

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 23, 2011

Admiral Jonathan W. Greenert
Chief of Naval Operations
2000 Navy Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20350-2000

Dear Admiral Greenert,

We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on today's change of office ceremony as you assume your duties as the 30th Chief of Naval Operations. We wish you every success leading the world's finest Navy.

Our purpose in writing is to encourage you to take a fresh look at the Navy's 2008 proposal to homeport a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier (CVN) at Naval Station Mayport, Florida. At a time when the nation's historic fiscal challenges will require drastic cuts in federal spending, we do not believe it is fiscally responsible or strategically necessary to build expensive and redundant nuclear-support infrastructure for CVN homeporting when there are more cost-effective alternatives to sustain Mayport's future as an operational base.

As you know, the recently enacted Budget Control Act of 2011 places extraordinary constraints on current and future Department of Defense spending. Specifically, initial reductions to defense spending total an estimated \$350 billion. A second round of spending reductions could push that number toward \$1 trillion. As you stated before the House Armed Services Readiness Subcommittee recently, "If we have a reduction of the kind that was passed around here—\$400 billion or \$886 billion—without a comprehensive strategic review, a fundamental look at what were asking our forces to do, we won't be able to meet the Global Force Management Plan today. It will exacerbate our readiness trends. And if we have to go to a reduction of force structure, I am concerned about the industrial base."

We share your concerns. It is inevitable that the expense of building and maintaining redundant facilities for CVN homeporting in Mayport will detract from the Navy's ability to reach the goal of a 313-ship fleet. The one-time construction costs to homeport a CVN in Mayport are estimated to be anywhere between \$500 million and \$1 billion, but the costs do not stop there. Taxpayers would face significant annual costs beyond initial military construction spending. According to a 2009 Congressional Research Service report, "the Navy estimates that, compared to the cost of homeporting a CVN at Norfolk, homeporting a CVN at Mayport would result in an additional recurring (i.e., annual) cost of \$25.5 million in constant calendar year 2010 (CY10) dollars."

This one cost element represents a quarter-of-a-billion dollars over a 10-year cycle. Expenses of this magnitude in the current budget environment cannot be justified in light of the major funding shortfalls the Navy already faces in its ship and aircraft depot maintenance and shore infrastructure sustainment accounts—budget pressures that have contributed to a steady decline in the Navy's readiness for aviation squadrons and surface ships since 2007. Navy

witnesses testified to Congress earlier this year that these trends are “unsustainable over the long term.”


From a strategic perspective, the Navy has recently modified its assessment of the Norfolk region and is on record stating there is a “low risk” of a terrorist attack, accident, or natural disaster occurring in the Hampton Roads region. In the unlikely event of a national emergency requiring the dispersal of the Atlantic carrier fleet, the Navy already has a transient docking capability at Naval Station Mayport and other locations so a carrier can make a port call for weeks or even months. We believe that a more rigorous risk-based resource allocation assessment will demonstrate that an additional East Coast CVN homeport is unnecessary and unaffordable in today’s economy.

We have been told that all options are on the table during the Navy’s comprehensive strategic review. As you consider the need for major adjustments in the Navy’s force structure, procurement, and other programs, you face the equally challenging task of ensuring that the Navy’s most fundamental mission requirements are adequately funded and that those resources continue to be available. You described this conundrum during your Senate Committee on Armed Services confirmation hearing in July. “Our options are limited,” you noted. “We can’t hollow the force.”

Referring to our nation’s serious economic challenges and the sacrifices that will be required, Secretary of the Navy Mabus said recently, “It means making tough decisions, but also smart ones.” In our view, re-examining the plan to homeport a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier in Mayport is the smart and fiscally responsible thing to do.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Jim Webb
U.S. Senator



Mark Warner
U.S. Senator



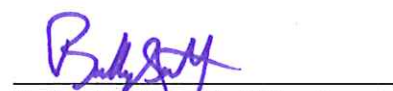
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