

**STATEMENT OF
BRADLEY BYRNE (AL-1)
MEMBER OF CONGRESS
BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON DEFENSE
ON
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INTRODUCTION

Chairman Frelinghuysen, Ranking Member Visclosky, distinguished members of the committee; it is my pleasure to appear before you today to testify on two issues important to our national security: the Department of Defense's Littoral Combat Ship program and Joint High Speed Vessel program.

LITTORAL COMBAT SHIP

The Littoral Combat Ship, or LCS, is essential to missions in the world's littorals, and it is critical if the Navy is to support the Department's pivot to the Asia-Pacific region.

Much of the concern surrounding the LCS today is focused on issues other than the sea frame. In fact, the LCS program is currently realizing substantial efficiencies and savings. Production is stable and costs have reduced significantly due to the learning that has been achieved on the ships built to date. The LCS is easily the most affordable surface vessel

in our fleet today, but the LCS is not just affordable, it is also very capable.

Some of the LCS's largest critics contend that the Navy has not effectively laid out its plans for the vessel. They have questions about the ships survivability and lethality.

These are important questions, many of which the Navy already knows the answers to. And although the survivability testing for the vessel will not officially be completed until 2018, this does not mean the Navy does not understand how survivable or lethal the LCS is in different threat environments. In fact, the Navy's Small Surface Combatant Task Force recently studied in great detail how the current LCS operates in certain environments and how additional capabilities added to the platform would enhance its ability to operate in these areas.

Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus described this study as “exhaustive,” and upon its completion, Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel agreed with the results and authorized the Navy to proceed with its plan to transition the LCS into the Frigate, validating the need to build out the program to 52 ships.

32 of these ships will be needed to complete the mine counter measures mission, which is vitally important to operations in the Fifth Fleet and Seventh Fleet areas of operation. The remaining 20 Frigates will be designed to carry out anti-surface and anti-sub missions. These ships remain essential to the Navy’s ability to project power by providing forward deployed presence and greater interoperability with our allies.

Last month, in testimony before the Armed Services Committee, Secretary Mabus said that, “any change to the production rate of three LCS per year [for the next three fiscal years] will significantly impact the transition to the Frigate.” This is an obvious but frightening

observation. It's become abundantly clear that delaying the production of the LCS would significantly reduce the size of our fleet and damage America's national security, forcing the Navy to cover the same geographic area with significantly fewer assets.

The LCS is the rare military program that has seen costs decrease instead of increase over time. The LCS has adhered to stringent contractual and budgetary constraints and is locked into fixed price contracts and a congressionally mandated cost cap. Littoral Combat Ships are being built today at an average cost of \$350 million per hull, well under the Cost Cap and at half the cost of the first ships of class.

Any further reductions will lead to cost increases and, more importantly, put the Frigate Program at significant cost and schedule risk.

Reductions will also greatly impact the shipyards in Alabama and Wisconsin, and the broader shipbuilding industrial base. Because of these considerations, I ask the Subcommittee to support the President's

budget and provide the funds necessary to procure three Littoral Combat Ships in this year's budget.

JOINT HIGH SPEED VESSEL

Next, I'd like to share my support for the Joint High Speed Vessel, or JHSV. The JHSV is a shallow draft, high-speed catamaran used for the intra-theater transport of personnel, equipment and supplies, providing access to shallow water and often times austere off load points. The JHSV is the only Navy asset that combines high-payload capacity with high-speed, providing combatant commanders a unique sealift mobility capability. In automotive terms, the vessel has been compared to a pickup truck – able to support a wide range of missions for all the services.

The JHSV has demonstrated the ability to transport military forces, as well as humanitarian relief personnel and materiel. Since delivery of the initial JHSV, these ships have deployed globally and supported a wide

range of operations, including supporting disaster recovery operations after the Indian Ocean earthquake and Tsunami in 2004 and the Japanese earthquake and Tsunami in 2011. As we meet, USNS Spearhead is completing her second deployment to the 6th Fleet Area of Responsibility to support operations in EUCOM and AFRICOM. She is scheduled to make her second deployment to SOUTHCOM later this year. Clearly, the JHSV is effectively filling a critical gap.

The Department of Defense places a premium on the ability of U.S. military forces to deploy quickly to a full spectrum of engagements. In addition, the Department values the ability of U.S. forces to debark and embark in a wide range of port environments, from modern to austere. The JHSV has demonstrated the ability to effectively support both of these needs.

Furthermore, the Navy, Marine Corps and Special Forces have all expressed interest in increasing the capability of the JHSV to support

additional missions. Studies are currently underway to accommodate the MV-22 Osprey and to provide increased capability to support Navy/Marine Corps sea-basing requirements.

The JHSV is currently in serial production with a stable and highly trained work force; we are benefiting from the efficiencies gained through the construction of the initial six vessels. In order to ensure the capability to build these ships to meet Fleet demand, and maintain the affordable price, we need to keep the production line open.

Unfortunately, without further procurement in FY16, the line will close.

Like the LCS, the JHSV program provides the Navy with a very affordable and capable ship. At roughly \$180M per ship, the JHSV costs a fraction of what other shipbuilding programs cost, and with production steaming along, new JHSVs are rolling off the line every six months. The program has clearly matured into what can only be

considered efficient, serial production. We shouldn't let that go to waste.

Thank you very much for your time today. I appreciate the opportunity to share my thoughts on these two valuable ships with the Subcommittee.