



# **Chairman Rodney Frelinghuysen**

*Subcommittee on Defense, House Committee on Appropriations*

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## **Navy-Marine Corps Posture Hearing March 1, 2016 Opening Statement As Prepared**

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The Committee will come to order.

This morning the subcommittee continues a series of open defense posture and budget hearings with our military services, our combatant commands and other major components of our armed forces.

Today we focus on the fiscal year 2017 budget request and the posture of the Navy and Marine Corps.

Joining us this morning is Secretary of the Navy, Ray Mabus, who will be testifying before this Committee for the final time.

I understand that Secretary Mabus is now the longest serving Secretary since the age of steam and sail in the early 1900s! Thank you for your service for these last several years, and we wish you good luck in your future endeavors.

We also welcome for the first time, ADM John Richardson, Chief of Naval Operations and GEN Robert Neller, the 37<sup>th</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps

In this time of rapidly expanding threats to our national security, our goal in these hearings - and in our fiscal year 2017 bill - is to make sure that our sailors and Marines (and their families) have what they need.

Every day brings another report regarding China's attempts to assert themselves in the western Pacific. They are building ships, submarines, underwater submarine pens, naval militia forces and cutting edge weapons at an alarming rate.

In the South China Sea, they construct runways, air defense radar systems and missile batteries on disputed islands. They are bent on denying us access to airspace and challenge us at every opportunity. Their actions test our Rules of Engagement on a regular basis!

And then there's the regime of King Jung Un in North Korea, which continues to illegally launch satellites and test missile and nuclear systems. These provocative actions taken by North Korea undermine global security.

Likewise, Iran is building naval capacity and sophisticated anti-ship missiles to menace our forces in the Persian Gulf.

At the same time, a newly aggressive Russia expands and modernize its surface and submarine forces. These fleets are now more active in the Atlantic and the Mediterranean than at any time since the Cold War. They are also expanding a naval base to allow for new ballistic missile submarines in Kamchatka in the northern Pacific.

With all of these current and emerging threats, and a new "pivot" to Europe, still has yet to lay out its Pacific" strategy. While such a pivot surely requires a greater emphasis on the Navy and Marine Corps, we continue to see budget requests that only marginally provide for an increased naval presence in the Pacific.

Once again, all of us remain concerned with the core of the Navy – ships and shipbuilding and the shipbuilding industrial base. After much talk of a 313 ship Navy, today the Navy has 272 deployable ships.

For Fiscal Year 2017, the goal is to have 287 deployable ships. I continue to ask whether this is enough. Are we building enough ships and submarines to decisively defend against and deter our enemies in all corners of the globe, including the Arctic?

You have heard me say this before: when it comes to ships - numbers matter! Yes, quantity has a quality all its own!

In addition to the *quantity* of ships, all of us are concerned with the mix of ships – submarines, surface combatants, amphibs, support ships - and how they are operated and maintained. The logistics "tail" is important, as is what the "tyranny of distance" in the Pacific does to their service-lives.

In this era of budget constraints, we need to make sure that we are "making every dollar count" by investing in the correct ships, in the correct numbers, at the correct time.

We also need to ensure that we are investing in the right weapons systems and advanced technology for the immediate threats we face, not just future conflicts. A strategy of playing "catch-up" will only encourage more dangerous and aggressive behavior from our adversaries.

So I need to say right up-front that we all need to work extremely closely together to ensure the funding you are appropriated is sufficient to take care of our Sailors and Marines and maintain your readiness at the highest possible level.

On behalf of all our Committee members, I ask you to convey to the sailors and Marines you command our deep gratitude for their skill, dedication, and sacrifice (and that of their families) – illustrated by multiple deployments - in the defense of America and our interests worldwide.

We have much to talk about – F-35s, Littoral Combat Ships, cruisers, readiness, end strength to name a few issues. We look forward to your comments and an informative question and answer session.

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