

Lawmakers Stand Firm for 31 Amphibious Ship 'Floor'



Gen. Mahoney speaks to members of the Amphibious Warship Industrial Base Coalition. *Brett Davis*

WASHINGTON □ The U.S. Marine Corps needs a minimum of 31 amphibious ships and Congress is prepared to force the issue if the Pentagon balks, lawmakers from the House and Senate told members of the Amphibious Warship Industrial Base Coalition on March 7.

"Until they [the Marine Corps] can walk on water, we better be building more ships," said Rep. Rob Wittman (R-Virginia).

He and other lawmakers from both parties said amphibious ships are critical for projecting both hard and soft power around the world.

Sen. Dan Sullivan (R-Alaska) said a floor of 31 amphibious ships is written into defense authorization, but a previous Navy budget projection "never once" hit that 31 number. He said Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Lisa Franchetti has assured him the new one will.

"We're going to make them build what the Marine Corps needs," Sullivan said.

Sen. Roger Wicker (R-Mississippi) said, "this is the most dangerous national security climate we've had in decades. Thirty-one amphibs. Three hundred and fifty-five ships. Do the right thing."

Sen. Tammy Baldwin (D-Wisconsin) said maintaining an adequate amphibious fleet is "an issue of national security for all of us."

General Chris Mahoney, the assistant commandant of the U.S.

Marine Corps, also addressed the group and noted how easy it is for adversaries to interfere with international shipping, citing the attacks by Houthi rebels in the Red Sea.

“I’m going to remain in lockstep with the CNO when she says, ‘I need more players on the field,’” Mahoney said. “We need to keep the [production] lines hot, multiple lines.”