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UNTIL RELEASED BY THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS

STATEMENT OF

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BEFORE THE

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS

MILITARY READINESS: FISCAL YEAR 2023 PROGRAM UPDATE HEARING

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Chairman Garamendi, Ranking Member Waltz, and distinguished members of the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Readiness, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the readiness posture of your Navy. I look forward to discussing the comprehensive actions the Navy is taking to deliver consistently ready forces and to develop and support ready and resilient Sailors. Our full Navy team appreciates the committee's continued partnership as we work together to deliver these outcomes.

Today, the Navy is delivering significant warfighting advantage to the Joint Force at the front lines of strategic competition, through our survivable strategic deterrence force and combat-credible forces deployed forward across all domains. Our adversaries today seek to challenge this warfighting advantage and, through military buildup and coercive behavior, undermine the existing international rules-based order. In addressing these challenges, the men and women of the United States Navy work hard every day to deliver sustained excellence, maintaining a competitive edge that keeps America safe and the global economy working. In 2021, the Navy-Marine Corps team generated combat power with broad impact—unmatched by any other naval force—while flying 1 million hours, sailing 22,000 days, and executing 59 major ship maintenance availabilities in order to support our allies, protect freedom of the seas, and project naval power around the globe from the Arctic to the South Pacific.

Foundational to delivering this significant impact is strong execution and resourcing of the Navy's force generation process, spanning each of the man, train and equip elements. Readiness remains the key enabler for naval superiority, and the President's Budget request for FY23 (PB-23) reflects that imperative, sustaining the Navy on a strong readiness vector.

Our Readiness Trajectory

The Navy is building today on the positive readiness gains achieved over the last four years, while recognizing that much work remains to be done. The Chief of Naval Operations' (CNO's)

“Get Real, Get Better” call to action remains a key engine for accelerating readiness performance. The Get Real, Get Better call to action is designed to scale the learning Navy has accrued over four years of force generation improvement, spanning significant progress in aviation mission capable numbers and the execution of ship maintenance, aircraft maintenance, and supply chain reform. Get Real, Get Better is designed to attack the variability between our best and weakest performers with clear standards for decision-making behavior and problem-solving, combined with tools, education and performance incentives. The *Bonhomme Richard* Fire, *Connecticut* grounding, and Red Hill are clear examples of the unacceptable outcomes that result from weak understanding of Navy-proven best practices. Get Real, Get Better will provide the leadership and problem-solving standards that we expect our people to embody and our talent management systems to reward—this movement is core to developing Sailors who lead, think and problem-solve better than any adversary.

Current Readiness

The Navy’s current readiness outcomes are delivered using the Optimized Fleet Response Plan (OFRP) force generation framework, which fields combat credible forces to meet Combatant Commander requirements. An important element of OFRP is exercising deploying units in challenging integrated battle problems to test their ability to prevail in Distributed Maritime Operations. The recent Large-Scale Exercise 2021 (LSE-21) was a strong example of innovation in this area, connecting eight fleet maritime operations centers, eight carrier strike group and amphibious ready group staffs, 30 ships and three Marine Expeditionary Forces into one Live-Virtual-Constructive (LVC) training environment. LSE-21 improved tactical performance in realistic high-end warfare, improved interoperability with our allies and partners, and was a significant validation of the power of large volume, high-end, LVC training to generate rigorous, effective training.

These fleet exercises are enabled by key investments in maritime and tactical training. Surface Warfare Officer proficiency continues to improve through comprehensive training curricula, assessments and a three-fold increase in ship-handling simulator hours since 2017. Advanced integrated combat simulators in our fleet concentration areas facilitate effective team training in high-end combat scenarios. Ready Relevant Learning reforms continue to modernize enlisted training by updating curricula and upgrading facilities in order to meet the technical demands of today's service and deliver a better trained Sailor to the fleet.

The Navy continues to work comprehensively to reduce risk in the maintenance phase of the OFRP as well, work that is actioned through Performance to Plan – Surface, with Commander Naval Surface Forces as the supported commander, Performance to Plan – Public Shipyards, with Commander Naval Sea Systems Command as the supported commander, and through the Learning-to-Action Board (L2AB), which is addressing the lessons learned from *Bonhomme Richard* Investigation and the Major Fires Review.

While much opportunity and work remains to achieve required ship maintenance performance, from 2019 to today these initiatives have decreased days of maintenance delay in our private sector surface ship CNO availabilities by 44 percent by working with our industry partners to improve planning, streamline burdensome administrative processes, level-load ports, improve the acquisition of long-lead-time material, and increase the rigor of safety standards for industrial activities.

The FY23 budget submission funds 41 private shipyard surface ship availabilities and builds on the positive results from the “Other Procurement, Navy” (OPN) pilot in contracting private sector maintenance across both coasts. Twenty-five surface ship availabilities are part of this effort in FY23. The OPN pilot is highly valued by our Navy workforce as well as the private sector, and we look forward to working with Congress to evaluate making this pilot permanent in the future as we collect and provide additional supporting data.

PB-23 commits to sustaining a public shipyard workforce of 37,080, a 40-percent increase over the last decade, in recognition of the importance of developing and sustaining a strong experience base in our tradesmen and shipyard artisans. Despite COVID challenges to production, the public shipyards have reduced maintenance delays by 32 percent since 2019. This progress is just a start, and we are taking action on multiple opportunities and initiatives to further improve aircraft carrier and submarine maintenance on-time completion rates.

In aviation readiness, the Naval Aviation Enterprise has reduced the excess time aircraft spend in depot maintenance and achieved the targeted 80-percent mission capable rate in our F/A-18 fleet over the last three years, despite COVID impacts. From this success, we have scaled best practices to several other Type-Model-Series with similar improvement. As a result of these improved mission capable rates, PB-23 requests a focused increase to the Flying Hour Program to sustain these hard-earned, required readiness levels across the fleet. Funding this account to the requested levels is critical to sustain the proficiency of our pilots and to increase our accessions pipeline throughput to get naval aviators to the fleet more quickly.

To improve productivity and reduce the stress associated with life at sea, since 2017 we have increased manning in ships and squadrons by adding over 10,000 more sailors to sea-going commands while the fleet grew by 19 ships. As these new accession cohorts progress through training and report to their commands, we are beginning to see the positive impact of these end-strength investments. For example, with an average crew size of 265, *Arleigh Burke*-class Destroyers (DDG's) today have an average of 25 more Sailors aboard compared to 10 years ago, and will have a total of 285 onboard by 2023. The Navy continues to work both increased Sailor supply and reduced Sailor demand initiatives aggressively.

To further address stress, fatigue and mental health concerns among our Sailors, we have implemented analysis-based fatigue management policies and improved access to mental health providers. We are implementing a holistic approach with both medical and non-medical mental

health assistance aimed at coordinating mental health care, optimizing performance, promoting signature behaviors, and suicide prevention. In FY21, nearly 20 percent of mental health visits were conducted virtually, allowing for more flexibility in connecting Sailors to providers. Valuing the importance of giving Sailors access to mental health resources, we have increased the percentage of our active duty mental health providers assigned to naval operational and training commands from 29 percent in 2019 to over 35 percent today. We also have initiatives underway to reduce the workload on our crews, spanning from reducing the scope of missions assigned to a specific ship, to reducing the daily maintenance workload by use of condition based management tools, to a Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA) task to examine maintenance periodicities for appropriateness based on operating history. We are also strongly focused on improving quality of life for both our Sailors and military families, including improvements to unaccompanied and family housing, and other programs that contribute to Sailor readiness and well-being.

Through the hard work of our Sailors' day-to-day preventative actions to keep COVID in check, the Navy has met all Combatant Commander operational tasking. While we work with public shipyards and our industrial partners to mitigate COVID impacts to their performance, PB-23 supports transition to steady-state mitigation of endemic public health threats by continuing robust testing, data reporting, and dynamic public health response capabilities for medical, logistics, and operational commanders.

Future Readiness

Future readiness remains a focus and we must balance this with the current requirements for modernization and recapitalization across the Navy portfolio. Restrictions on divestments, compounded by a historically high inflation rate and congressional reductions to our operating and sustainment accounts, are making it challenging to find the right balance. These factors resulted in prioritization of investments and hard choices in PB-23, including funding readiness accounts to

affordable levels and divesting of platforms with lower warfighting value as we balanced under directed fiscal guidance. Retaining lower priority capacity results in significant manning, operating, and sustainment costs in future budget cycles that limit Navy's ability to modernize and grow new capacity that is more relevant for strategic competition. We will continue to work with Congress on these challenges to ensure the Navy can operate, sustain, and improve the readiness of the future fleet.

As we work together to improve readiness, we are also addressing the infrastructure modernization and repair imperative, prioritizing those issues which most impact mission, quality-of-life, environmental stewardship and climate resiliency. Continuing congressional support to improve our Navy's organic repair infrastructure is critical to ensuring we modernize to meet future threats and maintain readiness of today's force.

The Shipyard Infrastructure Optimization Program (SIOP) is a long-term investment in our public shipyards that will allow us to better accommodate Virginia-class submarine and Ford-class carrier maintenance in our four public shipyards. PB-23 reinforces the Navy's commitment to this critical project with an FY23 request of \$1.7 billion for planning and design, construction of new dry-docks, optimization studies, modernization, and equipment upgrades, as well as over \$8 billion programmed over the five-year Future Years Defense Program (FYDP). The Fleet Readiness Centers' Infrastructure Optimization Plan (FIOP) similarly outlines the recapitalization of critical equipment and facilities that our aviation depots need to sustain the gains made in aviation readiness. The FIOP is resourced in PB-23 with \$195 million in FY23 and over \$1 billion in the FYDP.

Expanding the Fallon Range Training Complex (FRTC) remains a top legislative priority for the Navy. This expansion is critical to fully prepare our Carrier Air Wings and SEAL teams for the demands of today's fight by allowing them to train realistically, using the full capability of our high-end weaponry. We have made progress with the Department of Interior, the State of Nevada, Churchill County, and local tribes on working together to find an outcome that considers the

concerns of all stakeholders. We look forward to working with Congress this year to codify details of the proposed FRTC expansion.

Our Sailors, Civilians and Navy Families: the Foundation of Readiness

The Navy's people are our most vital element and core to remaining the most powerful Navy in the world. We owe our Sailors and Navy civilians a work environment and community where they are valued for their talent, treated fairly, and supported throughout their career. The Navy continues to promote a culture of respect and resiliency for our Sailors to thrive in the face of personal and professional adversity through our Culture of Excellence framework designed to promote signature healthy behaviors and enhance warfighting excellence. The proposed 4.6 percent pay raise for all military and civilian personnel—the largest in 20 years—signals our commitment to our dedicated team. Similarly, the Department's increased investment of \$150 million in child and youth programs supports our Navy families with affordable, high-quality child-care options so that they can focus on their important contributions in support of national defense. Sailor education opportunities are increased at multiple levels across the fleet: PB-23 requests increased resources for US Naval Community College (USNCC), as well as Tuition Assistance, as core elements of developing and educating our future warfighters and leaders.

Nothing erodes Sailor trust and unit readiness more than crimes of sexual assault and sexual harassment within our ranks. The Navy is fully committed to incorporating the approved recommendations from the Independent Review Commission for Sexual Assault in the Military (IRC). The Department of the Navy's related \$113 million increase in PB-23 funding spans four lines of effort: accountability, prevention, climate and culture, and victim care and support. The implementation of the IRC recommendations provides a best-in-practice sexual assault accountability, prevention, and response program, and the implementation plan provides a deliberate process with checkpoints to assess plan progress.

Conclusion

As evidenced by both Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine and China's provocative and disruptive behavior in the South China Sea, the United States requires a lethal, capable, and *ready* Navy to defend the homeland, support our allies, and provide enduring advantage. Our partnership with Congress is essential to providing the required Navy readiness, and I look forward to continued transparent and productive work with the committee to ensure the Navy is learning, improving, and delivering the readiness required to answer the nation's call.