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U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-6035

ONE HUNDRED FIFTEENTH CONGRESS

December 20, 2018

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The Honorable James N. Mattis
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Mattis:

As you complete your deliberations for the Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 budget submission, we write to encourage you to support the inclusion of advance procurement appropriations for a third Virginia-class submarine in FY 2022. These advance procurement appropriations two years in advance of construction are required to support the long lead time components such as the nuclear reactor and other associated nuclear components. Without such funding, the Navy will miss a strategic opportunity to take advantage of the excess submarine construction capacity that exists beginning in 2022.

Currently, the Navy has 51 attack submarines. In accordance with Navy's FY 2019 30-year shipbuilding plan, the Navy plans to drop to 42 attack submarines in 2028. This reduction in force structure is in sharp contrast to an increase of nearly 40% to the Navy's submarine requirement to 66 attack submarines, as reflected in the 2016 Force Structure Assessment. This requirement increase occurred before the National Defense Strategy affirmed, "great power competition has returned". If one compares the submarine force structure with other requirements in the Navy's inventory, this force structure element is the most demanded assets in the United States Navy yet faces the most pronounced and prolonged shortfall over the next three decades.

The Navy has also surveyed the shipbuilding industrial base and assesses that sufficient capacity is available in FY 2022 to increase the attack submarine construction to three submarines. In the FY 2019 30-year shipbuilding plan, the Navy included a funding option in fiscal year 2022 for congress to consider in light of the new 355-ship Navy requirement. Additionally, this increase in attack submarine construction would help de-risk the second largest DoD acquisition program, the Columbia-class ballistic missile submarine, by increasing the industrial base immediately prior to a full scale production build of Columbia.

The Honorable James N. Mattis

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Congress has acted on a bipartisan basis to support expanded attack submarine construction. Both the FY 2018 National Defense Authorization Act and the FY 2018 Defense Appropriations Act included multiyear procurement authority for this additional submarine. Additionally, the FY 2019 National Defense Authorization Act required the administration to preserve this funding option in FY 2022 for this attack submarine. However, Congress has not yet received a budget from the department that utilizes this authority.

Our committee has received repeated and consistent testimony from combatant commanders and military experts about the urgent demand for undersea capabilities. Even at today's force structure, demand for undersea capabilities significantly outpaces the supply of attack submarines – a trend that will only worsen as the fleet declines over the next decade. We believe that if the Department of Defense has one additional dollar to invest in future capabilities, it should place that money toward attack submarines. In an age of great power competition, we believe that there is no greater force projection capability in a contested environment than an attack submarine.

We believe the industrial base is prepared to respond and Congress is ready to support increased attack submarine production if the department provides a clear request in its FY 2020 budget. We hope that you agree with this assessment and look forward to continuing this conversation with you at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,



Robert J. Wittman
Chairman
Subcommittee on Seapower
and Projection Forces



Joe Courtney
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Seapower
and Projection Forces

RJW:djs