

**Opening Statement of U.S. Senator Jack Reed
Ranking Member, Senate Armed Services Committee**

**Room SD-G50
Dirksen Senate Office Building
Tuesday, March 10, 2015**

**To receive testimony on the posture of the Department of the Navy
in review of the Defense Authorization Request
for Fiscal Year 2016 and the Future Years Defense Program.
(As Prepared for Delivery)**

I want to join Senator McCain in welcoming Secretary Mabus, Admiral Greenert, and General Dunford to the Committee this morning to testify on the plans and programs of the Department of the Navy in our review of the fiscal year 2016 annual budget request. We are grateful to each of you for your service, for the service of the men and women under your command, and for the commitment of their families. I especially want to welcome General Dunford to his first posture hearing as Commandant this morning, but also note that this will be Admiral Greenert's last posture hearing. Admiral Greenert, thank you for your many years of outstanding service.

Our witnesses this morning face huge challenges as they strive to balance the need to support ongoing operations and sustain readiness with the need to modernize and keep the technological edge so critical to military success. These challenges have been made particularly difficult by the fiscal constraints of the Budget Control Act. All the military departments have been forced to make painful trade-offs. And now the threat of sequestration looms. If Congress does not act to end sequestration, I believe our long-term national security interests will be threatened.

Last year, the Department of the Navy was facing serious readiness problems, caused by deferred maintenance, reduced steaming and flying hours, and cancelled training and deployments. The increased emphasis on readiness in this year's budget will address some of the Navy's most serious readiness problems, but results in a serious shortfall in modernization funds to meet future threats. I am interested in hearing the witnesses' views of the increase in risk because of that shortfall.

All areas of our naval forces are overtaxed. The Navy is facing shortfalls in attack submarines, air and missile defense cruisers, destroyers and strike fighter inventories. They have already been operating for two years now with fewer than the required 11 aircraft carriers. And during the next decade, as a first priority, the Navy will need to buy a new class of strategic missile submarines to replace the *Ohio*-class submarines, a very costly venture. I am interested in hearing how the Navy is managing its operational tempo with these shortfalls. I am also interested in the witnesses' views on how they will manage competing demands on the budget once the costs of the Ohio replacement begin.

The President's Budget request calls for a Marine Corps endstrength of 184,000 Marines, down from the wartime high of over 200,000. I am interested to learn how the Marine Corps will manage mission risk with a force this size, particularly with the addition of missions such as increased embassy security.

For Marine Corps modernization, the FY 2016 request supports the decisions made last year that made the strategy for ground systems more sound. The Marine Corps clearly remains committed to the revitalization of its armored amphibious assault capabilities, with a budget request that includes funds for mobility and survivability upgrades for its current family of armored Amphibious Assault Vehicles and continues a competitive search for a new wheeled Amphibious Combat Vehicle. We understand that this Amphibious Combat Vehicle program would integrate a number of existing technologies into a new vehicle. The Marine Corps has described this program as "non-developmental," which raises questions about what this means. I am interested to hear insights from the Commandant on what "non-developmental" means in this context and how the Marine Corps will manage this program .

It is also clear that the Marine Corps' real amphibious challenge, or what General Dunford has called the "amphibious gap", has more to do with ships and connectors than air and seaborne assault systems. Navy witnesses have testified about the number of ships required to meet amphibious shipping goals. Sometimes lost in that discussion is the fact that changes in the Marine Corps ground or air components ripple through the amphibious ship force requirement

I know that the Navy's planned purchase of the LPD-28 amphibious transport is one effort to address the amphibious shipping shortfall. I am interested in knowing what else the Department of the Navy is doing to close or mitigate the gap between requirements and capabilities to ensure our amphibious force meets our needs and is capable and ready.

The Defense Department's defense strategic guidance, issued in January 2012, followed by the 2014 QDR, and this January by a new National Security Strategy all echo a renewed U.S. military orientation on the Asia-Pacific. Consistent with that strategy, the Defense Department has been working to realign U.S. military forces in South Korea and Okinawa, and plans to position Navy and Marine Corps forces in Australia, Singapore, and possibly elsewhere in the region. The Department has also been implementing a plan to forward deploy more ships – as shown by the Navy's second rotational deployment of a Littoral Combat Ship – USS *Fort Worth* – to Singapore. I am interested in hearing more about these and other aspects of that deployment.

Again, thank you for your service, and I look forward to your testimony.