

Mississippi, Maine Delegations Urge Support for Destroyers in Navy's Next Budget



The Arleigh Burke-class destroyer USS Fitzgerald (DDG 62) makes a brief stop for logistics in Singapore Feb. 18. Lawmakers from Mississippi and Maine would like to see three more destroyers of the class included in the fiscal 2023 defense budget. *U.S. NAVY / Leslie Hull-Ryde*

WASHINGTON – U.S. Sens. Roger Wicker and Cindy Hyde-Smith, and Representatives Steven Palazzo and Trent Kelly, all Republicans from Mississippi, joined lawmakers from the Maine congressional delegation in a letter urging Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro to include funding for three Arleigh Burke-class destroyers in the fiscal 2023 budget, Wicker's office said in a release.

"As you work to finalize the Department of the Navy's [fiscal] 2023 budget, we write to respectfully request support for a robust shipbuilding budget, and to include the procurement of three Arleigh Burke-class destroyers," began the lawmakers. "We urge the Navy to develop a multi-year procurement program of 15 destroyers which maximizes the procured number of ships under the contract, with the understanding that if adequately funded, the industrial base can support at least three ships per year."

The lawmakers highlighted the importance of Arleigh Burke-class ships to national defense – including their value in countering the growing threat of China – and the impact of the shipbuilding efforts on Mississippi and Maine communities. These ships are currently built at Ingalls Shipbuilding in Mississippi and Bath Iron Works in Maine.

“Furthermore, to address the growing threat of China and its increasing fleet size, hedge against a belligerent Russia and assure allies, we urge you to mature and submit the department’s acquisition plan for the next large surface combatant,” continued the lawmakers. “A strategy closely tied to the industrial base and with extensive oversight will help prevent the issues of cost increases, program delays and end-product reliability issues seen in other ship classes.

“These issues are imperative to maintaining our National Defense Strategy and advantage in the maritime commons, and sustaining our military-industrial base,” the lawmakers concluded.

In addition to the Mississippi lawmakers, the letter was signed by U.S. Sens. Angus King (I-Maine), and Susan Collins (R-Maine), and Representatives Chellie Pingree and Jared Golden, both Democrats.

The Mississippi and Maine congressional delegations have long championed funding for both Ingalls Shipbuilding and Bath Iron Works. In the recent 2022 National Defense Authorization Act, the lawmakers secured authorization of \$3 billion for the procurement of two Arleigh Burke-class destroyers at Ingalls Shipbuilding. Last month, Wicker, Hyde-Smith and Palazzo joined Del Toro at Ingalls Shipbuilding, where the secretary toured the facilities and saw the importance of the work being done at the shipyard.