

Chairman C.W. Bill Young
Subcommittee on Defense
House Committee on Appropriations
Fiscal Year 2013 Navy and Marine Corps Budget Hearing
March 1, 2012
Opening Statement

The subcommittee will come to order.

This afternoon the subcommittee will hold an open hearing on the posture and budget request of the Department of the Navy. We will focus on Navy and Marine Corps personnel, training, and equipment readiness and will also touch on acquisition issues to gain insights into the Department's priorities and decision making.

I would like to welcome Secretary of the Navy Raymond Mabus, Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Jonathan Greenert, and Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps General Joseph Dunford to the subcommittee. While Secretary Mabus is a familiar face to the subcommittee, Admiral Greenert is making his first appearance in his new capacity as the 30th Chief of Naval Operations. Congratulations Admiral Greenert and welcome. Additionally, General Dunford is filling in for General Amos who is having some back issues. So we also welcome you General Dunford and we know the Marine Corps has a very deep bench and I'm sure General Amos can use this time to recover and know that the Marines are in very capable hands.

Thank you all for being here today. I'm sure I can safely speak for every Member of this subcommittee in thanking you for your service to our great nation.

Gentlemen, we are looking forward today to hearing how you were able to craft a workable budget for fiscal year 2013 given the constraints that were placed upon you with respect to the decreasing top line. We are especially anxious to hear how the Marine Corps is going to handle the force reductions that seem to be coming right on the heels of the recent force buildup. We certainly do not want to break faith with any of our young Marines who have been performing so well by turning our backs on them and sending them along their way.

Also of interest to the subcommittee is the apparent contradiction that we see in the Navy's shipbuilding program. When it was announced that the Department of Defense was increasing its focus on the Asia-Pacific region, an increased Naval presence immediately came to mind. I was comforted in recalling Secretary Mabus's words to this subcommittee last year when he told us that the Navy would be building 57 ships over the period from 2013 to 2017, finally putting the Navy on pace to reach 300 ships. Now, when it would seem even more important to have a larger fleet, the Navy has actually decreased the number of ships planned for construction over that same time period. And the decrease isn't small. The current number of ships planned for construction over the 2013 to 2017 time period is 41 ships, a decrease of 16 ships from what was forecast last year. This represents a 28 percent decrease from last year's number. I am puzzled at the contradiction of planning to use a smaller fleet to cover a larger portion of the globe. Granted our new ships will be more capable but they can still only be in one place at a time. I would think that in many respects, quantity itself is a capability.

However, as we have always done in the past, this subcommittee will work hard to ensure the Department of the Navy is ready and able to conduct the very important mission that you've been given. We understand as well as anybody that the most important component of your Department are the sailors and Marines that you have the privilege to lead and who sacrifice so much in defending our freedoms.

So welcome – I look forward to your comments and an informative question and answer session. Now let me turn to my good friend and partner, Ranking Member Norm Dicks for any comments he may want to make.

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