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THE SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGING THREATS AND CAPABILITIES

STATEMENT OF  
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BEFORE THE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGING THREATS AND CAPABILITIES OF THE SENATE  
ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE  
ON

MILITARY SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

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SUBCOMMITTEE ON SEAPOWER AND PROJECTION FORCES

Chairwoman Ernst, Ranking Member Slotkin, and distinguished members of the Committees, good morning. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to address the state of the Department of the Navy's Science and Technology Efforts.

The Department of the Navy's Science and Technology (S&T) budget is essential for maintaining future naval power and national security amidst rapidly evolving global threats. The budget is aggressively focused on transitioning basic research into deliverable combat capabilities, ensuring a high return on investment through disciplined, relevant, and rapid technology development. The strategic landscape is transforming with relentless technological change and a new era of great power competition. The comfortable assumptions of the past are obsolete, necessitating continued and focused S&T investments to adapt to the evolving character of conflict and seize strategic opportunities.

The S&T budget is governed by enduring S&T Focus Areas and subordinate Research Areas that act as a strategic taxonomy. This ensures every dollar is tracked and matured through a deliberate pipeline, providing a clear demand signal to academia, industry, and internal stakeholders. Basic and Applied Research are the foundational "Science" that explores emerging concepts and technologies to provide new foundational knowledge and initial proofs of concept. Technology maturation bridges the gap between pure science and practical application to develop new technologies ready for prototype demonstration. Advanced technology development investments in Future Naval Capabilities provides transition-ready improved combat capabilities and investments in Innovative Naval Prototypes provide new game changing combat capabilities.

To maximize the impact of the S&T budget, the enterprise aligns its people, processes, and funding around a singular, ruthlessly prioritized framework focused on delivering specific combat effects:

**Focus** - Maximize the S&T portfolio's direct value to the Navy and Marine Corps.

**Explain** - Clearly define naval relevance, specific kill chain effects, and transition paths for all funded projects.

**Engage** - Proactively collaborate with strategic partners across industry and academia.

**Deploy** - Deliver the right technology to the fleet at the fastest pace possible.

The historical justification for sustained S&T funding is evidenced by its direct contribution to critical operational capabilities. Visionary S&T investments consistently yield disproportionate strategic advantages. As an example, early and long-term investments in the development of Unmanned Underwater Vehicles (UUVs) initiated an entirely new industry and evolved into a critical operational maritime capability. Visionary investments over the last decade in low-cost UAV Swarming Technology transitioned into the program of record for expeditionary loitering munitions. Continued Congressional support of DoN S&T budget ensures that the visionary research of today becomes the critical, game-changing warfighting capabilities of tomorrow.

To address our most urgent needs, the DON has established the Department of the Navy Rapid Capabilities Office (DONRCO). DONRCO is our single accountable organization for fielding critical solutions to the fleet within a three-year timeframe. DONRCO will “fail fast” and iterate quickly with industry to ensure capabilities are tested and refined in operationally relevant environments. DONRCO is able to do this by bringing operational challenges directly to industry. This enables a parallel focus on new entrants and traditional primes to the defense industrial base but also harnesses American innovation more effectively to deliver the best possible solutions to our warfighters. The DONRCO streamlines efforts by consolidating the functions of the Maritime Accelerated Response Capability Cell, Disruptive Capabilities Office, NavalX, and the Navy's execution of Defense Autonomous Warfare Group (DAWG) activities. DONRCO also leverages Budget Execution-year Technology Selections (BETS) to rapidly scale new programs.

The DON is also actively supporting Defense innovation ecosystem transformation efforts spearheaded by the Office for Research and Engineering (OUSW(R&E)) in order to strengthen alignment across science, technology, research and development organization. This initiative will help identify inefficiencies in the DoW innovation ecosystem and opportunities to drive stronger unity and coordination to deliver tangible, battlefield-ready results to warfighters. Relatedly, the DON is working to improve internal alignment of the Naval Research and Development Establishment (NR&DE) to best enable the new Program Acquisition Executives

(PAE)-centric acquisition enterprise strategy. Optimal alignment will ensure timely delivery of capability and operational support to the Fleet and Marine Corps while ensuring the long-term health and stewardship of the NR&DE.

The NR&DE depends on world-class facilities to develop and deliver capabilities. This infrastructure has been challenged by facilities that are exceedingly surpassing their traditional life expectancies and limited investment due to other higher priority needs across the Department. I am thankful to congress for recognizing this challenge and providing authorities that bring new and enhanced tools including the “Defense Laboratory Modernization Program” (10 U.S.C. 2810(f)), making the “Program for the enhancement of the research, development, test, and evaluation centers of the Department of Defense” (10 U.S.C. 4045) permanent, and increasing various thresholds. I am furthermore supportive of the Lines of Effort established in the “FY27 Annual Five-Year Plan on Improvement of Department of Defense Innovation Infrastructure” that highlight additional opportunities to strengthen RDT&E laboratories and facilities.

An effective NR&DE enables successful transition of emerging science and technology from the laboratory into the hands of our sailors and Marines. Key to that success is our ability to quickly translate scientific discoveries into and across our Naval operations, systems and platforms. The DON is leveraging lessons learned from Department pathfinders and proactively aligning our activities across Acquisition reform, Requirements reform and Innovation Ecosystem reform to streamline capability delivery and empower PAEs with flexibility to integrate new technical solutions as those solutions emerge. Critical to this accelerated capability delivery is a seasoned, technical workforce within our Warfare Centers which can shepherd S&T developers both within and outside the government across the Valley of Death, efficiently taking science and technology from clean, controlled fabrications centers and labs and delivering it as survivable and sustainable capabilities within harsh Naval operational environments. The DON is working to optimize access to and operation of our Warfare Centers’ engineering activities as a critical enabler for transition of S&T into the hands of our sailors and Marines.

These efforts reflect the “Acquisition Transformation Strategy Rebuilding the Arsenal of Freedom,” as directed by Executive Orders and authorities granted in the Fiscal Year 2026 National Defense Authorization Act. The DON is proactively aligning our activities to realize this acquisition reform, in concert with separate but related activities pursuing Requirements Reform and Innovation Ecosystem Reform to create new, streamlined business practices that balance speed and rigor across the key processes underpinning new capability delivery. Simultaneously, we are promoting competition, incentivizing faster execution, taking calculated and shared risks with industry to accelerate production, while leveraging new authorities to create acquisition flexibility which empowers our leaders to deliver the decisive capabilities our Sailors and Marines need to win, at a pace that ensures we never fall behind.

Thank you for your time. I look forward to your questions.