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Statement of
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before the House Armed Services Committee
Subcommittee on Projection Forces
on
The Nuclear Submarine Force – Current and Future Force Structure
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Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Subcommittee on Projection Forces, Rear Admiral Joe Walsh and I thank you for the opportunity to represent the men and women of your Navy and your Submarine Force.

We represent submariners that make up a small portion of our Navy – approximately 7%. However, I would submit that our contributions are disproportionately large compared to our small size. Our people are the cornerstone of our Force. They are talented, motivated and have chosen to serve their Nation in a submarine. We screen our applicants and take only the best. Operating nuclear submarines is complex and demanding, so our standards have to be high. Submariners feel a sense of purpose because they are busy and fully employed. They are out front everyday providing for our national security. Even while serving in a capacity outside the Undersea Enterprise, such as on joint staffs, or in Iraq and Afghanistan, these Sailors use their unique talents and Submarine Force experiences to make contributions to joint operations and the nation's defense.

As you have requested, today I will discuss the Navy's future shipbuilding plan as it pertains to future Navy mission requirements. I will also address the Submarine Force's current operational tempo and Fleet requirements, and relate them to the future force structure. My remarks will be unclassified; however I am prepared to discuss classified details with the committee anytime.

I. The Global Landscape – a backdrop.

Challenges. America is engaged in what will be a long war. Our current enemy is a complex network of ideologically driven extremist actors. Just how this war will continue to unfold, and the way the global strategic landscape will evolve, remains uncertain.

This uncertainty creates several alternative "futures". Your Submarine Force provides capabilities for national defense in each of these futures and we are ready. First, there is a world dominated by the fight against extremists, a long-term campaign fought on a global scale,

involving all elements of national power. Secondly, there is the constant potential for Major Combat Operations against a near peer competitor. Third is a world in constant crisis, with hot spots flaring around resources, ideology, religion or other issues. Finally, defending the homeland from direct attack will always be a priority and will be addressed within our borders and abroad; preferably forward, away from our borders. The Submarine Force provides capability, which can posture us against any and all of these.

Capabilities. We are acting to build an optimal future. This requires day-in and day-out operations in close proximity to the enemy and other potential adversaries to develop clarity of understanding of their capability and intent. We must take action to capture intelligence, not wait for it to come to us. It requires us to be a force in action, not a force in reserve. Building Maritime Security drives the need for a strong, capable, and forward deployed submarine force

Our capability is the combination of our platform technologies, our crews' abilities, and our Force capacity (which is the number of operational submarines). These are qualities not easily or rapidly reconstituted once lost. The firepower available from a deployed, ready, and clandestinely postured nuclear submarine is an important contribution to our nation's projection of power. Likewise, the sensors, communications and analytical capability of a continuously deployed and clandestinely postured submarine build Maritime Security and provides for our nations defense.

II. Submarine Force Structure.

In 2005, we deployed 31 SSN submarines throughout the world on lengthy operational deployments. This included the USS VIRGINIA, which conducted a successful deployment on a tailored mission to satisfy a specific Combatant Commander requirement. That the VIRGINIA was able to deploy only 11 months after her commissioning is a tribute not only to her crew, but also to the design of the ship and the skill of the ship builders at General Dynamic's Electric Boat Division and Northrop Grumman Newport News. These submarines worked in forward areas and brought back a product. Additionally, the preponderance of our SSBN force is

underway, underwater, in a survivable posture, able to rapidly respond to national tasking. Submarines supported every Regional Combatant Commander along with Strategic Command and Special Operations Command. Submarines were sent where they were needed most and transited the Arctic Ocean, Cape Horn, the Panama Canal, and the Suez Canal to get there. We are at work every single day, forward around the world.

And we are not alone. Working with our allies and partners around the globe, we are part of the free world's international Submarine Force that includes more than 224 submarines. This is a good example of Admiral Mullen's description of the 1000 ship international Navy.

The Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) has developed a shipbuilding plan that builds the Navy the nation needs – a Navy that is both affordable and meets with acceptable risk the future national security requirements outlined in the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR). Force structure requirements were developed and validated through detailed joint campaign and mission level analysis, optimized through innovative sourcing initiatives (i.e.: Fleet Response Plan, optimal basing and forward posturing) that increase platform operational availability, and balanced with shipbuilding industrial base requirements.

In July of 2005, the CNO directed an effort to examine existing force structure studies leading to the development of the right force structure mix for the Navy's long-term ship building plan. To maximize return on investment, the focus was for a Navy that was able to fight the GWOT, execute Maritime Security Operations and win in any Major Combat Operation (MCO). Nuclear powered attack submarine (SSN) force structure was examined using a 2020 capability based assessment (both for our forces and the forces of potential adversaries), and determined by developing the required forward posture for immediate response to any potential MCO. This analysis examined the present and future COCOM demand for SSNs, along with the risks associated with meeting all wartime requirements against the most stressing MCOs. Based upon this assessment, 48 was the number of SSNs that presented an acceptable risk and still allowed an affordable plan for long-range shipbuilding.

Since 1992, SSN force structure has been studied extensively. The 1999 Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Attack Submarine Study was directed by the Secretary of Defense to fulfill the language of the 1997 QDR. The basic premise of the 1999 study was principally based on Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance requirements. Our recent studies, conducted using improved modeling and campaign analysis techniques, reviewed war fighting requirements in a variety of potential conflicts as well as peacetime presence requirements. Additionally, the force mix of all U .S. Forces, including joint forces, as well as updated threat capability generated a different solution set from the 1999 study.

From a global perspective, the concentration of our operations has shifted over the past few decades from an Atlantic focus to a Pacific focus, and the distribution of SSNs has been adjusted accordingly. During the height of the Cold War, about 60% of our SSNs were based in the Atlantic, and we had a continual, multi-SSN presence in the Mediterranean Sea. When the Cold War ended and Pacific operations increased, we shifted the balance to 50%/50%. In order to execute a 2006 QDR recommendation we will shift 60% of our Submarine Force to Pacific homeports.

III. Submarine Employment.

Our Submarine Force is built upon a strong legacy of selecting and training the best people, building and maintaining the best ships, and equipping those ships with the latest technology and most advanced equipment. Those people and ships go to sea to practice, they get ready and then deploy. We are busy, on any given day more than 60% of operational submarines are underway, and of those 38% are deployed forward. These standards contributed to winning the Cold War and they have maintained our preparedness for the future.

Submarines are cost effective as well. These nuclear powered ships are launched with a “full tank of gas” that lasts for the life of the ship. This negates the need for costly logistics force ships and replenishment ships in ports with known potential adversaries. The average age of an attack submarine in today's Submarine Force is 16.5 years, which is half of their 33-year life

span. Rest assured, we continue to invest in upgraded technology, optimizing the capability of even our oldest submarine hulls.

The effects we deliver can also extend far inland. Timely, reliable delivery of accurate and lethal Tomahawk missiles is vital to most war plans. Our Trident submarines carrying ballistic missiles remain our Nation's most survivable strategic asset. Insertion of Special Operations Force (SOF) personnel from SSNs or SSGNs can create precision effects across the spectrum of conflict. The emerging capability in the area of Information Operations (IO) allows us to clandestinely shape the environment and reduce risk to our forces.

Our customer is the Combatant Commander. Collectively they have requested a total of 18 SSN-years of deployed operations in 2006. While we can only provide about 10 SSN-years of deployed presence, this is sufficient to accomplish all of their highest priority missions. With the maintenance process improvements in our post-overhaul LOS ANGELES Class, SEAWOLF Class, and VIRGINIA Class submarines, we will be able to maintain this annual deployment rate even as the SSN force structure is reduced to 48 SSNs. This force structure provides a sufficient number of SSNs to influence near peer competitors and to contribute to stability operations. Under the planned operational philosophy and build rate, the force size structure is anticipated to fall below 48 SSNs between 2020 and 2034. Any delay in building 2 Virginia Class boats a year in 2012 and beyond will make this gap worse. We will have to work mitigations during this period to meet minimum Combat Commander needs.

For those SSNs not in a maintenance period, OPTEMPO is 46%. This indicates that our SSN force is fully employed, but with some room for limited short-term surge.

Enabled by nuclear power, submarines stealthily and persistently go where others cannot. We operate clandestinely in shallow water, under ice, and in congested areas and in extreme weather conditions. We provide our own self-defense and are self-contained. We can stay on station a long time. We operate with Joint, interagency, and coalition forces when needed - other times we work alone.

The five key attributes, which enable submarines to deliver unique value are:

Stealth
Persistence
Agility
Mobility
Payload

We use these attributes to our advantage - day-in and day-out.

The Submarine Force provides value across the spectrum of conflict. On one end we build Maritime Security. These are operations to evaluate and shape the environment, and if shaping fails, to make combat preparations in the pre-hostilities phase of military action. This activity occurs everyday throughout the year. It is important to emphasize that if shaping a nation's will through actions projected from the sea is conducted effectively, then hostilities may never occur. At the other end of the spectrum is combat that could occur during a crisis or Major Combat Operation.

V. Needed Future Capabilities.

Overall, the number of submarines in the Navy's 30-year shipbuilding plan provides adequate force structure to meet the nation's needs with acceptable risk. Our SSBNs provide the only survivable nuclear deterrent capability and will remain a viable force until the end of their service life.

The first SSGN, USS OHIO, was delivered in December 2005 and returned to service as a SSGN in February 2006. The second SSGN, USS FLORIDA, will be delivered this April. When all four SSGNs are operational with two crews each, we will be able to keep two forward deployed at all times. These platforms provide a transformational capability for our nation. Using the Small Combatant Joint Command Center (SCJCC), the embarked 66 SOF personnel can plan and execute missions to find, fix and finish targets, or they could be attacked with the SSGN's 154 Tomahawk cruise missiles.

The VIRGINIA Class submarine is the epitome of capability, agility and flexibility. Designed after the end of the Cold War, she is built from the keel up with flexibility in mind. Her open architecture electronics allow us to rapidly upgrade her with new capability; and the modular torpedo room is designed to accomplish multiple missions. With her 9-man lock out chamber, and SOF mission configured torpedo room, she will provide enhanced SOF capability for the War on Terrorism. VIRGINIA, more than previous submarine classes, is ready for the future.

In the late 1990's we embarked on an effort to replace our legacy sonar systems with Acoustic-Rapid Commercial-Off-The-Shelf (COTS) Insertion (ARCI). COTS enables us to maintain our software and hardware at a fraction of the cost required to replace and upgrade our former legacy systems. This effort has been so successful, we have expanded the concept to our tactical fire control, radio room, electronic surveillance equipment, navigation, periscope, and torpedoes. The VIRGINIA Class is delivered with an entirely open architecture. As a matter of fact, the Navy as a whole has now adopted this open architecture approach. The bottom line is this process allows us to stay maintained and stay relevant relatively inexpensively on even our oldest ships.

However, we plan to make them more affordable. As Ms Stiller will answer for you, the Navy is pursuing a number of cost reduction initiatives intended to lower the acquisition cost of the VIRGINIA Class Submarine. The entire Undersea Enterprise is focusing on this goal, it will take some investment which we have planned and I believe we have the methods and the plan to achieve the goal.

I believe that the capability this Nation needs is defined by a sufficient number of submarine hulls, each with attributes described in the previous section and with some increased capability for:

Enhanced connectivity and

Utilization of distributed sensors and weapons

We are already moving toward a greater interdependence of Joint and Coalition force operations of which the Submarine Force is a current and valued component. While we communicate easily and frequently today with the Joint force, we cannot do so from all relevant postures.

We are experimenting with new technologies to provide submarines with communications at higher speeds and increased depth. This does not translate to full bandwidth capacity at all speeds and all depths. Instead, we are striving for tactically relevant communications throughout the submarine's operating envelope.

We also need stealthily delivered sensors and weapons in quantity. First, we already have the SSGNs, and the SEAWOLF and VIRGINIA Classes coming online with large payload volumes and ocean interfaces. These ships will enable us to experiment with and define the payloads that will deliver unique, enhanced capability.

I envision one of the payload sets in these packages to be knowledge and shaping tools. These will include networks of distributed sensors and weapons, which allow us to better understand and affect a larger area. Whether they are sensors, unmanned or manned vehicles, non-kinetic weapons, or kinetic weapons, they will inherit the submarine's unique attributes of: stealth, persistence, agility, and mobility. And they will reap the same benefits I have discussed today.

And finally, we must continue to improve the sensors installed on our submarines. We have refined the twin thin-line towed array systems on our SURTASS ships and need to transfer this enhanced capability to our submarines.

These capabilities will enable us to assist the Joint commander through persistent monitoring every day in areas where others can't go.

VI. Summary –Our submarines should continue to be deployed forward, as scouts "walking the field." Day-in and day-out, they need to be building Maritime Security, seeking out ground truth and shaping the environment to avert the next conflict or should it occur, be ready to engage quickly and decisively. A Submarine Force of 48 SSNs, 14 SSBNs and 4 SSGNs is the right size

and shape for our Navy and nation and to sustain that we need an effective and stable shipbuilding program, a program that builds two VIRGINIA Class submarines per year starting in 2012.

Thank you very much for your time today. We will be happy to respond to any questions.