

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

July 14, 2026

Hung Cao
Acting Secretary of the Navy
1000 Navy Pentagon
Washington, DC 20350

Dear Secretary Cao:

We write to request information on the future of the USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN-78) and its scheduled maintenance following its return after the longest carrier deployment since the Vietnam War. The ship and her crew performed admirably and accomplished every tasked mission, operating across the North Sea, the Mediterranean Sea, the Caribbean Sea, and the Red Sea. CVN-78 was deployed for 326 days and crossed the Atlantic Ocean four times. During CVN-78's historic deployment supporting operations in SOUTHCOM and CENTCOM, the carrier was a force multiplier for multiple combatant commanders, reinforcing the importance of these vessels to our fleet.

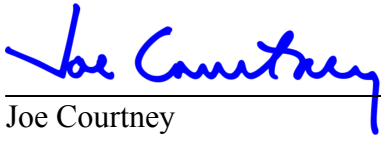
However, CVN-78 faced various challenges during its extensive deployment, including reported plumbing issues and emergency maintenance following a fire that medically impacted over 200 Sailors, and led to the loss of hundreds of racks and mattresses. Further, we are concerned that CVN-78's time at sea will likely lead to future gaps in deployability of our Navy's finite aircraft carrier fleet.

It is critical that we utilize lessons learned and the Department of Defense and the Department of the Navy understand the second and third order effects of extending warships' time at sea. This includes aspects such as the material and operational readiness of the aircraft carrier fleet, quality of life for the Sailors and their families, and the retention rate of the Sailors that are critical to the readiness of the carrier fleet.

As such, we respectfully request the following information:

1. Anticipated length of CVN-78's post-deployment maintenance period;
2. Anticipated cost of CVN-78's post-deployment maintenance;
3. Anticipated contract modifications or new contracts to cover unplanned or newly-identified repair work;
4. Summary of systems that did not perform as expected during CVN-78's most recent deployment, to include plumbing and fire suppression, and respective interim or long-term mitigation, as applicable;
5. Updated maintenance schedule for U.S. aircraft carriers, adjusted for changes caused by CVN-78's deployment extension;
6. Anticipated effects on upcoming U.S. aircraft carrier operational readiness, as a result of deployment extensions and changes in maintenance availabilities; and
7. Anticipated effects or estimated retention rate of first-term Sailors that were deployed on CVN-78 for this 326 day deployment.

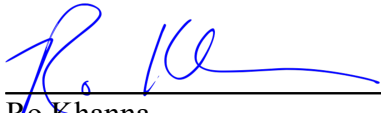
Sincerely,



Joe Courtney
Member of Congress



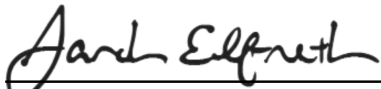
Donald Norcross
Member of Congress



Ro Khanna
Member of Congress



Chris Deluzio
Member of Congress



Sarah Elfreth
Member of Congress