



**HOUSE ARMED SERVICES SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS
JOEL HEFLEY, COLORADO – CHAIRMAN**

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release: April 6, 2006

Contact: Josh Holly, HASC (202) 225-2539 or
Kim Sears (Hefley) (202) 225-4422

Chairman Hefley Opening Statement

Hearing on the Department of the Navy's Transformation

Washington, DC --- Today we meet to discuss several key transformation initiatives of the Department of the Navy. The Navy is aggressively transforming its forces to prepare for the uncertainties of the future ranging from conventional threats posed by nation-states to asymmetric threats posed by non-state actors.

In this new environment, the Navy has recently implemented three initiatives: the Fleet Response Plan, the Navy Expeditionary Combat Command and a crew rotation program commonly referred to as "Sea Swap."

While we encourage new approaches from all the Services, we also have an important oversight role. These three programs represent institutional changes to the way the Navy has operated in the past. For example:

The Navy Fleet Response Plan (FRP) changes the traditional six month carrier deployment cycles. The Navy now has the ability to surge six vessels within a 30 day window, and an additional carrier within 90 days. But this "surge" capability comes with a cost not only in terms of dollars; but to our sailors' families, their training and even basic ship maintenance.

The Navy Expeditionary Combat Command was formed this year to expand the Navy's capabilities to address a stated need for sailors to be trained in close combat and force protection. As part of this Command, the Navy has re-established the riverine combat force. The "brown water Navy" has not experienced widespread use since swift boats fought in Vietnam.

The Navy "Sea Swap" is a crew rotation initiative designed to extend ship deployment length by swapping crews in mid-deployment at sea. This saves time regarding the steaming days a ship incurs as it travels to and from an area of responsibility. The GAO issued a report in November 2004 that raised many concerns about this program ranging from the impact on ship maintenance to training and crew morale.

Individually, these initiatives seem to be worthwhile endeavors. However, when taken together, we have concerns that the Navy may have difficulty understanding the long term impacts on professional development and mission training, maintenance and repair, and morale and retention.

In addition to these three topics, we look forward to discussing the implications of the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) and the Maritime Administration's policies regarding foreign shipyard depot maintenance.

The QDR states: "The fleet will have greater presence in the Pacific Ocean, consistent with the global shift of trade and transport." Many of us have questions on how and when the Navy will begin the shift of naval assets in order to accomplish the goals and policies of the QDR.

Finally, members of our committee have had long-standing questions regarding the way in which the Maritime Administration makes decisions pertaining to foreign ship yard repair of Ready Reserve Force vessels.

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