

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.

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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.