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Opening Statement of Chairman Roscoe Bartlett *Hearing on the Future Submarine Force Structure*

Washington, D.C. – Today, we will receive testimony from the United States Navy, the Congressional Research Service, members of industry and a retired submarine force commander concerning the Navy's future submarine force structure and the challenge of maintaining a viable and responsive submarine production industrial base.

Today's hearing will focus on three questions. First, does the submarine force structure set forth in the Chief of Naval Operations' (CNO) long-range shipbuilding plan adequately support the National Military Strategy and combatant commander submarine requirements? Second, what strategies have the Navy and industry implemented to reduce the cost of designing and building submarines? And third, could accelerating the procurement of more than one Virginia Class submarine per year to 2009 have a positive impact on the Navy's long-range shipbuilding plan, help reduce submarine construction costs and lastly, retain the valuable expertise of submarine designers and engineers?

Concerning our first question, meeting combatant commander requirements, the subcommittee understands that the Navy's submarine force structure contained in the CNO's shipbuilding plan has a goal of maintaining 66 submarines, of which 48 of these would be in the fast attack category. However, beginning in the year 2020, the Navy's inventory of fast attack submarines will decrease below 48 for a period of 14 years, and eventually drop to as low as 40 before slowly returning to 48 in 2034.

In contrast, a 1999 report to re-evaluate fast attack submarine requirements for the 2015 and 2025 timeframes was conducted by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The study concluded that a fast attack submarine force below 55 in 2015, and 62 in 2025, would leave combatant commanders insufficient capability to respond to urgent demands, without creating gaps in filling other requirements of higher national interest.

These force structure numbers are vastly different from the Navy's current plan, and the subcommittee will seek to understand what has caused this change in recent years.

Concerning our second and third questions, submarine shipbuilding costs and retaining design expertise, the subcommittee understands that the attack submarine force-level goal, once determined, is a primary factor to consider in assessing at what rate Virginia Class submarines should be procured in coming years. Another factor to consider is the effect of annual procurement rates on unit procurement costs. Due to spreading overhead costs at the shipyards and suppliers, and reduced loss of learning between submarines at the shipyards, procuring attack submarines at two per year could reduce the unit procurement cost by up to \$200 million.

The goal of the Navy and industry is to reduce the current cost of the Virginia Class submarine from \$2.4 billion, to \$2 billion by the year 2012. At that time, the Navy is programmed to begin the procurement of two Virginia Class submarines per year. The subcommittee is concerned the Navy's Virginia Class submarine procurement rate is driven primarily by a limited budget, divided among an array of immensely expensive platforms...and not at a procurement rate that would meet future requirements or potential threats.

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