

US Navy sustainability is sound policy

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by Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus

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The United States Navy has a history of leadership in energy innovation, from the transition from sail to steam, the development of coal and then oil burning power plants, or the move to nuclear power more than half a century ago. The propulsion of our ships, aircraft, and equipment is a vital operational concern. But power and energy is also an issue of national and international security.

My responsibility as Secretary of the Navy is to ensure that the Navy and Marine Corps have the right people, with the right training and the right tools to defend our country. To accomplish those things, I focus on four priorities: people, platforms, power, and partnerships. In Washington I'm sometimes asked, why is power or energy policy in there? It ought to be obvious. Without the energy to power our platforms, we might not be there when it matters.

Uniquely, naval forces offer the capability to provide presence. Presence means being in the right place, not just at the right time, but all the time. Presence helps deter potential conflicts, while helping to control escalation when tensions begin to rise. Naval presence is persistent and does not infringe on anyone's sovereign territory. Our Navy and Marine Corps are our nation's insurance policy across the globe and they give our leaders options in times of crisis.

In today's world access to energy and fuel can be a diplomatic pressure point and can be, and is, used as a geostrategic weapon. Whether we're talking about threats against the shipping lanes in the Middle East, or the headlines we see in the papers today about European dependence on Russian gas supplies and the effect on negotiations over Ukraine, energy and power are only becoming more important to international security.

Here in the United States, with domestic production up and new oil and gas reserves being discovered, energy still remains a security concern. Even if we were able to produce every single drop of oil or gas that America needs domestically, we cannot control the price. Oil is the ultimate global commodity, often traded on world markets based on speculation and rumor. Prices run up at the slightest sign of global instability, as we have seen at the gas pump in recent weeks. Commodities traders call this a "security premium."

Each \$1 increase in the price of a barrel of oil results in a \$30 million bill for the Navy and Marine Corps. In 2011 and 2012 price fluctuations added an unplanned \$3 billion to the Department of Defense's fuel expenses. The potential bills from that "security premium" can mean that we will have fewer resources for maintaining and training our military.

In 2009 I established formal energy goals for the Department of the Navy to help drive the Navy and Marine Corps to strengthen our combat capability by using energy more efficiently and by diversifying our sources of power. From the introduction of our biofuel powered Great Green Fleet at the Rim of the Pacific Exercise in 2012 to the Marines' introduction of sustainable expeditionary power systems which they used in combat in Afghanistan, we have made real

progress over the last few years. Looking to the future we are cooperating with the Departments of Energy and Agriculture on a national biofuels initiative which will provide up to twenty five percent of the Navy's fuel needs from a 50/50 blend of biofuel and conventional fuels at prices that are competitive with today's fossil fuel based products.

In the 21st century, as much as any other time in our history, power matters. The Navy and Marine Corps are working hard to ensure that we use energy efficiently and effectively in order to maintain or combat capability and improve our strategic independence. The energy to fuel our ships, our aircraft, and our bases helps guarantee our presence, and it helps guarantee our ability to respond and give the President options in any crisis. It helps us ensure that the United States Navy and Marine Corps remain the most powerful expeditionary fighting force in the world.

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