, it would be our mistake not to learn from Russia’s failures.

Comptroller General analysis of weapons systems readiness paints a grim picture. When analyzed by aircraft type, the majority of systems in our inventory fall more than 10 percent below the Department's own mission capability rate goals. And we continue to see high cannibalization rates and long maintenance delays across the 10 ship classes that GAO has reviewed since 2011. These sustainment failures have become chronic, and we simply cannot afford to continue doing business as usual.

Today I am looking forward to hearing our witnesses talk about how each service has learned the lessons that have been displayed since the invasion of Ukraine. And, more importantly what you are doing to operationalize those lessons to create a more lethal fighting force for the future. If the last year has taught us anything, it is that failing to prioritize the core readiness pillars of sustainment, modernization, logistics, and training will cost us dearly in both blood and treasure. Together we must ensure that we never ask our service members to pay that price.

With that, I yield back.