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## **THE SECNAV Implementing Policy, Taking Care of People**

*As the 75th secretary of the Navy, Ray Mabus leads the Department of the Navy and its 900,000 military and civilian members of the Navy and Marine Corps. With an annual budget of more than \$150 billion, his responsibilities include recruiting, organizing, supplying, equipping and mobilizing the Navy and Marine Corps, as well as overseeing the construction, outfitting and repair of naval ships, equipment and facilities.*

*He also is responsible to the president and the secretary of defense for formulating and implementing national security policies and programs, and executing the law as it applies to the Navy and Marine Corps.*

*Mabus brings broad experience in government and the private sector to his department. A former surface warfare officer, he served as state auditor and later as governor of Mississippi. He represented the United States as ambassador to Saudi Arabia and served as chairman and chief executive officer of Foamex, a large manufacturing company.*

*Mabus discussed his priorities for the Navy and Marine Corps with Managing Editor Richard R. Burgess and Editor in Chief Amy L. Wittman. Excerpts follow:*

### **What are your top priorities for the Department of the Navy?**

**MABUS:** One is making sure that we take care of our people – Navy, Marines, civilians, families – that we do the things necessary for them in family support, in child care, education, in salary and benefits.

Second, [make] the use of energy in the Navy a matter of national security [and] strategic concern. We buy too many fossil fuels from volatile places. We need to move away from using fossil fuels to the maximum extent possible.

Third is acquisition excellence: making sure that we make on time and on budget the standard, and that we are able to afford all of the things that we need for both the Navy and the Marine Corps. A good example of beginning

to do that is the [Littoral Combat Ship] down-select. When the bids came in that were unsustainable, we went to a down-select to make sure that we had competition, [that] prices would be the main variable. Also, in that down-select, saying that we were going to require a technical package so that we could have a second source beginning in FY [fiscal year] 2012.

Finally, unmanned systems: making sure that we maintain the competitive edge we have and that we not only do the R&D [research and development], but also do the fielding — and not just unmanned or pilotless UAVs [unmanned aerial vehicles], but also USVs and UUVs [unmanned surface and unmanned underwater vehicles] for the Navy.

**What are the main stressors on the services and what can be done to alleviate or manage them?**

**MABUS:** You've got the same stressors on our people and our equipment — which is a very high operations tempo — from using things like aircraft in ways that we never anticipated. A combat air-support mission over Afghanistan, a multihour flight with several refuelings, [is] not the way we had planned to use strike aircraft off of carriers. Same thing with the fleet. [With] the operations tempo we have, more than 40 percent of our fleet is deployed, [and] on any given day more than 50 percent is at sea. I was in Haiti yesterday [March 1]. One of the stops I made was [the amphibious assault ship USS] Bataan, which, at the time, had gotten back from a Central Command deployment and, 30 days later, got sent to Haiti. They've done a great job in two radically different missions in that compressed period of time.

Some of the things we could do for our people are making sure that we support families for forward-deployed service members to the maximum extent possible; that we do baselines and then measure when the people come back from deployment; that we measure things like PTSD and TBI [post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury].

For our equipment, the Navy and Marine Corps are a little different in how they've been reset. The Navy resets in stride. The operations and maintenance budget is our reset to make sure that ships reach their full service life, to make sure ships are deployable, to make sure they're ready to do whatever missions. Same thing with aircraft.

For the Marines, [it's a matter of] making sure that we reset enough so they not only have the equipment they need in theater, but also the equipment they need to train with back home.

**Now that the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) is out, what do you consider the main points of guidance for the Navy Department?**

**MABUS:** The QDR basically described the need for our naval services. It talked about prevailing in space conflicts, preventing future conflicts and

preparing for whatever the eventualities might be in protecting the force. It also did a lot of discussion about the need to be flexible, expeditionary and the need to move from high-end, more conventional types of warfare through irregular warfare to partnership building, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

The Navy and Marine Corps are showing that we do all of those things using exactly the same people and exactly the same platforms. One example is Bataan. Another good example is the DDG 51 [Arleigh Burke-class destroyer] that is going to be the backbone of our anti-ballistic-missile defense capabilities. It's also the platform we used when Capt. [Richard] Phillips and Maersk Alabama were rescued.

We pride ourselves on being flexible, being expeditionary. The Navy is always America's away team. When the Navy and Marine Corps are doing their jobs, they're a long way from home and the QDR validates a lot of the things we're doing.

**Secretary of Defense Robert Gates talked about rebalancing the force so that it meets the high and low ends of warfare and everything in between. Do you think the Navy and the Marine Corps are on the right track for rebalancing?**

**MABUS:** I do. Using common platforms to do everything, to have people who are trained to do a wide range of missions, all the way to the fact that we have about 12,000 individual augmentees/Sailors on the ground in Afghanistan, Iraq and throughout the Central Command, shows that we are ready to do the type of war we're fighting today while, at the same time, being capable of doing more traditional, higher-end things, if those come along, through carrier strike groups, ballistic-missile defense, things like that.

**An increase in the budget top line for shipbuilding – \$15.7 billion for 2011 – seems necessary to sustain the fleet. Do you see congressional support for reaching a sustainable level of \$25 billion annually?**

**MABUS:** Both in the 30-year shipbuilding plan and the five-year Future-Year Defense Plan [FYDP], we tried to be very realistic in three ways. One is on the cost of ships. One of the things that hurt our credibility a little was that we'd say ships were going to cost much less than they ended up costing at the front end.

Second was to be very realistic about what Congress would appropriate. Historically, Congress has never come anywhere close to appropriating \$25 billion. It averages a little less than \$15 billion a year over the FYDP, and over the 30 years it is closer to \$16 billion.

Third is the SSBN [ballistic-missile submarine] replacement [SSBNX]. If it is a Navy project and has to be funded out of our shipbuilding budget, there

[will be] some significant effects on the rest of the fleet. That decision-making process needs to be very transparent so that we and Congress and everybody knows what we're getting into.

So, I don't think we'll be at \$25 billion, but I do think we can sustain a very good fleet and we can sustain the missions that we've been given. I like to divide the 30-year plan into 10-year [increments]. We have a good grip on the problem over the first 10 years. The second 10 is notional and the third 10 is just more of a sketch than anything else, because we don't know what the missions and threats are going to be.

**Will the shipbuilding requirements be able to sustain six major corporate shipyards?**

**MABUS:** One of the things we looked at in this shipbuilding plan was industrial base concerns. The QDR also brought up industrial base concerns. It's important to keep some of these high-skilled jobs, very unique skills, in the shipbuilding industry. How that is allocated among shipyards is more a corporate decision than it is for us.

We're trying to be very transparent [about] how many ships we want to build, what types of ships these are going to be and what we expect them to cost. In exchange, by being this transparent, we expect industry to make the investments they need to make, train the people they're going to need and bring the cost down for us.

**Is a forcible entry capability over the beach still desirable and affordable?  
Is the QDR recommendation for amphibious-lift ships adequate?**

**MABUS:** We do need a forcible-entry capability, but more than that, our amphibious forces are some of the most flexible platforms we have. We can use them for forcible entry over the beach, but we can also use them for things like disaster relief, humanitarian assistance and [as] special forces platforms.

The [commandant of the Marine Corps and the chief of naval operations (CNO)] two years ago said that 38 amphibs was ideal, but 33 was an acceptable level of risk. That's what we are building toward at the end of the FYDP, assuming that Congress agrees in terms of the types and numbers of ships.

**With continued delays in the F-35 program, how will the Navy and Marine Corps bridge the so-called strike fighter gap?**

**MABUS:** We've been using a lot of levers to mitigate that shortfall. In FY 2010 and in the FYDP, we've either been authorized or are requesting 124 more F/A-18E/F Super Hornets. There are another 58 Growlers in that number and that line has been extended to FY13. [We're] using attrition aircraft, because we have a much better sense now of how many aircraft

we're going to need; speeding up the introduction of Super Hornets into our squadrons; things like doing high-flight-hour inspections and then service-life assessment programs.

It's going to be [on the Program Objective Memorandum 2012] decision list of what other things are needed, whether or how many service life-extension programs we may need. For example, to get F/A-18A through D aircraft from 8,600 hours up to 10,000 hours. Having said all that, we remain absolutely committed to the F-35 [Lightning II] Joint Strike Fighter and to the capabilities that it brings. We need it on our decks. The Marines need it. The earthquake-relief efforts in Haiti and Chile showcase the Navy's humanitarian relief capabilities. Do you have any concerns about the resources expended on such efforts being detrimental to readiness?

MABUS: Short answer: No. It's part of our mission to do disaster relief, to make sure we're capable of doing that. Now Haiti, for example, was not in our budget and we're hopeful the operational money will come back to us. I certainly don't think it degrades our mission and I think it's part of who we are and what we do in the Navy and the Marine Corps.

In Haiti, for example, the port was destroyed, [with] no way to get equipment in. So the Marines just found beaches and landed on them. That's part of what our country needs in terms amphibious capability: finding a beach and being able to put in equipment, [get] people and equipment across.

**Will you meet your goal of deploying a "green" carrier strike group in 2016? What kind of technologies do you think are going to make that happen?**

MABUS: I think we can meet that goal. We're going to demonstrate it in 2012 and actually deploy it in 2016. There [aren't] many new technologies needed to do that. Our carriers and subs are nuclear powered so they're not using fossil fuels. We have tested an F/A-18 engine on biofuels out at Patuxent River [Md.] We'll be flying that plane this year to demonstrate that. The challenge is more the price and infrastructure than it is the types of technologies, although we're continuing to do [research and development]. We've signed a deal with the Department of Agriculture to correlate that energy development to make sure we're not [duplicating] the same research.

**Are you being successful in changing the Navy's culture in terms of green programs and processes?**

MABUS: The Navy is there. They see it as strategic and tactical. Every time you don't have to depend on areas of the world that may not be completely stable for your energy needs, every time you separate your surface combatants from the oiler, it makes us better warfighters.

For the Marines, the price and also the difficulty of getting a gallon of gasoline to a forward-deployed unit in Afghanistan are not only expensive, [they take] Marines away from doing other things to do convoy duty, to guard and transport it. You risk people's lives to do this, whereas, with things like solar or wind in-country, or just things like more insulation and other efficiency measures, you're going to cut down on that. Marines are pretty forward leaning on this. They have water purification units now in Afghanistan that are solar powered. The commandant has been very forceful in pushing toward this just because it makes our Marines better warfighters.

**If you wanted to get one message to the defense industry, what would it be?**

**MABUS:** Responsibility runs two ways with the defense industry. Our responsibility is to have stable programs, to not design as we build; to have mature technology before we start to build; to not change in the middle; to let "good enough" be the goal instead of "perfect;" and, if you add new technology, you bring it in in the next block of equipment that you're buying. Our responsibility is to be open and transparent as to where we are going in everything that we're doing.

The industry's responsibility is to make the capital investments that are necessary; to keep a highly trained, skilled work force; and use this stability, this learning curve, this maturity of design to bring cost down and, particularly, bring it down after the lead item.

One of the things the CNO and I have been concentrating on is building fewer different hull types and building fewer first-of-class ships, to build what you know and incorporate more open architecture and more modular design so that you can use the same platform as technology changes.