

Senate Bill Would Fund Second Virginia-Class Sub in 2021



The Virginia-class fast-attack submarine USS North Carolina departs Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam on March 25 for a regularly-scheduled deployment. A member of the Senate Armed Services Committee has introduced a \$43 billion bill that would fund, among other things, a second Virginia-class sub in fiscal year 2021. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Michael B. Zingaro

ARLINGTON, Va. – A member of the Senate Armed Services Committee has introduced a \$43 billion bill to strengthen U.S. forces in the Indo-Pacific to counter Chinese competition and that would fund, among other things, some of the U.S. Navy's priorities on its unfunded list, including a second Virginia-class attack submarine.

Sen. Tom Cotton (R-Ark.) introduced the Forging Operational Resistance to Chinese Expansion (FORCE) Act on April 22, which his office said is a "critical investment in the United States' ability to compete with China."

The bill would include "\$6.1 billion to regain the advantage in the Indo-Pacific region; \$9.2 billion in capability increases for Great Power Competition; \$11 billion for mitigating coronavirus impacts to procurement programs; \$3.3 billion for mitigating coronavirus impacts to [the] defense industrial base; \$1.5 billion for hospital ship recapitalization; [and] \$12.0 billion to enhance national resilience and critical infrastructure."

The bill would provide \$3.9 billion to upgrade naval lethality, a summary of the bill said, including funds for:

- A second fiscal 2021 Virginia-class submarine.
- Virginia-class submarine industrial base expansion.

- Subsea and seabed warfare capability for the Virginia class.
- Advanced procurement for the Columbia-class ballistic-missile submarine
- Additional Naval Strike Missiles and their launchers.
- Integration of the long-range air-to-surface missiles on all combat aircraft.
- Additional sonobuoys for anti-submarine warfare.
- Marine Corps modernization, including ground-based anti-ship missiles.

The bill also would fund adding hypersonic weapons on compatible fighter aircraft and accelerating development of directed energy weapons and cyber offensive and defensive capabilities.

Also provided in the bill would be \$4.88 billion to the Navy and Marine Corps to “provide emergency aid for those programs that are most vulnerable” to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, including funds for shipbuilding and conversion; the Columbia-class submarine industrial base; aircraft procurement; operations and maintenance; and research, development, test and evaluation.

Cotton’s bill also specifically provides “funding for the Navy to replace the [hospital ships] USNS Comfort and USNS Mercy with new American-built vessels. This would be an opportunity to provide American jobs and grow the American industrial base for the future,” the bill summary said.

The summary of the bill can be found [here](#).