



Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments

IN THE NEWS

Virginia Congressman Releases Statement in Response to Esper's Shipbuilding Plan

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By: Nicole Brailer

WASHINGTON (WAVY) — Congressman Rob Wittman (VA-01) issued a statement Wednesday in response to the updated Battle Force 2045 shipbuilding plan released by Secretary of Defense Mark Esper.

According to the Department of Defense website

(<https://www.defense.gov/Newsroom/Transcripts/Transcript/Article/2374866/secretary-of-defense-remarks-at-csba-on-the-nds-and-future-defense-modernizatio/>), Esper announced the plan on Oct. 6 during the virtual Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments (<https://www.defense.gov/Newsroom/Transcripts/Transcript/Article/2374866/secretary-of-defense-remarks-at-csba-on-the-nds-and-future-defense-modernizatio/>) with the goal to have over 500 manned and unmanned ships in the fleet by 2045. Of that, Esper says the plan is to reach 355 traditional Battle Force ships by 2035.

The plan includes the immediate building of three Virginia class submarines per year, nuclear-powered carriers, ships, aircraft, unmanned surface and sub-surface vessels of all types, and integrating the Marine Corps' new force design. The full plan can be read here

(<https://www.defense.gov/Newsroom/Transcripts/Transcript/Article/2374866/secretary-of-defense-remarks-at-csba-on-the-nds-and-future-defense-modernizatio/>).

Esper says the expansion will “drive Battle Force 45 to be a more lethal, survivable, adaptable, sustainable, modern, and larger force than we have seen in many years. It will also be more balanced.”

“A more balanced naval force that will have a greater number of smaller surface combatants and unmanned or optionally manned ships. Along with an ample submarine force and a modern strategic deterrent,” he continued.

Wittman says he agrees with Esper’s plan of expanding and modernizing the fleet under the Battle Force 2045 plan.

“It is clear that any major conflict with China is going to be in the Pacific theatre and our Naval fleet is going to be the tip of the spear. Our fleet must be able to distribute lethality, adapt in a complex environment, and have the survivability necessary to engage in a high-end conflict — many aspects of this are highlighted in this Battle Force 2045 plan.”

The congressman also agrees with the plan to build three submarines per year beginning as soon as possible.

“This echoes what I have been saying for years — our attack submarines are our greatest asymmetrical advantage and we must exploit this strength to its utmost,” he said.

Wittman also said that he agrees with the Marine Corps integration into the future Navy.

In the statement, however, he continues that while he agrees with parts of Battle Force 2045, he has concerns about the carrier force reorganization and the unmanned and optionally manned platforms.

“I look forward to exploring these concerns further through discussions with Secretary Esper and Secretary Braithwaite,” Wittman explained.

In closing, Wittman said that he is “pleased” with the development of the plan through “budget-constrained realities.”

“This increase will get us to matching the average percentage spent on new ships during President Reagan’s naval buildup in the 1980s and will put us squarely on the right track to finally delivering the Navy we need.”

“I look forward to working with the Navy and the Secretary of Defense to put us on the path to retaining naval superiority for decades to come.”

Wittman represents the 1st District of Virginia. He serves on the House Natural Resources Committee and the House Armed Services Committee as the ranking member of the Seapower and Projection Forces Subcommittee.

For more information and the full release, click here (<https://wittman.house.gov/>).