



THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY
WASHINGTON DC 20350-1000

March 7, 2014

The Honorable Richard J. Durbin
Chairman, Subcommittee on
Defense
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I stated in my letter to the House Armed Services Committee in May 2012 that I would notify Congress concerning future changes to the Navy's battle force ship counting methodology.

Since that time the Navy completed a new Force Structure Assessment (FSA) in January 2013 to update how many and what types of ships the Department needs, and has evaluated the capabilities needed to conduct the missions in the Defense Strategic Guidance (DSG), the classes of ships needed to deliver those capabilities, and the number of ships of each type needed to execute the strategy.

After carefully considering the current force structure composition and evaluating the current demands of the Combatant Commanders, I intend to alter the battle force ship counting methodology to be more inclusive of certain conditional situations. As I have mentioned numerous times, my intent is to be open and completely transparent with respect to battle force ship counting and any changes I intend to make. I will ensure Congress is provided with a copy of the battle force ship count using both the old counting methodology and the updated counting methodology for at least the next two years.

The new counting methodology will allow ship types routinely requested by the Combatant Commanders and allocated through the Global Force Allocation Management Plan (GFMAP) to be counted on a case-by-case basis with the recommendation of the Chief of Naval Operations and my approval. This will be a temporary authorization to include these ships in the ship count and will remain in effect until the ships are no longer requested in the GFMAP or are retired (whichever occurs first).

This change will provide flexibility to the Combatant Commanders to assess the near-term environment and changing situations faced in meeting the demands of the DSG, and ensure that the ship types needed to execute the DSG are captured. This could

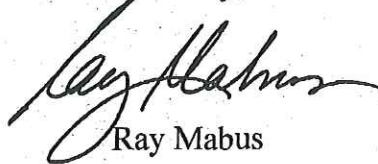
include forward deployed Naval forces, whether self-deployable or non-self-deployable, to be added to the battle force count dependent on the mission, location, and required capabilities. It will also add consistency to our battle force counting methodology.

The specific impact of this change will result in adding 10 Patrol Craft (PC) Forward Deployed Naval Forces (FDNF) currently operating in the 5th Fleet, reducing the Mine Counter Measure (MCM) ship count from 11 ships to the 8 ships FDNF in 5th and 7th Fleet, adding 1 High Speed Transport (HST) assigned to PACOM to replace the currently leased WestPac Express and adding the 2 Hospital Ships (T-AH) in FY2015.

Be assured that the Navy will continuously review the force structure inventory to ensure requirements of the ship types needed to execute the DSG are represented and accounted for in Navy guidance. We will continue to keep Congress apprised of any additional changes to the battle force counting methodology.

Thank you for your continued support to our Navy and Nation. A similar letter has been sent to Chairwomen Mikulski and Roby and Chairmen Forbes, Levin, McKeon, Rogers, Frelinghuysen, and Wittman.

Sincerely,



Ray Mabus

Copy to:
The Honorable Thad Cochran
Ranking Member