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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS

STATEMENT OF  
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BEFORE THE  
  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS

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## **Introduction**

Chairman Bergman, Ranking Member Garamendi, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to provide an update on the Department of the Navy's (DON) Energy, Installations, and Environment portfolio. I look forward to working with this Committee to ensure our installations are a source of strength for our Sailors and Marines and are postured to support the priorities of the President, the Secretary of War, and the Secretary of the Navy.

As a third-generation Naval Academy graduate, strengthening the foundation of how our Sailors and Marines live, train, and operate is deeply personal. I will tackle these responsibilities with the urgency required to maintain the world's most lethal and effective fighting force and deliver peace through strength.

## **Department of the Navy Priorities: The Foundation of Warfighting**

To counter the pacing threat from China, the Secretary of the Navy's mandate is clear: we must drive change more effectively. The Secretary's priorities – strengthening our shipbuilding and maritime industrial base, fostering an adaptive and accountable warfighting culture, and improving the health and welfare of our people – are rooted in the truth that wars are won by building and replenishing combat power faster than the adversary.

This cannot be achieved without a resilient shore infrastructure. You cannot surge fleet readiness with failing utilities, collapsing waterfronts, or constrained maintenance facilities. A capable and modern shore is inseparable from maritime dominance. Fostering a warfighting culture requires us to acknowledge what is broken, experiment with new solutions, and move at speed.

## **Installation Security and Resilience: Our Power Projection Platforms**

Our installations are not simply support structures; they are weapon systems. A weapon system includes all equipment, materials, and services required for its operation. Our installations provide power, water, maintenance capacity, logistics, force protection, and command and control to enable ships, aircraft, and expeditionary units to generate and deliver combat power. If this infrastructure weapons system fails, then our ability to deliver lethality across the force is at risk.

On the security front, we face daily challenges. Large numbers of unauthorized personnel attempt to enter our installations, from mistaken civilians to nefarious actors testing our defenses. We also see growing threats from Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS), and our defensive capabilities are not keeping pace with the evolution of these offensive systems. We must be prepared for a situation in which a trained and capable enemy deploys UAS at scale against our critical assets.

On the resilience front, decades of underinvestment have left much of our infrastructure past its useful life. Leaders made difficult choices to prioritize operational forces, but those decisions created a deferred risk that is now coming due. Without aggressive modernization, our facilities will continue to deteriorate toward catastrophic failure, a vulnerability our adversaries understand and will seek to exploit. For example, unclassified federal reporting shows that U.S.

water and energy utilities collectively experienced dozens of confirmed cyber incidents annually over the last five years, with many more attempted intrusions against power, water, or industrial control systems with military relevance.

The path forward will require changes in behavior from all stakeholders. Our approach must be a requirements-informed, data-driven decision process that ties our infrastructure investment dollars to the mission. The connection to mission can often get lost among the thousands of projects in our system, but it is incumbent on leadership to cut through the noise and make appropriate investments. Two facts we need to reflect on. Number one, we operate in a resource-constrained environment. Number two, we have a fiduciary responsibility to the American taxpayer. Those two facts require us not to accept the current processes and procedures, but to become more efficient with every dollar we are entrusted with.

### **Driving Change: Modernizing at the Speed of Relevance**

The DON cannot modernize at the required speed using business-as-usual. The slow timelines we have come to accept impose a real readiness tax on our force. Drawing on 25 years of private sector experience, I know we can do better by first changing how we approach the problem.

#### *Industry Engagement and Commercial Partnerships*

Driving change begins with deliberate partnership. We have a robust, innovative private sector that builds complex infrastructure every day, with schedule discipline, cost control, mature supply chains, and a trained workforce. Through expanded use of alternative authorities – including enhanced use leases, public-private partnerships, utilities privatization, power purchase agreements, and other flexible contracting tools – the DON can deliver infrastructure outside the standard Military Construction (MILCON) pathway without compromising our high standards for safety and quality. This allows us to focus MILCON resources on unique military projects while leveraging commercial capacity for everything else.

#### *Leveraging Expanded Authorities*

To execute, we must use every tool available. A suite of Title 10 authorities is available to execute smaller, faster, and more flexible infrastructure and support projects. We will expand the use of Intergovernmental Support Agreements to partner with local communities, leverage Other Transaction Authority for rapid innovative energy and infrastructure solutions, use increased Unspecified Minor Military Construction thresholds to push more projects to installation-level execution, use Repair-by-Replacement authority to recapitalize failing barracks earlier, and pursue recently authorized accelerated and progressive design-build approaches to shorten timelines. These tools are critical to moving work out of backlogs and into execution.

#### *Reforming Military Construction*

Today, MILCON projects average seven to nine years from identification to completion, with cost premiums estimated at 42 percent above industry prices. This is too slow and too expensive for the operational environment we face.

To change this, our reform efforts focus on two fronts. In order for new construction, we are shifting to minimum viable projects scoped tightly to essential mission needs, expanding the use of industrialized construction, and applying universal designs for standard facilities. By applying

these principles, we are already achieving dramatic results. For example, a recent P-8A hangar project at Naval Air Station Jacksonville achieved a 58 percent cost reduction with no loss of scope, while a barracks project for 1,400 Marines at Marine Corps Air Station Yuma went from concept to construction contract award in just four months—a fraction of the typical timeline.

In addition to this, the DON is shifting our investment focus. Consistent with the FY25 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), we will place increased investment in Facilities Sustainment, Restoration, and Modernization to bring our existing mission-critical facilities up to standard. Additionally, we will explore a targeted demolition initiative to remove excess and obsolete infrastructure, reducing our costly maintenance backlog and shrinking our footprint.

In parallel, a Department of War–led tri-service working group is streamlining the Unified Facilities Criteria to reduce or eliminate discretionary requirements and align criteria with proven industry standards. The revised criteria are expected this summer.

This balanced approach – building new things smarter, taking care of what we have, and getting rid of what we no longer need – is the foundation of a sustainable and effective infrastructure program.

## **Modernization in Action: Addressing Critical Portfolio Needs**

### *Caring for Our People*

The directive from the Secretary of the Navy is clear: provide quality housing for our Sailors, Marines, and their families. The Chief of Naval Operations' guidance leads with "Sailors First," and the Commandant of the Marine Corps' Force Design initiative depends on elite Marines who are not worried about mold, failing HVAC, or power outages in their homes and can instead remain focused on their warfighting readiness. We acknowledge that in too many cases, the material condition of our housing has not met this standard, and that is unacceptable. We are tackling this readiness issue with a renewed sense of urgency, applying significant resources and leadership focus across the enterprise.

- **Unaccompanied Housing**: The Secretary of War established the Barracks Task Force to accelerate improvements in unaccompanied housing. To address urgent needs, the Navy and Marine Corps allocated \$375 million and \$350 million, respectively, from the One Big Beautiful Bill Act for near-term restoration. Long-term investments continue under the Marine Corps' Barracks 2030 and the Navy's "Sailors First" programs aimed at improving the management of barracks, modernizing the inventory, and updating the refresh rate of materiel. We are also expanding the use of privatized unaccompanied housing projects in Fleet concentration areas like Hampton Roads and San Diego, which are delivering new, quality barracks faster than traditional military construction.
- **Family Housing**: The Military Housing Privatization Initiative remains our primary tool for family housing. We must hold ourselves and our Public-Private Venture partners accountable for results. We have ensured the Tenant Bill of Rights applies to all 95 DON installations and are working to improve resident satisfaction by improving maintenance response times and overall housing quality.

### *Shipyard Infrastructure Optimization Program (SIOP)*

SIOP remains one of our highest readiness priorities. Decades of underinvestment in our four public shipyards contributed to over 1,300 lost operational days for aircraft carriers and over 12,500 for submarines. By recapitalizing these critical assets through a combination of MILCON and industry expertise, SIOP will increase maintenance throughput and return combat-ready platforms to the Fleet faster. To date, over 50 SIOP projects have been finished and approximately 40 are under construction, representing a combined investment of more than \$7.6 billion.

### *Energy Dominance*

American energy infrastructure is a strategic advantage. Installations without power cannot train forces, and platforms without fuel cannot fight. In FY25 alone, the DON consumed approximately 34 million barrels of fuel, underscoring the need for assured fuel access. To ensure resilience, the DON requires a layered energy-generation approach to eliminate single points of failure.

The DON issued a solicitation on August 7, 2025, for innovative energy solutions, including advanced nuclear reactor technology. This effort prioritizes expanded natural gas infrastructure as a bridge to nuclear power. The Department is also leveraging financing tools to accelerate modernization. In FY25, we awarded \$227 million through Energy Savings Performance Contracts and Utility Energy Service Contracts to modernize infrastructure at the Naval Research Laboratory, Naval Surface Warfare Center Port Hueneme, and Marine Corps Air Station Miramar. Projects spanned from boiler plant upgrades to HVAC replacements.

Since 2023, we have executed \$124 million in operational energy projects, achieving a 46 percent fielding rate into Naval systems. To validate resilience, the DON exceeded its Title 10 mandate of five annual black start exercises by completing 18 in FY25, learning lessons on misconceptions about available power assets and inadequate backup fuel supplies.

### *Modernizing Training Ranges*

The DON's training ranges are a cornerstone of naval readiness. We have invested in modernizing key ranges like the Atlantic Undersea Test and Evaluation Center, the Pacific Missile Range Facility, and Point Mugu Sea Range. At the Fallon Range Training Complex, we have continued sustained engagements with the federally recognized tribes of northern Nevada, successfully finalizing a tribal access agreement to ensure continued access to ancestral lands within the range. In parallel with this engagement, we are making steady progress on the required land acquisition, having secured 92 of the 224 private parcels needed for the expansion. The DON proactively works to ensure our ranges remain operational to enable integrated air, maritime, space, and cyber training against pacing-threat scenarios.

### **Beyond the Fenceline: Partnering with Our Communities**

The DON manages approximately 4.6 million acres, including 170 runways, 391 hangars, 457 piers, and 128 small arms ranges. Our installations do not operate in isolation. They are deeply dependent on the communities that surround them, relying every day on local power grids and water systems. Our Sailors, Marines, and their families live, shop, attend school, and build their

lives in communities outside the fence line. Strong, enduring partnerships are essential to mission success.

#### *Tribal and Native Hawaiian Relations*

The DON continues to meet its Trust responsibility to federally recognized tribes. In accordance with the FY24 NDAA, we have established Tribal and Native Hawaiian Liaisons at each installation to ensure consistent, respectful engagement. We are in active consultation with the Suquamish Indian Tribe on the proposed Multi-Mission Dry Dock at Puget Sound Naval Shipyard, a critical element for SIOP.

#### *Community and Local Partnerships*

Our partnerships extend beyond the fence line through tangible investments that create mutual benefit. We use key programs to invest in shared community assets while also protecting our ability to train and operate, ensuring our success is intertwined with the prosperity and resilience of our neighbors.

- Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation (OLDCC): OLDCC provides technical and financial assistance to states, counties, and other communities fostering cooperation with military installations to enhance the military mission, achieve facility and infrastructure savings, reduce operating costs, address encroachment and incompatible land use issues, support military families, and increase military, civilian, and industrial capabilities for our national security. In FY25, the OLDCC awarded seven grants totaling \$85.6M to local DON communities for projects such as public-school repairs that benefit military children, utility grid upgrades that enhance energy resilience both on and off base, and transportation improvements that ease access for everyone. These investments strengthen our community bonds and directly support the quality of life of our people.
- Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) Program: The REPI Program is essential for protecting our ability to train and operate without restriction. Through REPI, we partner with state governments, local communities, and private partners to prevent incompatible development from encroaching on our installations and training ranges. This past year, the DON leveraged \$50 million in REPI funding to support 41 projects across 22 installations. A key example is the \$10 million investment in the Pacific to establish protective buffer zones around high-value training ranges, preventing encroachment and increasing installation readiness and resilience. This effort ensures our forces can continue to train in realistic, unconstrained environments that are essential to maintaining readiness.

#### *Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Program*

The DON has invested \$7 billion across five BRAC rounds, achieving \$14.2 billion in total savings. Approximately 96% of designated property has been transferred for productive reuse. The remaining 4% of designated property is encumbered by environmental cleanup challenges. Most notably, the introduction of onerous post-clean-up administrative restrictions by the state upon transferees is blocking development at California locations with final radiological cleanup remedies that are protective under Federal and state health standards.

### *Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility (RHBFSF)*

When things go wrong, we must be held accountable. Red Hill is an example of this. Community relationship building started with the commitment to the decommissioning and closure of the RHBFSF in Hawaii. In FY25, the Navy Closure Task Force – Red Hill commenced tank cleaning in eight of 20 fuel tanks, finished the installation of 47 groundwater monitoring wells, and executed 90% of pipeline inspections and cleaning in preparation for the removal of over three miles of fuel pipelines. The task force hosted open houses, webinars, podcasts, roundtables, neighborhood meetings, and state-led discussion forums to maintain open, transparent communication with the community.

### **Rebalancing Regulatory Requirements for Mission Success**

The DON is committed to meeting all its legal obligations while ensuring these processes support, rather than hinder, mission readiness. We have a well-established record of protecting human health and the environment, but we must also be clear-eyed about the cumulative cost and mission impact of these requirements.

### *National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)*

The DON works diligently to meet its NHPA responsibilities. The DON finished NHPA Section 106 consultations for over 6,700 actions, with fewer than one percent resulting in mitigation requirements. To streamline future consultations, we removed over 37,000 properties from NHPA Section 110 evaluation requirements. We thank the committee for extending streamlining authorities in the FY26 NDAA. At the same time, our increasingly aging infrastructure adds to our NHPA compliance requirements as we modernize the force.

### *Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) Response*

Our response to PFAS is at the forefront of our environmental cleanup program and is designed to protect the health of service members and surrounding communities. DON actions include removing PFAS-containing aqueous film-forming foam from use ashore, implementing new EPA drinking water standards, and aggressively addressing past DON releases of PFAS at 159 active and closed installations under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA). Under CERCLA, the DON uses a risk-based approach prioritizing responses to the most significant and immediate risks, or “worst first”, to maximize the protection of human health and the environment.

### *Regulatory Reform*

While our environmental program has been effective in supporting our readiness activities, the cumulative financial burden of all regulatory requirements is unsustainable, costing the DON approximately \$1.2 billion or more annually. This is not about avoiding our environmental duties but about seeking a more efficient path. Following the model of last year’s successful federal effort to reform the National Environmental Policy Act, we believe a similar common-sense approach can be applied to other areas. We will continue to follow the law, but we are seeking partnership to find relief in select areas where the current approach is no longer sustainable.

### **Conclusion**

The work across this portfolio never ends. The needs are material, and the impact on the mission is direct. We owe it to our Sailors, Marines, civilians, and their families to achieve better outcomes, and that requires holding ourselves accountable for every dollar invested. When we see inefficiencies, we will find the root cause and aggressively execute a new path. Not everything we try will work the first time, but we will own it, learn from it, and re-attack.

The message from Secretary Phelan in his recent address has been clear: we must meet the complexity and scale of the challenge before us with a true sense of urgency. That urgency means delivering the modern, resilient shore foundation upon which a ready, modernized Fleet depends. That is the standard we are driving toward. Admiring the problem is not a strategy; action is.

I thank the Committee for your continued advocacy and support for the Department of the Navy.