

NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL RELEASED BY
THE SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON SEAPOWER

STATEMENT OF

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PORTFOLIO ACQUISITION EXECUTIVE
ROBOTIC AND AUTONOMOUS SYSTEMS

AND

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BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON SEAPOWER

SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

ON

MARITIME UNMANNED SURFACE VESSELS

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Chairman Scott, Ranking Member Kaine, and distinguished members of the Committee: thank you for the opportunity to testify on unmanned surface vessels, a critical component of the future Navy.

The Secretary of the Navy and the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) are committed to revitalizing the domestic maritime industries and workforce necessary for our Navy and our national security. To achieve that vision the Navy is transforming our acquisition enterprise to deliver war-winning capabilities at the speed of relevance. Meeting this moment demands empowering our Navy's leaders and holding them accountable for one thing: delivering the decisive capabilities our Sailors and Marines need to win.

A cornerstone of this transformation is the establishment of new Portfolio Acquisition Executives (PAEs), designed to break down organizational stovepipes and give individual leaders authority and accountability to deliver integrated warfighting capability. PAE Robotic and Autonomous Systems (RAS) is the first of these new organizations, charged with rapidly acquiring unmanned capabilities to meet the urgent operational challenges our Fleet faces on, under, and above the sea. Along with the Resource and Requirements sponsor, we are working closely together to ensure that warfighting requirements are translated into an effective acquisition strategy delivering capabilities to meet Fleet needs at pace and scale.

Unmanned Requirements

First, we are committed to writing requirements that meet Fleet needs. Second, we are committed to fielding capabilities that meet these requirements at speed. Third, we are committed to ensuring unmanned vessels introduced into our Fleet have the proper manning, training, and equipment support to be sustained for the long term.

Incorporating RAS into the Fleet at scale will require us to learn, adapt, and change – and our fleet introduction and sustainment models will grow and evolve as we scale these capabilities as part of the Fleet. In the surface force, our model incorporates our Type Commander, Surface Development Group One, and our Unmanned Surface Vessel Squadrons. We are committed to evolving this model as needed to keep pace with the delivery of this critical capability.

The CNO's requirements and Fleet operational needs demand a faster acquisition cycle than traditional prototyping can provide. PAE RAS aims to accelerate this cycle; realizing a faster approach to acquiring MUSVs at scale is critical to meeting Fleet-driven timelines. Despite

this revised acquisition strategy, our requirements remain driven by Urgent Operational Needs (UON) and Fleet concepts of operation.

Scaling unmanned systems requires complete capability packages that include the personnel, training, infrastructure, and critical enablers to deploy them from storage to effect. We will care for our unmanned force through the same standard model that guides the rest of our Navy, following a deliberate cycle of maintenance, training, certification, deployment, and sustainment.

A New Approach to MUSV Acquisition

The Navy must change the way we do business. After years of valuable testing with prototypes like the Overlord and Sea Hunter unmanned surface vessels (USVs), the Navy made a significant strategic shift in our approach to acquiring our future unmanned fleet. PAE RAS concluded that industry investment and technological maturity are sufficient to proceed directly to a competitive marketplace to produce vehicles, rather than continue with government-funded prototyping efforts.

As a result, the PAE RAS launched a new comprehensive effort called the "Medium Unmanned Surface Vessel Family of Systems," canceling the previous Modular Attack Surface Craft (MASC) competition. This is a change in our business model, guided by three key factors. First, the CNO's requirements and urgent operational needs demand a faster acquisition cycle than traditional prototyping can provide. Market research indicates that viable commercial solutions exist that can be developed or tailored to meet our needs without extensive government-funded development. PAE RAS is exploring more agile procurement models in pursuit of more flexible business models, including contractor-owned, contractor-operated and government-owned, contractor-operated options, to supplement traditional procurements.

The Navy's new MUSV strategy will create an open marketplace that rewards companies that demonstrate results. Successful completion of at-sea demonstrations makes a company eligible for non-competitive, follow-on production or service contracts, with the goal of having the first vessels available in Fiscal Year 2027. This approach directly links demonstrated performance to production contracts, which incentivizes private investment and harnesses the full ingenuity of both traditional and non-traditional industry partners.

USVs as part of the Fighting Instructions

The CNO has made clear the Navy's operational need for tailored forces and tailored offsets – capabilities that are lower-cost, scalable, and can be fielded quickly to create operational advantage. The CNO's Fighting Instructions call for RAS in tandem with our Main Battle Force to answer specific operational requirements. Unmanned systems are the modern equivalent of the Scouting Force the U.S. Navy created one hundred years ago – just like the cruisers and destroyers of the Scouting Force that provided large-scale reconnaissance prior to and during World War II, unmanned systems will provide the Fleet crucial scouting, screening, harassment, and attrition functions as part of tailored forces. They expand the kill chain while the Main Battle Force provides the mass to finish the job and drive naval operations to their culmination.

USVs provide modular, scalable, and rapidly deployable capabilities that will augment and complement the Main Battle Force. A core principle of this approach is that unmanned systems are cost-effective and allow the Navy to hedge against high-consequence scenarios and impose disproportionate costs on adversaries under a different risk calculus than traditionally crewed platforms. They enhance the lethality and resilience of the entire Fleet while lowering risk.

Ultimately, these platforms are not standalone assets but are integrated into tailored forces to enable distributed yet coherent operations. By investing in and scaling these systems, the Navy is building a more adaptable, resilient, and distributed “high-low mix” of forces. We are not moving toward an exclusively unmanned Fleet – the reality is that achieving sea control in the modern era requires manned and unmanned teaming. We must combine high-end, technologically advanced warships for engaging peer adversaries with a larger number of less expensive, yet credible, platforms to counter the widespread and asymmetric threats they employ. Manned platforms will assure command and control of RAS under the most challenging combat conditions, ensuring their contribution to naval operations is not diluted through adversary effects.

Together with the FF(X), USVs will expand and extend the low end of the Navy's high-low mix of platforms. Both will carry containerized payloads, but they are complementary capabilities with FF(X) taking the missions that require a manned ship while MUSV will be able

to take on higher Acceptable Level of Risk. Combined, these low-end forces allow Fleet commanders to employ our more exquisite DDGs in higher-end missions.

The Central Role of USVs and Containerized Payloads

Our strategy for unmanned systems is about more than just the vessels themselves; it is about delivering distributed capability across the Fleet. The Navy has established a clear requirement for a non-exquisite and affordable medium-sized unmanned surface platform.

The key to this platform's effectiveness is its ability to employ containerized naval combat capabilities that can be rapidly embarked. This approach is central to the CNO's Containerized Capabilities Campaign. By designing systems to fit within standard International Organization for Standardization containers, we will rapidly add new capabilities—such as sensors, communication relays, logistics packages, or weapon systems—to the Fleet. This flexibility further enables tailored force packages, augmenting our general-purpose forces to address specific mission needs.

Realizing containerized capability is an essential aspect of the Fighting Instructions, which expands combat power, increases adaptability, and preserves decision space without requiring new construction or exquisite solutions. In addition to currently funded and developed payloads, Navy will continue to work with industry to further refine containerized capabilities. Our intent is to provide clearly defined priorities for payloads that will help guide industry as they invest in new capabilities. This approach gives the Navy the speed, scale, and flexibility needed to maintain an advantage in all operational environments.

Conclusion

Validated requirements continue to drive our introduction of unmanned surface vessels into the Navy. The warfighting value of these vessels has been clearly captured in the CNO's Fighting Instructions – they will form a crucial component of tailored offsets and tailored forces that will give commanders flexibility, broader room for tactical and operational risk calculations, present additional dilemmas to our adversaries, and will balance against specific risks, geographies, and adversary capabilities.

The Navy's pivot to a new acquisition model for the MUSV represents a critical adaptation to the pace of competition and the rate of change in technology. By fostering a

competitive marketplace that leverages private innovation and rewards demonstrated at-sea performance, the Navy is poised to accelerate the delivery of warfighting capabilities.

We are grateful for the opportunity to appear before you and we look forward to your questions.