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SERVICES COMMITTEE

STATEMENT OF

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U.S. NAVY

CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS

BEFORE THE

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS

AND

SUBCOMMITTEE ON SEAPOWER AND PROJECTION FORCES

ON

SURFACE WARFARE AT A CROSSROADS

JANUARY 18, 2018

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Chairman Wilson, Chairman Wittman, Ranking Members Bordallo and Courtney, and distinguished members of the subcommittees, thank you for the opportunity to brief you today on our Action Plan to address the systemic issues identified in both the Comprehensive Review and Secretary Spencer's Strategic Readiness Review.

Looking back, 2017 was a year of triumph and tragedy for our Navy. We consistently forward-deployed more than 60,000 Sailors and 95 ships and submarines around the globe. We executed our mission to protect America from attack, to advance our nation's interests, and to enhance our prosperity.

Working as part of the joint force and with our allies and partners, our Carrier Strike Groups (CSGs) and Special Operations Forces provided decisive combat power in the fight against violent extremism to help decimate the self-proclaimed ISIS caliphate. Our six embarked Carrier Air Wings launched sorties around the clock to project power far from our shores. And for the first time since 2007, we operated three CSGs together in an undeniable demonstration of maritime power.

Even as we achieved these successes, we were reminded of the unforgiving nature of operating at sea. Our Navy experienced five serious incidents in the Pacific resulting in the loss of 20 dedicated Sailors. Our thoughts and prayers remain with our fallen shipmates and their families, who will always be part of our Navy Team.

Our investigations into these incidents revealed that these mishaps were due in large part to human error and failures of leadership as we took our eye off of mastering the basics in seamanship and navigation.

We owe it to our Sailors and our loved ones who support us to quickly and forcefully apply these lessons through corrective action, and that's exactly what we're doing. In the wake of the collisions involving USS *Fitzgerald* and USS *John S. McCain*, I ordered an operational pause across the entire fleet to address immediate actions to improve our safe and effective operations at sea. Additionally, I commissioned a Comprehensive Review, led by Admiral Phil Davidson, Commander, US Fleet Forces Command, to identify additional systemic causal and contributing factors.

Based on the recommendations that emerged from the operational pause and Comprehensive Review, I can report to these subcommittees that the following actions are complete:

- No FDNF-J ships are operating uncertified for their missions assigned, and Ready for Sea Assessments have been conducted on FDNF-J cruisers and destroyers with the exception of those completing or in maintenance, in order to re-baseline existing afloat certifications. These remaining ships are either scheduled for assessments in the very near term, or are being transitioned to our new force generation model.
- Evaluated naval requirements in the Western Pacific to prioritize operations in theater;

- Implemented a new force generation model for all cruisers and destroyers (CRUDES) forward-deployed to Japan to support operational requirements and preserve maintenance and training time;
- Implemented circadian rhythm watch bills to manage fatigue;
- Established a comprehensive fatigue and endurance management policy to guide command teams to make balanced risk decisions;
- Revised formality of procedures for ships approaching within two nautical miles to preserve commanders' decision-making time;
- Changed reporting criteria for navigation, steering, propulsion, and damage control issues to address critical equipment problems in a timely manner;
- Mandated reporting of near-mishaps to ensure that best practices and lessons learned are shared across the Fleet;
- Commenced monthly assessments on the International Rules of the Road to grade and track watchstanders' level of knowledge;
- Accelerated navigation upgrades across all CRUDES platforms, including full integration of the Automatic Identification System (AIS), to equip ships with the latest technology;
- Directed surface ships to transmit on AIS in high traffic areas to reduce confusion in congested or high-traffic areas; and
- Standardized surface force common operating procedures to reduce variability in engineering practices and tactical responses;

I also established an Oversight Board (OSB) chaired by Admiral Bill Moran, Vice Chief of Naval Operations, to track those actions that are still in progress. These include:

- Re-designing the Surface Warfare Officer career path;
- Overhauling the seamanship, professional education, shipboard qualification standards, and risk management curricula (in the next three months);
- Assessing all variations of Bridge control systems (in the next three months); and
- Reviewing of all inspection, certification, and assist visit requirements to determine the optimal balance between operational assessments and burdens (in the next three months).

Finally, as Chief of Naval Operations, I am ultimately responsible for knocking down any obstacle preventing our Sailors from focusing on warfighting and safely operating at sea. This includes studying cultural dynamics and organizational issues to make lasting changes that will allow us to learn and grow as a Navy. These include:

- Reducing administrative distractions to give time back to commanders to train their teams and maintain their equipment;
- Creating effective, clear, and simple command and control structures so commanders know who they are working for as they train, certify, and deploy; and
- Developing a supply-side approach to our force generation model for ships -- particularly for those forward-deployed to Japan -- in order to support operational requirements, preserve sufficient maintenance and training time, and improve certification processes.

In December, I visited our naval forces in Korea, Japan, and Bahrain, and through my interactions with our Sailors, it's clear to me that our corrective actions are having a positive impact on our safe and effective operations at sea.

Looking forward, our mission for 2018 is simple but by no means easy. Our adversaries are adaptive and increasingly assertive. We must rise to the challenge by learning from our mistakes, capturing our successes, sharing those insights across the force, and improving upon our best every day.

By dedicating our hearts and minds to this calling, we will finish 2018 as the safest Navy in the world for our Sailors, the strongest partner in the world for our friends and allies, and the most lethal Navy in the world for our enemies.

On behalf of our Sailors, their families and our Navy civilians, I thank the Congress – and especially these subcommittees – for your continued support. I look forward to working with you and to taking your questions.