

Navy's 2021 Budget Cuts Marines Corps Funding, End Strength



U.S. Marines and a Japanese amphibious brigade simulate a beach raid on Feb. 9. The new 2021 Navy budget calls for an active-duty Marine force reduction of 2,100, but doesn't pare operational units. U.S. Marine Corps/Gunnery Sgt. Robert Dea The U.S. Navy is seeking to shave \$1.4 billion from the Marine Corps fiscal year 2021 budget request and to reduce the active-duty force by 2,100, according to new Defense Department budget documents.

The Marines' piece of the Navy Department's \$207.1 billion budget request for fiscal 2021 amounts to \$46 billion, down from the \$47.4 billion the Corps received in the enacted 2020 budget.

See details of the Navy's proposed fiscal year 2021 budget [here](#).

The National Defense Strategy (NDS) shifted focus from short conventional wars and protracted counterterrorism operations to "the high-end fight" and the re-emergence of China and Russia in a 'great power competition,' said Deputy Defense Secretary David L. Norquist, explaining the reasons for Pentagon funding diversions in a flat \$705.4 billion topline budget.

"That means we had to make additional tough choices and major cuts in some areas in order to free up money to continue to invest in preparing for the high-end fight," Norquist told reporters at

a Pentagon budget briefing.



An MH-60S Sea Hawk lands on the dock landing ship USS Germantown. The number of amphibious ships, key to Marine Corps expeditionary operations, would stay flat at 33 ships, per the new Navy budget, with the addition of one amphibious transport dock ship and the retirement of one dock landing ship. U.S. Navy photo/Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Rufus Hucks

Total Marine Corps end strength dropped 2,100 to 184,100 active-duty officers and enlisted Marines from the 2020 figure of 186,200. Reserve strength remained the same as 2020 at 38,500 officers and enlisted Marines. The force reduction is part of “efforts to align and sustain our force, as described by the NDS,” said Rear Adm. Randy B. Crites, the deputy assistant secretary of the Navy for budget.

The force cuts don’t target operational units per se, Crite said, adding that they are “primarily focused on headquarters reductions. They looked for excess capacity.”

The number of Navy amphibious ships, key to Marine Corps expeditionary operations, stayed flat at 33 ships, with the addition of one amphibious transport dock ship and the retirement of one dock landing ship. Most of the Marines’ \$7 billion operation and maintenance funding for 2021 is dedicated to expeditionary forces.

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Rear Adm. Randy B. Crites, deputy assistant secretary of the Navy for budget

The Navy's \$17.2 billion aircraft procurement budget includes 10 F-35B short takeoff and vertical landing Lightning II strike fighters to replace Marine AV-8B Harrier jets. Seven CH-53K heavy-lift helicopters, nine MV-22B variants of the V-22 Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft and five more VH-92A presidential executive helicopters also are included in the Marine aircraft procurement budget.

The \$2.9 billion Marine procurement budget also includes 752 Joint Light Tactical Vehicles, a joint Army-Marine Corps program and the first full-rate production lot, 72, of the Amphibious Combat Vehicle (ACV), which is phasing out Cold War-era Assault Amphibious Vehicles.

Navy, Marines Say Readiness Improving in Pacific After Fatal Air, Sea Crashes

WASHINGTON –

Stating that command readiness is their top priority, senior U.S. Navy and Marine Corps leaders told Congress they are improving manning, training and maintenance procedures in the wake of three fatal sea and air accidents.

In a joint hearing on Feb. 5, the House Armed

Services subcommittees on seapower and readiness queried commanders about progress in eliminating readiness issues in the 7th Fleet area of operations that were largely blamed for a spate of mishaps that lead to the deaths of 17 Sailors in 2017 and six Marines in 2018. Subsequent accident investigations by the Navy and Marine Corps uncovered a dangerous gap between increased operational tempo in the Asia Pacific region and inadequate training, maintenance and manpower practices.

“It is imperative that the Navy and Marine Corps get this right and balance these high operational desires with requisite systems and needs,” Seapower Subcommittee Chairman Joe Courtney (D-Conn.) said at the hearing’s start.

“There is one unified standard for ensuring readiness. Our manning, training and equipping objectives are unambiguous. We only deploy ships that have the required manning, are fully certified and have the necessary material readiness in place,” Vice Adm. Richard A. Brown, commander of Naval Surface Forces and the U.S. Pacific Fleet, told lawmakers.

There were several serious – in two cases, fatal – mishaps involving Navy ships in 2017. In June 2017, the destroyer USS Fitzgerald collided with a Philippine-flagged containership near Japan, severely damaging the ship and killing seven crewmen.

In August 2017, another destroyer, the USS McCain, collided with a civilian oil and chemical tanker near the Strait of Malacca, killing 10 more Sailors.

Investigators found both accidents were avoidable. The commander of 7th Fleet was relieved as were several officers and senior enlisted on the two ships. The Pacific Fleet commander took early retirement.

The hearing came two days after the USS Fitzgerald returned to sea for testing of onboard systems following nearly two years of repairs and modernization. An audit report released Feb. 4 by the Defense Department's Inspector General found training deficiencies in as many as nine of 12 Arleigh-Burke class destroyers, to which both the Fitzgerald and McCain belong, reviewed by the IG office. The report recommended that U.S. Fleet Forces Command direct destroyers with outstanding training requirements to complete them immediately or as soon as the mission allows.

Marine Corps manning and training practices also came under scrutiny in December 2018 after a Marine F/A-18 Super Hornet fighter collided with a KC-130J aerial refueling tanker during a training exercise 50 miles off the coast of Japan. Six Marines died in that incident. Both aircraft were based at Marine Corps Air Station

Iwakuni, Japan.

Investigators

determined the fighter pilot's inexperience in conducting nighttime aerial refueling contributed to the collision, but also cited inadequate oversight of squadron training and operations and an "unprofessional command climate." Four Marine officers and the Super Hornet squadron commander at Iwakuni were relieved.

"My focus

continues to be readiness for combat," Marine Corps Lt. Gen. Stephen R. Rudder, deputy commandant for aviation, told the House panel. "We are still modernizing and, most importantly, we are focusing on the maintainer, those Marines and Sailors who work on our aircraft."

The probe isn't over, he said, noting that Marine leadership appointed "a consolidated disposition authority to further review the findings of the command investigation of this mishap." The CDA is the independent senior commander who will review the investigation and could order further inquiry and, or, administrative or disciplinary actions.

**Report Criticizes U.S.
Defense Industrial Base;**

Cites Workforce Shrinkage, Intellectual Property Theft



Vigor Shipyard welder Robert Wood cuts and grinds metal during repairs aboard the submarine tender USS Frank Cable in 2017. A new NDIA report cites a shrunken workforce as well as intellectual property theft for the decline of the U.S. defense industrial base. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Alana Langdon

ARLINGTON,

Va. – The health and readiness of the U.S. defense industrial base, plagued by intellectual property theft and a shrunken workforce, rates a barely passing grade on a report card issued on Feb. 5 by the sector's largest industry group.

The report,

compiled by the National Defense Industry Association (NDIA) and data analytic firm

Govini, raises concerns about an industry challenged by cyber threats and industrial

espionage. Securing sensitive material against spies and data breaches earned a

failing grade, 63 out of 100, the lowest among eight areas analyzed by Govini

and NDIA.

In the

foreword to the report, "Vital Signs 2020: The Health and Readiness of the

Defense Industrial Base," Govini CEO Tara Murphy Dougherty noted the new era of

'great power competition' is different from the Cold War. China is a rival

economic power, rapidly closing the technological gap, she

wrote, adding, "China's efforts to exploit technological advancements made by others for its own benefit threaten the security of the defense industrial base."

"Just look what they do with regard to cyber threats. The intellectual property that they steal. Trillions of dollars a year are taken from our country with intellectual property theft or data breaches," Herbert "Hawk" Carlisle, a retired U.S. Air Force general and NDIA's president and CEO, told reporters in a teleconference for the report's rollout.

"China's efforts to exploit technological advancements made by others for its own benefit threaten the security of the defense industrial base."

Govini CEO Tara Murphy Dougherty

Production inputs, another area examined in the report, barely earned a C grade, with a 68, due in part to a defense industry workforce that has contracted from its peak of 3.2 million in the 1980s to about 1.1 million today. The persistent security clearance backlog was another contributing factor, especially with stagnating approvals for top secret clearances, the data-driven report found.

The threat to industrial security posed by state and nonstate actors is "very concerning" in the near term, said Wesley Hallman, NDIA's senior vice

president of strategy and policy. However, to achieve a capable workforce 20 to 40 years in the future, investments have to be made now by government and society as a whole to field a workers with “not only the skills, the talent and the educational background to perform, but they’ve got to be able to pass a security clearance,” Hallman warned.

NDIA and Govini analyzed, over a three-year running average – 2017 through 2019 – 44 statistical indicators, such as surge capacity and threats to digital systems. Each of the 44 indicators was graded from zero (bad) to 100 (excellent) and slotted into eight sections, called dimensions, that were then graded individually. The composite grades of the eight dimensions resulted in the defense industrial base’s overall C grade of 77 for 2019. Factoring in 2017 and 2018 data, the overall score is down 2% since 2017.

The other dimensions analyzed were: supply chain issues, which scored a 68; innovation, 74; productive capacity and surge readiness, 77; political and regulatory issues, 79; demand, 94; and competition, where conditions among the thousands of defense contractors scored a 96, the highest scoring dimension. That was largely because profitability is up 7% since 2017, enabling companies to expand business operations.

The 70-page report makes no specific recommendation, but NDIA leaders said their aim was to make the report an annual event that would generate a dialogue about national security among industry, the Defense Department, lawmakers, policymakers and

the public. "The American people are a big part of this," Carlisle said.

Brainpower Will Yield Advantage in 'Great Power Competition,' Navy Leaders Say



Sailors aboard the amphibious assault ship USS Wasp man the rails while arriving in Subic Bay. The Navy's Education for Seapower initiative is creating a Navy Community College for enlisted personnel to acquire more technical education, including an associate degree. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Daniel Barker

TYSONS CORNER, Va. – With strategic adversaries like Russia and China catching up technologically, the United States will need to rely on "intellectual ability" to maintain a competitive military advantage, according to acting Navy Secretary Thomas Modly.

The technological gap is only going to grow in the rising 'great power competition,' Modly told a gathering of defense industry executives here.

"You all see this because your companies are getting ripped off by the Chinese and others. They're pulling that technology and they're quickly putting it into systems that will compete with us," he said.

The best way to maintain “our enduring competitive advantage in an environment like that is going to be our intellectual ability – to think, to be agile thinkers,” Modly told the audience at a National Defense Industry Association-sponsored discussion hosted by government consultants LMI.

A growing need for Sailors, Marines and civilian workers who could think strategically and adapt quickly was revealed by the Navy’s Education for Seapower study, leading to the Navy decision to ramp up and prioritize education as a strategic enabler.

Joining Modly on the panel, John Kroger, the department’s first chief learning officer, enumerated changes to enhance and encourage educational opportunities and more fully integrate the Navy and Marine Corps.

Kroger, a Yale-educated academic and Harvard-trained lawyer who enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps at age 17, said it would be “a transformational thing for our force if we can get education right.”

The first job, he said, would be creating a Naval Community College to provide technology education beyond traditional military and naval skills.

Kroger said the school will be based in Quantico, Virginia, close to the Marine Corps base housing the Marine Corps University, Marine Corps War College and numerous schools, including Command and Staff, Officer Candidate and Basic schools.

Interviews to select the new school’s president and provost are underway, Kroger said, adding that he hoped to have the first students

enrolled by June 2021. The curriculum would include both residential and online classes. Kroger said he and his staff consulted with the U.S. Army and Air Force, which have outpaced the Navy in developing new education programs.

Currently, the Community College of the Air Force is the only degree-granting institution of higher learning in the world dedicated exclusively to enlisted personnel. It offers enlisted airmen the opportunity to earn a two-year associate in applied science degree.

Kroger said it would be prohibitively expensive to educate 40,000 to 50,000 students a year at a brick-and-mortar school. But the revolution in education – that includes distance learning and minimal in-person residency like executive education programs conducted at many university business schools – makes such a sweeping goal possible.

The Navy Department announced plans in December 2019 to add more than \$300 million to its spending on education over the next five years, starting with \$109 million shifted to learning initiatives in fiscal year 2020. The Education for Seapower initiative also calls for creating a new unifying Naval University System to strengthen existing Navy and Marine Corps educational institutions and align strategic needs and increase agility.

‘ Compliant ’ Doesn ’ t Mean

Secure, Navy CIO Says

TYSONS CORNER, Va. – The Department of the Navy has a security problem, and it's embedded in the institutional culture, according to the Navy's top informational technology executive.

"We are losing the Department of Navy's information every day. And we're losing it directly through our supply chain. Our adversaries are literally screening our plans and using them against us every day. And it's got to stop," Chief Information Officer Aaron Weiss told a meeting here of industry and department leadership on Jan. 24.

"We have a culture of compliance when it comes to security," said Weiss, who became CIO in September. That culture leads people to say, 'If I do the checklist and I do all the right things and I wait a year, then someone will give me a stamp that says I have authority to operate and I am secure,'" Weiss said.

"Well, you might have been secure at that moment you filled out the checklist, but time marched on," he said. "The adversaries' capability has moved on. You're no longer secure."

Security has to become a "constant of state of readiness," Weiss maintained. Both the department and industry have to move "from security by compliance to security as a state of being, and it has to be a part of everything we do both inside the Department of the Navy and in our supply chain,"

said Weiss, who joined acting Navy Secretary Thomas Modly and the Navy's first chief learning officer, John Kroger, for a breakfast meeting to discuss technology and education with executives hosted by the National Defense Industry Association.

Coming to the Navy after more than 30 years in the private sector and a stint as senior advisor to the Defense Department's CIO, Weiss said he was shocked by the difference in the day-to-day technology available to the Navy compared to the private sector.

"What we provide to Sailors, Marines and civilians is about 15 years behind where private industry is," said Weiss, noting he faces a huge task to bring the Navy Department's infrastructure capability up to parity with industry.

"We're not doing that today. We're providing data. Data without context is not usable information. We're providing steams of data that we expect our Sailors and Marines to integrate, create context and make usable so that they can decide and act. But we're not arming them with the information that they need."

Weiss conceded that changing a culture would be a heavy lift, but coming back to security, he added "there's very little value in a modernized infrastructure driving innovation if we're letting the good stuff walk out the back door."

New Shotgun-like Ammo Could Shield LCS from Drones

ARLINGTON, Va. – Naval ordnance experts will be testing heavy weapons precision ammunition, that could hit enemy drones “like a shotgun blast,” offering a counter-unmanned aircraft system (C-UAS) shield for littoral combat ships (LCS).

Rogue civilian drones and enemy attack and surveillance UAS are a growing concern across the military, especially after swarms of drones attacked Saudi Arabian oil facilities last September. Two months earlier, a Marine Corps anti-drone system downed an Iranian UAS that got within 1,000 yards of a Navy ship in the Strait of Hormuz.

“There’s a lot of interest in the Navy now for a counter drone system,” said Kevin Knowles of Northrop Grumman Mission Systems. “How do you shoot down these quadcopters? Trying to hit them with a round is not that easy,” he added.

Northrop Grumman, which makes mission modules for the LCS, is exploring something called precision air burst munition for the twin 30 mm guns in one of the Surface Warfare Mission Modules. A laser range finder on the gun determines the range.

“There’s a modification that would need to be made to the gun to fire the round,” Knowles explained Jan. 16 at the Surface Navy Association convention. “It actually programs the round to fly out a certain distance. And then it blows up almost like a shotgun blast,” he said, noting

the point-and-shoot proximity round can actually detect the target and gets about a certain distance away before exploding.

The Naval Surface Warfare Center Dahlgren Division (NSWCDD) is slated to run tests on the proximity rounds in the Spring, he said.

“And so, assuming that test goes well, then we’ll start putting those rounds in the magazines” of the 33 mm guns on both the Freedom and Independence variants of the LCS. Because the 30 mm gun has a dual ammunition feed, the high explosive rounds the guns now fire could be loaded in one feed while the precision air burst proximity rounds could be fed into the other. “That will give the LCS a counter UAS capability,” Knowles said.

Coast Guard, Too, Has Role to Fulfill in ‘Great Power Competition,’ Vice Commandant Says



A group of scientists and engineers from the Coast Guard Cutter Healy deploy equipment on the Arctic ice in 2018. Healy is in a maintenance period now until June. U.S. Coast Guard/Nyxolyno Cangemi

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Coast Guard has a unique role in the growing global rivalry with Russia and China, the service’s second-ranking leader says.

In addition to Department of Homeland Security, law enforcement and maritime rescue missions, Coast Guard assets are deployed with the Navy in the Middle East, seizing illegal narcotics shipments in South American and Caribbean waters and traveling the increasingly tense Indo-Pacific region, said Adm. Charles W. Ray, the Coast Guard's vice commandant.

In addition to interoperability with the Navy overseas, the Coast Guard forms "a unique element of the joint force with the smaller countries and navies of the world" because it is both a military and law enforcement organization, Ray told the annual Surface Navy Association convention here Jan. 15. "There's something unique about a white ship with a racing stripe," he said, adding the Coast Guard operates at "the level below lethal level."

That role has become more significant because the "Great Power Competition" has reached the High North, where "the Coast Guard is the nation's presence," he said.

The Arctic region makes demands not seen in a long time. When the medium icebreaker U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Healy sailed above the Arctic Circle last summer, "she was literally off the grid for almost a month," Ray said.

"There's not a lot of there, there, when it comes to comms and navigation," the deputy commandant added, noting the issue isn't just

communications but domain awareness. As Arctic sea ice melts, previously impassable sea lanes are opening during the summer to commercial maritime traffic and naval vessels. "We've got to be aware of who else is up there," Ray said.

Designed to break 4.5 feet of ice continuously and operate in temperatures as low as 50 degrees below zero, the Healy is out of service for maintenance work until June. The nation's only operational heavy icebreaker, the much larger but aging Polar Star, can break ice 21 feet thick. Commissioned in 1976, Polar Star is on its seventh tour of icebreaking duties in Antarctica. Both vessels are homeported in Seattle, far from Arctic waters.

The Coast Guard wants to increase its icebreaking fleet with six new polar security cutters. Congress appropriated \$655 million in fiscal 2019 to begin construction of the first, with another \$20 million appropriated for long-lead-time materials to build a second icebreaker.

While the Coast Guard has gotten funding to build five classes of new cutters including icebreakers, Ray expressed concern about where they all will be homeported and maintained in the future. "We've got about \$2 billion in shore infrastructure backlog," the admiral said.

Unmanned Watercraft for Expeditionary Warfare Progressing Rapidly



Bruce Connor (left), chief mate of the expeditionary fast transport vessel USNS Spearhead, and General Dynamics marine operations engineer Dan McDonald prepare a Knifefish UUV for deployment. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Anderson W. Branch

ARLINGTON,

Va. – The development of unmanned watercraft for expeditionary warfare has been

progressing rapidly, said the program manager of U.S. Navy Unmanned Maritime Systems.

“We made a tremendous amount of progress in the expeditionary warfare area in 2019,” Capt. Pete Small, PMS 406, said Jan. 16 during a briefing at the Surface Navy Association symposium here. That progress included successful testing of three Mine Countermeasures USVs (MCM USV) on three different platforms.

The Navy is using Textron’s Common Unmanned Surface Vehicle for the MCM USV program, one of the mission modules for littoral combat ships. The long endurance, semi-autonomous, diesel-powered boat has been tested with Raytheon’s AQS-20 and Northrop Grumman’s AQS-24 mine-hunting sonars.

“We have three

vehicles operational in the water,” Small said. In 2019, all three were operated with three different payloads – a suite payload and the two different towed sonars. Testing was done in different locations on the East, West and Gulf coasts, sometimes simultaneously in multiple locations. “We have accrued just shy of 900 hours of on-water operational time deploying this payload in 2019,” Small said.

Additionally, PMS 406 conducted integration tests with the LCS and two different vessels of opportunity – a U.S. expeditionary sea base and a British amphibious platform.

Small said formal developmental testing and operational assessment of the suite variant of the MCM USV was completed in late November. “That was a major milestone for us, and we are rapidly nearing a milestone C decision and the award of low rate production,” Small said.

Progress also continued with the Knifefish Unmanned Undersea Vehicle (UUV), another counter-mine package for the LCS, completed formal testing and operational assessment in August. “We’ll continue low rate production of that throughout [fiscal 2020],” Small said, adding the Navy will continue additional development and testing of the General Dynamics-made, medium class UUV to demonstrate the full capability of the mine counter measures mission package.

PMS 406 – a unit of Program Executive Office Unmanned and Small Combatants, which oversees the littoral combat ship and

its mission modules and related systems – also develops unmanned maritime vehicles, both surface and undersea, for three different warfare domains: unmanned expeditionary, unmanned undersea and unmanned surface, “our most rapidly growing warfare domain,” Small said.

‘Great Power Competition’ Drives Navy, Marines to Integrate Beyond Joint Operations, Berger Tells SNA



Marine Commandant Gen. David H. Berger speaks Jan. 15 at the Surface Navy Association’s annual symposium.

ARLINGTON,

Va. – The strategy behind the integration of the Navy and Marine Corps is being

driven by China’s emergence as a sea power, according to the commandant of the U.S.

Marine Corps.

“The thing

that has driven us to where we are right now is the paradigm shift by China

moving to sea,” after years of building up its defensive forces and weaponry, Gen.

David H. Berger said Jan. 15 at the Surface Navy Association’s annual symposium

here.

“We can no

longer afford for the Navy and Marine Corps not to be integrated," he said, adding "It's a must-do. Our naval force is unbalanced."

In an era of global terrorism and asymmetric warfare, both services had different tasks to do that strayed from traditional fleet operations. However, for the next 20 to 40 years, with a rising China and a resurgent Russia creating a new 'great power competition,' the tasks and the challenges have changed.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fIyzZhQ8X9g&feature=youtu.be>

A Sept. 6,

2019, memo signed by Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Michael Gilday and Berger stated

the services will work on a "comprehensive naval force architecture"

and an integrated force-structure assessment.

The Navy has

largely been a big ship, standoff force with long-range precision weapons. The

Marines have handled a number of tasks such as counter-insurgency, infantry

patrolling and urban and mountain warfare in Iraq and Afghanistan. It's been

years since most Marines have logged sea duty aboard ship.

Berger said

he and Gilday are developing a force structure that provides depth "all the way

forward and all the way back." A standoff force won't provide the deterrence

needed in the future, he maintained. "The farther you back away from China,

they will move toward you," Berger said, adding that any

forward projecting

force must be able to switch to offense if deterrence fails.

“We will not be

given the chance to swap out that [deterrent] force for another force. A great

power competitor will not allow us to do that,” he noted.

Deterrence is the underpinning of the National Defense Strategy, Berger told *Seapower* when asked how units like the 700 Marines rotating through training tours in Norway since 2017 fit into the new strategy.

“The forces that we have in Europe, and specifically in Norway, are part of U.S. deterrence against Russia or anyone else doing bad behavior. If that doesn’t work out on some future date, the forces that are in Norway and Europe have to be ready to fight immediately. They have to have the equipment; they have to have the training. They have to be ready.”

Asked about

the focus on China, Berger said, “I think the read of the National Defense

Strategy is pretty straightforward. What the primary focus is, in the primary

theater is not exclusive, of course, but it does prioritize.

That’s where we

take our lead from.”

CNO Wants Larger Slice of

Defense Budget to Modernize, Meet China Threat



Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Mike Gilday delivers remarks at the Surface Navy Association's 32nd National Symposium at the Hyatt Regency Crystal City in Arlington, Virginia. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Raymond D. Diaz III

ARLINGTON,

Va. – American commerce depends on the seas, and it's the U.S. Navy that

secures that economic prosperity, the chief of naval operations said here, arguing for a bigger slice of the Defense Department budget.

"American

commerce is maritime commerce. The American economy flows from the sea," Adm.

Michael Gilday told an audience Jan. 14 at the Surface Navy Association symposium.

Addressing a

ballroom packed with Navy, U.S. Marine Corps and foreign military personnel as

well as industry representatives, Gilday reminded them that infrastructure improvements

to several ports around the world were funded by the Chinese government, which he

said is trying to expand "a network of influence which helps them assert

control over an international system we're trying to protect."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YpnrelnN4BE>

To meet the

challenge of the "great power competition," the Navy needs to grow the fleet's

capabilities while it maintains and modernizes existing platforms, Gilday said.

“We need more money. We need more top line,” he added.

The current practice of dividing the topline defense budget roughly into thirds for the Army, Navy and Air Force “does not reflect a strategy,” according to Gilday. Just 1% of the total defense budget would give the Navy an additional \$7 billion a year for shipbuilding.

“American commerce is maritime commerce. The American economy flows from the sea.”

Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Michael Gilday

As an example of Navy funding challenges, the CNO cited the Columbia class submarine program, which he called his highest priority. The Ohio class subs will be 42 years old when they are all retired. In the 1980s, when that program was in full swing, it accounted for about 20% of the shipbuilding budget. Today, the Columbia program accounts for roughly 25% of shipbuilding funding, and it is expected to grow to 32% between fiscal 2022 and 2030.

“Lot of dough,” Gilday said, adding that, in the 1980s, the Navy’s share of the budget was 38%. Now, it’s 34%, he said.

“We, collectively, have to do a better job of making the case [for] what the United States Navy does for our fellow citizens,” he added.