

NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL RELEASED BY
THE SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS

STATEMENT OF

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ON CURRENT STATE OF NAVY READINESS

BEFORE THE

SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS

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Chairman Sullivan, Ranking Member Kaine, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the Navy's current readiness.

This hearing occurs during a critical time for our country. Multiple nations are attempting to undermine the existing international order that has benefited so many for so long. Our rivals are rapidly modernizing their militaries and eroding our advantages. Emerging technologies have provided them more ways to attack our shores. A global pandemic and economic crisis threaten global stability and security. And the maritime environment – a vital source of our prosperity and protection – has become increasingly contested.

America is a Maritime Nation – Our people depend on freedom of the seas

Since the end of the Cold War, traffic on the seas has increased over four fold. 90 percent of global trade now travels by sea, facilitating \$5.4 trillion in U.S. commerce annually and supporting 31 million American jobs. 95 percent of global internet traffic travels along undersea cables, fueling our digital economy and accounting for \$10 trillion in financial transactions per day. Competition for offshore resources such as aquaculture, energy, and rare-earth minerals is increasing across the globe. There can be no doubt that our economic vitality relies on free and open conditions at sea. And now those conditions – and our way of life – are under threat.

Despite benefiting from decades of peace and stability, China and Russia are now using all elements of their national power to undermine the international order at sea. Both attempt to unfairly control access to rich sea-based resources outside their home waters. Both intimidate their neighbors and enforce unlawful claims with the threat of force. Both have constructed sophisticated networks of sensors and long-range missiles to hold important waterways at risk. And China, in particular, is building a Navy to rival our own.

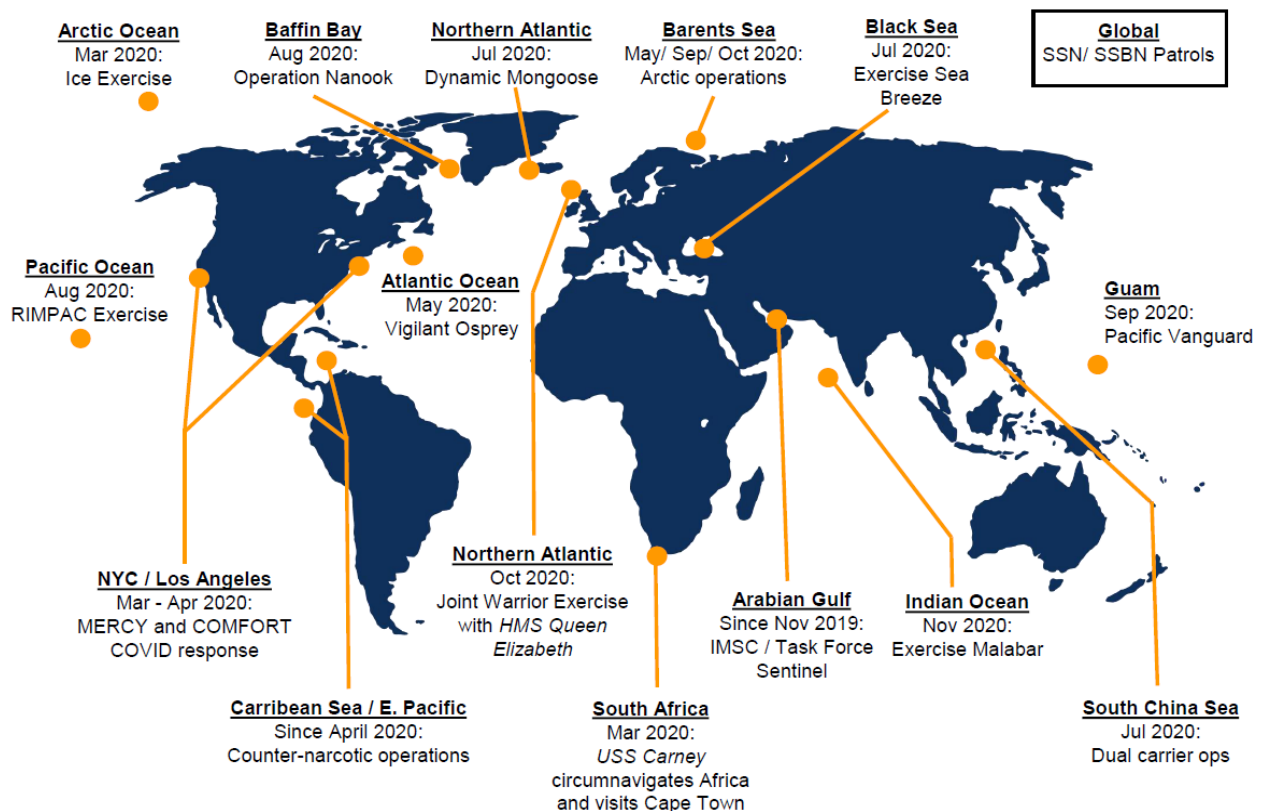
Over the last decade, China has rapidly grown its Navy from 262 to 350 ships that include modern surface combatants, submarines, aircraft carriers, amphibious assault ships, and polar icebreakers. Expanding their robust naval force with a multilayered fleet of Coast Guard and maritime militia vessels, they routinely harass neighbors to exert pressure at a level below traditional armed conflict. They have blanketed their regional waters with the world's largest missile forces in an attempt to intimidate their rivals. They have strengthened all dimensions of military power to contest us from the seafloor to space and in the information domain. They are extending their maritime infrastructure across the globe through aggressive investments, particularly in ports, to control access to critical waterways. We must move with urgency to sustain and grow our advantage at sea.

U.S. Navy – Deployed Forward to Defend America and Protect our Way of Life

The U.S. Navy is responding to this challenge by: demonstrating our global reach, enforcing common principles, sustaining the conditions that enable shared prosperity, strengthening our alliances and partnerships, and modernizing our fleet to control the seas in contested environments. Today, 39,903 Sailors are currently deployed on nearly 111 ships and submarines to preserve freedom of the seas, deter conflict, and keep America safe. Together with the United States Marine Corps, our Navy is delivering Integrated All-Domain Naval Power across the globe. And we are doing this in the midst of a global pandemic.

With parts of the world shut down in response to COVID-19, our operational tempo did not decline. Since the last time I appeared before you in March, the Navy has continued to steam and fly from the Arctic Circle to the Cape of Good Hope. Our hospital ships provided relief to American communities; we executed underway training events for deployment certification; and we conducted exercises alongside the Joint Force and our allies and partners.

The U.S. Navy Globally Deployed during the COVID-19 Pandemic



Since the COVID-19 outbreak, we have aggressively worked to keep our Sailors and families safe, while sustaining fleet operations and supporting the whole-of-government response to the virus. Lessons learned from the outbreak aboard *USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT* honed our COVID-19 Standardized Operational Guidance. Our Sailors and their families adjusted and sacrificed to accomplish the mission. When the virus threatened the deployed *USS KIDD*, *USS RONALD REAGAN*, and *USS MAKIN ISLAND*, we quickly stemmed the spread of COVID-19 and the ships continued their missions, reflective of our strong learning organization.

We are applying this same kind of adaptive mindset across our entire Navy. After identifying a potentially dramatic increase in gapped sea billets for fiscal year (FY) 2021 due to COVID-reduced accessions, we gradually and safely increased recruit training to meet our goals. All while adhering to strict Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Guidance to keep our force safe. We also leveraged retention incentives, such as Advancement-to-Position, to keep Sailors in critical jobs. These measures are improving our ability to fill operational requirements.

When health protection measures reduced public shipyard productivity, we took swift action to protect our workers and mitigate impacts to maintenance. Meanwhile, our dedicated, patriotic shipyard workforce adapted to our COVID-19 protocols, came to work every day, and got our ships back to sea. We cannot thank them enough. To stay connected during the pandemic, our Information Technology workforce quickly increased network bandwidth, added virtual private network licenses, and supported the DOD Commercial Virtual Remote (CVR) environment roll-out. This enabled a large portion of the Navy workforce to get the mission done from home.

We are aggressively working to mitigate the readiness impacts of COVID-19 and deliver a more ready fleet.

Building a More Ready Navy

Delivering the decisive naval power needed to maintain America's advantage at sea requires balanced investments across multiple elements of naval power. Naval power is not a function of ship numbers alone, nor is it simply a result of the lethal systems employed from those ships. It is also about the networks that connect them, the Sailors that bring them to life, the concepts that shape how we fight, and the means to maintain, train, and equip our forces to win in combat.

Readiness – the investments across the force that bring naval power to life – is the backbone of our Navy. For the past two decades, the Navy sustained the same operational tempo seen during the Cold War, but with a fleet almost half the size. Meeting the security demands of our nation with a smaller Navy and budget instability had a corrosive effect on our readiness.

Over the last three years the Navy has implemented critical reforms and improved our readiness in new ways. With sustained funding and our learning culture, our readiness recovery was on an upward trend before COVID-19 struck. Measurable improvements were seen across the Navy, including:

- Operational billets filled to highest point in six years.
- 80% mission capable rates sustained for F/A-18E/F and EA-18G.
- On-time private shipyard surface ship maintenance availability completion rates improved from 37% in FY19 to 67% in FY20.
- Public shipyard reduced maintenance delay days by over 80% from FY19 to FY20.
- All 111 Strategic Readiness Review and Comprehensive Review (SRR/CR) Surface force readiness initiatives are implemented.

COVID-19 will undoubtedly impact our continued recovery in FY-21 – as the need to protect the force will likely cause some delays in on-time maintenance completion. However, we will continue to meet any challenge with the same adaptive mindset and learning culture that has kept our ships sailing throughout this pandemic.

Congress can help support our readiness recovery by swiftly enacting our requests in the FY-21 President’s Budget (PB-21). PB-21 sustains our trajectory by increasing funding in our readiness accounts. This means more time steaming and flying, more ammunition and spare parts, more effective maintenance, and better infrastructure and training for our Sailors.

A larger, more ready, more lethal fleet will need greater investments to operate and sustain. It also requires an unrelenting focus on reforms that deliver the force needed to deter and – if needed – fight and win. With your support and our Sailors’ determination, we will continue our momentum – even in the midst of this pandemic – to build a more ready Navy in the following ways.

To build a more ready Navy, we’re more robustly manning and strengthening the fleet. A lethal fleet depends on our Sailors – the true source of our naval power. As we grow our fleet, we must bring in more personnel, which is why we are requesting an additional 7,300 Sailors in FY-21. We are grateful to Congress for the generous pay raises and personnel reforms. The Navy is leveraging both – alongside our Sailor 2025 initiatives – to better retain our incredibly talented force. Meanwhile, we continue to transform our MyNavyHR infrastructure to rapidly deliver services to our Sailors at a reduced cost. This includes the DOD-leading mobile applications that help with the challenge of military moves and finding childcare or housing. Our personnel reforms are keeping Sailors excited about the Navy and we are exceeding retention benchmarks.

The strength of our fleet depends on the strength of our Sailors. We are cultivating a Culture of Excellence (COE) across the Fleet, which strengthens the Navy’s enduring standards of

professional competence and personal character. It teaches our Sailors to actively pursue what is right, rather than simply avoiding what is wrong. We saw COE at work during the tragic fire aboard *USS BONHOMME RICHARD*. Battling 1,200 degree heat, smoke and poor visibility, and a series of explosions, our Sailors exemplified the initiative, integrity, accountability and resiliency central to our COE.

We also launched Task Force One Navy in July under the COE framework to analyze and evaluate issues in our society and military that detract from Navy cohesiveness and readiness. The Task Force is hard at work and will release their report to me this month. Respect and the promise of opportunity are core to our Navy, and we will not stop until we rid discrimination and other biases from our ranks. This is a moral and warfighting imperative.

To build a more ready Navy, we're better training the fleet. Our Sailors must be better trained than their Chinese and Russian counterparts. Maintaining this competitive edge requires sustained investments in steaming days and flying hours as well as in virtual and constructive training. The PB-21 budget increases funding for steaming days and flying hours and invests in advanced virtual environments. This delivers high quality training to the waterfront, modernizing our existing training through key programs like Ready, Relevant Learning which provides Sailors the experience to hone their skills between underway operations.

Maintaining the edge also requires providing the ranges our Sailors need to train for the high-end fight. Currently, our premier Carrier Air Wing and SEAL training center – the Fallon Range Training Complex (FRTC) – is too small. Without expansion, our Sailors cannot sufficiently train with longer-range weapons, or practice the tactics and techniques they will employ against a near-peer threat. We will continue to work with Congress, the local communities, and key stakeholders to ensure our aircrew and special operators can train effectively to win in combat.

We are also fully funding all Surface Force readiness initiatives. The Navy has now fully implemented all 111 Strategic Readiness Review/Comprehensive Review recommendations. 1,432 junior officers have now graduated from our new Junior Officer of the Deck course with training aligned to International Maritime Organization's standards. We are broadening the use of instructor-led virtual reality training through the construction of two Mariner Skills Training Centers and the modernization of our Integrated Navigation Seamanship and Ship handling Trainers. All of these efforts are building a COE that prepares our teams to confidently perform under the most demanding conditions.

The Navy is training and operating in the places that matter most for great power competition. Together with the Joint Force, we are providing credible deterrence and sharpening our warfighting advantage from the South China Sea to the Mediterranean. Additionally, we are keeping pace with the changing strategic environment by proactively steaming and flying in the

Arctic region. Ice Exercise in the Arctic Ocean, Exercise Dynamic Mongoose off the coast of Iceland, and multiple exercises in the Barents Sea demonstrate our commitment to provide capability and presence in higher latitudes alongside our allies and partners.

To build a more ready Navy, we're better maintaining the fleet. Delivering ships and aircraft from maintenance on time is vital to generating ready forces. Using data driven methods, we are reducing delays, improving operational availability, and saving taxpayer dollars. We have seen this type of success in our tactical aviation community. 80 percent of our Super Hornets and Growlers remained mission capable throughout FY-20, a dramatic improvement from the 55 percent long-term average. With higher numbers of aircraft available, our aircrew are more ready to fly and fight than at any point over the last decade.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, we were seeing dramatic improvements in ship maintenance, and the on-time delivery of ships in private yards continues to improve this year. To sustain improvement of ship maintenance in private shipyards, we modified contracting strategies, increased dry dock capacity, and worked to optimize facility and pier layouts. We also made adjustments to ship maintenance durations to account for available shipyard capacity and improved planning and directed maintenance to reduce growth and new work. Getting the durations right has reduced days of maintenance delay and increased on-time delivery. We are also leveraging authorities provided by Congress, such as the three year Other Procurement, Navy pilot program, to increase flexibility and stabilize demand for our shipyard workforces.

In February of 2020, we were successfully reducing the maintenance backlog and better predicting the delivery of availabilities when the impacts of COVID-19 began to manifest. The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent decline in our production workforce impacted the trajectory of further gains and current availabilities in execution. To mitigate additional impacts to ship maintenance in our private shipyards, we accelerated awards of contract options and improved the cash positions of the industrial base. For our public shipyards, we mobilized 1,352 skilled Navy Reserve Sailors, increased overtime usage, and rebalanced future workload and capacity. Still, we have much work to do.

Submarine maintenance, in particular, remains one of our most pressing challenges. While we have driven submarine idle time down by 50 percent this year, public and private shipyard capacity is still not adequate to meet requirements. We are aggressively working to modernize our public yards, reforms which will take many years. In the near term, we have better aligned work requirements with capacity, hired additional workers and accelerated their training, and partnered with private industry to increase capacity. In the longer term, we are continuing to explore innovative technologies such as hull crawling robots and cold spray repairs to more efficiently conduct maintenance.

To build a more ready Navy, we're better sustaining the fleet. Our logistics enterprise and strategic sealift capacity are vital to a dynamic Joint Force operating forward in support of national interests. We are accelerating our sealift recapitalization strategy and improving the readiness of our Surge and Ready Reserve Force (RRF). PB21 increases resources for sealift operations and maintains service life extensions, while executing the efficient replacement of the oldest and least ready vessels first.

Sustaining the fleet for long-term competition also means making targeted investments in critical infrastructure like our public shipyards and aviation depots. Our Shipyard Infrastructure and Optimization Program (SIOP) takes a deliberate approach to refurbishing these vital national assets. Beginning with building virtual models of each shipyard, we are leveraging 21st century technology to improve productivity, safety, and quality-of-life for our talented workforce. Over the next year, we will use these models to drive investment decisions for major dry dock, facility, and equipment upgrades. We have already broke ground on a perimeter floodwall at Norfolk Naval Shipyard and are building a new lock system at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard. These and many other investments will be important in keeping our Navy competitive for years to come.

We are also optimizing and recapitalizing our aviation depot infrastructure, the Fleet Readiness Centers (FRCs). Through a Naval Aviation Infrastructure Optimization Plan (IOP), we are developing a 10-year Master Plan that provides our organic depots the capacity to sustain and modernize our aircraft, engines, components, and support equipment. Funding \$3.5 billion over the next 10 years will ensure the Navy's ability to conduct maintenance on next generation aircraft while sustaining current aviation readiness gains. Additionally, PB-21 requests the largest funding for shore readiness in the past four years. These funds cover a range of critical needs, such as increased oversight of public-private venture housing to better serve Navy families and cyber infrastructure protection for our ashore and deployed units.

To build a more ready Navy, we're better connecting the fleet. Maintaining readiness ashore and at sea requires strengthening our digital fleet. We are modernizing and transforming our Navy enterprise shore network infrastructure into a secure, resilient digital platform which includes a \$1 billion investment across our Future Years Defense Budget. We are also laser-focused on delivering a resilient operational architecture for Distributed Maritime Operations (DMO). The Naval Operational Architecture (NOA) serves as the digital backbone of our future fleet by connecting our sensors, platforms, and command and control nodes with the Joint Force. As we incorporate more unmanned systems into the fleet, the NOA will become even more vital to delivering the naval power we need to deter, fight, and win.

Protecting our networked fleet also requires building cyber security and resilience into our platforms. To meet this end, PB-21 requests over \$1 billion to protect our forces from intrusions and will ensure that we can fight through and recover from cyber-attacks. Critical to the

resiliency of our networked fleet is the ability to assure our capabilities in positioning, navigation, and timing (PNT). We are investing in alternate sources of PNT, like the Automated Celestial Navigation System, to ensure our Navy can fight and win in GPS denied or degraded environments.

To build a more ready Navy, we're better arming the Fleet. To fight and win at sea against a near-peer threat, we must arm the fleet with distributed payloads of increasing range and speed such as: the Maritime Strike Tomahawk, Joint Standoff Weapon Extended Range, the Long Range Anti-Ship Missile, and the Standard Missile-6. When coupled with enhanced Air-to-Air and Air-to-Surface missiles along with MK-48 torpedoes, our platforms will have the advantage they need against near-peer threats under, on, and above the seas.

Concurrently, we are rigorously developing hypersonic and directed energy weapons to increase the lethality and defensive capability of the fleet. Hypersonic missiles change the risk calculus for our competitors by providing conventional sea-based prompt, global strike capability. Our Navy Laser Family of Weapons are also continuing to mature. The recent demonstration onboard *USS PORTLAND* showed how we can disable an unmanned aerial vehicle using directed energy. We will continue to invest in laser technology and non-kinetic defensive systems to increase fleet survivability and free magazine space for our offensive missiles.

Conclusion

Let there be no doubt – America is a maritime nation – our security and prosperity are inextricably linked to the seas. For 245 years – in both calm and rough waters, your Navy has stood the watch to protect our homeland, preserve the freedom of the seas, and defend our way of life.

Our competitors are increasing their naval power every day, and their malign behavior and growing presence on the waters places an enormous demand on our forces. Our global forward posture – necessary to deter conflict and meet our national objectives – requires a relentless focus on readiness to keep our ships and Sailors strong. Sustaining our readiness recovery has never been more vital to our nation's future.

And yet, it is important to remember readiness only partly delivers the maritime power our nation needs. Maintaining our advantage at sea also demands growing the fleet with manned and unmanned systems; developing weapons of greater lethality; connecting our fleet with resilient battle networks; mastering all-domain, fleet-level warfare; and empowering our Sailors with intellectual overmatch to outfight our rivals.

Without sustained funding that comprehensively grows U.S. naval power, we will lose the military advantage at sea on which our nation's prosperity and security depend.

Our Navy remains the finest maritime fighting force in the world and our Sailors – active and reserve, uniformed and civilian – are committed to keeping it that way. But we need your help. I am grateful to this subcommittee for your support in this crucial work. And I look forward to working with you as we ensure our nation’s advantage at sea.