

Rep. Steven Palazzo
Remarks for HAC-D Member Priority Hearing
April 4, 2014

Thank you Chairman Frelinghuysen and members of the committee for the opportunity to appear before the Subcommittee on my priorities for your FY 2015 Defense Appropriations bill. As a member of the House Armed Services Committee, I want you to know that I have a healthy respect for the work of your subcommittee and the essential role you play in providing for our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines who wear the uniform of the United States in service to our nation. I also share your commitment to providing for a Navy and Marine Corps that is capable of projecting American power abroad with forward deployed naval forces.

As some of you know, I represent the 4th Congressional District of Mississippi down on the Gulf Coast, and it's no surprise that my district depends heavily on industries like military shipbuilding, which is both a national AND strategic industry that contributes to our national economy and our national defense with an impact that goes well beyond the borders of my district. And so I come here today to discuss a national and strategic issue that I believe is critical to the future of our Navy and Marine Corps.

The *San Antonio*-class of LPD is a 684-foot long amphibious assault ship. This class of ships functionally replaces four previous amphibious ship classes and provides greater mission capability and enhanced command and control than her legacy amphibs. The San Antonio-class LPD also features a longer expected service life, improved quality of life for the sailors and Marines aboard her, and reduced total ownership cost, something I know is of critical importance to us on the House Armed Services Committee and a desire that I know you share as well, Mr. Chairman.

The LPD is a warship that embarks, transports, and lands elements of a landing force for a variety of expeditionary warfare missions. When fully loaded, these warships can carry Landing Craft Air Cushions, or LCACs, Amphibious Assault Vehicles (AAVs) and a wide variety of Marine Corps aviation assets, from the MV-22 Osprey to every helicopter in the Marine Corps inventory. Simply put, this ship enables the Marine Corps to go to war when necessary, but she is built to handle a wide range of missions, including humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

Most importantly, the LPD is a survivable amphibious warship that is capable of going into harm's way. The ship is built to protect the almost 1,000 sailors and Marines who sail aboard her, and she relies on the critical contributions of over 1,000 companies in over 40 states from across our nation.

So I come before you today because I strongly support a proposal to build a 12th LPD in Fiscal Year 2015. It's no secret that the budget of the Department of Defense has been under a lot of pressure recently, and the Navy's budget is experiencing similar strain. However, I do not believe that current budget pressures should unduly influence our long-term, strategic thinking on the needs of our future Navy Marine Corps team. We are building the last 2 ships of the San Antonio class today in Mississippi, and given the needs of the Navy and Marine Corps, the hot production line, the stable design of the ship, the maturity of the supply base, and the proven

fleet performance of these ships, I firmly believe we need to build an additional 12th ship of the San Antonio class. I ask for your support of this proposal in your FY15 Defense Appropriations bill.

In closing, shipbuilding is one of the most strategic activities undertaken by our defense industrial base. It takes many years to build the finest ships for the finest Navy Marine Corps in the world, and I'm proud to represent one of the last great centers of American manufacturing right at home in South Mississippi. But don't take my word for it:

During a recent forum, General James F. Amos, the Commandant of the Marine Corps and a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, stated, quote "We have an LPD hull right now which is one of the most successful hulls we have. There are years and years of time and effort that have gone into that LPD. That is as fine of an amphibious warship that has ever sailed the seas. The LPD, from my perspective, just makes sense."

I couldn't agree more with General Amos, and I thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today.