



Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments

## IN THE NEWS

# Morning Defense—A 500-Ship Navy

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By: Bryan Bender

**A 500-SHIP NAVY:** "Defense Secretary Mark Esper on Tuesday outlined a plan to grow the Navy to 500 ships by 2045, a major expansion for the sea service that he says will be paid for by using savings from Pentagon reform efforts," Seligman reports.

(<https://subscriber.politicopro.com/defense/article/2020/10/esper-outlines-plan-for-500-ship-navy-2005518>)

The Pentagon proposal, which Esper said is needed to counter China's aggressive military buildup, calls for additional attack submarines, new light carriers but potentially fewer nuclear "super carriers," and many more unmanned vessels, he told the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments.

Esper in February initiated a study to figure out alternative pathways to growing the fleet from the current 296 ships to more than 355 — one of Trump's top 2016 campaign promises.

**The study, called "Battle Force 2045," calls for** reaching 355 "traditional battle force ships" before 2035, which is when China aims to fully modernize its own military, and reach over 500 manned and unmanned ships by a decade after that.

Byron Callan at Capital Alpha Partners called the unfolding plan "a new course heading for the Navy" but also called it "a long voyage."

**A major unanswered question** is where the money will come from. Esper cited his efforts to reform the “fourth estate” of defense agencies and combatant commands. But is that enough?

“Esper did not state he raided Army or Air Force budgets for the Navy plan,” Callan wrote. “In inflation-adjusted terms, the Navy budget could reach Reagan-era levels.”