NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL RELEASED BY
THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TACTICAL AIR AND LAND FORCES

STATEMENT OF

FREDERICK J. STEFANY
ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE NAVY
RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND ACQUISITION ASN(RD&A)

AND

LIEUTENANT GENERAL MARK R. WISE
DEPUTY COMMANDANT FOR AVIATION

AND

REAR ADMIRAL ANDREW LOISELLE
DIRECTOR AIR WARFARE

BEFORE THE

TACTICAL AIR AND LAND FORCES SUBCOMMITTEE

OF THE

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

ON

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY ROTARY AVIATION PROGRAMS

JUNE 30, 2021

NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL RELEASED BY
THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TACTICAL AIR AND LAND FORCES

Chairman Norcross, Ranking Member Hartzler and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the Department of the Navy's (DON) Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 budget request for rotary aviation. Rotorcraft are essential to a full range of Navy and Marine Corps operations, and we thank Congress and this Committee for your support of these programs in the FY 2021 Authorization and Appropriation Acts.

In an interconnected and interdependent world, a dominant naval force and a strong maritime strategy are critical to the security of the Nation. The global security environment is increasingly influenced by our competitors; requiring the Navy and Marine Corps team to operate continually to provide credible combat power forward and a ready response force to global crises and disasters. As our national security posture evolves to confront new challenges, the DON continues to invest in key capabilities that maximize our naval power contribution to the Joint Force and ensure a proper balance of readiness, capability, and capacity within the limits of available resources.

The Department's rotorcraft capability is a key enabler of the Navy and Marine Corps ability to operate forward and conduct a broad range of military missions in support of the Joint Force. When coupled with air-capable ships, vertical lift aircraft provide speed, range and flexibility to give our Nation unmatched global reach and expeditionary agility. The versatility of these aircraft is unparalleled. Rotorcraft airframes can transport troops, equipment, and supplies from ships and land bases for amphibious assault and operations ashore. Encompassing over fifty percent of Naval Aviators, rotary pilots fly these aircraft to support a broad depth of missions, to include Anti-Submarine Warfare, Anti-Surface Warfare, Surveillance, Combat Search and Rescue, Humanitarian and Disaster Assistance, and organic Airborne Mine Countermeasures missions. They can fly these missions from practically anywhere, including ship decks, open water, unimproved landing sites, roof tops, and the White House lawn.

The Fiscal Year 2022 President's Budget Request

The President's FY 2022 budget advances key DON priorities to defend the nation, innovate and modernize the Department, increase resilience and readiness, and build a workforce to compete and win. It balances the urgent readiness needs of our force today with investments,

and reflects hard decisions to divest of less capable platforms and systems, freeing resources to invest in a future force that can deliver greater efficiency and effectiveness.

The Department will increase the lethality and capability of our aviation portfolio through leading edge technology development and platform modernization. The FY 2022 budget continues investments in key Navy and Marine Corps developmental programs, including prioritization of force design and delivery of Naval Expeditionary forces capable of imposing costs on global competitors.

The FY 2022 budget requests funding for 53 manned rotorcraft including the planned ramp-up of CH-53K King Stallion helicopter production. The budget prioritizes recapitalization of the Helicopter Training Fleet through procurement of the TH-73A. As part of the Advanced Helicopter Training System (AHTS), these aircraft will be vital to training future generations of rotary and tilt-rotor pilots for the Navy and Marine Corps.

This budget continues Research, Development, Test and Evaluation (RDT&E) investments in aviation enhancements and recapitalization efforts, such as Future Vertical Lift (FVL). The Department is working with our Service partners to support the FVL Family of Systems, including Navy's FVL Maritime Strike (MS) and the Marine Corps' FVL Attack Utility Replacement Aircraft (AURA). FVL (MS) and AURA will close key warfighting gaps and recapitalize capabilities lost when legacy rotary wing platforms reach service-life limits beginning in the late 2020's. In addition, the FY 2022 budget increases the overall Flying Hour Program to enable pilots to execute more of their training matrix. These increased investments in Aviation Training restore pilot production to meet Fleet needs, leading to improved pilot proficiency and safety.

Summary

The Department of the Navy continues to deliver aviation platforms with the capability we need to address today's maritime challenges while looking ahead to tomorrow's evolving security environment. With Congress' continued support, we will provide the Nation with the Integrated All-Domain Naval Power for the Joint Force required to win today and tomorrow.

Programmatic details regarding Navy and Marine Corps capabilities are summarized in the following section.

ASSAULT SUPPORT AND LOGISTICS SUPPORT AIRCRAFT

CH-53K Heavy Lift Replacement Program

As the only fully marinized heavy lift helicopter in the DoD, the CH-53K provides agile maritime logistical connectors with greater payloads and speed than any current or emerging rotorcraft. The CH-53K contributes to a more lethal joint force by enabling forces to rapidly transition from contact to blunt layer activities -- and back again. In the past year, the CH-53K program has demonstrated significant progress in executing development and flight test activities. To date, the CH-53K has flown nearly 2,300 developmental flight test hours and is nearing completion of all test activities in support of operational testing. Notably, the fire suppression system uses a more ecologically friendly HFC-125 suppressant, a technical milestone only a few other DON platforms have achieved. The Marine Corps Operational Test and Evaluation Squadron (VMX-1) received their first aircraft in October of 2020 and received two additional aircraft in March 2021. As of June 2021, VMX-1 has flown over 200 training hours in preparation for Initial Operational Test and Evaluation (IOT&E), which is expected to begin this summer. During FY 2022, the program will complete IOT&E and Live Fire Testing, continue to expand the CH-53K's envelope through ground and flight testing and analysis, and procure the sixth Low Rate Initial Production Lot.

The FY 2022 President's Budget requests $256.9 million in RDT&E to continue the CH-53K development and test, and $1.6 billion in APN for procurement of nine low rate initial production aircraft, including advanced procurement and initial spares.

CH/MH-53E

Operational demand for CH-53E, the DoD's only current heavy lift assault support aircraft, remains high. Continued execution of the H-53 Reset Initiative has mitigated challenges to the material condition of CH-53E from increased operations. To date, 44 aircraft have completed reset and accumulated approximately 26,300 flight hours. Reset returns fully mission capable aircraft to the fleet and recovers platform readiness, reducing both the cost per flight hour and maintenance man-hours per flight hour as the H-53 approaches 30 plus years of service. Continued reset and sustainment initiatives are critical to the success of the CH-53E until its replacement, the CH-53K, is delivered to the fleet.

The MH-53E continues to perform its primary mission of airborne Mine Countermeasures (AMCM), as well as transport of cargo and personnel. As the Navy modernizes its AMCM mission, the airborne capabilities have been fielded within the MH-60S helicopter and MQ-8 Fire Scout programs of record since 2017 and are fully operational.

To keep the CH-53E and MH-53E viable through their remaining services lives, the FY 2022 budget requests $84.4 million in APN and $2.9 million in RDT&E. This provides continued funding for T-64 engine reliability improvements, Integrated Vehicle Monitoring Unit upgrades enabling Condition Based Maintenance, cockpit upgrades, engine fire prevention upgrades, and survivability upgrades. These safety and avionics upgrades are essential to address obsolescence issues within the cockpit, increase overall situational awareness, expand digital interoperability capabilities, and maintain mission effectiveness.

ATTACK AND UTILITY AIRCRAFT

AH-1Z/UH-1Y

The AH-1Z and UH-1Y provide attack and utility support to the MAGTF, deploying globally with Marine Expeditionary Units. The final AH-1Zs will be delivered in FY 2022, fulfilling the Marine Corps' Program of Record of 349 H-1 aircraft. H-1 aircraft have maintained combat relevance through capability improvements in line with Marine Corps' top priorities of digital interoperability (DI), survivability and lethality. Readiness improvements, through a comprehensive strategic recovery plan, are providing the highest mission capable readiness rates H-1s have seen in recent times that pace Marine Corps aviation platforms.

The FY 2022 President's Budget requests $124.2 million in APN and $50.2 million in RDT&E. APN funding focuses on DI, Survivability, Lethality, Position/Navigation/Timing, and Sensing. RDT&E funding continues efforts developing DI, aircraft safety and survivability, and air vehicle improvements to increase capability, mission flexibility, aircraft range and weapons employment. These systems and developments will serve as a stepping stone to capability with Future Vertical Lift. In addition, in order to accomplish the Commandant of the Marine Corps' Force Design divestments of two Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadrons by the end of FY 2023, efforts to right size the H-1 fleet have started. A previously planned program attrition reserve is being placed in storage for the program of record in FY 2021 and FY 2022, and a disposition plan for excess aircraft is being created while the divestment continues.

MH-60R/S

The MH-60 R/S continue to be the foundation of the Navy's helicopter concept of operations, providing multi-mission support including Anti-Submarine Warfare, Anti-Surface Warfare, AMCM, Personnel Recovery, Special Operations Support, and Combat Logistics among a variety of other missions.

The FY 2022 President's Budget requests $94.8 million in APN and $46.4 million in RDT&E. APN funding supports safety related systems improvements, corrections of deficiencies, warfighter upgrades, and obsolescence issues. RDT&E funding reflects a ramp up of integrating transformational technology including the Minotaur Family of Systems, and modernized tactical datalinks to include Multifunctional Information Distribution System, Joint Tactical Radio System, and Concurrent Multinetting-4. Funding is also requested to support bi-annual System Configuration releases including Common Aircraft Survivability Equipment, as well as addressing Diminishing Manufacturing Sources and Material Shortages, engineering and developmental activities keeping the MH-60 operationally relevant.

EXECUTIVE SUPPORT AIRCRAFT

VH-92A Presidential Helicopter Replacement Aircraft

The FY 2022 President's Budget requests $45.9 million in RDT&E and $40.3 million of APN for the VH-92A Presidential Helicopter Replacement Aircraft. The first year of procurement for this aircraft was FY 2019 and the Department completed procurement in FY 2021 with a total of 17 aircraft. FY 2022 RDT&E funding is required for Follow-On Test and Evaluation activities and improvements. These efforts include Mission Communications System upgrades (both software and hardware), enhancements to required Wide Band Line Of Sight capabilities, component reliability, shipboard interoperability, maintaining test aircraft and facilities; as well as, initiates test and evaluation efforts for distributed network communications, and vehicle performance enhancements. APN in the amount of $40.3 million is required for retrofit modifications for the incorporation of the of the Federal Aviation Administration mandated Automatic Dependent Surveillance Broadcast Out system capability, upgrades to the Mission Communication System servers, and shipboard interoperability.

TRAINING AIRCRAFT

Advanced Helicopter Training System / TH-73A

The Advanced Helicopter Training System (AHTS) is the DON's new system-of-systems to meet advanced rotary wing and intermediate tilt-rotor training requirements for the Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard and allied partners through 2050. AHTS includes aircrew training services that provide new flight training simulators, a modernized curriculum and contractor logistics support for the maintenance and flight line support requirements of the new helicopter. Using a skills-based approach to training, with just-in-time methodology, AHTS will ensure higher quality rotary wing aviators are produced more efficiently and are ready to meet the challenges they will face in the fleet.

The TH-73A is the aircraft portion of AHTS, replacing the aging TH-57B and TH-57C, which will begin to sundown in FY 2022. The contract for TH-73A aircraft was awarded in January 2020, and the Navy is scheduled to take delivery of the first operational TH-73A helicopter on July 2, 2021. A total of 32 TH-73As are scheduled for delivery this calendar year and 130 total over the contract period. The new TH-73As will be housed in a temporary hangar at Naval Air Station Whiting Field, Florida, with construction scheduled to begin in 2023 on a new helicopter maintenance hangar.

Under the Aircrew Training Systems contract, awarded in August 2020, rotary students will ultimately have availability on 18 Flight Simulation Training Devices, and the Logistics Support contract awarded earlier this year, began full performance on June 1, 2021. The new logistics contract ensures the Navy can successfully maintain the TH-57B/C until the TH-73A is fully operational, and will ensure the Navy has the capacity to train several hundred aviation students per year.

The FY 2022 budget request includes $163.5 million in APN for 36 TH-73As, as the AHTS program continues an aggressive pursuit of fleet introduction and Initial Operating Capability in early FY 2022.