

PRESS RELEASE

House Armed Services Committee Bob Stump, Chairman

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OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN BOB STUMP POSTURE HEARING ON FY 2003 NAVY AND MARINE CORPS BUDGET

Today, the committee begins its review of the budget requests of the military services starting with the Navy and Marine Corps.

I am pleased to welcome back Secretary of the Navy Gordon England, Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Vernon Clark, and Commandant of the Marine Corps General James Jones to testify on the Department of the Navy budget request for fiscal year 2003.

Last week, Secretary Rumsfeld testified that this year's budget request represents a strong commitment to national security by ensuring proper support for our military forces in their fight against terrorism. My own view is that the President has submitted a budget to Congress that accomplishes that goal while generally establishing the proper balance in overall spending priorities.

Turning to the Department of the Navy, the budget request for next year is \$108 billion - roughly \$9 billion over the fiscal year 2002 level. While this budget represents a nearly 10 percent increase, the specifics it contains also serve to highlight precisely why the President's overall defense increase is so critically needed.

Contrary to the conventional wisdom coming from the editorial pages that this budget contains no hard choices, I believe that the budget request before us is full of tough decisions. I am confident that anyone that listens carefully to today's discussion and those to follow will quickly realize that even the significant defense topline increase requested for this year is not enough to eliminate the many pressing shortfalls facing the military services.

Faced with this reality, I believe the Navy has made some very difficult trade-offs in this budget and deserves credit for resisting the temptation to continue the shell game of under funding critical readiness and operations accounts, as has been the case for the past decade. With this budget, the Navy has decided to stop digging and begin climbing out of the hole of fiscal irresponsibility that has plagued it for far too long.

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This decision unfortunately comes with the price of having to continue to defer some important initiatives, particularly in the area of modernization. However, in spite of this, this budget moves in the right direction and I look forward to working with the leadership of the Navy to make sure we stay on this course and solve the remaining shortfalls as soon as possible.

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