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COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-6035

ONE HUNDRED SIXTEENTH CONGRESS

February 12, 2020

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The Honorable Mark Esper
Secretary of Defense
1400 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Esper,

We write today with regards to the FY2021 budget request for Navy shipbuilding programs.

The FY21 budget requests eight ships, of which just six are actual combatants. This is a significant deviation both to the FY20 budget request, which planned for 10 ships in 2021, and the final agreement on the 2020 authorization and spending measures that approved 12 ships. We also note that the budget request plans to procure 44 ships between 2021 and 2025, a nearly 20 percent reduction from the 54 that were planned over this period previously.

The stated requirement for the Navy is a fleet of 355 ships, which has been reaffirmed repeatedly in testimony by senior defense leaders, statements of policy from President Trump's administration, and approved in law by Congress. We understand the challenges associated with making the 355 ship a reality, which is why we have worked collaboratively, and on a bipartisan basis, with our colleagues on the Seapower and Projection Forces subcommittee to provide the support, authorities and tools needed to achieve this goal.

However, it is challenging to put this request in a strategic or analytical context without two key plans. First, as you know, federal statute requires the submission of a 30-year long range shipbuilding plan concurrent with the President's annual budget request. This requirement, unfortunately, was not met with submission on the Fiscal Year 2021 budget request this week. In order to fulfil our committee's constitutional responsibility to raise and maintain a Navy, we expect the FY2021 30-year shipbuilding plan to be submitted no later than February 27, 2020.

In addition, the subcommittee had worked with the Navy to schedule a bipartisan briefing this week on the updated Force Structure Assessment. This engagement was meant to provide the larger strategic and analytical context needed to review the new budget request. However, this long-planned briefing has now been cancelled indefinitely. We request an update, in writing, on the status of the FSA and an anticipated date that Congress can expect to receive it.

The Honorable Mark Esper
February 12, 2020
Page 2

Thank you in advance for your assistance in providing the plans and analysis needed for our panel to inform its review of the FY21 budget and fulfil its constitutional duties to raise and maintain a Navy.

Sincerely,



Joe Courtney
Chairman
Seapower and Projection
Forces Subcommittee



Rob Wittman
Ranking Member
Seapower and Projection
Forces Subcommittee

JDC:jpm