

ADM Gary Roughead
Senate Armed Service Committee Oral Statement
February 28, 2008

Chairman Levin, Sen. Warner, distinguished members of this committee; on behalf of our 600,000 sailors, Navy civilians and families, thank you for your support and the opportunity to appear before you today. Together with secretary winter and General Conway I am privileged to be a part of this leadership team committed to our nation's safety, security and prosperity.

Today your Navy stands ready with the agility the, flexibility, and the competence to do what no other Navy in the world can do. Last week we successfully, temporarily converted our sea based ballistic missile defense program to engage a failing satellite. Sea based BMD is here, it is real, and it works; but that is only part of what your Navy delivers to the nation. We recently deployed the first converted strategic submarine for seal delivery, 2,800 sailors set sail to patrol in the Mediterranean and Middle East, and the three ships of our Africa partnership station conducted four port calls in West Africa.

What you saw last week was just a small part of what your Navy does in executing the maritime strategy – a strategy that is more than just a glossy brochure. Four carriers last year anchored our presence in the Arabian gulf; SSBNS patrolled as silent deterrents; three carrier strike groups and masses of joint power exercised sea control in the western pacific in exercise valiant shield; F/A-18 Hornets increased projected power ashore in operation enduring freedom when the Air Force F-15s were grounded; ships patrolled the horn of Africa enhancing maritime security against piracy; USNS comfort and USS PELELIEU provided proactive humanitarian assistance to tens of thousands in South America and southeast Asia; and USS KEARSARGE ESG rushed to provide disaster relief to Bangladesh in the aftermath of a cyclone. We are out and about, doing essential missions for the nation; but as you so well know, our operations come at a cost to our people, our current readiness, and the future fleet and those are my three areas of focus.

Our people; sailors, marines, and their families, know they have your support. We must continue to invest in their futures and in the young men and women of America who will follow in their wake. As a nation at war, our utmost responsibility is to our wounded warriors. I am proud of, and committed to, the safe harbor program; which has dedicated staffs and teams individually tracking and meeting the needs of those heroic sailors and their families. In the context of this generational war, however, investing in the health of our force must go further. The health care we provide, especially for our traumatic brain injuries and post-traumatic stress disorder, as well as the president's support for childcare, hiring preferences for spouses, and family education benefits, will bring welcome relief to the military families that assist us in a very challenging recruiting and retention environment. Likewise, increasing the throughput of the U.S. Naval academy is an important investment in our future leadership, especially as Marine Corps end strength grows.

But supporting our future force cannot be done without readiness to fight today. To this end, quality shore installations, responsive depot level maintenance centers, and unfettered ability to train responsibly are necessities. Where area access and shore support is denied, the commandant and I have been moving forward with a seabasing alternative. These elements are essential to

support our fleet response plan, which has enabled us to meet requirements and will sustain us through the requested temporary carrier force level adjustment.

Of my three focus areas, building tomorrow's Navy to be a balanced, appropriately sized force is the most immediate imperative and challenge. Fiscal realities, operational strain on our ships and aircraft, and necessary decommissioning are contributing to the risk we assume. Achieving the 313 ship floor at current funding levels will require us to improve required processes, collaborate with industry, and make difficult decisions in the near term. I am pleased that the first two DDG 1000 contracts have been awarded. The technology embedded in that ship will advance our surface combatants of the future. I remain strongly committed to funding those programs that provide critical capabilities to our forces: there is no substitute for the littoral combat ship in closing a littoral capability gap, current F/A-18 Hornets are needed to assuage a 2016 strike fighter shortfall, surface combatant superiority will be maintained through DDG 51 modernization, multi-mission maritime aircraft will recapitalize our maritime patrol ASW capabilities, and sea based ballistic missile defense will ensure future theater and national defense and enable access. These critical programs for our future fleet require appropriate, disciplined investment now.

The 2009 budget and its associated force structure plans will meet our current challenges with a moderate degree of risk. Clearly, we have many challenges, of which building tomorrow's fleet is the greatest. But with these challenges it is our opportunity to have a fleet which will defend the nation and assure our prosperity for generations to come. On behalf of our sailors, our Navy civilians and our families, thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today and thank you for your support for what we do today and what we will do tomorrow.