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BY THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES
COMMITTEE SUBCOMMITTEE ON
SEAPOWER AND PROJECTION FORCES

STATEMENT

OF

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BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON SEAPOWER AND PROJECTION FORCES

OF THE

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

ON

AMPHIBIOUS FLEET REQUIREMENTS

JULY 25, 2014

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SUBCOMMITTEE ON SEAPOWER AND PROJECTION FORCES

Mr. Chairman, Representative McIntyre, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to address the Department of the Navy's Amphibious Fleet Requirements. The future security environment requires a robust capability to project forces ashore from amphibious platforms and to maneuver over land to positions of advantage. Amphibious ships and their expeditionary forces provide Combatant Commanders with unmatched versatility and capability, and consequently there is a great demand for these forces. It is clear that our Navy and Marine Corps would like more Amphibious Ships, yet we must balance war-fighting risk across the spectrum of required capabilities and capacity.

Amphibious Ships

Amphibious ships operate forward to provide the Nation's best means of projecting sustainable power ashore, responding to crises, deterring potential adversaries, and supporting allies; they also provide an exceptional means for delivering humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. Amphibious forces comprised of Sailors, Marines, ships, aircraft, landing craft and surface connectors provide the ability to rapidly and decisively respond to global crises in an expeditionary environment or for temporary duties without establishing a permanent footprint ashore that could place unnecessary political or logistical burdens upon our allies or potential partners. There are two main drivers of the amphibious ship requirement: maintaining our persistent forward presence, enabling engagement and crisis response, and delivering the assault echelons of up to two Marine Expeditionary Brigades (MEB) for joint forcible entry operations.

Amphibious Battle Force Requirements and Inventory

The Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) and Commandant of the Marine Corps (CMC) have determined that the force structure required to support a 2.0 MEB assault echelon lift is 38 amphibious assault ships. The 38 ship requirement was communicated to the chairmen of the House and Senate Appropriations and Armed Services committees by a joint Secretary of the Navy, CNO and CMC letter dated January 7, 2009. This requirement, initially established during a 2007 Navy/Marine Corps working group has been fully analyzed and was last revalidated in March of 2011. Understanding this requirement, and in light of current fiscal

constraints, the Department of the Navy can sustain a minimum of 33 amphibious ships in the assault echelon. Balancing the total naval force structure requirements against fiscal projections imposes risk in meeting this requirement. Based on the footprint of a 2.0 MEB assault echelon force, a minimum of 30 operationally available ships is necessary to provide a force made up of ten Amphibious Assault Ships (LHD/LHA), ten Amphibious Transport Docks (LPD) and ten Dock Landing Ships (LSD). Planning factors call for a force of 33 ships to achieve this availability.

At the end of FY 2015, the Amphibious Force Structure will stand at 30 ships, which includes 9 LHD/LHAs, 9 LPDs, and 12 LSDs. A total force of 33 ships will be achieved in FY 2018, although the required mix of 11 LHA/LHD, 11 LPD, and 11 LSD will not be achieved until the delivery of LHA 8 in FY 2024. Eleven LPDs will be achieved in FY 2017 with the delivery of LPD 27. Twelve LSDs will be maintained by the CG/LSD Phased Modernization Plan, retaining eleven deployable LSDs in the battle force until LX(R) delivers. The FY 2015 shipbuilding plan will result in a projected amphibious ship force structure of at least 30 ships in the near-term and maintains 33 ships throughout the 2020s and most of the 2030s. The FY 2015 shipbuilding plan’s amphibious battle force inventory across the entire 30 years is depicted in the below Table A.

Table A – FY 2015-2044 Amphibious Battle Force Inventory

	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44
LHA/LHD	9	9	9	10	10	10	10	10	10	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	10	11	10	9	9
LPD	9	10	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11
LSD/LX (R)	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	14	13	14	13	13	12	12	13	12	10	10	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11
Total	30	31	32	33	33	33	33	33	33	34	34	36	35	36	35	35	34	34	35	34	32	32	33	33	33	32	33	32	31	31

LSD Phased Modernization Plan

The Navy plans to maintain eleven deployable LSDs in the active force until LX(R) delivers by rotating three LSDs, one at a time, into a four-year phased modernization period and then placing them back in service. *USS TORTUGA* (LSD 46) would be inducted into its phased modernization beginning in 2016, and will achieve the expected 40-year operational service. The phased modernization of *USS WHIDBEY ISLAND* (LSD 41) and *USS GERMANTOWN* (LSD 42) will begin in 2020 and 2024 respectively. This will extend LSD 41 and LSD 42 (with midlife complete) to 45 operational years of service. This plan mitigates presence shortfalls and 2.0 MEB Assault Echelon shipping requirements.

Mitigating Amphibious Lift Shortfall

In the short-term, we are accepting risk to aviation, vehicle lift capacity, and surface assault capacity in the event of a 2.0 MEB forcible entry operation. Major combat operations may require all LSDs and careful management of maintenance cycles to avoid delay of forcible entry timelines. The LSD Phased Modernization Plan will maintain LSD inventory at the required eleven ships. Ten operational LSDs are sufficient to source Amphibious Ready Group (ARG)/Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) deployments at current levels. However, the capacity to support any additional independent amphibious ship demands, such as maritime security operations, theater security cooperation, or other forward presence missions, will require employment of alternate maritime vessels.

Risk may be reduced through the greater use of carrier tactical aviation for close air support and by delivering additional ground maneuver support vehicles via the Mobile Landing Platform (MLP)/Large, Medium-Speed Roll-On/Roll-Off (LMSR) and/or the Joint High Speed Vessel (JHSV), and sustainment from the Dry Cargo & Ammunition Ship (T-AKE). Innovative approaches and employment models are also under consideration to mitigate impacts to presence missions caused by reduced ship quantities. With increased investment in the capabilities of JHSV, MLP/LMSR and T-AKE, the risk associated with missions in permissive environments may be reduced. These new ships can take on potentially valuable roles in security cooperation, humanitarian assistance and disaster response, freeing up the amphibious warships to meet global warfighting demands.

Connectors

Surface connectors such as Landing Craft, Air Cushion (LCAC) and Landing Craft Utility (LCU) provide amphibious capability to lift all weapons systems, cargo, equipment and personnel of the assault element of a Marine Air/Ground Task Force from amphibious ships and mobile landing platforms to the shore. The LCACs and LCUs have reached their useful service life and are being replaced. The Ship to Shore Connector (SSC) program will replace the aging LCACs, and the Surface Connector Replacement (SC(X)(R)) program will replace the LCUs. The LCAC inventory, including those LCACs which have undergone a Service Life Extension Program (SLEP), begins to degrade below the Required Operational Capability/Projected

Operational Environment (ROC/POE) requirement beginning in 2015. Ensuring that both the LCAC SLEP program, which has 14 planned SLEPs in the FY 2015-2018 timeframe, and the SSC, which will begin ordering SCN funded craft in FY 2015, stays fully funded and on-track is imperative in addressing the projected air cushioned connector capability gap. Similarly, keeping the SC(X)(R) program on track to replace the LCUs is also important. LCUs were designed for a 25-year service life, but the existing LCUs have been operational for an average of 43 years, and are experiencing increasing maintenance costs associated with aged, corroded and obsolete systems.

Amphibious Ship Acquisition and the Industrial Base

A healthy design and production industrial base is critical to achieving the Department of the Navy's priorities and fulfilling the Navy's needs going forward. Perturbations in naval ship design and construction plans are significant because of the long-lead time, specialized skills, and extent of integration needed to build military ships. The complex configuration and size of naval vessels result in long design and construction schedules, and each individual ship makes up a significant portion of not only the Navy's shipbuilding budget, but also industry's workload and regional employment numbers. Consequently, the timing and stability for planning for funding of ship procurements is a critical matter to the Department as well as to the health and sustainment of U.S. shipbuilding, combat system industries, and their suppliers.

While the Department is ever mindful of the effect of its decisions on the industrial base, our ability to mitigate adverse impacts on the shipbuilding industrial base from constrained resources is not without limits. The reduced BCA levels starting in FY 2016 and fiscal realities associated with funding of the Ohio Replacement Submarine program will significantly impact the industrial base and the future ship mix due to reduced procurement of other ship classes. The result will be increased risk in the Navy's ability to support the Defense Strategic Guidance, and inevitable reductions in the shipbuilding and combat system industrial base, with potential for further long term impacts on platform affordability and force size. During the Future Years Defense Plan, 2015-2019, construction continues on three previously-awarded amphibious ships, one additional ship will be awarded in FY 2017, and the design for the replacement of the LSD 41/49 Classes will complete. A summary of the FY 2015 shipbuilding acquisition plan for the LHA/LHD, LPD, and LSD programs follows.

LHA/LHD Class

LHA/LHD Class ships are flexible, multi-mission platforms with capabilities that span the range of military operations - from forward deployed crisis response to forcible entry operations. The LHA replacement program, called LHA(R), will be the modern replacements for the remaining LHA 1 TARAWA Class ship and the aging LHD 1 WASP Class ships as they begin decommissioning in the late 2020s. The LHA(R) program began with two Flight 0 ships, *America* (LHA 6), delivered in April 2014, and *Tripoli* (LHA 7), scheduled for delivery in 2018. These ships are optimized for aviation capability in lieu of a well deck. LHA 8, the first Flight 1 ship, reincorporates the well deck to provide increased connector capability along with a reduced flight deck island to increase flight deck space and retain an aviation capability similar to the Flight 0 ships. Both features improve the ship's essential dual surface and vertical assault capabilities. LHA 8 design activities are underway, and the ship procurement will be split funded in FY 2017 and FY 2018 with delivery scheduled in FY 2024. The Navy expanded the early industry involvement efforts for the LHA 8 design and initiated a phased approach to the design for affordability of amphibious ships. FY 2014 funding enables affordability efforts that foster an interactive competition with industry partners in developing an affordable, producible detail design and build strategy, and help drive towards more affordable ships. Beginning in FY 2024, the Navy plans to begin building LHA(R) Flight 1 ships every four years.

LX(R)

LX(R) is the replacement program for the LSD 41 WHIDBEY ISLAND and LSD 49 HARPERS FERRY Classes, which will begin reaching their expected service lives in the mid-2020s. The Navy has completed the LX(R) Analysis of Alternatives (AoA) and is currently determining the ship's key performance parameters (KPP) and refining design and construction options. Navy anticipates the program will begin technology development in early FY 2015. Affordability will be a key focus for this ship class. Industry will be involved in identifying cost drivers and proposing cost reduction initiatives to drive affordability into the design, production, operation, and maintenance of this ship class. Advanced procurement funding in FY 2019 is planned with the lead LX(R) Class ship planned in FY 2020. The lead LX(R) will deliver in

time for LSD 43's retirement in FY 2027. The remaining ten ships will be procured in the FY 2022 through FY 2034 timeframe. This build profile will help maintain the inventory for amphibious ships at or above 33 ships until the mid-2030s.

LPD 17 Class

The LPD 17 SAN ANTONIO Class provides the ability to embark, transport, control, insert, sustain, and extract elements of a Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) and supporting forces by helicopters, tilt rotor aircraft, landing craft, and amphibious vehicles. The Navy accepted delivery of *USS SOMERSET* (LPD 25) in October 2013, the 9th of 11 ships. The remaining two ships are under construction and will deliver in 2016 and 2017 respectively. The FY 2015 President's Budget requests SCN funding for cost-to-complete, outfitting, post-delivery, and program close-out costs.

The FY 2015 Shipbuilding Plan does not include a request for a 12th LPD. The Navy's Force Structure Assessment (FSA), completed in 2012, identified a requirement for an eleven LPD 17 Ship Class. Additionally, the Navy's 30-Year Shipbuilding Plan currently supports an eleven-ship class profile. If fully funded, the Navy can execute the acquisition of a 12th LPD, but the requirement cannot be supported at the expense of other items in the PB-15 request.

The FY 2013 Continuing and Furthering Appropriations Bill (P.L. 113-6) added \$263 million of Advanced Procurement (AP) funding for a 12th LPD 17 amphibious transport dock ship. With the sequestration mark of approximately \$20 million, the net FY13 appropriation for the 12th ship is \$243 million. The end cost of a fully scoped 12th LPD is estimated at \$2.023 billion. If the 12th ship were to be constructed, the Navy would build it as a bridge to LX(R), implementing some of the affordability initiatives identified during the recent design studies effort.

Connectors:

The Ship to Shore Connector (SSC) program will have its Critical Design Review in August 2014, followed by a Production Readiness Review in September. Fabrication of the first two craft will follow, and they are scheduled for delivery and operational testing in FY 2018. The program is planned to deliver a total of 73 SSC craft. In order to mitigate the LCAC connector gap, SCN funded craft orders begin in FY15, ramping up from 2 craft per year to a

more economical production rate of 8-11 craft per year by the end of the FYDP.

The SC(X)(R) program to replace the aging LCUs is completing its Analysis of Alternatives, and detail design and construction of these craft will begin in FY 2018. A total of 32 SC(X)(R) craft are planned.

Summary

The DON remains committed to providing sufficient amphibious lift for day to day presence as well as large-scale expeditionary operations and will reach the required 33 amphibious ships in the near-term. The 33-ship amphibious force will eventually be comprised of 11 LHA/Ds, 11 LPDs and 11 LSDs/LX(R)s. Our proposed delivery and decommissioning profiles will meet historical sourcing for Amphibious Ready Groups. The Navy remains committed to providing 30 operationally available amphibious ships to meet global amphibious warship demand.