

Remarks by the Honorable Ray Mabus
Secretary of the Navy
Senate Armed Services Committee
Washington, DC
Thursday, 15 March 2012

Chairman Levin, Ranking Member McCain, members of the committee, I want to start by thanking you all for the support that you give to our sailors, Marines, civilians and their families in the Department of the Navy, and ensuring that they get what they need to do their mission.

The pride that General Amos, the commandant of the Marine Corps, and Admiral Greenert, chief of naval operations and I take in leading these dedicated sailors, Marines, civilians of the department, who selflessly serve the United States, is exceeded only by the accomplishments of these brave and completely selfless individuals.

Whatever is asked of them by the American people through their commander-in-chief, from Afghanistan to Libya, from assisting the stricken people of Japan to assuring open sealanes around the world, from bringing Osama bin Laden to final justice, to bringing hostages out of wherever they may be hidden by terrorists or pirates, they answer the call. They get the job done.

The CNO, the commandant, and I are confident that the United States Navy and United States Marine Corps are well prepared to meet the requirements of the new defense strategy and maintain their status as the most formidable expeditionary fighting force the world has ever known. No one should ever doubt the ability, capability, or superiority of the Navy-Marine Corps team.

As we reposition after two long ground wars, it was essential to review our basic strategic posture. The new guidance developed under the leadership of the president and the secretary of defense, with the full involvement of every service secretary and service chief, responds to changes in global security. The budget presented to implement this strategy, which was also arrived at through full collaboration of all the services, ensures that the Navy and Marine Corps will be able to fully execute this strategy, while meeting the constraints imposed under the Budget Control Act passed by Congress.

This new strategy has an understandable focus on the Western Pacific and Arabian Gulf region, while maintaining our worldwide partnerships and our global presence using innovative, low-cost, light-footprint engagements. It requires a Navy-Marine Corps team that is built and ready for any eventuality on land, in the air, on and under the world's oceans, or in the vast cyber seas, and operated forward to protect American interests, respond to crises, and to deter and if necessary win wars.

The impact of these two ground wars in the last decade on our Navy fleet and force is unmistakable. As you pointed out, Mr. Chairman, a fleet stood at 316 ships and an end-strength of 377,000 sailors on 9/11/2001, dropped to 283 ships and close to 49,000 fewer sailors just eight years later when I took office. This administration has made it a priority to rebuild our fleet.

Despite the budget constraints imposed under the Budget Control Act, our plan assures that we will have no fewer ships at the end of the five-year budget cycle than we have today, although the fleet of 2017 will include more more-capable ships equipped with state-of-the-art technology and manned as always by highly skilled people.

Although we are presenting one five-year budget plan, one FYDP, this is certainly not a one FYDP issue. As the defense strategy states, we are building the force for 2020. In the years beyond the current FYDP, we have a plan to grow our fleet and ensure capacity continues to match missions. Our plan will have us again cross the threshold of 300 ships by 2019. Overall, we will fully meet the requirements of the new strategy and maintain the industrial base we need.

The Marine Corps will also return to its maritime roots and resume its traditional role as the nation's expeditionary force-in-readiness. Our Marines will retain the lessons of a decade of hard and effective fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan as they transition back to a middleweight amphibious force optimized for forward presence, engagement, and rapid crisis response.

We will carefully manage the reduction in active duty end-strength from 202,000 to 182,100 by the end of fiscal year '16 in order to keep faith with our Marines and their families to the maximum extent possible.

This restructured Marine Corps, developed under a plan arrived at after a year-and-a-half of very careful study, will be smaller, but it will be fast, it will be agile, it will be lethal. The number of Marines in certain critical jobs like special forces and cyber will be increased and unit manning levels and therefore readiness will go up.

Both the Navy and Marine Corps will continue to decrease operational vulnerabilities in ways that are cost efficient. That means we will maintain our effort to reduce our dependence on foreign oil and to use energy more efficiently.

These efforts have already made us better warfighters. By deploying to Afghanistan with solar blankets to charge radios and other electrical items, the Marine patrol dropped 700 pounds in batteries from their packs and decreased the need for risky resupply missions. Using less fuel in-theater can mean fewer fuel convoys, and that will save lives. For every 50 convoys we bring in, a Marine is killed or wounded. That is too high a price to pay.

We all know the reality of a volatile global oil market. Every time the cost of a barrel of oil goes up a dollar, it costs the Department of the Navy \$31 million in extra fuel costs. These price bites

have to be paid for out of our operational funds. That means that our sailors and Marines are forced to steam less, fly less, and train less.

It's for these reasons that we have to be relentless in the pursuit of energy goals that will continue to make us a more effective fighting force and our military and our nation more energy independent.

MABUS:

As much as we have focused on our fleet's assets of ships, aircraft, vehicles and submarines, they don't sail, fly, drive or dive without the men and women who wear the uniform and their families. They have taken care of us. They have kept the faith with us. We owe them no less.

The commitment to sailors, Marines and their families is there whether they serve four years or 40. It begins the moment they raise their hand and take the oath to defend our country. It continues through the training and education that spans their career.

It reaches out to their loved ones, because it's not just an individual who serves but the entire family.

It supports our wounded warriors with recovery, rehabilitation and reintegration. It continues with transition services for our veterans to locate new jobs and the G.I. Bill for their continued education to transfer for a family members' education.

The list goes on and on and on, as it should. Our commitment to our sailors and Marines can never waiver, it can never end.

For 236 years -- from sail to steam to nuclear, from the USS Constitution to the USS Carl Vinson, from Tripoli to Tripoli -- our maritime warriors have upheld a proud heritage, protected our nation, projected our power, and provided freedom of the seas.

In the coming years this new strategy and our plans to execute that strategy will assure that our naval heritage not only perseveres, but that our Navy and Marine Corps continue to prevail.

Thank you very much.