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Statement of the Honorable Duncan Hunter Chairman, Subcommittee on Military Procurement

This afternoon we welcome witnesses from the Department of the Navy to receive testimony on the modernization programs required by our maritime forces to protect them from a myriad of threats they can expect to confront in the world's littoral regions, most notably mines in the shallow water and surf zones, anti-ship cruise missiles (ASCMs), and torpedoes launched from diesel electric submarines.

Since the Gulf War, both the Navy and Marine Corps have formalized their focus on littoral operations in their strategic vision documents: the Navy's *Forward From the Sea*, and the Marine Corps' *Operational Maneuver From the Sea*. These documents outline the doctrine required to meet the security challenges that will confront U.S. maritime forces in the 21st Century. As a consequence of changing doctrine, the primary combat mission of U.S. naval forces in the post-Cold War era has evolved from winning a major war-at-sea, to one of power projection ashore in littoral regions. Therefore, both the Navy and Marine Corps must be capable of operating in these regions with little resistance, on short notice, and with great flexibility. Desert Storm highlighted deficiencies in the sea services' ability to successfully meet certain littoral threats, specifically, the capability to counter relatively unsophisticated threats, such as anti-ship mines.

Iraq used sea mines extensively and effectively during the Gulf War, which complicated and constrained naval operations. Two of these unsophisticated mines, allegedly costing less than \$1,500 each, achieved a "mission kill" against a state-of-the-art AEGIS cruiser and inflicted serious damage to a large amphibious helicopter carrier. These weapons continue to be a threat from relatively low-tech military forces throughout the world and especially in the Arabian Gulf region.

The mismatch between resources and requirements for mine warfare has been particularly evident over the last decade. The service has spent less than one half of one percent of its total budget on this critical area.

The Secretary of Defense has indicated on three separate occasions from November 1997 to January 1999 in correspondence to the Navy his great concern about the lack of resources being applied to mine warfare, stating, and I quote from his April 1998 letter, "I remain concerned about the lack of commitment of necessary resources to bring about the desired transformation of mine warfare within the shortest possible time. Over the past several years we have spent a great deal of our resources on RDT&E programs, none of which have resulted in any transition to production. We cannot continue in this manner in the future."

He went on to state that funds for Naval Mine Warfare Programs were to be fenced from further funding reductions until the current dedicated capability for the fleet becomes an organic capability in the fleet. In January 1999, the Secretary of Defense noted that the Navy had still failed to fully fund this effort, so he directed that an additional \$315 million be added to the Navy's budget to fully fund its organic mine warfare initiatives through the FYDP.

Just as mines present a relatively simple, inexpensive, and an easily deployed threat against U.S. naval forces in the littorals, the spread of other threats, such as, the sale of sophisticated anti-ship cruise missiles (ASCMs) and diesel submarines by Russia and other countries could greatly complicate the ability to employ Navy and Marine Corps forces in potential trouble spots. ASCMs have widely proliferated throughout the world and many small and relatively unsophisticated militaries have the capability to employ them against U.S. naval forces. One has only to look to the Arabian Gulf as examples of this threat, where there are both ship- and shore-launched versions of the Chinese Silkworm missile used by Iran to protect its gulf coastline and air-launched French Exocet missiles in the Iraqi inventory. Most can still recall the severe damage inflicted on the U.S.S. Stark in 1987 from an Exocet missile fired by an Iraqi Mirage F-1 attack jet. In order to meet these ASCM threats, the Navy has invested considerable resources principally because of the danger ASCMs pose to aircraft carriers.

While AEGIS cruisers and destroyers are extremely capable against ASCMs, there is always the possibility of missiles eluding AEGIS ships requiring other combatants, such as amphibious ships, to defend themselves. To address this requirement, the Navy is investing in the Ship Self Defense System for amphibious ships and aircraft carriers. As a result, the new LPD-17 San Antonio class amphibious assault ship will be constructed with this system onboard.

Torpedoes launched from diesel electric submarines also present a particularly challenging threat for naval forces operating in littoral areas. Although the threat is not as widespread as ASCMs, submarine technology has widely spread into potential trouble spots in the world. For example, the North Korean diesel submarine force could complicate U.S. Navy operations around the Korean peninsula just as Iran's advanced Russian KILO class submarines have the potential to threaten operations in the Arabian Gulf and North Arabian Sea.

Although the Navy has both towed and expendable countermeasures that ships can employ to confuse torpedoes, there is no similar system to a self-defense missile that would destroy a torpedo in the water. The Navy is developing upgrades for its towed decoy systems to improve their capability against evolving torpedo threats. Additionally, the Navy is also procuring the Launched Expendable Acoustic Device (LEAD)—a ship-launched acoustic decoy intended to confuse a torpedo as it homes on the launching ship. However, the Navy has no systems that are intended to detect, track and destroy a torpedo in the manner similar to that of self-defense missile systems.

Today, we will hear about the Navy and Marine Corps' progress to meet these littoral warfare threats from our first panel.

Our second panel will focus on shipbuilding requirements needed to carry out both the Navy's "*Forward From the Sea*," and the Marine Corps' "*Operational Maneuver From the Sea*" doctrine.

During the Full Committee's February 24th hearing on the fiscal year 2000 defense budget request, the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Jay Johnson, stated that his number one long-term concern is building enough ships and enough aircraft to recapitalize the force. He went on to add that "We need a minimum of 305

ships fully manned, adequately trained, and properly equipped.” I accept Admiral Johnson’s remarks as the Navy’s public commitment to this fleet size as being the minimum necessary to support both peacetime forward presence and warfighting requirements. Even though this fleet size has been reduced from the 346 ship requirement that was established by the Bottom Up Review only six years ago, the Navy’s shipbuilding program over the past several years has been insufficient to support this smaller number. With ship construction rates averaging only five to six per year and an average ship service life of 30 - 35 years, it will only be a matter of time before the Navy has built down to a fleet size of around 200 ships. I credit the Administration for funding increases in the President’s Budget for Fiscal Year 2000 that begin to recapitalize shipbuilding programs. However, not until fiscal year 2005 does the budget provide for building nine ships per year – the minimum average rate necessary to maintain the Navy’s 305 ship fleet. I am concerned that we may have already waited too long before beginning to increase the shipbuilding rate.

There are currently only six major shipyards engaged in new construction of ships for the U.S. Navy. It has become increasingly difficult to support these facilities with the low military shipbuilding rates of the past several years, and there have been recent merger and acquisition proposals to reduce excess capacity and consolidate this industrial base. Additionally, many of the construction shipyards have begun competing for Navy maintenance work that was previously performed in government owned and private sector maintenance yards. As the shipbuilding industrial base continues to “right size,” concentration of market power could raise issues regarding competition in the shipbuilding market.

I look forward to a frank and open discussion of the adequacy of the Navy’s shipbuilding plan and the state of the U.S. shipbuilding industry.

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