NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL RELEASED BY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

STATEMENT OF

ALLISON F. STILLER
PRINCIPAL CIVILIAN DEPUTY
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE NAVY FOR
RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND ACQUISITION (ASN(RD&A))
PERFORMING THE DUTIES AND FUNCTIONS OF ASN(RD&A)

AND

LIEUTENANT GENERAL ROBERT S. WALSH
DEPUTY COMMANDANT
COMBAT DEVELOPMENT AND INTEGRATION &
COMMANDING GENERAL, MARINE CORPS COMBAT DEVELOPMENT COMMAND

AND

VICE ADMIRAL WILLIAM K. LESCHER
DEPUTY CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS
FOR INTEGRATION OF CAPABILITIES AND RESOURCES

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON SEAPOWER OF THE

SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

ON

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY SHIPBUILDING PROGRAMS

JUNE 21, 2017

NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL RELEASED BY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

Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member Hirono, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to address the Department of Navy's shipbuilding programs.

The global activities over the last year have made it clear that the security challenges from major power competition are intensifying at an increasingly rapid pace. The Navy and Marine Corps continue to support the Joint Force in defending the homeland and responding to the security challenges of Russia, China, North Korea, Iran and global counter-terrorism. In the Indo-Asia-Pacific, our carrier strike groups, amphibious ready groups, and destroyers provide presence, strengthen partnerships, patrol the South China Sea to maintain interoperability, and deter adversaries. In the Middle East, our carrier strike groups and strike fighter aircraft continue operations against the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. In Afghanistan, the Marine Corps deployed to Helmand Province to train, advise and assist the Afghan National Army and Police. This past April, two destroyers operating in the Mediterranean Sea enabled the United States to take swift action against chemical attacks in Syria with Tomahawk cruise missile strikes.

Over 2016, the Marine Corps executed over 210 operations, 20 amphibious operations, 160 Theater Security Cooperation events, and participated in 75 exercises, with units deployed to every Geographic Combatant Command. And in response to a request for the U.S. Agency for International Development to assist with U.S. Government disaster relief efforts after Hurricane Matthew made landfall in October 2016, a Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) self-deployed within 48 hours to provide much needed aid to the people of Haiti, followed by the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) shortly thereafter. Our Sailors and Marines deployed around the world continue to perform missions and operate forward – ready to respond to any challenge and being where it matters when it matters.

To remain competitive, it is imperative that we continuously adapt to the emerging security environment – and do so with a sense of urgency. This requires working closely with Congress to return budget stability and predictability to the Department, and address defense spending in a fiscally responsible manner. Together, we can ensure our military's capability, capacity and readiness can continue to deliver superior naval power for the United States around the world, both today and tomorrow.

The Fiscal Year 2018 President's Budget Request

The Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 President's Budget submission is governed by the defense priorities of the Secretary of Defense to improve warfighting readiness and program balance by addressing pressing programmatic shortfalls that have accrued from 15 years of wartime operational tempo, fiscal constraints and budget uncertainty. Improving readiness directly impacts the operational capacity of our current fleet by ensuring that our ships and aircraft are ready to deploy when needed. If a ship is de-certified due to lack of maintenance, it is one less asset that the Navy and Marine Corps can deploy. The Department thanks the subcommittee for your efforts in supporting the Administration's request for additional funding for our critical readiness shortfalls and increases in force structure procurement in the FY 2017 Consolidated Appropriations Act.

At the same time, investing in the modernization of our current platforms and weapons is necessary to restore the fleet to full health and ensure they have the advanced capabilities needed to address the dynamic current and future threats. The FY 2018 request continues key investments in advanced technologies and modernization of our current Seapower and Projection forces.

The Navy prioritized addressing the significant readiness debt and improving the wholeness of our current fleet over our ability to grow force structure in this budget. The FY 2018 President's budget supports procurement of nine ships in FY 2018: two SSN 774 *Virginia* class attack submarines; two DDG 51 *Arleigh Burke* class destroyers; two Littoral Combat Ships (LCS); one *Ford* class aircraft carrier (CVN); one *John Lewis* class fleet oiler (T-AO); and one Towing, Salvage and Rescue ship (T-ATS). The Secretary of Defense has prioritized growing capacity and lethality, informed by the National Defense Strategy, for the FY 2019 President's Budget. The wholeness that the FY 2018 President's Budget delivers will accelerate key warfighting capabilities and maintain the operational effectiveness of our current force, while also building a bridge to growing the future force.

The Navy's 2016 Force Structure Assessment (FSA) was developed in an effort to determine the right balance of forces – ships currently under construction and future procurement – needed to address the evolving and increasingly complex threats naval forces are expected to counter. The FSA detailed a long-term requirement for 355 ships in the battle force, assuming the Navy continues to replace the ships we have today with ships of similar capability and employs them using similar concepts of operations. The FY 2019 President's

Budget will be informed by the pending National Security Strategy and the National Military Strategy and chart a course to building the larger, more capable battle force the nation needs.

In addition, the Department continues to analytically assess the Future Fleet Architecture studies directed by the FY 2016 National Defense Authorization Act in order to incorporate the most promising elements in our concept development, research and development, and rapid fielding efforts. This assessment will innovate ways to deliver the equivalent naval power of a larger force.

Summary

The Department of the Navy's FY 2018 budget request strategically delivers the best balance to responsibly improve the wholeness of our current forces. In addition, the Department is aggressively pursuing efforts to accelerate acquisition processes and schedules and further drive affordability into our programs, in order to deliver capability to our warfighters faster and be as effective as possible within our resources. We greatly appreciate this subcommittee's strong and consistent support for your Sailors and Marines.

Programmatic details regarding Navy and Marine Corps capabilities are summarized in the following section.

U.S. NAVY AND MARINE CORPS SEAPOWER CAPABILITIES

Aircraft Carriers

The aircraft carrier is the centerpiece of the Navy's Carrier Strike Groups and central to Navy core capabilities of sea control, maritime security, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. *Nimitz* and *Ford* class carriers will be the premier forward deployed asset of choice for crisis response and early decisive striking power in major combat operations for the next half-century. The Department has established a steady state *Ford* class procurement plan designed to deliver each new ship in close alignment with the *Nimitz* class ship it replaces. The USS *GERALD R. FORD* (CVN 78), the first new design aircraft carrier in 40 years delivered this past May, returning force structure to 11 aircraft carriers and providing an unprecedented capability to our nation for the next half century.

By capitalizing on lessons learned from the lead ship, CVN 79 and 80 have achieved significant cost reductions. The USS *John F. Kennedy* (CVN 79) is 28 percent complete with launch planned in 2020 and delivery in the fall of 2024. The USS *Enterprise* (CVN 80) has begun construction planning and long lead time material procurement. Construction is scheduled to begin in spring of 2018.

The *Nimitz* class Refueling Complex Overhaul (RCOH) is key to both the maintenance and modernization of each carrier in support of the second half of its service life. This spring, USS *Abraham Lincoln* (CVN 72) will return to the Fleet for another 23 years after completing her mid-life recapitalization depot availability to accomplish refueling of the ship's reactors, modernization, and repair of ship systems and infrastructure. This fall, USS *George Washington* (CVN 73) will begin her mid-life recapitalization.

Submarines

Ballistic Missile Submarines, coupled with the TRIDENT II D-5 Strategic Weapon System, represent the most survivable leg of the Nation's strategic arsenal and provide the Nation's most assured nuclear response capability. The current SSBN and SSGNs' life cycles cannot be extended, and the *Columbia* Class Program is on track to start construction in FY 2021, deliver to pace retirement of our current ballistic missile submarines, and deploy for first patrol in FY 2031. The Navy released the Detail Design Request for Proposal for *Columbia* and plans to award the design contract in calendar year 2017. The FY 2018

President's Budget supports the funding required to achieve a target of 83 percent design completion at construction start in FY 2021. This budget request also funds Continuous Production of Missile Tubes which will improve manufacturing efficiencies and vendor learning, maintain critical production skills, and reduce costs by leveraging high-volume procurements.

In addition to the Department of the Navy's budget request, the continued support of Congress for Naval Reactors' Department of Energy funding is vital to the Navy mission and ensuring the safe, reliable, and enduring operations of the nuclear-powered fleet. The President's FY 2018 budget fully funds Naval Reactors' request for the *Columbia* class SSBN. Recapitalizing this capability is critical to the Navy's readiness, specifically by ensuring adherence to the tight refueling and defueling schedule of nuclear-powered aircraft carriers and submarines.

The *Virginia* class submarine program continues to deliver submarines that are operationally ready to deploy within budget. The Block IV contract for 10 ships continues the co-production of the *Virginia* class submarines through FY 2018. The Navy intends to build on these savings and capitalize on increased efficiency and decreased costs with a *Virginia* class Block V Multiyear Procurement (MYP) contract for 10 boats, planned for FY 2019. The Block V contract will bring to bear two new capabilities to the fleet with the introduction of the *Virginia* Payload Module (VPM) and Acoustic Superiority. The Navy is investing in VPM to mitigate the 60 percent reduction in undersea strike capacity when the SSGN boats retire in FY 2026-2028.

In 2014, the Navy led a comprehensive government-industry assessment of shipbuilder construction capabilities and capacities at General Dynamics Electric Boat (GDEB) and Huntington Ingalls Industries-Newport News Shipbuilding (HII-NNS) to formulate the Submarine Unified Build Strategy (SUBS) for concurrent *Columbia* and *Virginia* class submarine production. This build strategy's guiding principles are: affordability; delivering *Columbia* on time and within budget; maintaining *Virginia* class performance with a continuous reduction in costs; and maintaining two shipbuilders capable of delivering nuclear-powered submarines. In 2016, the Navy established the Integrated Enterprise Plan to further the SUBS effort and provide a framework for an integrated approach to support *Columbia*, *Virginia*, and CVN construction. This long term plan will guide the execution of these nuclear powered platforms to reduce cost and schedule risk.

Large Surface Combatants

The *Arleigh Burke* class (DDG 51) program remains one of the Navy's most successful shipbuilding programs with 64 ships delivered to the Fleet. The FY 2018 President's Budget request includes the FY 2018-2022 MYP for ten destroyers, maximizing affordability and stabilizing the industrial base. All ships in this MYP will incorporate Integrated Air and Missile Defense and provide additional Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) capacity known as Flight III, which incorporates the Air and Missile Defense Radar (AMDR). AMDR meets the growing ballistic missile threat by improving radar sensitivity and enabling longer range detection of increasingly complex threats. The program demonstrated design maturity through its successful completion of several stages of developmental testing and its recent achievement for entry into the Production and Deployment phase.

This radar is planned for inclusion in FY 2017 via an Engineering Change Proposal to the Flight IIA configuration. This much needed capability is essential for future sea-based BMD and is expected to deliver to the fleet in the early FY 2020s.

The DDG 1000 *Zumwalt* class guided missile destroyer is an optimally crewed, multi-mission, surface combatant designed to provide long-range, precision, naval surface fire support to Marines conducting littoral maneuver and subsequent operations ashore. The DDG 1000 program accomplished several milestones in 2016 including the first phase of delivery, commissioning, and sailaway of USS *Zumwalt* to her homeport of San Diego. The ship has completed multiple at sea underway periods for follow on testing and has since commenced its Combat Systems Activation period in her homeport of San Diego. USS *Zumwalt* will deliver in the spring of 2018. The remaining two ships of the class, DDG 1001 and DDG 1002 are under construction and are 92 and 59 percent complete, respectively.

Small Surface Combatants

The 2016 FSA revalidated the warfighting requirement for a total of 52 small surface combatants. To date, nine LCS ships have delivered and 17 are in various stages of construction. Both LCS shipyards have upgraded their facilities and have a qualified work force and industry team in place for full serial production; delivering ships well below the congressionally mandated cost cap. The Department continues to refine the requirements and acquisition strategy for the Frigate. To allow adequate time to mature the design and thoroughly evaluate design alternatives, the FY 2018 President's Budget request defers the first

year of Frigate procurement to FY 2020 with the LCS program continuing in FY 2018 and FY 2019 to bridge to the Frigate. The Department plans to transition to Frigate in FY 2020 and maximize competition in the shipbuilding industrial base.

The LCS Mission Modules program continues the development of the Surface Warfare (SUW), Mine Countermeasures (MCM), and Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) capabilities and delivering individual mission systems incrementally as they become available. The LCS with an embarked SUW Mission Package (MP) provides a robust and flexible combat capability to rapidly detect, track, and prosecute small-boat swarm threats. The Surface-to-Surface Missile Module with Longbow Hellfire is currently in testing with Initial Operational Capability (IOC) planned for FY 2018. Development and integration of the ASW MP Escort Mission Module (EMM) and Torpedo Defense Module are ongoing. The Department recently awarded an option to build the ASW EMM and is on track to fully integrate with LCS to support IOC with the ASW MP in FY 2019.

The MCM MP provides the capability to detect, classify, identify, and neutralize mines throughout the water column, from the beach zone to the sea floor. Several of the MCM MP systems performed well during MCM MP TECHEVAL. IOC for Airborne Laser Mine Detection System and Airborne Mine Neutralization System was achieved in November 2016. These systems are in production and are being delivered to the fleet today. After cancelling the Remote Minehunting System program in FY 2016 due to poor reliability during TECHEVAL and following the conclusion of the Independent Review Team recommendations, the Department designated the MCM Unmanned Surface Vehicle (USV) as the new tow platform for minehunting operations. The MCM USV is based on the USV already used in the Unmanned Influence Sweep System program and development began in March of 2017. IOC is planned for FY 2020.

Amphibious Ships

Amphibious ships operate forward to support allies, rapidly and decisively respond to crises, deter potential adversaries, and provide the Nation's best means of projecting sustainable power ashore. They also provide an excellent means for providing humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. The 2016 FSA validated the warfighting requirement for 38 amphibious ships, driven by: maintaining persistent forward presence, which enables both engagement and crisis response; and delivering the assault echelons of two Marine

Expeditionary Brigades (MEB) for joint forcible entry operations. The 38 ship requirement is comprised of 12 Amphibious Assault Ships (LHD/LHA) and a mixture of 26 Amphibious Transport Dock (LPD), Dock Landing Ship (LSD), and Amphibious Ship Replacement LX(R) Ships. The amphibious force structure is projected to grow to a total of 34 ships starting in FY 2021.

LX(R) is the replacement program for LSD 41 and LSD 49 classes. The LX(R) program focus during the remainder of this year will be on completing the contract design efforts. The LX(R) contract design is being performed by General Dynamics National Steel and Shipbuilding Company (GD-NASSCO) and HII, in support of the future Detail Design and Construction competitive acquisition. The lead LX(R) is planned to begin construction in FY 2022.

LHA 6 *America* class ships are flexible, multi-mission platforms with capabilities that span the range of military operations, from forward deployed crisis response to forcible entry operations. These ships will provide the modern replacements for the LHA 1 *Tarawa* class ships and the aging LHD 1 *Wasp* class ships. USS *America* (LHA 6) will begin her first operational deployment with the 15th MEU in July 2017. USS *Tripoli* (LHA 7) construction is 70 percent complete and on schedule to deliver in 2018. LHA 8 will have a well deck to increase operational flexibility and a reduced island that increases flight deck space to enhance aviation capability. The Detail Design and Construction contract for LHA 8 was awarded last Friday and delivery is planned for FY 2024.

The *San Antonio* class (LPD 17) provides the ability to embark, transport control, insert, sustain, and extract elements of a MAGTF and supporting forces by helicopters, tilt rotor aircraft, landing craft, and amphibious vehicles. Two ships are under construction, *Portland* (LPD 27) and *Fort Lauderdale* (LPD 28), and are planned to deliver in October 2017 and August 2021 respectively. LPD 28's design and construction features will leverage many of the ongoing LX(R) design innovations and cost reduction initiatives that are necessary for the program to achieve affordability goals while maintaining the high level capabilities of the LPD 17 class. Congress added a 13th ship (LPD 29) in FY 2017 which will mitigate critical impacts to shipbuilding and combat systems industrial bases caused by the gap in ship construction between the start of construction for LPD 28 and the start of construction for LX(R).

Auxiliary Ships, Expeditionary, and Other Vessels

Support vessels such as the Expeditionary Sea Base (T-ESB), Expeditionary Transfer Dock (T-ESD) and the Expeditionary Fast Transport (EPF) provide additional flexibility to the Combatant Commanders. The USNS *Montford Point* (T-ESD 1) and USNS *John Glenn* (T-ESD 2) provide two core capabilities of vehicle and equipment transfer at-sea and interface with surface connectors to deliver vehicles and equipment ashore to complete arrival and assembly. The USNS *Lewis B. Puller* (T-ESB 3), the first Afloat Forward Staging Base variant of the T-ESD, was delivered in June 2015 and becomes operationally available this year. T-ESBs are flexible platforms capable of hosting multiple mission sets with airborne, surface, and subsurface assets. T-ESBs 4 and 5 are under construction, with deliveries scheduled for March 2018 and May 2019, respectively.

The T-EPF provides a high-speed, shallow-draft alternative to moving personnel and materiel within and between the operating areas, and to supporting security cooperation and engagement missions. T-EPF 8 was delivered in April 2017 and production continues on EPFs 9-11.

The Combat Logistic Force consists of T-AOE fast support ships, T-AKE auxiliary dry cargo ships, and T-AO fleet replenishment oilers. Combat Logistics Force ships fulfill the vital role of providing underway replenishment of fuel, food, repair parts, ammunition and equipment to forward deployed ships and embarked aircraft, to enable them to operate for extended periods of time at sea. The *Kaiser* class (T-AO 187) fleet replenishment oilers will be replaced with the *John Lewis* class fleet replenishment oilers, designated T-AO 205 class. The Detail Design and Construction contract was awarded in 2016 to GD-NASSCO for production of the first six ships of the class.

The Department has begun procurement of a combined Towing, Salvage, and Rescue (T-ATS) ship to replace the four T-ATF 166 class fleet tugs, which reach the end of their expected service lives starting in 2020, and the four T-ARS 50 class salvage ships, which reach the end of their expected service lives starting in 2025. The lead ship is planned for award in 2017 and the total ship quantity is planned to be eight ships.

Also in 2016, the Navy and Coast Guard established an Integrated Program Office to rebuild the Nation’s heavy icebreaking capability. The Navy is supporting the Coast Guard's efforts to responsibly and affordably recapitalize the heavy polar icebreaker fleet. The Coast Guard intends to leverage existing designs and mature technologies to mitigate schedule and

cost risks using a strategy based on robust industry collaboration and competition. Based on this effort, the Coast Guard expects delivery of the first icebreaker as early as 2023.

Surface Ship Modernization

Modernization is a critical aspect of sustaining the current fleet with advanced capability. The Navy and industry are collaborating on innovative approaches to conducting Modernization of Cruisers and Dock Landing Ships. The FY 2018 President's Budget includes funding for the modernization of six destroyers to sustain combat effectiveness, ensure mission relevancy and achieve the full expected service lives of the AEGIS Fleet. The request also continues to execute and fully funds $4 billion over the FYDP for "2-4-6" modernization of seven cruisers to ensure long-term capability and capacity for purpose-built Air Defense Commander platforms. The remaining four CGs, which have BMD capability, will receive modernization to their hull, mechanical and electrical systems to support their operation through their engineered service life.

In order to maintain 11 deployable LSDs in the active force until LX(R) delivers, the Department continues modernization of three LSDs to ensure 40 years of operational service life for each ship. The first LSD, USS *Tortuga* (LSD 46), was inducted into modernization in FY 2016 and is scheduled to begin her modernization availability in FY 2018. This plan mitigates presence shortfalls and supports 2.0 MEB Assault Echelon shipping requirements.

Autonomous Undersea Vehicles

Autonomous Undersea Vehicles (AUV) are a key component of the Navy's effort to expand undersea superiority. These unmanned vehicles operate independently from or in cooperation with manned vehicles, conducting maritime missions such as Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR), Seabed Warfare, and Deception.

The Orca Extra Large Unmanned Underwater Vehicle (XLUUV) is one of the larger class unmanned undersea vehicles that is being designed to launch from a pier or large surface ship and operate for weeks or months. It will have extended range and a reconfigurable, modular payload bay to support multiple payloads and a variety of missions to complement manned systems.

The Snakehead Large Displacement Unmanned Underwater Vehicle (LDUUV) is an unmanned undersea vehicle to offload "dull, dirty, dangerous" missions from manned

platforms and mitigate the submarine gap beginning in 2022. Snakehead LDUUV will be launched from a variety of platforms, including both surface ships and submarines. The initial craft's mission will be intelligence preparation of the operational environment with follow-on missions including ISR, acoustic surveillance, ASW, MCM, and offensive operations.

Combat Systems

The Department continues to field the most capable and lethal surface and submarine combat systems in the world. The AEGIS Combat System Baseline 9, fielded on cruisers and destroyers, offers unprecedented defense capabilities, including simultaneous air and ballistic missile defense on Destroyers and Air Defense Commander capability on cruisers. By the end of 2017, the Navy will have completed a total of twelve AEGIS Baseline 9 Combat Systems installations. Baseline 10 will bring the AMDR radar providing enhanced radar performance and expanding the Navy's ability to perform the Integrated Air and Missile Defense mission.

The Ship Self Defense System combat system supports a myriad of mission areas on all Carrier and large deck Amphibious Class Ships (six ship classes).

The Department continues to aggressively pursue affordable defensive systems that are employable from multiple platforms. Under the Surface Electronic Warfare Improvement Program (SEWIP), the Department is replacing aging analog electronic warfare defensive systems first fielded in the early 1970's with new, digital systems. SEWIP Block 1 and 2 systems have been approved for Full Rate Production and are currently being fielded across the fleet. The SEWIP Block 3 program has completed its Critical Design Review in 2017 and is currently on track to begin fielding in the 2019-2020 timeframe.

The Submarine community continues to successfully deliver improvements in Anti-Submarine Warfare utilizing a bi-annual spiral development model and leveraging commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) technologies via the Acoustic Rapid COTS Insertion (A-RCI) program. Developmental towed arrays with improved telemetry have been successfully fielded on deployed fast attack submarines and new contracts for TB-29X and TB-34X, with these new telemetries were awarded in FY 2016.

Weapons

The Department continues to make significant strides in extending the fleet's layered defense battle-space while also improving the capabilities of the individual ship defense layers in order to pace the increasing anti-ship missile threat. Standard Missile-6 (SM-6) provides theater and high value target area defense for the fleet and with integrated fire control, has more than doubled defensive battle-space. In April 2017, SM-6 Block I testing successfully completed live fire requirements and the program is on schedule to declare Full Operational Capability (FOC) by the end of this calendar year. SM-6 Block IA is an enhanced version of SM-6 Block I with guidance section hardware and software modifications for improved capability against advanced threats. Delivery of both the SM-6 Block I and SM-6 Block IA continue to meet contractual delivery schedule requirements.

The Evolved Sea Sparrow Missile (ESSM) provides another layer to the Navy's defended battle-space. The ESSM Block 2 Milestone C decision is scheduled for July 2018 with IOC for AEGIS platforms scheduled for 2020 and Ship Self Defense System platforms IOC in the 2022-2023 timeframe.

The third inner layer of the fleet's layered defense is the Rolling Airframe Missile (RAM) Block 2 designed to pace the evolving anti-ship cruise missile threat and improve performance against complex stream raid engagement scenarios. In FY 2017, the RAM Block 2 Program continued to demonstrate outstanding performance through successful fleet and ship qualification firing events. The RAM Block 2 will proceed to a Full Rate Production Decision Review in FY 2018 upon completion of the final modeling and simulation runs.

The FY 2018 President's Budget includes funding to continue upgrades to the Standard Missile-2 (SM-2) inventory with active guidance. This investment provides an affordable, integrated fire control capable, area defense missile to counter stressing threats.

Connectors

Our expeditionary warfare doctrine requires surface and vertical lift capability to transport personnel, supplies and equipment from within the seabase and maneuver them to objectives ashore. Surface and aviation connectors with enhanced speed and range will provide future expeditionary force commanders greater flexibility to operate in contested environments. While the aviation component of our connector capability has seen significant modernization with the fielding of the MV-22 and continuation of the CH-53K program, our

primary surface connectors, the Landing Craft Air-Cushion (LCAC) and the Landing Craft Utility (LCU) are reaching the end of their service lives and require modern replacements.

The FY 2018 President's Budget funds the new LCAC-100 class air cushioned vehicles. The Ship-to-Shore Connector program will replace the aging LCACs which have undergone service life extension programs (SLEP) and a post-SLEP sustainment program. Additionally, FY 2018 budget request includes the procurement of the first LCU-1700 class craft which will begin the recapitalization of the aging LCU 1610 class.

These platforms are essential in connecting the combat power and logistics sustainment the sea base provides, with the forces operating in the littorals and executing inland missions. The Department will continue to explore future connector options that will increase our ability to exploit the sea as maneuver space by increasing range, speed, and capacity.

Conclusion

The Department of the Navy continues to instill affordability, stability, and capacity into our shipbuilding and supporting programs. Continued congressional support of the Department's plans and budgets will help sustain a viable industrial base. This request begins to lay the ground work for growing warfighting capabilities in the FY 2019 President's Budget, as the Department also makes initial investments in a larger Navy and Marine Corps. We thank you for your continued support of the Navy and Marine Corps and request your support of the FY 2018 President's Budget.