

Oral Testimony  
Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus  
House Armed Services Committee  
Washington, DC

Chairman McKeon, Congressman Smith, members of the committee; first, thank you for your support of the Department of the Navy, our Sailors and Marines, our civilian employees and our families.

General Amos, Commandant of the Marine Corps, and Admiral Greenert, Chief of Naval Operations, and I could not be prouder to represent those courageous and faithful Sailors, Marines, and civilians. These men and women serve their nation around the world with skill and dedication, no matter what hardships they face, no matter how far they are from home and from their families.

The architects of our Constitution recognized the inherent value of the United States Navy and Marine Corps. Article 1, Section 8, which is on a plaque in this hearing room, gave Congress the responsibility to “provide and maintain a Navy,” because our Founding Fathers knew that the nation needed a naval force to operate continuously in war and peace. Over two centuries ago, the United States had a crucial role in the world. Today that role is exponentially greater.

Whether facing high-end combat, asymmetrical threats or humanitarian needs, America’s maritime forces are ready and present on Day One of any crisis, for any eventuality. In today’s dynamic security environment, naval assets are more critical than ever.

In military terms, they provide presence. Presence worldwide. They reassure our partners that we are there and remind potential adversaries that we’re never far away. This presence provides

immediate and capable options for the Commander-in-Chief when a crisis develops anywhere in the world. In the past year our naval forces have operated globally from across the Pacific, to the continuing combat in Afghanistan, and from the Gulf of Guinea to the Arctic Circle.

The 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance and the newly released QDR are both maritime in focus, as you pointed out Mr. Chairman, and require presence of naval forces around the world. Four key factors make that global presence and global action possible. These four factors – People, Platforms, Power and Partnerships – have been my priorities during my tenure as Secretary and they have to continue to receive our focus looking ahead.

In our fiscally constrained times, we have used these priorities to help balance between the readiness of the force, our capabilities, and our capacity.

Our people are our biggest advantage, and we must ensure that they continue to get the tools they need to do their jobs. In compensation, we have increased sea pay to make sure those sailors and Marines deployed aboard ship are appropriately recognized. However, this budget also seeks to control the growth in compensation and benefits, which threatens to impact all the other parts of our budget. If this is not addressed, as the CNO puts it, the quality of work for our Sailors and Marines will almost certainly decline.

Shipbuilding and our platforms remain key elements of our maritime power, and a focus of this committee. The number of ships, submarines, and aircraft in our fleet is what gives us the capacity to provide that global presence. While we have the most advanced platforms in the world, quantity has a quality all its own. I think it's important to understand how we got to our current fleet size. On September 11th, 2001 the fleet stood at 316 ships.

By 2008, after one of the largest military buildups in American history, that number had dropped to 278 ships. In the four years before I took office as Secretary, the Navy put 19 ships under contract. Since I took office in May of 2009, we have put 60 ships under contract and by the end of this decade our plan will return the fleet to 300 ships. We're continuing our initiatives to spend smarter and more efficiently which are driving down costs through things like competition, multi-year buys, and just driving harder bargains for tax-payer dollars.

Power—energy—is a national security issue and is central to our naval forces and our ability to provide that presence. Dramatic price increases for fuel threaten to degrade our operations and training and could impact how many platforms we can acquire. Having more varied, stably-priced, American produced, sources of energy makes us better warfighters. From sail to coal to oil to nuclear, and now to alternative fuels, the Navy has led in energy innovation.

Since the end of World War II, U.S. Naval forces have protected the global commons to maintain the foundation of the world economy. In today's complex environments partnerships with other nations, evidenced by interoperability, by exercises, and operations, continue to increase in importance. The Navy and Marine Corps, by nature of their forward presence, are naturally suited to develop these relationships, particularly in the innovative, small footprint ways that are required.

With the Fiscal Year 15 budget submission, we are seeking, within the fiscal constraints imposed, to provide our Navy and Marine Corps with the equipment, training, and other tools needed to carry out the missions the nation needs and expects from them.

There are never any permanent homecomings for Sailors and Marines. In peacetime, wartime, and all the time they remain forward deployed providing presence and providing whatever is needed by our country. This has been true for 238 years and it is our task to make sure it remains true, now and in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.