

The Path to Restoring Naval Readiness
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Years of operating under the 2011 Budget Control Act and over nine years of continuing resolutions have imposed high costs on the Department of the Navy. Some of these costs have been financial, but budget caps and delays have also had deep impacts on our ability to resource our mission. The resultant effect of continuing resolutions and lack of budgets produces a U.S. Navy and Marine Corps team that is operating at a level less than optimal when compared to known funding on a regular budget cycle. Finding the right remedy — which is an imperative — will require ingenuity and partnership on all sides.

Rest assured, the Department of the Navy is dedicated to restoring readiness and increasing the capacity and capability of the fleet to meet the nation's security needs. We are beginning to witness improvements in these three areas, and we expect to see the rate of improvement increase in the near future. We are committed to doing so in a way that works hand-in-hand with our partners in Congress and industry so we may deliver superior national defense at a value to the American taxpayers.

Finding that value means we must avoid the expense of mistakes and delays so we can build the foundation for future growth today. This will require large capital investments, now, in order to achieve our goals while continuing to maintain the enterprise and associated infrastructure we have today. The centerpiece for my department is the fleet. I cannot tell you exactly what the maritime fleet composition will be in 20 to 25 years, but I know that bringing that additional capacity into existence will be infinitely more challenging if we do not make prudent investments today.

Time is a commodity that cannot be regained once lost — no amount of money can buy it back. The money we do have must be invested as efficiently as possible, which means we must attain greater budgetary certainty in order to fund our strategy. Having a clear line of sight to the necessary resources for growth will allow our partners in industry to invest for the future, which will in turn lower overall costs.

I am looking intensively at ways that the Department of the Navy can be more efficient in how we conduct our business in order to strike the balance between sustainability for industry and value for the taxpayers. Additionally, we are determined to work with our industry partners so we may implement their lessons learned in order to be better informed customers for our suppliers.

We will do this by streamlining our acquisition process and working with our congressional partners to secure steady funding commitments, which will encourage innovation, better manage risk and drive efficiencies.

The solutions I see, while challenging, can provide value to the enterprise. All of us in the national security enterprise — the Pentagon, Congress and industry — share the goal of supporting our current and future sailors and Marines so that they can be successful at conducting their missions. We have not done enough in that regard. Today, they face stark choices between conducting missions for which they have been tasked, training in order to be prepared for future missions, and maintaining their equipment so that it can perform safely and effectively. We have given them too few resources, and we have done this with a lack of consistency. Our sailors and Marines have done their utmost to manage this quandary, while always acting with a “can do” attitude and a bias for action. We now owe them consistent resources in order for them to act today and sustain their ability to do so over time. Our sailors and Marines are committed to being the best; we must deliver the means that they need to continue to realize that commitment.

This is the opportunity. This is the time. This administration is dedicated to rebuilding American military might and ensuring stability and certainty as we address global security demands. The future is challenging but bright as we lean forward to engage with our legislative and industry partners to guarantee that the Navy and Marine Corps team remains the world’s most ready and lethal forward-deployed fighting force.