



The Honorable John P. Murtha
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February 27, 2008

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Murtha Remarks on the Navy's Shipbuilding Program

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Congressman John P. Murtha, Chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense, issued the following comments today before a hearing on the Navy's Shipbuilding Program with Vice Admiral Barry McCullough, Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Integration of Capabilities & Resources; and Allison Stiller, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy-Research, Development & Acquisition.

“For over a hundred years we’ve relied on a strong Navy to project power and to maintain peace. I’ve said repeatedly that the Navy’s current shipbuilding request is grossly inadequate to meet the goal of a 313 ship fleet while maintaining our naval superiority.

“In the last seven years, the Navy reduced personnel by 45,000 so that they could use those cost savings to procure more ships. This hasn’t happened.

“Last March, the Congressional Budget Office said that the Navy needed to spend \$20.6 billion annually on new ship construction over 30 years to meet the 313 ship fleet. But the President’s FY09 budget requested only \$14.1 billion in FY09 for shipbuilding, \$300 million less than what Congress provided in the current fiscal year.

“Last year, the subcommittee recognized this problem and increased the number of ships in the FY08 budget. The conference report provided \$938 million above the President’s request for advance procurement funding for an additional five ships.

“The Navy estimates that we must average 11 new ships per year between now and 2020 to grow the fleet to 313 ships. I’m going to recommend that we buy 10 ships in the FY09 budget.

“I want to express a serious concern that I have with the shipbuilding program. We have to stop awarding contracts before we have a completed design for what we are developing. How can we agree on a price when we don’t know what we are paying for?

“Take the LCS program, which began construction before the final design was completed, only to have the Navy come back to Congress for assistance to cover cost growth. The Navy is preparing to award a construction contract for the new DDG 1000 Destroyer yet the design is only 55 percent complete. How can we be sure of the estimates if we don’t have a completed design? This isn’t a good business practice nor is it good for the American taxpayer.”

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