

**Opening Statement of  
The Honorable Donald C. Winter  
Secretary of the Navy  
Before the Senate Armed Services Committee  
Washington, D.C.  
28 February 2008**

Chairman Levin, Senator Warner, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

I am here to present the Department of the Navy's plan to support our Sailors and Marines in their mission to defend our Nation against current and future challenges.

The President's Fiscal Year 09 Budget will assist the Navy and Marine Corps in accomplishing their complimentary and reinforcing missions, while building capabilities necessary to meet future threats.

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One of the primary responsibilities of our government is to provide for the Nation's defense.

Those responsibilities include the critical requirement to organize, train, and equip our Naval forces.

For the vast majority of citizens the only cost imposed on us is financial.

America is able to provide for the national defense with such a minimal impact on the citizenry because we are blessed to have among us a generation of people—patriots all—who volunteer to serve.

They are the ones who bear many hardships, accept many risks, and go in harm's way.

The pay and benefit funding levels in our 09 budget request reflect the compensation levels necessary to continue to attract and retain quality personnel in the Navy and Marine Corps.

Furthermore, although we are doing well in our overall recruiting and retention numbers, I emphasize the need for special pays and bonuses to meet critical subspecialty needs such as our requirements for nurses, physicians, and explosive ordnance disposal personnel.

It is because of the hard work of our Sailors and Marines that we are making progress fostering maritime security, defeating terrorist networks, progressing towards a stable Iraq, supporting the Afghan government, countering piracy and the proliferation of deadly technology, rendering humanitarian assistance, and strengthening partnerships around the world.

Our Sailors and Marines have responded when called, and superbly performed their many missions in our Nation's defense.

It is truly an honor and privilege to work with them and support them as their Secretary.

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The Department of the Navy's FY 09 Budget meets the challenge of resourcing the Navy and Marine Corps Team across a range of missions, from partnership building to combat operations.

It invests in our ability to operate, sustain and develop forces that are engaged in the Global War on Terrorism, while preparing the force for the challenges and threats of the future.

We are requesting a total of \$149 billion, a seven percent increase over the FY 2008 baseline.

This increase is driven by factors such as rising oil costs and the critical, comprehensive growth of the Marine Corps.

Our FY 2009 budget reflects three key priorities, which are consistent with those of previous years. They are:

- First of all, prevail in the Global War on Terror;
- Secondly, take care of our Sailors, Marines, their Families, and particularly our wounded; and
- Lastly, prepare for future challenges across the full spectrum of operations.

To help meet our first priority – prevail in the GWOT – we are adapting our force for current and future missions to include growing the Marine Corps; shaping the force by recruiting and retaining the right people; and addressing critical readiness needs.

Among our most critical readiness needs is the ability to train our Sailors and Marines for the threats they may encounter.

Unfortunately, our Navy has encountered increasing encroachments in our ability to conduct critical training.

We recognize that there are, on occasion, impacts on the citizenry at large associated with such training.

But these are necessary costs that are critical to the defense of the Nation.

We take extensive precautions to minimize the impact of our training.

We owe it to the American people, and we owe it to those who serve to acknowledge that—as in all things in life—there are competing interests and trade-offs, and that we treat the risks of sonar operation at sea or the impact of jet noise the way we treat all public policy issues, balancing risks and costs against legitimate national security interests.

I greatly appreciate the support this committee provided us last year with respect to Miramar Air Station, thereby ensuring that our Naval Aviators can continue to receive vital training.

I commit to you today that I will continue to keep you apprised of legal challenges—and their implications for readiness—that we face over the course of the coming year.

Mr. Chairman, if in the future we are unable to properly train our Sailors and Marines, we will have failed to do our duty—to them and to the American people.

Another critical issue I would like to highlight concerns doing right by those who go in harm's way.

As Secretary of Defense Gates has stated, “Apart from the war itself, we have no higher priority [than to take care of our wounded].”

Our wounded warriors and their families deserve the highest priority care, respect and treatment for their sacrifices.

Our 09 budget honors our commitment to ensure that our Sailors and Marines receive the appropriate care, training and financial support they need.

Finally, to meet the challenges of the future, the 09 Budget provides for a balanced fleet of ships, aircraft and expeditionary capabilities with the fighting power and versatility to carry out blue, green, and brown water missions, wherever called upon.

Furthermore, I would like to note that—consistent with our commitment to ensure affordability and timely delivery of capabilities—we have launched an acquisition improvement initiative to:

- Provide better integration of requirements and acquisition decision processes,
- Improve governance and insight into the development, establishment, and execution of acquisition programs; and
- Formalize a framework to engage senior Naval leadership.

Mr. Chairman, I am grateful for the strong support this committee – and the Congress at large – has given our Navy and Marine Corps team.

I want to thank you on their behalf.

Our Navy and Marine Corps is a strong, capable and dedicated team.

I appreciate the opportunity to represent them today and look forward to your questions.