

Opening Remarks of the Honorable Robert J. Wittman
for the
Seapower and Projection Forces and Readiness Joint Hearing on
Posture and Readiness of the Mobility Enterprise
March 31, 2022

I want to thank Chairman Courtney for yielding and especially thank Chairman Garamendi and Ranking Member Waltz for participating in another joint hearing this month to discuss our mobility forces.

The people of Ukraine have been fighting valiantly against Vladimir Putin's Russian invasion. Ukrainian forces have particularly targeted an overextended Russian logistics line causing Russian forces across multiple axes to grind to a halt. If there is anything in this war that we can use as a lesson learned is the value of our logistics forces and their need to pace with the combat forces.

Unfortunately, as I review our nation's mobility forces, I see many areas that will cause dangerous parallels with the Russian logistics failures. For example, the Air Force has proposed to reduce our tanker force structure by 24 aircraft over the next two years; Navy continues to underinvest in the surge sealift forces, particularly harming the Army and the Marines; Navy and Marine Corps are programmed to pull the plug on the last of the Maritime Prepositioned Forces; and, while there has been much stated about the need to invest in our intratheater connectors, Army continues to reduce

watercraft while Navy and Marine Corps' efforts to support light amphibious warship and next generation logistics ship continue to slip to the right. And, just to add some additional logistic woe, the Red Hill debacle highlights the inadequacies of our malpositioned fuels stores throughout INDOPACOM. In my estimation our mobility and logistics forces are in a clear decline.

To be frank, the administration talks about our pacing challenger China, and the acute threat of Russia, but their budget requests continue to have more bark than bite. Or, they don't understand the basics of warfare that require strong logistics to sustain our combat forces forward. We must deliver a comprehensive strategy to address our acute shortcomings.

I would propose a strategy that expands our tanker security program; that ensures our intratheater connector strategy is coupled with a prepositioned force appropriate for the Pacific distances our forces will be required to traverse; that has adequate surge sealift forces; and, that has adequate bulk fuel stores positioned at the correct locations BEFORE we pull the plug on Red Hill.

Fortunately, we have the correct witnesses to help us better hone our logistics strategy as we prepare for our fiscal year 2023 markup. I look forward to reviewing this varied list of issues during our discussions today.

In closing, I am reminded of our foremost military tactician, Sun Tzu, who indicated “The line between disorder and order lies in logistics.” I remain convinced that we should reject the disorder offered by our current logistics vision and, working with my Democratic colleagues, correct the more egregious elements of this failing budget request.

Again, I appreciate Chairman Courtney, Chairman Garamendi, and Ranking Member Waltz’s support for having this important hearing and I yield back the balance of my time.

Questions

Pacific Logistics. [Dave note: trying to establish a need for our connectors to specifically include Light Amphibious Warship, which has once again, moved to the right and is now in FY25]

General Van Ovost, there are several key intratheater connectors programs that appear to allow INDOPACOM contested logistics to work including Army Watercraft, Navy's Next Generation Logistics Ship and Marine Corps' Light Amphibious Warship. If ADM Davidson and Aquilino are to be believed, the threat is upon us to deliver this intratheater connector strategy now. In your estimate, is there a deficit in our intratheater logistics connectors for INDOPACOM? How essential are these programs to allowing your logistics to flow in INDOPACOM?

PACOM bulk fuels logistics. [Dave note. We will defuel Red Hill before our optimized bulk fuel logistics footprint is established. Two questions that tease this line of thought.]

Alternative bulk fuel stocks. General Van Ovost, do you believe that our PACOM bulk fuels wartime reserves will be available, AT THE REQUIRED QUANTITY, in time for the defueling of Red Hill? (after Red Hill is defueled)

Tanker Security Program. Ms. Lessley, when do you anticipate finalizing the rules and fielding the 10 ship Tanker Security Program? (after Red Hill is defueled)

[Mr Wittman editorial comment that it is imperative to not harm our national security and that the basic elements of our bulk fuel logistics be put in place before Red Hill is defueled.]

Maritime Security Program. General Van Ovost, Can you describe how the Maritime Security Program helps to ensure that we have capability to carry sustainment cargoes to support our warfighter, and what risks we would face if we had to rely on foreign carriers to perform that work?

Ready Reserve Force. General Van Ovost. I have been pained to read the ready reserve forces TURBO Activations reports and the inadequacies of this fleet. Do

you believe that our current ready reserve forces are able to meet the time requirements of INDOPACOM?
(No)

Aviation tanker force structure. General Van Ovost, do you believe that you have sufficient aviation tankers and do you support the elimination of 24 tankers from the tanker force structure in the next two years? What level of risk would you characterize of our tanker force structure if we support the administration's request to reduce these 24 tankers in the next two years? (supports but would characterize our tanker force structure as high risk)