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# Senate Armed Services Subcommittee on Readiness and Management Support Holds Hearing on Navy and Marine Corps Readiness

## LIST OF PANEL MEMBERS AND WITNESSES

SULLIVAN:

Good morning. This hearing of the Subcommittee on Readiness and Management will come to order. The subcommittee meets today to receive testimony on the current readiness of the United States Navy and the United States Marine Corps. I want to welcome our three distinguished witnesses, the Honorable Kenneth Braithwaite, Secretary of the Navy; General David H. Berger, Commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps; and Admiral Michael Gilday, Chief of Naval Operations of the United States Navy.

I would also like to thank Diana Maurer, director of defense capabilities and management and her team at the Government Accountability Office for submitting the requested statement for the record for this hearing. GAO is an invaluable resource to our work on the committee.

Some of the issues that I would like to address and cover today are COVID-19 and its impacts on the readiness of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps, the Navy and Marine Corps' pivotable--pivotal role in countering great power competition, as highlighted in the National Defense Strategy, the Commandant of the Marine Corps' bold new force design and planning guidance, a recent provocation of Russian military exercises, massive Russian military exercises in the Arctic and, related to that, the role in--of the Navy and Marine Corps as they play an increasingly important role in protecting our strategic interest in the Arctic.

Let me touch on these briefly. First, the impact of COVID-19 on Navy and Marine Corps readiness. Over the last few months, this committee has received frequent and productive briefings on COVID-19 and on its impact on military readiness. As you are all aware, COVID-19 reduced operations at Navy and Marine Corps depots, canceled or postponed vital exercises such as RIMPAC 2020 and changed the way in which we train our sailors and marines. I'm looking forward to an update on these critical issues as it relates to the readiness of our Marine Corps and Navy team.

Second, I'd like to address the 2018 National Defense Strategy and the Navy's and Marine Corps' role in responding to the return of great power competition. Released in 2018, the National Defense Strategy, I believe, is a--still very much a bipartisan document and strategy which prioritizes the return of great power competition, particularly with Russia and China--with China as the pacing threat. Thus far in responding to the NDS's directives, the U.S. Navy and this committee have advocated for building a 355-ship Navy and has heavily, and rightfully in my view, focused these investments on improving and expanding our nation's submarine fleet, a key area of America strategic advantage.

Third, as part of the Navy team's response to great power competition, the Marine Corps, under the Commandant's new planning guidance and his force design 2030 construct has keenly focused on how to address the NDS's pacing threat, China. Specifically, General Berger has zeroed in on transforming our Marine Corps into a slightly leaner, but more agile force. The Commandant's planning guidance calls for revolutionary change to the Marine Corps at least in the Department of Defense terms, and I commend him for his efforts on being one of the services leading in terms of trying to implement the NDS. But the Commandant's strategy is not without its critics, and I'd like the secretary and General Berger the opportunity to respond to some of those in this hearing.

I'd like to also address a recent incident. I was with the secretary in Alaska where we saw a pure exercise of great power competition, the recent very large military exercises which took place inside the U.S. exclusive economic zone off the coast of the great state of Alaska. As some of you may already know, in late August the Russians conducted a major wargame

near Alaska. Over 50 Russian warships, about 40 Russian aircraft took part in these exercises in the Bering Sea, involved multiple practice missile launches, submarines.

The New York Times reported last month in an article I'd like to submit for the record a headline and byline, Are We Getting Invaded? U.S. Boats Face Russian Aggression Near Alaska. Russia has accelerated its provocative encounters in the North Pacific, harassing American fishing vessels in U.S. waters, sending bombers toward Alaska's shores. I'd like to enter this into the record without objection, but I would like, Mr. Secretary, Admiral, an update on that, particularly the coordination that we need to improve between the Coast Guard, the Navy and the Alaskan fishing fleets that were impacted by this.

Finally, I'd like to have a broader discussion today on the Arctic, as it has become an emerging area of great power competition and to better understand the Navy and Marine Corps' role in protecting the Arctic homeland, safeguarding the Arctic region's global commons, and as the Navy and Marine Corps do across every part of the world. In this regard, I'm hopeful to hear some positive news about a new Navy Arctic strategy, which this committee has been encouraging all the services to produce Arctic strategies, and I am hopeful that we could also have a discussion on not only the support for building six polar class icebreakers that our nation needs, but the discussion that the president started a couple months ago with his memo to senior national defense officials on where and how we should be basing polar class security cutters in America's Arctic. And Mr. Secretary, you and I have had a lot of discussion on that.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, in this committee I would like a production of who is going to win the Army-Navy football game that takes place in a couple weeks. That's going to be very important, gentlemen. Thank you very much. I'm looking forward to this hearing, and I'd like to now hear from my friend and colleague, Senator Kaine.

KAINE:

Well thank you, Chairman Sullivan. We find ourselves in very, very challenging times. And it's good that this committee's work has continued and will. I want to welcome the distinguished witnesses. Thank you for your service. We're looking forward to the testimony

and opportunities to exchange questions today, and I echo the comments from Chairman Sullivan and offer thanks to Diana Maurer for her work at the GAO.

I also want to do one other set of thank you's. This is probably the last opportunity that we'll meet either as a subcommittee or even as a full committee prior to, you know, some changes, and we're losing two colleagues, Senator McSally and Senator Jones who served on the committee in a wonderful way and on the subcommittee, as well. They were public-- great public servants before they got here. They were great public servants while they were here, and I'm sure they have great public service ahead of them, but I just wanted to acknowledge each of them.

The chairman has done a really good job of putting the issues kind of up on the board that we need to discuss today. Impact on readiness from the ongoing pandemic and lessons learned along the way that will help us going forward. What role will the DoD play in vaccine distribution, and what plans are being made within the Navy family, Navy and Marine Corps, over vaccines and how they'll be deployed.

Shipyard modernization plan and the looming threats that our bases face from the effects of climate change. I won't delve further into those now, and I'll save those topics for my questions. We want to help the department address what we need to do to be ready to operate in this challenging environment and respond and execute the full range of DoD responsibilities and missions. I look forward to your testimony today, and thank you.

SULLIVAN:

And I'd like to begin testimony. Each of you will have five minutes to give an oral testimony. Your longer statements can be submitted for the record if you so choose. Mr. Secretary, I'd like to begin with you, sir.

BRAITHWAITE:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And before I begin, I'd like to offer the Department of the Navy's condolences to you, sir, the loss of your father, a great veteran of the United States Navy.

And our thoughts and our prayers are with you, sir.

SULLIVAN:

Thank you.

BRAITHWAITE:

In May of 1943, American troops, aircraft and ships were sent to the Aleutian Island of Attu to dislodge the Imperial Japanese troops occupying our American soil. These young Americans were dedicated and brave but unprepared and underequipped. The only thing that prevented the operation from ending in total catastrophe was the fact that that landing was unopposed. In short, we, the United States military, got lucky. But that should never be accepted as good enough for our fleets, our force or for our nation.

As secretary of the Navy, I am determined to ensure that our sailors and marines are never again sent into a situation without the right training, the right equipment and the right leadership. Chairman Sullivan, Ranking Member Kaine, distinguished members of the committee, we appreciate your efforts to ensure funding stability over the past several years. This stability has enabled a greater focus on readiness across both services from the Navy's investments in shipyards and aviation maintenance, to the Marine Corps' modernization initiatives within the Commandant's force design 2030. These efforts are increasing our expeditionary deployment capabilities and fleet readiness even in the face of this COVID-19 and other global challenges.

More importantly, we are investing in the training, education and resilience of our personnel. They and their families will always be our greatest resource. As I discussed during my confirmation hearing, I was concerned about the morale of the force and its underlying effects on culture across the entire department. Thankfully, I found many efforts underway to address these concerns, and in consistent engagements with our sailors and marines around the globe, I have discovered our morale is better than I thought it might be, but it can get better as we direct the resources to make it better.

We must prepare today for tomorrow, and we must continually adjust to the threat. Our existing fleet structure operates on the premise that we still live in a post-9/11 state where NATO's flanks are secure, the Russian fleet is tied to the pier, and terrorism is our biggest problem. That is not the world of today. And so as the world changes, we must be bold, evolve and change with it. Instead of perpetuating a structure designed to support yesterday's joint forces command, we are aligning to today's threat.

To meet the unique maritime challenges of the Atlantic theater, we will rename Fleet Forces Command as the U.S. Atlantic Fleet, and we will refocus our naval forces in this important region on their original mission, controlling the maritime approaches to the United States and to those of our allies. The Atlantic Fleet will confront the re-assertive Russia Navy, which has been deploying closer and closer to our East Coast with a tailored maritime presence capability and lethality.

Also, in order to improve our posture in the Indo-Pacific, we will reconstitute the first fleet, assigning it primary responsibility for the Indo and South Asian region as an expeditionary fleet back to the capabilities and unpredictability of an agile, mobile, at sea command. This will reassure our allies and partners of our presence and commitment to this region, while ensuring any potential adversary knows we are committed to global presence to ensure rule of law and freedom of the seas.

We are determined today to make the bold changes required to ensure that our forces are prepared to dominate any potential battle space and return home safely tomorrow. As the great navalist, the 26th president of the United States, Teddy Roosevelt, once said, a strong Navy is not a provocation to war, but the surest guarantor of peace. We look to you, our Congress, for the strong oversight partnership that has enabled our maritime strength ever since Congress authorized the construction of our first six ships, the mighty American frigates of 1794.

So I'd like to take this moment to announce that the next Constellation-class frigate will be named for one of those original six, a name selected by our first president, George Washington. The ship will be USS Congress to honor and recognize the work that you and

your staff do every day to support our sailors, our marines and the people of the United States of America. On behalf of the Department of the Navy, our marines, our sailors, our civilian workforce and their families that serve at their side, thank you for what you do to enhance our readiness. I look forward to your questions.

SULLIVAN:

Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary. Admiral, would you care to make an opening statement, sir?

GILDAY:

Yes, sir, I would. Chairman Sullivan, again, my condolences on your family's loss. Your dad was not only a sailor, but a great friend of the Navy, sir.

SULLIVAN:

Thank you.

GILDAY:

Ranking Member Kaine, distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you this morning with the secretary of the Navy, and as well, Commandant Berger. My wife, Linda, behind me, joins me this morning. To be effective, the United States Navy has to be able to carry out two critical functions. The first is sea control, and the second is power projection. And both of those missions are timeless. The Navy does not need to reinvent itself. The manner by which we carry out those functions and the equipment that we use to do it do change over time. But, as Admiral Nimitz said in front of a joint session of Congress in October of 1945 at the dawn of the nuclear age, he called those missions timeless.

President John F. Kennedy in the wake of the Cuban Missile Crisis said the same thing. So for me, sea control and the capability to control the seas and to dominating the oceans is my primary focus. With respect to readiness, that covers two areas, readiness today, which I

believe is the focus of this hearing, as well as our readiness tomorrow. And the budget decisions that the Navy presents to the secretary of defense really balance across three big areas that are aimed at those two functions. That would be readiness, readiness today and readiness to the future. That would be lethal capabilities in order to control the seas and to project power. And the last is capacity, the size of the United States Navy.

Today, in the midst of a global pandemic, we have about 100 ships deployed, and we have about 40,000 sailors at sea. That ranges from the Arctic Circle to the Cape of Good Hope, from the Black Sea and the Baltics to the Arabian Sea, the Atlantic and the Indo-Pacific. Our cyber warriors are standing vigilant watch right now as we speak. They are joined by our silent service under the seas that continue their constant patrols.

I'd be remiss if I didn't talk about the civilian sailors who support us every single day so that we can control the seas. Those are our shipyard workers. Those are folks that work in production lines that keep our spare parts rolling to the waterfront, to our aviation squadrons, to our submarines and to our ships. They're people that provide the Naval Academy, our academic institutions like the Naval Academy, the Naval War College and the Naval Postgraduate School to continue to churn out the best and the brightest that this nation has, and our boot camp which is operating at double its capacity.

That said, the investments to keep that machine going every single day are also balanced against investments of the future. Think about hypersonics and laser energy. We just shut down a UAV with laser energy at sea just last month. We shot down in ICBM from a destroyer with a standard missile just two weeks ago. So we are focused on the future and what we need to do to get there.

Members of the committee, we are grateful for the support you provide the United States Navy, our sailors and our families. Again, I thank you for this opportunity this morning, and I look forward to your questions.

SULLIVAN:

Thank you, Admiral. General Berger.



BERGER:

Chairman, thanks for the opportunity for us to appear this morning, and from one marine to another, as we talked last night, just know that when one marine hurts, all of us hurt, so we're all thinking about you and your family. And for the Ranking Member Kaine and the rest of the members, it is--this is a good opportunity and timely for us to be here this morning to talk about readiness.

I'm in the same spot as the CNO. I think readiness is job one for a service secretary. But it's also a balance, as he highlighted, of today's readiness, what we have to provide combatant commanders now, this afternoon, balanced against the force that we have to prepare for the future. And the cold hard truth of it is, if you're a service chief that every dollar you spend on a legacy piece of equipment or on trying to prepare something for this afternoon is a dollar that you have to consider for the future. This is the--this is the tension that every service chief has always--always been challenged with.

That said, I think you should be very confident. This committee should be--subcommittee should be very confident that all your Navy and Marine units that are deployed around the world are ready this afternoon. They're ready for any crisis, any contingency, and we are working very hard to make sure that we're going to stay in front. There is no adversary that's going to overtake us. And readiness, I would just offer you I probably will break precedent in my view of readiness, how I view it. I do not view readiness as availability only.

It's more than just having a platform, a ship, an aircraft, a piece of equipment available. I think you expect us to be ready in terms of, are you manned, are you trained, are you equipped, are you ready for the threat? So when we think of readiness, we're talking about readiness in terms of ready for what, ready when.

I'm also grateful for all the support this committee has given us because five, six years ago we were in a tough spot readiness-wise. We had rode the force hard, and we needed to the resources to build our readiness back, and we are back where we need to be thanks to the support of the members on this subcommittee and Congress at large. So I'm very grateful for that.

And lastly, I would just touch on the same thing I think that Admiral Gilday mentioned, which is our readiness in a sort of unconventional way, and that's cyber readiness. Of course, that's offensive and defensive, and I would just highlight that because those threats clearly are not going down. In fact, they're increasing, but you would be very proud of the cyber mission force that every day is tackling the challenges that you want it to tackle.

And on the defensive side, I think we have all the means, the resources in terms of the training, and the people, and the equipment to prepare all our networks for the challenges that another adversary is going to pose. So in both cases I think we're very focused on it, and that's going to be an enduring test for all of us. And Chairman, I'd yield the rest of my time to the topics that you want to focus on, sir.

SULLIVAN:

Well, thank you, General. And I'll just begin. I appreciate the comments about my dad. You know, I come from a family with a long tradition of naval service. My dad accomplished a lot in his life, but his proudest accomplishment, no doubt, was his service in the U.S. Navy. His cousin, Bruce Wilhelm, he was a naval aviator, Academy grad who won the distinguished Flying Cross during the Cuban Missile Crisis. You read about that. He's actually highlighted in a movie. He was later killed in a training accident. And finally, my dad's uncle, Tom Sullivan, was a lieutenant in the Navy. He did three Murmansk runs during World War II, some of the most dangerous service in the U.S. Navy during the war.

And I mentioned the Murmansk runs, and General, as you know, it's the 70th anniversary of the Chosin Reservoir Battle right now. A lot of Americans don't know a lot about that battle. But I mention that because those are all very important cold weather operations that our Navy and Marine Corps did quite well at a critical moment in history.

So Mr. Secretary, perhaps you can begin by talking about the Navy's upcoming Arctic strategy to get back to the roots, whether Murmansk operations, or Chosin Reservoir type operations where we have a Navy and Marine Corps that can operate well and protect America's strategic interests in some of the coldest places in the world that are now

increasingly becoming the places where great power competition are going to be taking place in the future.

BRAITHWAITE:

Mr. Chairman, I would be happy to. As you know, I am a student of the Arctic, an advocate for the Arctic. I first went to your great state as a U.S. Navy pilot stationed in Adak, Alaska, at the Naval Air Station, and flew ASW missions up throughout the Arctic Circle. Most recently, I was the U.S. ambassador of the Kingdom of Norway, and I spent most of my time above the Arctic Circle right near Murmansk. And I've seen with my own eyes how the Arctic has changed in those 35 years.

Today, it is navigable 365, and there are other nations in the world that have recognized its importance to us. And it should be an alarm to all of Americans as an arctic nation that we should have a more formidable presence to ensure rule of law and freedom of the seas in that part of the world.

Most recently, the USS John McCain was doing just that, a freedom of navigation exercise near the Bay of Peter the Great and was engaged by a more assertive Russia Navy. The United States Navy, the United States Marine Corps, has had a recommitment to the Arctic. We operate in the Arctic today much more than we have historically, although, as you know, the Navy has operated consistently in the Arctic since the inception of our submarine force. It's just that you can't see our vessels.

Today, we need that visible presence. As the chief of Naval Operations talked about just a few moments ago, power projection, sea control, and the ability to ensure to our partners and allies and to our own people that we, the United States Navy, have that first and foremost in our minds.

We are about to release an Arctic strategy that you and I talked about during our recent trip to Alaska and the importance of how that blueprint will recommit ourselves in a much more visible way to activities in the Arctic. But we must recognize that if we don't step forward quickly, those who have challenged us on the stage of great power competition are there.

I've seen it. Russia has remilitarized Arctic. China has recommitted itself to build icebreakers to be able to move its product from its homeland to Western markets in half the amount of time that it has historically had to. So the United States Navy, the United States Marine Corps, Senator, is committed to being present in the Arctic in a much more visible way than we've historically been.

SULLIVAN:

Can I guess just two quick follow-ups, maybe for you and Admiral Gilday? The Russian exercise that I mentioned, it did catch our fishing fleet by surprise. I know that there's been an after action, but you know, our fishing fleet was ordered out of the EEZ, which of course is our EEZ where they fish; shouldn't be ordered out of that by Russians. They were buzzed. They were harassed.

What are we doing in terms of an after action to make sure that that doesn't happen again, that our fishing fleet--you know, my state is what I call the superpower of seafood. Almost--actually over 60 percent of all seafood harvested in America comes from Alaska's waters. What are we doing to make sure that that doesn't happen again? And Admiral--or I'm sorry, Mr. Secretary, do you have any follow-up on the president's memorandum on icebreakers and home porting those in different parts of the Arctic?

BRAITHWAITE:

Well again, as I mentioned, the USS John McCain was just recently in the Arctic to ensure freedom of navigation, and I would invite the chief of naval operations to go into a little more detail. Some of it, of course, is classified, as you and I have discussed, and the CNO and I would be happy to talk with you privately at any time that would be convenient to you, Mr. Chairman.

You may know that I recently went to Finland to see the icebreakers in question, the president has directed us to purchase. We are looking within the Department of Navy of how we can facilitate that. Part of commissioning those ships means that they become U.S. naval vessels, and there are requirements that we have to have U.S. naval personnel in

command of those vessels. So I've asked the CNO to look into the process by which we can facilitate that. You and I agree we need to build icebreakers. We can't build them as quickly as we need them. Today the Coast Guard maintains two icebreakers, and that's all that we have.

SULLIVAN:

And one is broken.

BRAITHWAITE:

Yes, sir, one is broken. So we do need icebreakers, and the Navy recognizes it's not a mission that is central to the United States Navy, but it's one that we rely on the Coast Guard to provide. And in this instance, per the executive order, we are looking in ways to procure them. So CNO, do you have any thoughts you'd like to offer?

GILDAY:

Thanks, Mr. Secretary. Sir, in terms of the Navy's presence in the--the Navy and the Marine Corps--I'd say that over the past year we've done some 20 exercises in the High North, and so that ranges from unilateral joint exercises that the U.S. conducts alone, some of it in the training range in Alaska, to bilateral exercises with some of our closest allies and partners, to multilateral exercises. And so now our operations above--in the High North are not extraordinary, but they're beginning to become part of our day-to-day business. And I think that's directly tied to the National Defense Strategy. The chairman's role as the global integrator to posture the globe against those primary competitors, namely in this case China and Russia, that would include the Arctic.

With respect to the incident that happened in late August, I share your concerns, Senator. I actually meet with the NORTHCOM commander later on this week. I know they're looking at what potentially happened with communication breakdowns, potentially to our fishermen, perhaps miscommunication between agencies in the U.S. government, but U.S. fishermen should not feel threatened by another nation in our own EEZ in terms of fishing.

SULLIVAN:

Thank you.

GILDAY:

Our continued presence up there will have some blunting effect to that, but I think perhaps more needs to be done, including through the Arctic Council, to have honest discussions about it

SULLIVAN:

Thank you, Admiral. Senator Kaine.

KAINE:

Thank you Mr. Chair. Secretary Braithwaite, I want to talk to you about the announcements you've made today about the 1st Fleet and the Atlantic Fleet. I'll spend one minute on the 1st Fleet and then four minutes on the Atlantic Fleet. So the 1st Fleet, as I understand your announcement, it will take the sizable real estate that is now covered by the 7th Fleet out of Japan and divide it into two fleets because of increased activity at the scene between the Pacific and the Indian Oceans. Do I understand that correctly?

BRAITHWAITE:

Yes, sir, that's exactly right.

KAINE:

And so this is something that you've worked out with PACOM, with the 7th Fleet, and you're still making decisions about manpower, but it will likely be an expeditionary fleet without at least at the start a land-based HQ. Is that correct?

BRAITHWAITE:

That is correct. Yes, Senator.

KAINE:

Thank you. And that's to emphasize the growing importance of this region and the strategic alliances that the United States has with nations like India and others in the quad in that part of the world?

BRAITHWAITE:

That's exactly right, Senator. As you know, and you've traveled in that region, it's vast. And for the 7th Fleet, which is home ported in Japan, although it's also sea-based, it, you know, has formidable challenges to move all the way through the Western Pacific, down through the approaches of the Indian Ocean, all the way over to the Northern Arabian Gulf.

KAINE:

Let me move to the Atlantic Fleet question, which affects Virginia significantly. So the Atlantic Fleet was the fleet headquartered in Norfolk until, I believe, Secretary Rumsfeld, during the War on Terror, reconstituted the Atlantic Fleet as the Fleet Forces Command. And it wasn't just a name change. There were some different areas of focus. Right before I came to the Senate in 2011, the 2nd fleet, which was based in Norfolk and provided coverage in the Atlantic was decommissioned because the United States perceived that Russia would no longer be a naval threat.

BRAITHWAITE:

That's correct.

KAINE:

Well, not so fast. In 2018, during my service on the committee, the Navy recommissioned the 2nd Fleet in Norfolk because of the increased Russian threat in the Atlantic. And so your proposal today to reconstitute the Fleet Forces Command, which was focused on the War on Terror to the Atlantic Fleet, as I understand it, is to recognize the reality of this increased

Russian presence and the fact that the great power competition is now sort of the dominant concern of the National Defense Strategy. Is that correct?

BRAITHWAITE:

That is correct, Senator.

KAINE:

Let me ask this. My folks in Hampton Roads will wonder whether reconstituting Fleet Forces Command as the Atlantic Fleet will cause them either to lose jobs or personnel or investment levels in that region. Should they be worried about that?

BRAITHWAITE:

No, Senator, there are no loss of jobs. There is no loss of revenue to the Tidewater region.

KAINE:

And I understand that you'll be going to the region to have discussions with folks in the area about this proposal that you've announced today.

BRAITHWAITE:

I will. That is correct, Senator.

KAINE:

That's very helpful. And so if I understand now, with the structure that you're putting on the table, the Pacific Fleet would have the 1st, 3rd and 7th Fleets reporting through it, correct?

BRAITHWAITE:

That is correct, yes, sir.

KAINE:



You're contemplating that the 5th Fleet would still report through CENTCOM?

BRAITHWAITE:

That is correct.

KAINE:

The Atlantic Fleet would have the 2nd and 4th Fleets reporting through it. Is that correct?

BRAITHWAITE:

That is correct, though--

KAINE:

And you'd suggest the 6th Fleet would be reporting through U.S. Forces Europe--

BRAITHWAITE:

That is correct, yes, sir.

KAINE:

--because that fleet does so much in tandem with NATO allies in that theater?

BRAITHWAITE:

That's correct.

KAINE:

Okay. Let me ask now--well, move to one other topic, and I'll save the others for a second round. Vaccine deployment.

BRAITHWAITE:

Yes.

KAINE:

So we're--we're grappling with a lot of vaccine deployment issues nationally, but also it's very, very critical that vaccine, thank goodness it's being developed, rapidly, that the vaccine be deployed rapidly in a way that will keep our military forces active and healthy. Talk a little bit about the DoD discussions about vaccine deployment issues and how you're approaching it. And did you learn things with respect to how you did testing, wide testing through the DoD family that have given you lessons about how to do vaccine deployment and how to phase the deployment of vaccines throughout the Navy and Marines?

BRAITHWAITE:

Yes, sir, Senator. So I am extremely proud of the Department of the Navy. Both the Marine Corps and our Navy have done a phenomenal job in the aftermath of the lessons we learned from USS Teddy Roosevelt. And we are applying some of those lessons in the vaccines as you--or in the testing, as you mentioned, to what our rollout strategy will be around the vaccine. Of course, some of those discussions are still going on with the OSD team as we determine how quickly we will get those vaccines, how quickly we'll roll those out.

I know the CNO is in discussions with our Surgeon General to how we will do that for the Navy, as well as the Commandant for the Marine Corps. I would invite the CNO, if he had any thoughts on this specifically, to comment.

GILDAY:

Thank you, Mr. Secretary. Sir, there are two related but separate plans that are in development right now very closely with the CDC. And the first one deals with the distribution of vaccines, and so there are two that DoD is looking at. One is Moderna, and the other is Pfizer. And as you probably know, the Pfizer requires--the Pfizer is going to be shipped in GPS-tracked coolers (INAUDIBLE)

KAINE:

Right, separate refrigeration, yeah.

GILDAY:

Right. And once it's thawed, it's good for about five days. And so the Pfizer--the Pfizer medicine will be distributed here in CONUS, the 10 different locations across the DoD. Every medical treatment facility in the military will receive that vaccine. And then we'll also have three or four out CONUS overseas locations that will receive the Moderna vaccine, which is allowed to be refrigerated for up to 30 days. And so you have a little bit more flexibility.

So the second piece of this is the vaccination plan itself, and it is kind of tied to lessons learned from testing. We actually developed a prioritization for testing. We were building the airplane as we were flying it, as we were trying to get testing capability out. This time, we have a better sense of what that prioritization structure ought to look like, and at the top are healthcare workers and then emergency and safety personnel at our installations. Those people are likely to come in contact with people that are infected.

And then our strategic forces, and so think maybe your cyber mission forces, the crews on strategic missile submarines. And then the forces that will deploy within the next three months. And so we have a good count of what those numbers are, and if there's anything we really good at, it's mass immunization in the U.S. military. And so we feel pretty confident, sir, that once we get the vaccine distributed, that the vaccination piece, now that we had the prioritization well thought out, will happen pretty quickly.

KAINE:

Great. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SULLIVAN:

Senator Shaheen.

SHAHEEN:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to each of you for being here this morning and for your service. Secretary Braithwaite, I want to follow up on the conversation you and Senator Sullivan were having about the importance of being able to operate in cold climates and the importance of the Arctic going forward because in New Hampshire we have the U.S. Army's Cold Regions Research and Engineering Lab, and they do amazing research, and I wondered how--to what extent you share that kind of research across branches. Do you get information from the Army about research that's being done at CRREL that would be helpful to the Navy?

BRAITHWAITE:

We do. Of course, you know, under a new joint approach the service secretaries and I, we talk. The service chiefs talk all the time, and our respective research arms have exchange and interplay, as well.

SHAHEEN:

Admiral Gilday, I appreciated your comments on the importance of our civilian workers, especially at our shipyards. We've had the opportunity to visit the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, and everyone appreciated that. I'm very interested in ensuring that the shipyard optimization plan goes forward as envisioned. Are you comfortable that the resources are going to be there to keep that plan on time, and what's been the impact, if any, of COVID-19?

GILDAY:

With respect to the plan, ma'am, it's been a priority of the department and certainly the secretary since he--since he's been in the seat. I will tell you in terms of putting our money where our mouth is, right now across the four public yards we have nine MILCON projects that are underway. So four of those are up at Portsmouth. There's a couple in Puget Sound and a couple more, a couple more in Hawaii and so forth. But those are progressing on track and funded.

Across the FYDP we've outplayed \$3.5 billion, which is not a trivial amount given the fact that--this is for SIOP--given the fact that we--our typical MILCON budget a year is about \$1 billion, so 3.5 over the FYDP. And that is progressing pretty well with respect to the work and the planning associated with it. It's a big project in Hawaii that we just made congressional notification on a week ago. So I am confident that we're heading in the right direction. That is the right degree of prioritization and resources against the plan, ma'am.

With respect to the workforce itself, so the workforce as you know is an older workforce, and so we were very conservative, particularly in the spring, and we wanted to make sure that we were--that safety was our number one priority. And so we did see probably, with respect to production, we saw a dip in our production capability at the public yards with respect to the work that was being done. It went down to the 70s with respect to--70 percent of the workforce on the job every day. That's now back at 90 percent.

When we look at lost man days with respect to that time period, it is about 2 percent of the man days across the four yards that we would expect to complete a year. So we have mitigation efforts in place. That includes overtime, which buys us back 2 percent or 3 percent, contracting--so going to local contractors outside of those public yards that can do some of that work for us. And also, we've mobilized about 1300 reservists that have unique skill sets that we could bring into the yard.

So the mitigation plan, again, safety first. And right now we're watching it very closely. But I think that we are stable right now. I would describe our repair efforts in the public yards as stable. Very comfortable with where we are.

SHAHEEN:

And so do you expect to be delayed in terms of where we had hoped to be with the optimization plan as the result of COVID?

GILDAY:

I have not seen any delays to MILCON projects as a result of COVID. I'm sure that there have been some slight delays, but nothing that has popped a red flag at my level to raise significant concern.

SHAHEEN:

Good. Thank you. Also, and this is I think both for you, Admiral, and for the secretary. One of the challenges that we have is our shrieking industrial base, as we look at the needs going forward, and I assume that COVID is going to have an impact on that. I know we have small businesses in New Hampshire that are part of our defense industrial base in the state that are facing real challenges as the result of this pandemic. Are you concerned about the impact of the pandemic on more of those businesses that we're going to rely on for our industrial base, and do you have any thoughts about how we can do more to ensure that we have the support that we need through the industrial base?

BRAITHWAITE:

So Senator, as you and I--as I mentioned to you, you know, I'm a product of Philadelphia and the shipyard closure there, and what a negative impact that it has had, not just on the greater Philadelphia region, but on our industrial base at large across our country. We need to protect every shipyard we have. The Chinese, ma'am, have 25 shipyards to our one. And I'm a student of history. When you go back and you see the element that kept the United States capable during World War II, was our industrial might. It was our ability to build back the ships that we were losing.

We need to maintain the sacred industrial base that we have today. I would give kudos to our Assistant Secretary of Defense Jim Geurts, who has done an incredible job of crafting a plan to look to those second and third tier suppliers to ensure that there is consistency in getting the product into the yards. As this CNO has indicated, our shipyard workers both in our public yards and in our private yards have done an amazing job of continuing to be there, engaged through the fact that they're dealing with antiquated systems; they're

dealing with older ships that require more work, and especially in the midst of a global pandemic.

They've done a phenomenal job. As the CNO has indicated, we really haven't missed a beat. We'll have some slowdowns, I'm sure, and CNO can go into some more detail on that, but overall, I believe that the Department of the Navy has a great record under the leadership of Jim Geurts of doing the work to ensure that we have consistency to those yards.

GILDAY:

Thank you, sir. Just a couple of comments to amplify some things that the secretary said. I think that the apprenticeship programs that we have that are associated with each of our shipyards and local community colleges, whether it's Hawaii, or Washington, or New Hampshire or Virginia, have been phenomenal. And so those four-year programs that produced some of the best and brightest in the yards, that hopefully we can--we can keep around for 30 years because it is a family business in many cases.

It's eye watering to meet those young people. Actually they're not just young people. They're people from all walks of life, and some of them are middle-aged that just have decided that they want to give more back to the country. But that program collectively produces about 1,000 workers a year, and over the past three years we've increased the number of shipyard workers from about 33 to 36--almost 37,000. So we have been on the increase, and we are changing that demographic.

As you know, there are a lot of young--there are either young people in the shipyard, or there's older people in the shipyard, but we missed a generation. And so we're trying to rebuild. I think--I think we're--I'm very optimistic about where we are headed with the workforce, and when you visit those shipyards, I know that you do, it is an uplifting experience when you meet those people. Salt of the earth, and they love what they're doing.

With respect to the supply chain, it remains a concern for us, and so I would say--Senator Kaine mentioned this during his opening remarks--with respect to opportunities that we've seen during COVID, the relationship that we have, the opaqueness that's dissolved with

vendors during COVID, has been something that I have not seen in my career. Again, as the secretary said, Assistant Secretary Geurts can speak to this in more detail, but we have our eye on more than a quarter of a million parts, and you know it only takes one to take down a ship, or an aircraft, or a submarine.

But we have our eye on those vendors that are struggling and other vendors that are coming--that have stepped up to fill the gap in places. And so we've seen a bit of both. We've seen some failures that have been troubling. We've also seen some great innovation.

SHAHEEN:

Well thank you. Certainly ensuring that those businesses get paid as expeditiously as possible is really important right now. And I know that that's been a focus of DoD. So thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SULLIVAN:

Gentlemen, I'm going to have to step out for a brief minute. Senator Kaine will be taking over, but I will--I'm sure we're going to have a number of additional questions. We have a number of senators on the line, as well, so I'm going to next call on Senator Hirono.

HIRONO:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And before you leave, I would like to also extend my condolences to you for the loss of your dad.

SULLIVAN:

Thank you.

HIRONO:

Mr. Secretary, you were talking a bit about the Arctic, and this will be a yes or no question. Is it time for the United States to ratify or the Senate to ratify UNCLOS? Mr. Secretary?



BRAITHWAITE:

Yes, Senator, I--I think we need to do some more work to make sure that it's the right time, to be very honest with you.

HIRONO:

(INAUDIBLE) UNCLOS has been hanging around for over four decades, and I would say it is the right time, especially as I think our country is, I think, disadvantaged by not being part of UNCLOS, especially as the Arctic is seeing a lot more activity, shall we say. And I think one of the reasons that the Arctic has become navigable is because of global warming. For General Berger, I would like to offer my condolences, General, for the eight marines and one sailor who tragically perished in an AAV accident in the end of July, and I realize that the investigation is occurring. Can you tell me when the investigation into this accident will be completed?

BERGER:

The initial portion of the investigation is done, ma'am, and I think probably within 30 days it will be--the endorsement chain will be complete.

HIRONO:

So since the initial phase has been done, can you tell us what led to this accident very briefly?

BERGER:

I cannot, ma'am, because I have not seen the investigation. As long as it remains in the endorsement chain, in respect of the due process I'd don't poke into that. We did take, as you are well aware, ma'am, we took initial measures within the first 30 days. But as far as the final recommendations, the final opinions and recommendations, I have not seen them yet.

HIRONO:

So I know that these, the vehicle that was involved in the accident is to be replaced by the ACV, so we probably will need to get some kind of an update on how all of that is going. Back to Mr. Secretary. I don't want to get into a long discussion with you, but I did--it came as news to me that I thought I heard you say that you are taking some ships from the 7th Fleet based in Japan to be located in the Indian Ocean. Is that what you said? This is a proposal, or is it already being implemented?

BRAITHWAITE:

No, Senator, that's not what I said. We are going to re-commission the 1st Fleet which like the 7th Fleet, would operate in the greater Pacific region under the command and control of the United States Pacific fleet headquartered in Hawaii. It wouldn't necessarily take ships from the 7th Fleet or from the 3rd Fleet. It would be a sharing. That's how our numbered fleets operate, predicated on the demand and the threat that emanates in that part of the ocean which those respective fleets operate.

The 1st Fleet would be expeditionary. We are still determining where, from where that fleet would operate from. But its major focus would be on the Western Pacific and the Eastern Indian Ocean

HIRONO:

So Mr. Secretary, is this a proposal, or has the decision already been made to do this?

BRAITHWAITE:

The decision has been made, yes, under my (INAUDIBLE)

HIRONO:

And you're going--did I hear you say that this was in consultation with the INDOPACOM people?

BRAITHWAITE:

It is in consultation with INDOPACOM through the chairman's office and the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

HIRONO:

Thank you. You were asked some questions about the importance of the continuation of the modernization program at the shipyards, and so I just want to reiterate my support of the importance of blending in with those plans even though I know with COVID we've had delays, etc. because of manpower issues relating to COVID.

Let me turn to you once again. You visited Palau, which was I think--I think that was very important. You were the first, I believe, secretary of the Navy to visit Palau in October, and you emphasized the importance of U.S. military presence in the Indo-Pacific as of course China continues its destabilizing activities in the area. So the recent activation of the Marine Corps' camp, Camp Blaz in Guam is also an important part of the military's force laid out in this region. I wanted to ask you, can you provide some insight into how the U.S. and Palau can build on that--on our partnership with Palau through joint use facilities in the Pacific? I believe that the new president of Palau has written to us saying that he would welcome that kind of effort.

BRAITHWAITE:

Yes, Senator. Thank you for the question. I had never been to Palau before.

HIRONO:

Oh, I'm sorry.

BRAITHWAITE:

No, no, I went as secretary of the Navy. It's a beautiful country. I had never been there before. I was--

HIRONO:

(INAUDIBLE)

BRAITHWAITE:

--a Navy pilot, and I flew extensively throughout the Western Pacific, but I had never been to the beautiful islands of Palau, and what a gorgeous country it is. And the thing that struck me, I went in the wake of Secretary Esper. He and I had discussed the opportunity to not only reassure those who are our partners and allies, like Palau, who is on the cutting edge, the tip of the spear of Chinese aggression in that part of the world, that we are with them. I personally went with members of my team to look at the infrastructure there to see how we could support U.S. Naval vessels operating periodically from there.

During my trip I also visited Guam, Senator, and the same reasons, to see how we could ensure a more forward presence of naval forces and enhance our presence there. And that process is ongoing. Palau continues, as you have said, to be receptive to receiving more U.S. naval vessels. While I was there, we had some operating in the region. I was able to interact with them. And the support that they received was, again, indicative of the Pacific Island nations.

Also, as I think through the uniqueness of Palau, they're COVID-free, Senator. And one of the things that we're dealing with now is our sailors, our marines have been deployed on ships without any port visits, and you know it was kind of one of those additional bonuses of my trip, but Palau, where we have forces operating at sea who are COVID-free, it would be almost a bubble to bubble to be able to see our ships go into Palau. So all of those things indicate that Palau is a nation that we need to continue to support and recognize, you know, their partnerships, their friendships with us and how we can enhance that.

HIRONO:

Yes, I hope that we can do more with all of our Compact (PH) nations. That would include Palau, the Marshall Islands and the Micronesian--Commonwealth of Micronesia. So--yes?

KAINE:

I was just saying, Senator--

HIRONO:

Is my time being called?

KAINE:

I need to move to Senator Duckworth, yes.

HIRONO:

Okay, thank you so much. I'll submit other questions for the record.

KAINE:

Thank you, Senator Hirono. Senator Duckworth, I believe, is with us by--via WebEx.

DUCKWORTH:

Yes, thank you so much, Senator Kaine. I want to open by acknowledging the Department of the Navy's leadership in removing the Confederate flag from Navy and Marine Corps installations. Commandant Berger, you specifically led the way for other military services in a move that I felt displayed great concern for all of your marines and sailors and great personal moral courage. Your expectation that the marines and sailors assist you in rooting out symbols that cause division in the ranks sets a clear standard of leadership, and this is a readiness issue, and I think you have made that very clear.

Additionally, your recognition that the Confederate Army's battle flag can cause feelings of, and I quote, "Pain and rejection," plainly states a truth that other senior leaders have failed to acknowledge for so long. The Confederate flag was carried by those who took up arms against the United States to keep black Americans in chains. It's imperative that all of our service members feel welcomed and valued.

Banning displays of the Confederate flag shows respect for black service members who already face well-documented barriers to service in the military and inclusions in the ranks. Commandant, your actions represent one of the many important steps that our armed services can take to improve the inclusion of all service members, as well as discipline and unit cohesion. I applaud your leadership, and I also applaud you, Admiral Gilday, for your subsequent call for a Navy order banning the display of the Confederate flag from public spaces above--aboard Navy installations.

Now that I (INAUDIBLE) my question, I actually want to focus on a region that is personally important to me, Southeast Asia, in particular. The National Defense Strategy, the NDS, focuses significant attention on countering the rise of China and our own readiness to operate in this large, geographically diverse distributed and maritime region is absolutely key to executing the vision that is laid out in the NDS.

General Berger, I was pleased to see your acknowledgment in your written statement that our operational logistics system, both ground and aviation, is insufficient to meet the challenges posed by peer and near peer conflict, especially in the Indo-Pacific. I'm very concerned about our ability to sustain our troops while they execute the vision of war fighting that's laid out in the NDS, but the logistics function of war fighting receives far less attention than fires and maneuver. Your admission that the Marine Corps has work to do when it comes to logistics gives me greater confidence that you are thinking realistically about this problem set.

I think that your recognition at readiness, particularly in the Indo-Pacific, implies more than simply maintaining legacy equipment is a really important one. As services plan to operate in smaller and more distributed formations across a large and geopolitically complex region, perhaps with limited comms, it's clear that the military services will have to rethink the way they sustain war fighters in theater. General Berger, from your perspective, what are the biggest challenges to reforming the Marine Corps' current operational logistics (INAUDIBLE) to meet the needs of distributed war (INAUDIBLE) Pacific. Sorry for the long preamble.

BERGER:

I think I understand the question, Senator. We have--we have a big challenge because two factors, I think. One is the distances, which you highlighted. The second is that we've enjoyed a protected backside in terms of our logistics chains for 70 years. We have not been challenged. We are now. We have to assume that any adversary's going to contest our logistic supply chains. So we have--in terms of what do we have to do about it, I'll offer just two or three thoughts.

First of all, we've got to be able to distribute laterally at the tactical to operational level sustainment supplies, equipment, people, in a way we have not been challenged to do in the past, and we've got to do it in, again, in a contested environment. And by contested, I mean in a region where an adversary can see us and can interdict you. So we have to have the--everything from the surface craft to the aircraft, and probably in the future I would suspect a fair portion of that being unmanned. We have to have better distribution mechanisms than we have right now.

From the operational to strategic, we've enjoyed a secure line all the way back to CONUS, as you pointed out, for years. Has not been challenged. That is a chall--that's now becoming a problem. So from the strategic to the operational, we've got to push the supplies forward, and then operationally to tactical laterally, we've got to--we are going to need different means to move supplies and equipment and people laterally within a second or first island chain, or within Europe or within CENTCOM.

DUCKWORTH:

Well, thank you. So are there policies of programs that my colleagues and I should be considering at our level to address these challenges and better adapt to an environment and style of warfighting that is very different from what we've seen in Afghanistan and Iraq?

So what can we do here at our level here in the Senate, in terms of particular programs that will help you basically bring your readiness level in those logistical networks, especially

when you're talking about doing it horizontally in a contested environment? What can we do to support you? Are there particular programs that you would emphasize?

BERGER:

There are, ma'am. I think the combination of oversight and resourcing for our unmanned surface and aerial systems is probably the biggest area. I'm sure there are others, but you asked me here. I would say that one comes to mind. We have to move very quickly to develop and field the unmanned surface vessels and unmanned aerial systems that will move those supplies. Because we'll never get there if we rely only on manned systems. And we have a lot of learning to do there. We have a lot of experimentation to do there. But if there's one area I'd ask for support there, that would be it.

DUCKWORTH:

Thank you.

GILDAY:

Senator, as the CNO, can I add--

KAINE:

Admiral Gilday, do you want to weigh in? Admiral Gilday, you can weigh in and then I will move to Senator Jones if that's okay, Senator Duckworth.

GILDAY:

Senator Duckworth--

DUCKWORTH:

Yeah, my next question was actually going to be to ask Admiral Gilday for his input. Thank you.



GILDAY:

Thank you, ma'am. I appreciate the opportunity. And to amplify on what General Berger so eloquently spoke to, we have a legislative proposal right now with the NDA--in consideration by--in conference with the NDAA that would allow the Navy to buy used SELAH vessels instead of investing in new SELAH vessels, to increase the number of used vessels that we can buy.

As you know, that's a growing capability gap for us, as you highlighted, and we need to close it quickly. We can do so at one-tenth of the cost by--we've already done the market analysis. We know which ships we'd go after at one-tenth of the cost of buying new. So for \$30 million instead of \$300 million with a minor upgrade in a U.S. shipyard, we will have the sealift that we need to move ground forces where they need to be, in order to bring effects to bear.

The other thing I would mention is the Future Naval Force Study assessment that was completed recently and will be briefed to staff up here on the Hill tomorrow. One of the things, one of the big takeaways I think, are logistics vessels, and the numbers increase significantly with respect to the requirement. And I think it's noteworthy and something that we as a department need to put a higher priority on with respect to procurement. Thank you, ma'am.

KAINE:

Thank you, Senator Duckworth.

DUCKWORTH:

Actually, (INAUDIBLE) don't have enough hulls in the water nor heavy lift capabilities, and that's it. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

KAINE:

Senator Jones.

JONES:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And let me first--I want to echo Senator Duckworth's comments about the removal of the Confederate battle flag and those symbols. In my career, I've seen, especially coming from a state like Alabama, words matter, symbols matter. And they can have deadly consequences on occasion. And so I appreciate your efforts without an act of Congress to remove those symbols.

I want to talk just a moment about readiness in a different way, not from adversaries attacking or whatever, but from security on our own installations here in the United States, on our soil. One year ago this coming Sunday, there was a shooter and a terrorist attack at the Naval Air Station in Pensacola, Florida.

I met a few months ago with Ben Watson and his son Adam to talk about their terrorist attack. Ben's son, Ensign Kaleb Watson, was the officer on deck that morning and was one of the first people the shooter encountered. And though he had been a captain of the rifle team at the Naval Academy, per installation rules Kaleb did not have a weapon that day.

He and two other young men, Airman Mo Haitham from Florida and Airman Apprentice Cameron Walters of Georgia died that day. Ben and his wife Sheila wanted to be here today, but were unable to because of COVID restrictions, but they're watching in Alabama. And I believe, and Kaleb's family believes, that things could have been different that day in December 2019. Things should have been different.

Secretary Braithwaite, you and I have talked about this some. For one thing, the law enforcement officer who drove Kaleb to the hospital with his injuries got lost on the base. That just shouldn't happen. Now, my office has been asking the Navy since April 6th about this investigation report. We finally got that last week, week and a half ago, a redacted version.

And one of the things that was clear even before the report came out is this has happened too many times on our military installations. Too many American troops have lost their lives to shooters on U.S. military bases on U.S. soil. As someone in the Senate like Senator Kaine

and others who send folks to the academies that are going to be on these bases, as someone who encourages our young men and women to join the armed forces to serve their country, that's disturbing that we are putting them in harm's way at a place where they should be most secure.

There have been investigation reports about all of those instances and shootings, and there've been recommendations. But what we see from the Pensacola report is that many of those are just not being followed, especially with regard to planning, training, and assessment of response plans for situations just like this. And I, for one, believe that's inexcusable.

Ben and Sheila Watson are watching today from Alabama, and they've made it their mission to do everything they can to prevent losing more of our sons and daughters. I've tried to help in my time here on the Armed Services Committee.

So I ask for the committee to include in the Senate version of the NDAA language that would require the Secretary of Defense to implement within 90 days of all applicable security emergency response recommendations to protect military installations, and language requiring the Secretary of Defense to ensure that each installation conducts or develops a plan to conduct live emergency response training with first responders. And I very much hope that those requirements make it into the final bill that we're going to see shortly.

I'm going to ask each of you today, and this is just brief answers, because I've got a couple more I'd like to ask. Can you tell me that it is currently a priority, currently a priority to make absolutely certain that on every Navy and Marine Corps installation that all applicable security recommendations and regulations have or will be implemented and followed? And if that isn't a priority, would you commit to making one? Secretary Braithwaite.

BRAITHWAITE:

Senator, first and foremost, Kaleb is a hero. I was in Pensacola two weeks ago with the leadership there, and I was in the very place where Kaleb was--was shot. And I can't imagine the anguish that his family, being a father myself, must feel. In 31 years in uniform of our

country as a naval officer, every time I went aboard a base, I always felt safer because I presented my ID card.

And although there is no easy answer to this, we are committed to ensuring that we get to the root problem of all of these. In some instances, it's because people do have guns on our installations. In other instances, it's because people don't have weapons on our installations. So we are working diligently to figure out the right approach to this, so a hero like Kaleb Watson never loses his life.

JONES:

I want to--I'll come back to the other two real quick, but I want to follow up on the comment about the weapons. One of the recommendations is that there be a uniform policy with regard to weapons on there. Is that something that you intend to try to follow, to develop a uniform policy on weapons on base?

BRAITHWAITE:

Well, the uniform policy, I mean, we are one department of the Navy and it should be uniform. But remember, the shooting in Pearl Harbor was just the opposite. It's because the individual who was on duty had a weapon and used that weapon to attack others with it.

So again, there isn't an easy answer to say one or the other. What we are committed to is ensuring that those people who are armed are appropriately trained, that there is the cross integration both on base and off base. So what happened in Escambia County doesn't happen again on any other base. That's what we are committed to do.

JONES:

Mr. Chairman, if you could bear with me, I'd like to just get a quick answer from Admiral Gilday and General Berger on the question about a commitment to the security of those installations and following those recommendations. Admiral?

KAINE:

Sure.

GILDAY:

First of all, Senator, I completely agree with you that the incident was inexcusable. Secondly, taking a deeper look at this, besides as you mentioned the MOUs that we are looking at and the training that we are doing with first responders at all of our installations now, that we had not been doing to the degree we should have been doing, is underway, regardless of whether any legislation comes out. And the third thing is, I commit to you, sir, that this is a priority for the Navy.

JONES:

Thank you. General Berger?

BERGER:

Senator, I can affirm the same. It is a priority right now; it will remain a priority.

JONES:

Thank you all. Mr. Chairman, let me say, first of all, it's been an honor serving on this committee in the last two years with both of you and all the other members, this subcommittee as well as the general committee. I will miss it, but I know that the work is in good hands.

And Mr. Chairman, let me say to you specifically, let me also offer my condolences. I lost my dad about 11 months ago. He was also a Navy guy, so I feel the pain and I feel the loss, and it can never be replaced. So thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SULLIVAN:

Thank you, Senator Jones. Thanks for your kind words and thanks for your great service on this committee. You know, I think the witnesses know there are certain senators who dig into these issues, really care. The issues of civilian oversight for our military are critical, and

you certainly have been one of those. And we appreciate your service, and we know that you have a lot left in terms of giving to your country and your state. So thanks very much for your great service on this committee.

Gentlemen, I'd like to continue with the second round of questioning. And General Berger, I'd like to dive in a little bit more with regard to the Force Design 2030 plans that you have put forward that I highlighted in my--in my opening remarks. And to be respectful and also to give you an opportunity, as you know--and I think this happens anytime someone's trying to break glass in terms of a broad-based strategy that recognizes challenges that are new and very significant. I happen to agree wholeheartedly with the National Defense Strategy, the National Security Strategy of this administration.

I think one of the unwritten stories in the media is how bipartisan the support is for that strategy. But then the services now have to start implementing it, and I think that's always a difficult challenge. I think the Marine Corps under your leadership has really taken that to heart, and I happen to appreciate it. But it's not, as I mentioned in my opening remarks, without its critics.

I'm going to read just a couple lines from a detailed piece in *The National Interest* from former secretary of the Navy Jim Webb, who has a lot of respect in the Marine Corps, of course, as a combat veteran from Vietnam. But he says a couple things in his piece: quote, "After the centuries it took to establish the Marine Corps as a fully separate military service, this new strategy could reduce its present role by making it again subordinate to the funding and operational requirements of the U.S. Navy." That's one criticism.

Another, he talks about the plan to dramatically alter the entire force structure of the corps to focus on China ignores the unpredictability of war. And he also says there's no greater danger in military strategy than shaping a nation's force structure to respond to one specific set of contingencies, giving an adversary the ability to adjust and adapt beforehand.

Do you want to comment on those comments? I know there's some other former commandants who have also been critical, and I want to offer this as an opportunity for you to make the case of what you're trying to do with the 2030 Force Design.

BRAITHWAITE:

Mr. Chairman, if I may--

SULLIVAN:

Sure. Mr. Secretary, as the secretary of the Navy, certainly--both of you I would welcome--really all three of you, secretary--former Secretary Webb obviously incorporates the Navy in general, so I'd welcome--actually, it's a good point Mr. Secretary--all three of you to respond.

BRAITHWAITE:

Mr. Chairman, I'd just like to say first and foremost, Secretary Webb is an incredible patriot and great American.

SULLIVAN:

He is, no doubt.

BRAITHWAITE:

And an individual I hold in extremely high regard.

SULLIVAN:

A former member of this committee.

BRAITHWAITE:

Yes, sir, and an incredible accomplished Marine graduate from the U.S. Naval Academy where I was fortunate to follow in his wake, and a gentleman who I consider a friend and somebody that I have had many--have had discussions with.

But I would say that General Berger is a visionary. And I couldn't say this during my confirmation hearing because I was told to throttle back a little bit, but I generally don't

throttle back, Senator. I lean in pretty heavy when I know and believe in my heart and in my head something is right. Dave Berger is the visionary that the Department of the Navy needs today.

It is his vision and his humble leadership of going up against all of the challenges that he's now encountered to see something come to fruition that his long overdue. The world has changed in the last 20, 40, 60 years, but what has been proven is the concept that a combined Navy/Marine Corps team, not one subordinate to the other. The Marine Corps and the Navy, and the Commandant's vision are one equal paired together. His vision gives a combatant commander another tool in the toolbox in order to fight the fight, if you have to do that. It takes the Marine Corps from being land-centric to being a capable amphibious force again.

His vision is predicated on those of Commandant Russell and Commandant Fuller who, through the fleet marine force concepts of the 1930s created the success of the amphibious marine-oriented combat capabilities, coupled with the department--with the United States Navy in being able to take the fight to the Japanese and win World War II. So, I wanted to be on record to say, as the Secretary of the Navy, I'm proud to be with our Commandant whose vision is the one that we need for the challenges that we see emerging in glob--in great power competition.

SULLIVAN:

Thank you, Mr. Secretary. And if--Senator--Senator Kaine, if you're--if you're okay with it, I'm going to go a little long here for General Berger and Admiral Gilday to be able to respond and add to what the Secretary said. And then try to--you know the criticisms, General, if you can take this opportunity to address what former Secretary Webb and others have been saying in--in how you and, Admiral, how you view this new force design for the Marine Corps.

BERGER:



Chairman, I think the feedback--my view--the feedback from Secretary Webb and others is helpful. This is elevating the discussion. This is an ongoing debate that'll continue for years. So it's not hurtful, it's actually helpful. I met with Secretary Webb, as I have with the others who want to provide feedback, so I met with him in Arlington. And we--we talked for probably two hours.

Now I didn't know him that well, but it was a great discussion. I know him now, didn't know him that well before. We talked in three broad areas. First of all, does the Marine Corps need to change? Second, if it does, does it need to change now? And the third part was the changes that we think--that we're considering right now, the direction we're headed, are those the right changes?

So in basic order, kind of marine-like, we bo--we broke it down into three categories. I don't think there's any--I didn't see any daylight between us on, do we need to change. To the point you made earlier, we have to change. Now do we need to change now or can we wait to change in a year or two when things are a bit clearer? This is a--this is as much a judgment control as anything, but my assessment is, we cannot wait. We have adversaries that are moving quickly. If we wait a year or two for a clear 90 percent picture, we'll not catch up. So we--my opinion, we cannot wait.

So then it came down to the changes themselves which you highlighted. Here, there are going to be differences of opinion, but what I emphasized to him is, this is just--where we are right now is on the front end, not the back end. We have a lot of experimentation, a lot of learning to do. We cannot wait to move out. So, we had a great, healthy discussion and the--and I take all the input from everybody else not in a negative sense, but in a positive sense. It elevates the discussion. But in my assessment--my professional opinion, we have to change. We have to move out now. And we have to preserve enough to learn in the future over the coming years to make sure we get it right.

SULLIVAN:

Thank you, General. Admiral, would you care to comment?

GILDAY:

Thank you, Senator. I go back to what I said in my opening statement, sea control and power projection. And so Nimitz said it was timeless, President Kennedy said it's timeless. If you look at the missions of the NDS today, they require those functions from the Navy and Marine Corps team. What General Berger's doing is giving us another, as the secretary said, tool in the toolkit.

So what changes today is not only what we fight with, but how we're going to fight. And we have to look at that fight in every domain from the seabed to space. The Marine Corps brings a terrestrial capability to the problem of sea control, a function that we still value. If the nation believes that we need a United States Navy and a United States Marine Corps forward so that the fight stays forward and not in this country, then that's an investment that you want to double down on.

Because what General Berger is bringing is an asymmetric advantage to that particular function, something that the enemy is going to be--it's going to be difficult to find, difficult to pin down, and difficult to take on. We're going to be coming at--it gives us many more options. It presents more options, as the Secretary said, to a combatant commander to confuse an enemy and to come at him with multiple vectors, with multiple tools in the toolkit. So it goes without saying, Senator, I'm a huge supporter. I think we're headed in the right direction. That's not to say that there still won't be friction within the Department of the Navy in terms of where we put our next dollar with respect to capabilities.

And you'll be asking the same question on whether--on whether a capability for the Marine Corps with respect to sea control is worth it or whether you get more flexibility, more maneuverability, more--you know better effects through another investment. And so I think we have to be openminded about that. And I think we have to look, at the end of the day, the capability gaps you have to close in order to give you sea control.

SULLIVAN:

Great. Thank you. And your point, General, I think is a really good one that all of this, whether it's from former Secretary Webb, former Senator Webb as well, and former commandants, it does elevate the discussion. I think the discussion also needs to be here which is why I've highlighted it in terms of the Armed Services Committee's civilian oversight responsibilities and I think it's going to continue.

So appreciate--this really is kind of the beginning of important discussion at the highest levels of our government because it's a really important undertaking that the Navy and Marine Corps are advancing right now as part of our national defense strategy. And I commend all three of you for the seriousness with which you have undertaken this at this moment. Senator Kaine.

KAINE:

Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I'm glad you took extra time on this question because I think it is a very, very important one. General Berger, I want to echo comments made by Senators Duckworth and Jones about your courage in taking the stance you took last spring with respect to display of the Confederate battle flag on Marine installations.

And because you have such family ties to Virginia, this was not a decision taken by an outsider or imposed by somebody who doesn't deeply understand the dimensions of this issue. And frankly, your ties to Virginia I think are--are such that the decision that you made and the way you articulated it maximized the acceptability of it within your ranks. And so I want to echo those comments.

Your willingness to take courageous stands when you need to bears upon this last question as well. I--change is needed. Should change happen now or can we wait on it? I think the answers to those first two questions, I think you've answered them correctly. Exactly the dimensions of all the change that is needed, that is a profitable area for a lot of discussion now and in the future. But your willingness to take big steps forward is one of the reasons that you're in the position that you're in and that we have confidence in your leadership. A few questions.

The Navy's developed a shipyard infrastructure optimization plan and that was to direct--to deal with this lack of capacity at shipyards. The original plan was estimated as a \$21 billion investment over 20 years. The GAO suggests that's likely an underestimate because a number of costs were probably not included in the original estimate. So I guess, Admiral Gilday, what I--what I would like to ask you, is the SIOP still on track with respect to both time and funding? And if so, why are not we--why are we not seeing it in budgetary requests to Congress?

GILDAY:

Sir, but I woul--I would argue that we are. I mean as I--as I talked about the investments in you know nine MILCON projects underway right now, three and a half billion in MILCON at the four shipyards themselves invested over the FYDP, we're typically we're spending a billion a year on--on MILCON. And so I think, relatively speaking, we--we are making a--we are sort of making it a high priority. And we understand the importance of it.

These dry docks on average, as you know, are over 100 years old and we've neglected them for too long. And this is a strategic decision by the department to make--to make this a priority and put the money where we need to. Or we can't sustain the fleet of the future. We're ha--as you know, we're challenged to sustain the fleet that we have now.

KAINE:

Thank you, Admiral. Mr. Secretary, the FY20 NDAA required the department to submit military installation resilience plans to help our bases prepare for extreme weather events, whether it's sea level rise in Hampton Roads or whether it's dry--drought or wildfire conditions in other parts of the country. In the wake of destruction observed over the last several years at Camp LeJeune, China Lake and elsewhere, has the department completed any military installation resilience plans and when can we, on the committee, expect to see them?

BRAITHWAITE:

Yes, Senator, thank you for that question. You and I spoke about this in detail both during my confirmation hearing and in meetings between now and then. You know, our department has looked into this. I mean the devastating destruction Hurricane Florence at Camp LeJeune or the earthquake at Naval Air Station China Lake, you of all have been wonderful to help offset our losses there so that we can rebuild some of those structures.

As you know, Senator, a lot of our structures on our military bases are old. They're antiquated. They were built before, you know, there were codes in place to ensure that our buildings could withstand a hurricane of a certain severity or an earthquake. So we are in the process of developing the plans. Our insulations are working on those. I don't know if the CNO has any specific thoughts on this, or the commandant, but it is important to us as we look forward because we can't be a ready force unless we ensure that we're operating from bases that are resilient. And those homes on those bases where our dependents live which of course have a personal impact on--on our readiness--our--have the ability to sustain damage as well.

KAINE:

Could I ask either Admiral Gilday or General Berger, do you know when--when any of these plans are likely to be done so that we can review them on the committee?

GILDAY:

Sir, I do not. I'm not satisfied right now where we are. The pace that reacting--we're acting on these plans, there are discreet projects that we have ongoing. One down in Norfolk Naval Shipyard right now in terms of dealing with rising water tables in the vicinity of the dry docks as an example. Others at the Naval Academy where we're seeing rising water levels so we are reactive and not proactive. And I owe you a better answer for the Navy in terms and the Sec--I owe the Secretary a better answer as well in terms of when--when we can present those plans to both him and you.

KAINE:

General Berger?

BERGER:

Sir, some of them are complete, not all. And we prioritize the ones that we had to do first which is Camp LeJeune North Carolina where we had to rebuild. So the--every contract in the last 18 months that you all have resourced to rebuild Camp LeJeune is to the new regulations for res--for resiliency. So they're prioritized--we'll--we'll provide you the detailed breakdown, sir.

KAINE:

That--that would be helpful. I think, you know the--this is a serious matter for the committee because the resilience plans will enable us to not just exercise oversight on are you trying to be resilient, but it will help us prioritize investments. We would hate to rebuild something in a way that's substandard and doesn't really meet the conditions that are likely to be there in 10 or 20 years. Rebuilding one off or being reactive one off to dangers or emergencies isn't the same as having a forward-looking plan that's likely to--to involve a more efficient use of the dollars that are so competitively sought. So I would like follow up on that from both the Navy and the Marines.

Here's the last question I'd like to ask, I'm over, Mr. Chair, but with an indulgence. And I'd like each of you to address it. And it's sort of like a lessons learned during COVID question. COVID and the pandemic has been horrible, the death toll, the economic effect, it's been horrible. Nevertheless, even in a horrible time, you learn some lessons.

Americans are doing much more telehealth than they did before and that's actually had some significant benefits for people who might have a hard time accessing healthcare institutions because they live so far away. We've been able to do some committee work virtually so there's--there have been some lessons learned that we wouldn't want to just snap back to the status quo ante when this public health emergency is over.

In each of your spaces, I'd love you to talk about maybe some lessons learned since the beginning of March as we dealt with COVID that you think could be--that could lead to sort of continuous improvement or changes you've had to make that you won't want to undo when we're over this public health emergency. And if you could each address that question, that's the last question I have.

BRAITHWAITE:

Senator, thank you. I'll answer the question first because I will tell you that I believe the Department of the Navy, both the Marine Corps and the United States Navy ha--have done an incredible job. You know this caught the department off guard as it did the entire world. And the Navy, in particular, struggled through some of the early weeks of this because the close proximity of which our sailors live aboard ship made this a real threat to our ability to operate at sea. And that was even more important aboard our submarine--or more challenging aboard our submarines.

Admiral Gilday has done an incredible job to lead the effort to not only identify ways to mitigate the risk but to keep our ships operating. We have over 100 ships today that are at sea deployed and there are cases of COVID aboard some of those ships. But he and the leadership of the Navy have done an incredible job. It's an amazing story of resiliency to be able to address the issue, to isolate the issue, through contact tracing, through all the protocols that CDC and NIH have put out, the social distancing, masks.

When I go aboard a ship, everybody's masked up. I--I'll let the CNO talk to more of the details, but we are, today, a better force prepared for nuclear, biological, chemical warfare in the future because of the lessons we've learned from this pandemic. And as you and I talked about, you know carbon footprints and the ability to have our workforce telework, that's another great--we have finally busted through the fact, as a former military guy, you've got to form up in front of the flagpole every morning to get credit for actually being on the job. I think we've thought beyond that now to a point where we're more realistic in the fact that we can do work from afar. We can be productive. But I'd invite the CNO who,

believe me, is an incredible leader who's done an incredible job on this. And I'm very proud to be his wingman.

GILDAY:

Thanks, sir. Sir, a couple things. One of the things that strikes me the most aboard ship right now is just the change in behaviors. It's almost a cultural change onboard ships because, as the Secretary said, you're operating in such close quarters and your success or failure comes down to individual responsibility. So that means that every sailor now understands that, as a leader at whatever level they're at on a ship, that they have a responsibility to their shipmates that's tangible. And they also have a responsibility to hold other people accountable if they're not following the--they're not following the protocols and the standards that they should be.

So with respect to the culture of excellence that we want to--that we want to have in the Navy and the kind of leadership that we want people to--to exhibit, I think that's been a positive. There's been a lot of second order effects to telecommuting. So excess capacity with respect to lease spaces where we can recoup over \$100 million a year in spaces that we just don't need. And so another byproduct has been a realization of--I think a better realization of what's core and what's non-core in terms of what we really need to be focused on and working on. And how we use that teleworking force.

Another is an acceleration of IT--IT capabilities, I don't want to say the specific company, but--but capabilities that would have taken us, you can imagine, years to feel that have been accelerated by the Secretary of Defense to weeks and months, that have put us in a much better place. And I also mentioned, real briefly, training at sea because now we operate in COVID bubbles.

We've said, "Well, jeez, why are we just in a--in a kind of a single production line with ships to get ships trained and qualified? Why can't I do that with six ships at once, get a lot more out of the--get a lot more out of the trainers, become a lot more efficient, and actually increase the numbers of ships that I'm generating for the secretary to present to the Secretary of Defense to use out there at sea?" And so I--I think overall, it's caused everybody



to think a little bit more innovatively and to be a little bit more efficient in terms of how they think about using their time.

KAINE:

General Berger?

BERGER:

Sir, I'll be pretty short. I think it--this is a virus that we--not the first virus that your military's operated in so it's not--the pandemic is once every hundred years. But this isn't an operating environment that's new. You would expect us, in other words, not to take a knee, but to operate through it. And that's what's happened.

A couple of things to highlight. You said--you asked for lessons learned. There's not an exercise or a training event that we do in the military. We don't take away nine ways to Sunday afterwards. We do after action reports like nobody else. And we have a long list. I'll just mention one or two, recruit training. We had to continue recruit training, but we--we can't be taken to our knees.

So what we learned that we're going to continue, to your question, Senator, is spread out the racks in the squad base. Put washstands outside the chow hall. Take specific measures that we're going to keep in place afterwards because, normally, typically, every officer candidate class, every recruit training class gets some kind of crud in the first two weeks and it shuts them down.

We haven't had that problem. Why? Because we're--we're basically quarantining them for two weeks before first day of training. Wh--why would we not consider continuing that later on so that, when training starts, everybody can train instead of half the squad bay being sick? So some, to your point, some of these measures, we need to keep in place afterwards.

And I'll just finish with, you would--I would echo the same as--as Admiral Gilday, you--this committee, this subcommittee would be very proud of the small unit leaders. This is where

discipline matters. We haven't had large outbreaks because we are a disciplined force. We follow orders. We--we very much trust our leaders and--and they've not let us down.

KAINE:

Mr. Chairman, I'm so glad I asked that question--

SULLIVAN:

--Yeah, great question.

KAINE:

--that's really important. One of the first visits that I did when we were in our kind of initial months of COVID and when we were home during April and the Senate was closed was I went to the VA hospital in Richmond, the McGuire VA which is dealing with a lot of these issues. And it didn't really strike me until I walked into that massive facility that there was not a single thing that they did that they didn't have to rethink. I mean touching an elevator button. The arrangement of, you know, tables in the cafeteria. Everything--how do you check-in if you're a patient coming in. Every last thing that's done in that facility, which is tens of thousands of square feet--it's massive--they've had to rethink.

And onboard a ship or a sub, close quarters, people working in such close proximity to each other, that is even magnified. But I just think it's really important for us in this committee and you know, across the board that we do the lessons learned. It would be foolish if we went back to the status quo ante. One of the things we did, for example, is we used to, as a federal government, reimburse telehealth visits at a lower reimbursement rate than in office visits. We made an emergency change to allow an equalization of reimbursement rates for such visits and that has dramatically advanced telehealth. It would be foolish to go back to the status quo ante when this is done because then we would sacrifice all that learning and slide back to a second best.

So there's going to be a lot of need for us to look at the changes that have been forced upon us and say, "Hey this needs to be the--the going forward norm". There are some things we'll

be glad to let go, but there's also, as--as you point out, General Berger, why wouldn't you have a 14-day quarantine period now forever to avoid just the common kinds of, you know, infectious viruses or whatever that could take down a recruiting class early in their time in. So we're going to really need to do this and you guys have offered some great examples that--that can I think inspire that work. So I really appreciate it, thank you.

SULLIVAN:

Yeah, great question and great answers. And, General Berger, I mentioned I did see, I think it was a New York Times article or something that talked about the changes to Marine Corps recruit training, but how it's still working. And you know, in my view, some of the best, you know recruit training anywhere in the world. So kudos to the Marine Corps and the rest of the Department of the Navy for doing such great work.

I'm--I'm going to end here with just a couple additional questions. Appreciate the patience of the three of you gentlemen. General, I wanted to--just one--one additional question on the force design.

You speak in your testimony of modernizing a Marine Corps infantry and recon units. And as an infantry and recon officer myself and I'm a MARSOC marine officer currently, I'm interested in what you stated in your testimony that we are modernizing our infantry battalions and traditional reconnaissance units to create a more distributable formations with much greater organic lethality in accordance with units traditionally associated with special forces and commando units. Could you unpack that a little bit more in terms of, again, your force design and what Marine infantry and recon units can anticipate and MARSOC as well?

BERGER:

Senator, like you, I have the same background.

SULLIVAN:

Yours is a little bit more distinguished--

BERGER:

--I think it's--

SULLIVAN:

--a hell of a lot more distinguished--

BERGER:

--common--we have common ground. I believe, if we're going to compete and we're going to deter, first of all, then much of who has an advantage is decided in the reconnaissance, counter-reconnaissance sort of effort that both sides, in any competition, are going to do. I think we will rely more and more and more on your four expeditionary forces to paint a picture of what's happening in front of them.

Because deterrence is really the foundational element of the strategy. To do that effectively, you have good reconnaissance forward to understand what's happening in front of you. To give decisionmakers the space, the situational awareness to make good calls. As we reshape the Marine Corps, we will reshape our reconnaissance and effort and our reconnaissance units and infantry units as well. Infantry training will be longer. The product of infantry training on the enlisted side will be at a higher level than we're producing right now.

Right now--in other words, you complete basic training and you go through infantry training, you join your first unit, the rest of the way is on the backs of the platoon sergeant in that first platoon. We need to take that Marine to a higher level so that the whole platoon, the whole battalion can get to a higher level. And we need to get to that higher level because they are going to be more distributed. We're going to rely on them to make higher level decisions.

As--as you know, sir, from your service, we ask captains to make decisions now that lieutenant colonels, battalion commanders made a decade ago. Why? Because they have the capabilities now. We have to get them to a tar--to a higher training level now. So infantry training, both on the officer and enlisted side, more extensive, longer. Reconnaissance

forces, better capabilities, a deeper reach, and the ability to commit--to communicate, to sense, and to--to distribute what they're sensing back, and to--laterally to the rest of the force. So I think you're going to see a lot of our investments in ground, aerial, and surface reconnaissance so that we can give the combatant commander the fleet--numbered fleet commander a better picture of what's in front of us.

SULLIVAN:

Great. Thank you for that. Mr. Secretary, I--I--we talked briefly on the Arctic and icebreakers. I wanted to dive in a little bit more, you know I authored language in the NDAA a couple years ago that gave--that congress put forward the authorization to build six polar class icebreakers between the Coast Guard and the Navy. And as I mentioned, the president put forward a memo a couple months ago on how we operationalize that, what ways we look at that.

And then importantly, from my perspective, where you would want to homeport some of these polar class icebreakers that, in my view, should have much more than just icebreaking capabilities. Should have intelligence capabilities, should have weapons capability the way the Russians are certainly viewing their massive icebreaking fleet, I think the latest number is 56. And as you mentioned, we have two, one is broken. So we have a long way to catch up.

But on this issue, to me, it's a no-brainer that you would at least homeport some of these icebreakers that we're building in the Arctic of America. And you--you and I had a great visit when you came out to Alaska, I really, really appreciated that. I know my fellow Alaskans certainly enjoyed meeting you in Ketchikan and Adak and Kodiak and Anchorage, but do you have a view on this? The president has actually asked his national security team. I've talked to you, the SecDef national security adviser, commandant of the Marine Corps--or I'm sorry, commandant of the Coast Guard.

I'm a little bit biased but I think it makes strategic sense for America. If you're going to have icebreakers, you need to--you need to base them in the place where the action is and that's the Arctic, not in Florida or other places where there's no ice. Do you have a view on where we should be basing these? I know the president has asked that in the memo.

BRAITHWAITE:

Mr. Chairman, I always have an opinion.

SULLIVAN:

Good.

BRAITHWAITE:

I think you know that.

SULLIVAN:

Love to hear it.

BRAITHWAITE:

(LAUGHTER)

SULLIVAN:

Especially if it's the right answer.

BRAITHWAITE:

However, as you and I also discussed, the United States Coast Guard does not fall under the command and control of the Department of the Navy.

SULLIVAN:

I'm asking you in your personal--

BRAITHWAITE:

--Of course we could change that. You could change that. And I'd be happy to incorporate the Coast Guard as part of the Department of the Navy.

SULLIVAN:

I'm not committing to that right now.

BRAITHWAITE:

As a sister of maritime service, I think that would be wonderful. It doesn't take anything away from Homeland Security, but I love the Coast Guard. They are incredible partners and we'd like to see them to get all the resources they need. I've seen, you know some of the efforts in the shipbuilding when I've been down to Huntington Ingalls in building a new national security cutter.

You know, as far as homeporting those ships, you know if they fell under the control of the United States Navy, of course we would homeport them closer to where they would be required to fulfill their mission. But I am not in a position, Mr. Chairman, to make a determination for the Coast Guard on where they should put those icebreakers.

If we are the ones who end up operating those icebreakers, I think as the executive order has indicated, that's something that we, the Department of the Navy, would come back and work with you, Mr. Chairman, on figuring out the best placement, where we would have the kind of support. I know going into Kodiak I was extremely impressed with the Coast Guard facility there, meeting with the station commander. Again, a phenomenal, phenomenal base with the infrastructure to support additional ships being homeported there. So again, there are a lot of options here, but there's a lot of work to be done, and unfortunately it's not an A to Z quick answer.

SULLIVAN:

I'm going to press you a little bit. Do you have a personal opinion on this issue of where you would homeport icebreakers to defend America's interest in the Arctic?

BRAITHWAITE:

So Mr. Chairman, you and I both served--you still serve in the uniform of our nation, so for 31 years I wore the cloth of the U.S. naval officer very proudly, and in my role as now the Secretary of the Navy, I still fall under the command and control of the president of the United States, and I have to follow the lawful orders of those appointed over me. So again, as the Secretary of the Navy, I have personal opinions, and I have professional requirements of how I conduct myself each and every day. So in this case, the Coast Guard has the authority to operate those vessels, and I think they are the ones who would have to determine where they wanted to homeport them.

SULLIVAN:

Let me turn to, if--Senator Kaine, I just have a couple more questions--Mr. Secretary, on the USS Bonhomme Richard, can you--I guess the Navy made the decision just a few days ago that this is going to be a ship that's decommissioned. Can you just give us a little quick understanding of what actually happened? It's obviously an issue that this committee has a lot of interest in. And then why you made that decision recently on the decommission, and what that does to our capability, both from a Navy and Marine Corps perspective. That's quite an important ship.

BRAITHWAITE:

Absolutely, Senator. So first of all, the investigation is ongoing, and our NCIS has done a remarkable job in working through all the details of something that is not straightforward. There was such extensive damage on that ship. Both the Chief of Naval Operations and I went out to visit the ship shortly after the incident. And the amazing performance of the crew to save that ship of what they did is just remarkable and a testament to the training that they received in damage control and firefighting.

I'm a businessman, Mr. Chairman, and at the end of the day there is a return on investment, and the return on investment of what it would have taken to rebuild that ship, working very closely with the Secretary of Defense Dr. Esper wanted to see that ship come back, and for



all the right reasons, to send the right message to say, you know, we don't give up our ships very easily.

We have a battle flag that hangs in Memorial Hall at the Naval Academy that says don't give up the ship, but using logic and looking at what it would have required to put that ship back together, it would have been--it would've been a foolish investment of our American taxpayer dollars to invest in a ship that was over 20 years old instead of looking at the options of building another ship in the future that would have more relative capabilities, embracing the technologies that are emerging.

So I would invite the CNO to go into some of the particulars of what we've determined. The ship was not to deploy until 2022. So talking with the Commandant about how we could ensure that we have the right assets to come in in the deployment plan to offset the loss of the ship, we're working all those now, but CNO, do you have any thoughts about the Bonhomme Richard?

GILDAY:

Thank you, sir. Just a couple. So sir, the ship's 22 years old. About 60 percent of it was so heavily damaged it would have to be replaced. If we try to rebuild a ship into an LHD, its original--return to its original state, it would take 5 to 7 years. It would be stranded in the industrial base. We think there's one shipyard in the Gulf Coast who could do that kind of work, and it would cost almost as much as a brand-new ship.

If we took a look at other options, like repurposing it, could it be a command-and-control ship? Could it be a hospital ship? Could it be a sealift vessel? It costs us less money to buy one new than it would be to restore or to repurpose Bonhomme Richard to another function. And so for those reasons, sir, that 30 million in decommission was the best decision, I think, and the secretary has all the consequential decisions come to his desk, and I supported that recommendation that we decom her.

In terms of near-term impacts operationally, we've mitigated those. I think longer-term, let's say out to 3 to 5 years, we're taking a look at what those other options could be. Do we

accelerate the, you know, the production of a big deck vessel? What would that mean with respect to the amphibious force that we're building for the future? You know, what are the priorities that we want to take a look at within the department? What is the demand signal from the secretary of defense and the combatant commanders for those vessels? And so that's work to be done that's ongoing right now, but in the near term there won't be any operational impact. We have mitigated that with moving some other deployment schedules around.

SULLIVAN:

Great. Thank you for that answer, and we're going to look forward to the report when it's done, both if it's classified or unclassified on what happened and some of the actions. I know there was a lot of sailors that undertook very heroic actions to save that--try to save that ship.

Let me ask another for all three of you gentlemen. As you know, here in the Senate we've got a number of important bills that we're trying to finish up prior to the end of this Congress, both a COVID relief bill, the NDAA and a final appropriations bill. Importantly, that's going to have our military appropriations, but it's not for sure we're going to be able to get there. There's a lot of work that's being done to try and get compromised bipartisan bill. If we don't get there and we have to settle for a continuing resolution, which is certainly not ideal--it's better than a government shutdown, but it's not ideal--I'd like the three of you to weigh in on what you think the impacts of a CR would be on Navy and Marine Corps operations.

And I think sometimes it's not well understood that even though it's continued funding, it is very, very disruptive for our military operations and readiness, which is the whole point of the oversight of this subcommittee. Mr. Secretary, we'll start with you.

BRAITHWAITE:

Absolutely, Mr. Chairman. And really, thank you for this question. When I worked on the Hill, we rarely ever had a CR. I worked for Senator Arlen Specter, and passing our appropriations bills our authorizing bills, extremely important, especially to an organization like the Department of the Navy. So this does impact us, and we are looking at ways now

that if in fact we do have a CR how we minimize the impact. But it will affect readiness. We ask for an anomaly, and it appears that we have received that to continue to build the Columbia class, our follow on SSBN to replace the Ohio class. Without that anomaly, we would not be able to replace the Ohios, which are 35, 40 years old.

So on behalf of the department, we'd like to thank Congress very much for that relief. But the particulars of this, I mean, the way that we operate our fleet, steaming hours, flying hours, all that will be impacted. Pay to our sailors, to our marines, there will be significant impact, you know, in the hazardous and special pay--pay spaces. I'd invite Commandant or the CNO, you know, to talk to some of the more specifics of what they see as the operational leads for their respective services.

SULLIVAN:

Admiral.

GILDAY:

Yes, sir. So as the secretary mentioned, across a number of accounts you begin to see the effects cumulate over time. So with a 72-day CR, it's about \$1 billion that primarily affects our operations and maintenance accounts. So think steaming hours, flying hours. You want to keep these people in the era of great competition on the cutting edge and the best that they can be, and you can't when you're dealing with FY 20 levels of spending.

You see that begin to manifest itself more acutely at the six-month point where we have decisions to make with respect to moving money around with the next steps for the USS Gerald R. Ford, an aircraft carrier that we want to get operational in FY 22 as fast as we can, or with overhauls on the ongoing overhaul on George Washington, refueling overhaul, or a new start overhaul on the John C. Stennis, a carrier that's waiting to go into maintenance.

MILPERS, you begin to see the effects more acutely in those accounts, as well, where you cannot hire the people you want to hire in numbers to get to where you want to be at the end of the fiscal year. A 12-month CR, the impact of that is in the order of about \$18 billion for

the United States Navy across a number of accounts. So over time, you begin to see significant impact with respect to both near-term readiness and investments that we're trying to make in the future.

SULLIVAN:

General, do you have anything to add to that? That's a really staggering number you mentioned, \$18 billion.

BERGER:

Chairman, I think if you asked any leader who has anything to do with executing a budget, if they could--if you could have one thing, you know, what would you ask for, they would say stable, predictable funding. They wouldn't ask for a dollar amount. They would just say some predictability, some stable predictable funding. I boil it down to the same two buckets as the CNO, readiness and modernization. We'll get by--we have gotten by so far on this CR on readiness without any negative impacts. It will begin to impact going into the next few months, and the CNO just really accurately highlighted those areas. They are similar to ours.

My bigger concern, frankly, or my major concern is modernization. We're turning our ship to make a Marine Corps that we will need 10 years from now. That involves new starts. If we don't have the appropriations bill on time, you're going to delay the modernization of the Marine Corps and to the detriment of our readiness, it's going to be for us sort of a double whammy, not a good picture.

SULLIVAN:

Thank you. And I appreciate it. I have one final question, gentlemen, and again I appreciate the comments about my--my father. One of favorite things I got to do with him every year was go to the Army-Navy game, and as a member of the board of visitors of the Naval Academy I was honored to be appointed by that by the former chairman of this committee, Senator McCain. So looks like it's--the game is going to continue, which is great, and I would

appreciate a prediction. If you can't make it in your professional capacity, Mr. Secretary, maybe your personal view on who is going to win that game. It's a very important question for the nation. And if the other two uniformed leaders, the Admiral and General also have a view, I would welcome that.

BRAITHWAITE:

So Mr. Chairman, as a proud member of the United States Naval Academy class of 1984, my personal and professional opinion on this one converge. We will beat Army at West Point. We have a record of playing there three times. The first Army game in 1890, and Navy won. And we played it at West Point. We went back to Army during World War II when we were under some of the same pressures as we are today with COVID, and went Secretary Ryan McCarthy and I talked about where we should play the game, we were committed to ensuring that every cadet and every midshipman would get to attend that game.

Being a Philadelphian, I live about an hour outside the city, it was always great to go back to Philadelphia, but Philadelphia would not allow us to go beyond 7500, which doesn't cover all of the corps cadets or the brigade of midshipman. So Secretary McCarthy and I, working with the CNO and the Army Chief of Staff and the respective superintendents of both the United States Military Academy and the United States Naval Academy, determined that we will play the game even if we have to play it in a parking lot outside the Meadowlands.

This is an uninterrupted tradition that has gone on since 1890 in the midst of the Spanish influenza, World War I, World War II, and we're not stopping now. So Navy will beat Army on December 12, once again, for the fourth time that we play at West Point. Army's home team. That's why we went to West Point. Go Navy. Beat Army.

SULLIVAN:

Are there any dissent--dissenting opinions from the Admiral and the General on that view?

UNKNOWN:

No, sir.

SULLIVAN:

I didn't think so. Well, listen, gentlemen, I appreciate very much your time and your professionalism and your service to our nation. This has been a very, very informative hearing. I know that there will be additional questions for the record, and we will keep the record of this hearing open for two more weeks for additional questions, and the committee asks respectfully if you get QFRs, if you can try to get them back to the committee in short order, again, we appreciate it, and thank you for your service. This hearing is now adjourned.

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SECRETARY OF THE NAVY KENNETH J. BRAITHWAITE

NAVY OPERATIONS CHIEF ADM. MICHAEL M. GILDAY

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