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THE HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON DEFENSE
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

STATEMENT OF

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BEFORE THE

HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON DEFENSE

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRITIONS

ON

COMBAT AIRCRAFT REQUIREMENTS

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Our eleven-carrier force structure is based on worldwide presence and surge requirements, while also taking into account training and maintenance needs. The Navy thanks Congress for granting us a waiver to temporarily reduce our force to ten carriers for the period between the inactivation of USS ENTERPRISE (CVN 65) and the delivery of GERALD R. FORD (CVN 78). We will continue to meet operational commitments during this 33-month period by managing carefully carrier deployment and maintenance cycles. After the delivery of CVN 78, we will maintain an eleven-carrier force through the continued refueling program for NIMITZ Class ships and the delivery of our FORD Class carriers at five-year intervals starting in 2020.

CVN 78 is the lead ship of our first new class of aircraft carriers in nearly 40 years. FORD Class carriers will be our nation's premier forward-deployed asset capable of responding to crises or delivering early decisive striking power in a major combat operation. These new carriers incorporate an innovative new flight deck design that provides greater operational flexibility, reduced manning requirements, and the ability to operate current and future naval aircraft from its deck. Among the new technologies being integrated in these ships is the Electromagnetic Aircraft Launch System (EMALS), which will enable the carrier's increased sortie generation rate and lower total ownership costs. Recently, EMALS successfully demonstrated a controlled launch sequence with a full-scale EMALS test article. It is on track for an aircraft demonstration this Summer. EMALS is on schedule to support delivery of CVN 78 in September 2015.

Strike Fighter Capacity: Joint Strike Fighter and F/A-18 E/F

Our Navy remains committed to the Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) program. The timely delivery of the F-35C carrier variant remains critical to our future carrier airwing strike fighter capacity. Our Navy has the necessary tactical aircraft capacity in the near term to support our nation's strategic demands; however, a January 2010 assessment forecasts a decrease in our carrier-based strike fighter capacity that peaks in 2014 and remains through 2019. We have a plan to address this capacity decrease that involves several management and investment measures.

Our force management measures are targeted at preserving the service life of our existing legacy strike fighter aircraft (F/A-18A-D). We will reduce the number of aircraft available in our squadrons during non-deployed phases to the minimum required. We will reduce our Unit Deployed squadrons (UDP) from twelve aircraft to ten aircraft per squadron to match the corresponding decrease in Marine Corps expeditionary squadrons. We are accelerating the transition of five legacy F/A-18C squadrons to F/A-18 E/F Super Hornets using available F/A-18E/F aircraft and will transition two additional legacy squadrons using Super Hornet attrition reserve aircraft. These measures make our legacy strike fighter aircraft available for High Flight Hour (HFH) inspections and our Service Life Extension Program, which together will extend their service life and manage to some extent the decrease in our carrier-based strike fighter capacity through 2018.

These measures rely on increased use of Super Hornets, which expends their service life earlier than programmed, so we are refining our depot level production processes to maximize throughput and return legacy strike fighter aircraft to the Fleet expeditiously. Our FY 2011

budget procures 22 additional F/A-18E/F aircraft – achieving an overall inventory of 489 F/A-18E/F against the total budgeted quantity of 515 aircraft. The existing F/A-18E/F production line is expected to close-out in FY13 after the last aircraft required by this inventory objective are procured.

Our investment measures are targeted at extending the service life of our F/A-18A-D aircraft and procuring JSF. High flight hour inspections, which have been in place for two years, provide the ability to extend the service life of our legacy F/A-18A-D aircraft to 8,600 flight hours, while engineering analysis is underway to determine the SLEP requirements necessary to reach the service life extension goal of 10,000 flight hours. The HFH and SLEP programs increase our institutional risk by diverting investment and maintenance funds from other accounts, but they are necessary measures to address our strike fighter decrease while preserving our investment in JSF.

The Navy remains committed to the JSF program because of the advanced sensor, precision strike, firepower, and stealth capabilities JSF will bring to our Fleet. While the overall schedule for JSF has slipped, causing us to reduce the overall rate of procurement, initial operating capability is still planned for 2014 and we have not reduced the total number of airframes we plan to buy. We are monitoring the JSF program closely and managing our existing strike fighter capacity to meet power projection demands until JSF is delivered. Procurement of an alternate engine for JSF increases our risk in this program. The Navy does not have a requirement for an alternate engine, and its additional costs threaten our ability to fund currently planned aircraft procurement quantities, which would exacerbate our anticipated decrease in strike fighter capacity. The FY 2011 budget request procures seven F-35C aircraft.

EA-18G Growler and Airborne Electronic Attack (AEA)

The proliferation of technology has allowed state and non-state actors to use the electromagnetic spectrum with increasing sophistication. Airborne Electronic Attack (AEA) provides one of the most flexible offensive capabilities available to the joint warfighter and it remains in high demand in traditional, irregular, and hybrid conflicts. The Navy continues to provide extensive AEA support from our carriers afloat and from our expeditionary EA-6B Prowler squadrons deployed currently to Iraq and Afghanistan.

We are leveraging the mature and proven F/A-18E/F airframe production line to recapitalize our aging EA-6B aircraft with the EA-18G Growler. As directed in the QDR, we are planning to procure an additional 26 EA-18G Growler aircraft across the FYDP to increase joint force capacity to conduct expeditionary electronic attack. Our program of record will buy 114 total EA-18G aircraft, recapitalizing 10 Fleet EA-6B squadrons and the Navy's four expeditionary squadrons. The program continues to deliver as scheduled. In September, our first EA-18G transition squadron, based at NAS Whidbey Island, reached Initial Operational Capability and it will deploy as an expeditionary squadron later this year. Our FY 2011 budget requests funding for 12 of the 26 additional EA-18Gs.

P-3 Orion and P-8A Poseidon Multi-Mission Maritime Aircraft

Your continued support of the P-3 and P-8A force remains essential and is appreciated greatly. Our P-3 Orion roadmap focuses on sustainment and selected modernization until it is replaced by the P-8A Poseidon. These aircraft provide capabilities ideally suited for regional and littoral crises and conflict, and are our pre-eminent airborne capability against submarine threats. Our P-3s are in high demand today for the time-critical intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance they provide to the joint force on the ground in CENTCOM and for their direct contributions to our maritime domain awareness in key regions across the globe.

P-3 Zone 5 wing fatigue has resulted in the unplanned grounding of 49 aircraft between 2007 and 2009, with more expected. Mitigation measures include a combination of targeted Zone 5 modifications and outer wing replacements. As of December, we have returned 12 aircraft to service after completing Zone 5 modification and 32 aircraft are currently being repaired. As part of our sustainment program, we have included $39.6 million in our FY 2011 budget request to conduct outer wing installations on nine of our P-3 aircraft. P-3 sustainment and modernization programs are critical to ensuring successful transition to the P-8A, while preserving essential maritime and overland battle space awareness.

The P-8A completed it's first Navy test flight this past October and will resume integrated flight testing in March of this year. The P-8A will achieve initial operating capability and begin replacing our aging P-3 aircraft in 2013. Our FY 2011 budget request procures seven P-8A aircraft.

MH-60R/S Multi-Mission Helicopter

The MH-60R and MH-60S successfully completed their first deployment together this past summer with the USS JOHN C. STENNIS carrier strike group. The MH-60R multi-mission helicopter replaces the surface combatant-based SH-60B and carrier-based SH-60F with a newly manufactured airframe and enhanced mission systems. With these systems, the MH-60R provides focused surface warfare and anti-submarine warfare capabilities for our strike groups and individual ships. Our FY 2011 budget request procures 24 MH-60R helicopters. The MH-60S supports surface warfare, combat logistics, vertical replenishment, search and rescue, air ambulance, airborne mine counter-measures, and naval special warfare mission areas. Our FY 2011 budget request procures 18 MH-60S helicopters.

Conclusion

Vice Chairman and distinguished members of the subcommittee, I would like to thank you for your continued support of Navy aviation and Navy TACAIR in particular. While our Sailors provide talent and will, your efforts provide our young men and women, who fight daily with great courage, the training and assets to win. While not without challenges, I am optimistic about our future given the significant contributions and great success the Navy has achieved worldwide. I am also confident in the increased capability that our programs promise the war fighter. I request your continued support as the Navy continues to make sound investments that increase Fleet capacity, maintain our war fighting readiness, and develop and enhance the Navy Total Force. Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today.