

Statement of the Congressman Forbes
Chairman, Subcommittee on Readiness

Future of Seapower Hearing

February 26, 2013

I want to welcome all of our members and our distinguished panel of experts to today's hearing, that will focus on the future of Seapower in advance of receiving a budget request for Fiscal Year 2014.

In January, the Navy presented to Congress a goal of achieving a fleet of 306 ships, a reduction from the previous goal of 313 ships. The Fiscal Year 2013-2017 five year shipbuilding plan contains a total of 41 ships, which is 16 ships less than the 57 ships projected for the same period in the Fiscal Year 2012 budget request. Of this 16 ship reduction, nine ships were eliminated and 7 ships were deferred to a later time.

It should be noted that at its current strength of 286 ships, under the 30 year shipbuilding plan submitted to Congress, the Navy will not achieve its goal of 306 ships until fiscal year 2039. And given our past record of meeting long-term goals, I seriously question the viability of the shipbuilding plans presented in the out-years of the 30-year plan. Even worse, the Navy will experience shortfalls at various points in cruisers-destroyers, attack submarines, ballistic missile submarines, and amphibious ships. One would think the number of required ships would have increased instead of decreased with the Navy now bearing the brunt of missile defense missions and the announced "rebalance" to the Asia-Pacific.

Another area of concern is the cost of the plan. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that in the first 10 years of the 30 year shipbuilding plan, that the costs will be 11% higher than the Navy's estimate. It is because of this issue of affordability that I agree with both Secretary Lehman and Admiral Roughead on the need for acquisition reform. While I think it is critical to provide an environment that provides industry some stability to achieve better pricing, I think it is equally important to pursue more effective acquisition strategies. I look forward to understanding what options our Subcommittee could pursue to obtain this needed acquisition reform.

In addition to new construction of ships, I also have concerns on the sustainment of ships already in the fleet. After year's of maintenance challenges, the Navy has now been forced to cancel numerous ship maintenance availabilities in the third and fourth

quarters of this fiscal year due to the budgetary constraints of sequestration and the continuing resolution.

The Navy has been operating in a sustained surge since at least 2004. We have been burning out our ships more quickly because the demand has been high. Indeed, in the past five years roughly 25% of destroyer deployments have exceeded the standard deployment length. A key tenet in the shipbuilding plan is an assumed ship service life for most ships of 35 years. If ships do not get the planned shipyard repairs, attaining this service life will be problematic and ships will be retired prematurely.

In Fiscal Year 2012, the existing force structure only satisfied 53% of the total Combatant Commander demand. It has been estimated that to fully support the Combatant Commander requirements would necessitate a fleet size in excess of 500 ships. Without an increase in force structure, this trend will only get worse.

Finally, I think that our Navy needs to place more emphasis on undersea warfare and long-range power projection as part of a strategy to prevent potential adversaries from achieving the benefits offered by anti-access/aerial denial strategies. I am particularly interested to better understand what options the Subcommittee should consider to achieve these goals and ensure the Combatant Commanders have the right tools to achieve our national strategy.

Today we are honored to have as our witnesses, former Secretary of the Navy John Lehman and former Chief of Naval Operations Gary Roughead. Gentlemen, thank you all for being here.

I now recognize the Ranking Member, Mr. McIntyre for any remarks he may have.