

Remarks by Donald C. Winter
Secretary of the Navy
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Thank you, Steve, for that kind introduction. I am pleased to be back again this year at this important conference, particularly in light of last week's unveiling of our new Maritime Strategy at the International Seapower Symposium in Newport, RI.

The focus of my remarks at that event was on the invariance of America's reliance on Naval power, and on our continued commitment to Naval dominance as the core element in our Maritime Strategy.

A full understanding of the evolving role of the Navy-Marine Corps team in the Joint fight must take into account all elements of our strategy.

It is perhaps understandable that most press attention—even before the release of the document—has focused on the new elements in our maritime strategy, specifically, the increased emphasis on maritime security and humanitarian assistance.

I fully support our maritime strategy, and I recognize the value of cooperative engagement and the potential of more extensive maritime security partnerships.

But there is a danger of misinterpretation here, and a number of analysts have drawn unwarranted conclusions about the implications of the Navy and Marine Corps' embrace of cooperative engagement and humanitarian assistance as core elements of our strategy.

An evolving threat environment calls for an evolving response, but the strategic imperatives of the United States—particularly with respect to the maritime components of the strategic equation—remain unchanged.

The Navy and Marine Corps' bedrock obligation to the American people to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic, requires that we maintain Naval forces with certain indispensable attributes.

Worldwide presence, credible deterrence and dissuasion capability, an ability to project power from Naval platforms anywhere on the globe, and the ability to prevail at

sea are the non-negotiable elements of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps' strategic posture.

In other words, Navy and Marine Corps capabilities in the Joint fight remain our number one priority—and for good reason.

The realities of America's interests and position in the world remain fixed.

The United States is a maritime power, bounded by the sea to the east and west.

The health of our economy depends on safe transit through the seas—and the trend in international commerce is ever upward.

The strength of a nation's Navy remains an essential measure of a great power's status and role in the world.

All these realities suggest that maritime dominance—which has been a cornerstone of U.S. military strategy since World War II—is still indispensable to America's security interests.

Therefore, our maritime strategy reflects enduring strategic imperatives and interests that Naval forces are uniquely capable of supporting.

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The unique value of the Navy-Marine Corps team and expeditionary capability has long been recognized.

That value, however, is at an even greater premium today due to the increased uncertainty and unpredictability of the current threat environment.

With land invasions across the Fulda Gap no longer primary planning scenarios, where to pre-position our forces defies obvious answers.

Threat uncertainty is compounded by coalition uncertainty, for we live in an era in which coalition partners may not be available as hoped or expected.

These uncertainties lead us to conclude that the ability to project power from Naval platforms has become even more indispensable to our ability to wage war in the Joint fight.

Reminders of that reality are all too frequent.

We must adjust our strategy accordingly.

Keep in mind that during the Cold War, our bases were largely established by treaty, which afforded us a higher level of certainty and reliability than we can count on

today.

There was also a clear recognition on the part of most that we faced a common adversary who actively worked against our interests on every level.

Today, these conditions no longer obtain.

Adversaries and governments change, rendering base agreements problematic and introducing an element of chronic uncertainty to our calculations.

Some of our friends stretch the limits of the meaning of the word “ally,” and our relationships continue to surprise and disappoint at inopportune moments.

The net result is that the number of bases in fixed locations that we can completely rely on is increasingly limited.

Therefore, we must acknowledge our growing dependence on expeditionary warfare capability.

We believe that the rise in the number of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief missions, and the persistent desire to expand our engagement efforts with partner nations are not in conflict with our longstanding commitment to maintaining a posture of maritime dominance.

Rather, they add to and support our enduring objectives.

Soft power elements can help avoid war, and the benefits of engagement often emerge once war becomes necessary.

Soft power missions do not obviate the need for hard power.

We may execute such missions with greater frequency and with greater eagerness than in the past, but we are under no illusions regarding their role in the Joint fight.

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We are not only seeing a growing need for expeditionary capability, we are seeing a need for Navy and Marine Corps capabilities across the full spectrum of operations.

The shift in focus from blue to green and brown water threats began in the 1990s.

This shift has resulted in a Navy and Marine Corps that is focused on a wide variety of possible threats.

We must manage a portfolio of capabilities to defend against a range of threats—from criminals and terrorists at sea, to rogue nations, to potential competitors.

This array of threats complicates our task considerably.

Organizing, training, and equipping Naval forces in order to execute our core missions now requires an ability to meet the challenges posed by threats of unpredictable nature and geographic location.

And yet our core missions in the Joint fight are unaffected by this development.

Providing combat airpower, carrying out land attack missions far inland and for an extended period of time, providing amphibious assault capability, providing military logistics, and executing strike missions at sea continue to be our *raison d'être*.

Faced with these requirements, we are diversifying the fleet.

We are developing new littoral capabilities: the first Riverine force since Vietnam has already been deployed to the Euphrates River.

As we speak, those Riverine forces are patrolling waterways in harm's way, providing presence, searching for weapons caches, and taking out terrorists who foolishly enter their domain.

The diversification of the fleet is reflected in our 30-year shipbuilding program, which our new maritime strategy does not change.

There is no deviation from our plan to reach at least 313 ships, including at least 32 amphibious platforms.

Some commentators have failed to mention that our shipbuilding program and core mission focus remain unchanged.

Instead, they have focused on particular elements of soft Naval power.

However, there should not be an over-emphasis on any one aspect of our strategy.

Let there be no mistake: we are not walking away from, diminishing, or retreating in any way from those elements of hard power that win wars—or deter them from ever breaking out in the first place.

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Our efforts to improve the expeditionary warfare elements of hard power are approaching a pivotal period.

A series of significant acquisition decisions will soon be made, and those decisions will largely define the future of our amphibious forces.

The decision-making process regarding EFV, MPF-Future, and JLTV and other key programs is now entering a critical phase.

We are at the critical point where we need to decide what we really want to buy in the first place.

A systems engineering approach that optimizes fleet capabilities is the key to making the right decisions, and we must ensure that we are buying the capabilities we truly want and need, both now and in the future.

In addressing these issues we must be mindful of the range of capabilities expected of our Navy-Marine Corps team.

The Marine Corps has and always will be our Nation's rapid response force.

Holding territory and policing large areas are not core missions for Marines, and yet, the success of the Marines in turning around the dire situation in Iraq's Al Anbar province has been truly impressive.

This success has been wrought from the flexibility and agility inherent in the Marine Corps – the same flexibility and agility we need to provide them in their future weapon systems.

We expect our Navy-Marine Corps team to continue to perform NEO's, like they did last year in Lebanon. We expect our team to continue to respond to disasters like the mud slides in the Philippines, and we expect them to continue performing special operations in the Global War on Terror.

And lastly, we expect the Navy-Marine Corps team to meet any challenge of the future, be it from a rogue nation or a potential near peer competitor.

The Navy-Marine Corps Team provides unique leverage in peacetime, lethal combat power in times of war, and great flexibility at all times. To ensure we maintain this national asset, we must ensure that their fighting spirit is supported with weapons systems that are capable, reliable and sustainable.

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Let me close by sharing an anecdote with you.

It is common for U.S. Secretaries to have a portrait in their office of a former Secretary whom they hold in high regard. I have a portrait of Theodore Roosevelt in my office. I consider him an inspiration.

Theodore Roosevelt, as Assistant Secretary of the Navy, and later, of course, the 26th President of the United States, was a passionate believer in the virtue of Naval power.

Roosevelt understood that no fine-sounding words, no treaty, no gathering of diplomats expressing their peaceful intentions can forge diplomatic solutions without hard power to back them up.

Words not supported by the implicit understanding of what would follow—should words fail—are empty.

He lived by the credo. And so should we.

Successful diplomacy is made possible by the capability evidenced by Naval power.

Our strategy reflects that message, and it is bolstered by the expeditionary warfare elements of hard power that the Navy-Marine Corps team can uniquely provide.

Expeditionary warfare capability provides enormous leverage in diplomacy, and it is and always will be indispensable in the Joint fight.

As we move forward, keep your eye on the big picture. Never forget that the purpose of the Navy and Marine Corps is to support the Joint fight, and to win our Nation's wars.

Thank you, and may God bless America.