

Appropriations Member Day Statement
Defense Subcommittee
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Alabama's First District
March 9, 2017

Chairwoman Granger, Ranking Member Visclosky, distinguished members of the committee; it is my pleasure to appear before this Committee once again this year to testify on two issues important to our national security: the Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) program and the Expeditionary Fast Transport (EPF) formerly known as the Joint High Speed Vessel program.

I would be remiss if I did not begin by thanking the Committee for its support of a third LCS in the Fiscal Year 2017 Defense Appropriations bill we are considering this week.

I am here to articulate why funding three LCS in Fiscal Year 2018 is so important to the Navy, the program, the industrial base, and American tax payers.

Three LCS is the minimum sustainable number required to produce these ships and achieve a 40% reduction in man-hours. Because of concentrated efforts by the Navy and the shipyards, construction efficiencies have been identified and

implemented reducing each ship by almost a half million man-hours. This, as I am sure the Committee knows, equates to a significant cost savings of 15-20%. These savings can only be achieved by continuing a hot production line and maintaining a skilled workforce. The shipyards in Marinette, Wisconsin and Mobile, Alabama have been extremely clear that three ships is the minimum number to create cost and time savings to complete each ship.

The Trump Administration is faced with overcoming significant hurdles set in place by the Obama Administration. Decisions were made which put the future of our naval fleet at risk. For example the Navy has been and continues to be steadfast that their requirement for small surface combatants is still 52 ships. Despite the Navy Leadership's articulation of this need, former Secretary of Defense Ash Carter attempted to decrease the number of LCS from 52 total ships down to 40 and require a down select to a single shipyard in Fiscal Year 2019.

The Navy's Force Structure Analysis, which was completed late last year, articulates the need for a 355 ship Navy and maintains the requirement for 52 Littoral Combat Ships. Furthermore, three separate alternative studies aimed at reconstituting our Navy with an optimized fleet have been completed over the past few weeks. Each one of these studies identifies the need for a larger naval fleet

and call for an increase in small surface combatants over the current 30-year shipbuilding plan. The only means to produce the desired number of small surface combatants is to continue building at least 3 LCS per year.

The Navy is advancing strategic concepts to maintain control of sea lanes by using distributed lethality and flexibility. The LCS, specifically the USS Coronado, is outfitted with an anti-ship missile defense system and over-the-horizon missile systems. These added capabilities now require our adversaries to pay much closer attention to the location of the LCS. The combined speed and lethality of LCS enables the Navy, at a low cost, to reshape the Russian and Chinese calculus of our forces in places such as the South China Sea.

The USS Coronado participated in the 2016 Rim of the Pacific Exercise, the world's largest naval exercise with participants from over 25 nations including the Chinese. I was fortunate to attend RIMPAC and go aboard the USS Coronado as she conducted exercises that demonstrated to the world just how capable the LCS. The sailors and officers of Coronado were proud of their ship and confident in the capabilities LCS brings to the fight – and trust me our adversaries were watching.

Following RIMPAC, the Coronado replaced the USS Fort Worth on a rotational deployment to Singapore. The LCS are perfect for the Asia-Pacific region because these are shallow draft vessels capable of can get to places larger surface ships often cannot get to in that very important part of the world. I visited Singapore just two weeks ago and met with the Admiral that employs these ships, and he stressed to me that the requests from our partner nations to work with the LCS are in higher demand than we have ships available. He indicated that he needs more LCS in theater as soon as possible.

Just last month, in testimony before the Armed Services Committee, Admiral Moran, the Vice Chief of Naval Operations, stated “The Navy is smaller today than it has been in the last 99 years.” This is at a time when our adversaries have been investing in their navies for the past few decades. I urge this committee to fund a 355 ship Navy and to recognize that the LCS is an essential component of our future fleet and critical to the success of Navy.

Next, I’d like to share my support for the Expeditionary Fast Transport commonly known as the EPF. The EPF is a shallow draft, high-speed catamaran small amphibious vessel used for the intra-theater support of personnel, equipment and supplies. I’ve talked to Combatant Commanders, the Marine Corps, and the

Military Sealift Command about the EPF, and each have stressed its importance and unique capabilities.

These ships are making an impact around the world. They have participated in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief following the tsunamis in India and Japan. They have operated in SOUTHCOM for the counter-drug mission, in EUCOM for anti-piracy missions, and in PACOM for theater security operations. As we meet, the USNS Trenton is forward deployed to Naval Forces Europe-Africa Command's area of operation, performing intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance missions. Last month, USNS Spearhead deployed with an embarked medical team to conduct civil-military operations where a variety of medical services will be provided to over 15,000 people.

Clearly, these vessels are effectively filling critical roles for all Combatant Commanders. The stated requirement for the number of these ships is 18, but to this point 8 have been delivered and another 4 are under contract. The Department of Defense places a premium on the ability of U.S. military forces to deploy quickly to a full spectrum of engagements. The EPF has demonstrated the ability to effectively support these needs and more.

The EPF 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 eight vessels. In order to ensure the capability to build these ships, and maintain such an affordable price, we need to keep the production line open. Unfortunately, without further procurement in Fiscal Year 2018, this line will close.

The EPF program provides the Navy with a very affordable and capable ship. At roughly \$225 million per ship, the EPF is a fraction of what other shipbuilding programs cost. The program has clearly matured into what can only be considered efficient, serial production. As we work toward a Navy of 355 ships, we must capitalize on low-cost, high production product lines.

As a member of the Armed Services Committee, I have had multiple opportunities to go aboard both classes of vessels. I have been able to follow these vessels from construction to commissioning ceremonies to training exercises to day-to-day operations. I have seen them as they operate forward deployed in South East Asia. I have talked to the fine sailors who operate these vessels and the Navy Operators that utilize these assets for strategic purposes. The feedback I get from the fleet

has consistently been that they need more Littoral Combat Ships and more Expeditionary Fast Transports.

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