

Chairman John McCain
Opening Statement, Richardson Nomination Hearing
July 30, 2015

The Senate Armed Services Committee meets today to consider the nomination of Admiral John Richardson to be the 31st Chief of Naval Operations.

Admiral Richardson, we thank you for joining us this morning. We are grateful for your many years of distinguished service to our Nation, and for your continued willingness to serve. We also welcome members of your family joining us this morning, and thank them for supporting you and our Nation. As is our tradition, at the beginning of your testimony we invite you to introduce any family members that are joining us.

The next Chief of Naval Operations will lead our Navy in confronting the most diverse and complex array of global crises since the end of World War II. With instability spreading across the Middle East and North Africa, more than ever our Nation is counting on the forward presence, power projection, and rapid response that the Navy uniquely delivers.

In the Asia-Pacific, China is undertaking an ambitious naval buildup that seeks to project power and influence in key waterways of the Asia-Pacific and beyond. While our rebalance to the Asia-Pacific has shown some successes, this policy has not yet addressed the shifting military balance in any serious manner. While some would rather avoid a discussion of competition with China, this relationship will be a serious challenge for our Navy.

And yet, while worldwide challenges like these grow, the Defense Department has grown larger but less capable, more complex but less innovative, more proficient at defeating low-tech adversaries but more vulnerable to high-tech ones. And worse, the self-inflicted wounds of the Budget Control Act and sequestration-level defense spending have made all of these problems worse.

Now more than ever, a strong Navy is central to our nation's ability to deter adversaries, assure allies, and defend our national interests. And yet, by any measure, today's fleet of 273 ships is too small to address these critical security challenges. The Navy's requirement is 308 ships. The bipartisan National Defense Panel calls for a fleet of 323 to 346 ships. And our Combatant Commanders say they require 450 ships. With continuing high operational tempo and drastic

reductions to defense spending, we will continue the downward spiral of military capacity and readiness until Congress acts.

Admiral Richardson, there are several challenges that will require the next Chief of Naval Operations' personal leadership. I look forward to discussing many of these today.

- First, each *Ford*-class aircraft carrier has experienced more than \$2 billion in cost growth. This program continues to be plagued by technology immaturity, concurrent development and production, and a lack of reliability test data for critical systems. This is unacceptable and I fully expect the Navy's ongoing study of alternative aircraft carrier designs to provide real options.
- Next, the Navy still needs to justify the Littoral Combat Ship's transition to a frigate, which is required in the Senate NDAA, and all three of the LCS mission packages must overcome major technology integration challenges to deliver the promised warfighting capability.
- Several other important new shipbuilding efforts will require the service chief's leadership in the coming years, including: building the first *Ohio*-class replacement submarine, building the first Flight 3 destroyer with the new Air and Missile Defense radar, and integrating the Virginia Payload Module on attack submarines.
- In naval aviation, it will take strong leadership to address the strike-fighter shortfall, oversee the smooth and timely integration of the F-35 *Joint Strike Fighter* into the fleet and ensure the right requirements for the first Unmanned Carrier-Launched Airborne Surveillance and Strike system.
- We must also maintain our advantage in the capability and capacity of our munitions. Fielding new weapons, like the Long Range Anti-Ship Missile, and improving existing ones, like the family of standard missiles, will continue to be essential.
- Our ships and planes have been operating at a sustained high operational tempo for over a decade and it shows. Clearing maintenance backlogs and restoring the Navy's readiness will be a priority.

- Finally, we cannot forget about our Sailors. High operational tempo and lucrative opportunities outside the Navy continue to drive some of our best talent to leave the service. I'm interested in your plans to manage operational tempo and views on how best to provide a competitive and modern compensation package that provides the right retention incentives.

No matter how many dollars we spend, we won't be able to provide our military the equipment they need with a broken defense acquisition system that takes too long and costs too much. With this year's National Defense Authorization Act, this committee has embarked on a major effort to reform this system, including ways to empower our service leaders to manage their own programs and take on greater accountability. Admiral Richardson, we are interested to hear your views on improving defense acquisition based on your years of service.

Thank you, and we look forward to your testimony. Senator Reed.