

# Military Readiness Crisis Worsens under Biden's Watch

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What happens when nearly 20,000 tons of warships nearly collide? Navy investigators are determining precisely that question after a destroyer and amphibious warfare vessel almost “traded paint” in the congested San Diego Bay. A video of what happened, dubbed “warship chicken” by local news, showed a harrowing encounter in which the USS Harpers Ferry and USS Momsen avoided a devastating collision with seconds to spare.

The near-collision is the latest in a string of incidents for the Navy. In 2015, the destroyers USS John McCain and the USS Fitzgerald both experienced deadly and avoidable collisions that cost the lives of a multitude of sailors. Then, in 2020, the \$1.2 billion USS Bonhomme Richard was destroyed after fire engulfed the ship for four days in the San Diego Bay. And last year, the USS Connecticut — an indispensable fast-attack submarine — hit a seamount, potentially resulting in the loss of the boat.

Yet these incidents only scratch the surface of the Navy's woes. Last month, one of our supercarriers, the USS Nimitz, was forced to come home after sailors reported headache, rash, diarrhea and a suspicious smell in the drinking water. Fuel had contaminated the vessel's water supply, rendering it useless for weeks. And naval maintenance yards, designed to keep our ships in fighting shape, are hopeless. Just this year, the Navy reported nearly \$2 billion in shipyard backlogs for their service fleet — an amount that the Government Accountability Office says doesn't adequately “show the full extent, causes or risks of deferred maintenance.”

While the circumstances surrounding each of these incidents varied, they share a common heritage. Many of our military's problems, from operations to maintenance to acquisition, are downstream from failed leadership.

Last year, members of Congress led by Sen. Tom Cotton released a report on the “fighting culture of the Navy.” The authors wrote, “In a situation where the surface Navy is losing personnel and ships absent interaction with an armed enemy, Navy leadership ought to be concerned as to how elements of their organization will perform when a capable enemy presents itself.”

Under President Biden's direction, our senior military leaders are unserious and unfocused, obsessed with bureaucratic trivialities and political hobby horses. Today, military leaders fixate on fripperies like new uniforms and ponytail regulations rather than studying enemy battle tactics.

Even our secretary of defense found it imperative to deliver a public response to the Supreme Court's overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, but he had little to say about the military readiness crisis worsening on his watch. It seems that senior leadership is more concerned about whether the next generation of military officers knows all the latest woke vocabulary rather than how to fight and win wars.

Thankfully, we still have time to reverse course. In fact, this isn't the first time that our military has found itself distracted. When Gen. George C. Marshall took command of the Army in 1939, he found his officer corps lacking. Many of the same problems that plague our military now plagued the pre-World War II military too. There were too many bureaucrats and too few fighting leaders. Marshall responded by launching an Army-wide housecleaning aimed at clearing out the "deadwood" officers to make room for new talent.

While the move elicited howls from Congress, the men who stepped up to take command are today household names like Eisenhower, Patton and Bradley. Had Marshall not appointed these supremely capable officers to command, American casualties and the outcome of the war would have been radically worse.

The next Congress has a sacred duty before them. They must hold the Biden administration accountable for leaving our armed forces unprepared and untrained. The American people deserve leadership who place our military war-fighting mission first. That's why Congress should demand that our armed services forsake woke policies and get rid of the self-interested administrators and rent-seekers. Identify aggressive leaders who put their military tasks and drills above all else and put those leaders in charge. Knock off the goofy political fads and return to military fundamentals.

In short, either the Pentagon can rid us of the nonsense in peacetime, or the enemy will do it for us in wartime.

Read in the *Washington Times*.  
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