

Opening Statement of Chairman McKeon

WASHINGTON— The House Armed Services Committee held a hearing today on [The Fiscal Year 2014 National Defense Authorization Budget Request from the Department of the Navy](#). Chairman Howard P. "Buck" McKeon made the following opening statement as prepared for delivery:

Witness testimony can be found on the [Committee Document Repository website](#) or linked below. All witness testimony is as prepared for, and embargoed until delivery.

"Before we start today, it is only appropriate that we pause for a moment of silence in remembrance of the victims of yesterday's Boston attacks. I know the thoughts and prayers of everyone on this committee are with the families

"Thank you for joining us today as we consider the President's Fiscal Year 2014 budget request for the Department of the Navy. I appreciate our witnesses' testimony here today and their support of our naval forces.

"The Navy and Marine Corps team continue to serve in a stressed environment and in my estimation, the fundamentals are unsustainable. The "sustained surge" that the Navy continues to employ to meet the combatant commander requirements have driven our force structure to the ragged edge. Surface ship deployments of seven to nine months are the new normal. While the material readiness of our surface forces has shown some improvement over the last year, these improvements will be reversed as we begin to implement sequestration.

"As to the Marine Corps, they continue on a path of contraction, reducing to a force structure of 182,000 marines. Their material readiness after a decade of war is at abysmal lows. At this force structure level and with this material readiness, the Marine Corps will be challenged to meet our global commitments and make no mistake about it, these challenges will invariably lead to placing more and more of our service members at risk in future conflicts.

"Ironically, this sustained Navy force deployment model and Marine Corps force structure reductions will be further exacerbated with the administration's fiscal year 2014 budget request. Instead of adding ships and force structure to reverse this sustained surge, the Navy is preparing to accelerate the retirement of ships and reduce the combat force structure to an all time low of 273 ships. This reduced force structure is in contravention to even their own goal of 306 ships and calls from the Independent Panel Assessment of the 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review to support a navy force of 346 ships. And the Marine Corps continues their general reductions that will be further challenged as diminishing budgets threaten red line determinations.

"Further aggravating this diminution of our force structure, Secretary Hagel has initiated Strategic Choices and Management Review that is expected to report out later this spring. This review will be used to inform the next Quadrennial Defense Review and will serve as a seminal document to inform other strategic documents and operational plans. Once again, we are allowing our budget process to drive strategy, a dangerous direction for our nation.

"My friends, our fiscal decisions have real consequences. Using the Department of Defense budget allocations as a tool in a grand budget bargain will only serve to further shrink our force structure. Our ability to project power in times of global instability will continue to atrophy. The risk that our marines and sailors will not return in times of future conflict will continue to grow. As America steps back, someone else will step forward.

"Now is a time for some real leadership. I hope to do my part and reverse this general decline of our Navy and Marine Corps. I am pleased that my committee led the way during last year's legislative cycle and provided the authority to retain four cruisers in fiscal year 2013 that were slated for early retirement. I look forward to continuing this restraint on the administration to ensure that our nation is able to retain the programmed service life of our naval fleet.

"I understand that our committee, a reflection of our national ideals, is appropriately assessing the direction of our military. I think that we can lead from behind and quietly support a weakening of our military or we can seek to retain a military force that best serves the strategic interests of our nation. I would urge the administration to share in my vision and ensure that our forces, if ever called to conflict, will not just win but will strategically deter future aggressors from even trying to assess whether military conflict with the United States is a reasonable alternative. We cannot fail in this endeavor.

Witnesses

General James F. Amos, USMC

Commandant of the Marine Corps, U.S. Marine Corps

- Witness Statement [[PDF](#)]
- Witness Biography [[PDF](#)]

Admiral Jonathan W. Greenert, USN

Chief of Naval Operations, U.S. Navy

- Witness Statement [[PDF](#)]
- Witness Biography [[PDF](#)]

The Honorable Ray Mabus

Secretary of the Navy

- Witness Statement [[PDF](#)]
- Witness Biography [[PDF](#)]