NATIONAL PRESS CLUB LUNCHEON WITH SECRETARY RAY MABUS

SUBJECT: SATISFYING THE NAVY AND MARINE CORPS ENERGY NEEDS

MODERATOR: ALAN BJERGA, PRESIDENT, NATIONAL PRESS CLUB

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ALAN BJERGA: (Sounds gavel.) Good afternoon, and welcome to the National Press Club. My name is Alan Bjerga. I'm a reporter for Bloomberg News, and President of the National Press Club. We're the world's leading professional organization for journalists and are committed to our profession's future through our programming and by fostering a free press worldwide. For more information about the Press Club, please visit our website at www.press.org. To donate to our programs, please visit www.press.org/library.

On behalf of our members worldwide, I'd like to welcome our speaker and attendees to today's event, which includes guests of our speaker as well as working journalists. I'd also like to welcome our C-SPAN and Public Radio audiences. After the speech concludes, I will ask as many audience questions as time permits. I'd now like to introduce our head table guests.

From your right, Steve Sami, Military and Diplomats World News; Emily Whitten, a Washington, D.C. attorney, and a new member of the National Press Club; Ann Roosevelt, Deputy Editor of the Defense Daily; Austin Kiplinger, Chairman of the Kiplinger Washington Editors, a World War II Navy carrier pilot, and a 69 year member of the National Press Club; Gladys Commons, Assistant Secretary of the Navy.

Skipping over the podium, Andrew Schneider, Associate Editor for Kiplinger Washington Editors, and Chairman of the Press Club Speakers Committee; skipping for the moment over our speaker, we have Shawn Bullard, President of the Duetto Group, and the National Press Club Board of Governors member and Speakers Committee

member who organized today's event; Sean Stackley, Assistant Secretary of the Navy; John Donnelly, Congressional Quarterly national defense correspondent, and a member of the National Press Club's Board of Governors; Jim Noone of Clark & Weinstock, retired Navy public affairs officer, and President of the Navy Public Affairs Alumni Association; and finally, Secretary of Agriculture, Tom Vilsack, a guest of the speaker. (Applause)

Today's speaker started his career in public service nearly four decades ago when he served as a naval officer in the U.S. Navy after having graduated from an Ivy League law school. Less than 20 years later, he earned a seat in the Mississippi governor's mansion at the age of 39. In the 1990s, he was tapped by President Clinton to serve as U.S. ambassador to Saudi Arabia. Today, he joins us as the 75th Secretary of the Navy, where he is the vocal advocate for the nearly one million men and women who serve in the Navy and Marine Corps. He's responsible for a budget of about $150 billion annually, and today he is here to respond to the Navy and Marine Corps' push to produce at least 50 percent of its shore-based energy from renewable sources within a decade.

Looking at the military's global land and sea footprint, he has been charged with revamping the way sailors, marines and naval aviators consume energy, whether it be jet fuel, ship system engine design or simple composting. The Chief of the Navy is developing ways to reduce consumption. For example, citing the military's insatiable appetite for fuel and energy, he has identified armed services fuel consumption as a potential point of vulnerability. Recently, he stated it was strategically imperative to reduce America's reliance on foreign sources of fossil fuel to get the military better down the roads to energy independence.

The Chief of the Navy also has taken recent action to allow women to serve on submarines. Other issues under his purview remains from future aircraft acquisition programs to whether he believes Congress will change the Department of the Navy to the Department of the Navy and Marine Corps. Please welcome to the National Press Club the Honorable Ray Mabus, Secretary of the U.S. Navy. (Applause)

SECRETARY MABUS: Thank you, Alan Bjerga, for that wonderful introduction. I want to only recognize a couple of other people. Shawn Bullard, who covered me all those years ago when I was governor. I'm glad to see you again and see that you're gainfully employed. And Tom Vilsack. Tom Vilsack was an astoundingly good governor of Iowa, and he is continuing that as Secretary of Agriculture. I'm going to talk about the Agriculture/Navy partnership. I am incredibly fortunate to have Tom Vilsack as friend, and America is incredibly fortunate to have his talent as Secretary of Agriculture

I'm honored to be here today and be speaking with you. My understanding is that the very first speaker at the National Press Club was Teddy Roosevelt. I do want to point out, however, that both Theodore Roosevelt and his distant cousin, Franklin, were Assistant Secretaries of the Navy. (Laughter) Today is a Navy birthday; 212 years ago today Congress authorized the Department of the Navy. It was a pretty different place

and organization from the Navy of today. Then, the Navy only had three commissioned frigates, the *United States*, the *Constellation*, and the *Constitution*, still in service in the Boston naval shipyard. We had a tiny navy and one which had never fought. Since the days of the revolution, the Navy had been pretty quiet. Although you can make a pretty good argument that the reason America changed from the Articles of Confederation to the Constitution that we have today was because we could not field a national navy to deal with the Barberry pirates. And that was one of the main impetuses for getting together in Philadelphia in 1789.

In 1798, then-Secretary of the Navy, Benjamin Stoddard, had three ships, a few, very few, squadrons of marines to sail on those ships, and it was a very decidedly regional and limited navy. Today, things have changed a little bit. Some of the things that Alan talked about, today we have 286 ships in our battle fleet, 3,800 aircraft, over 900,000 people, 4.4 million acres, 72,500 buildings, and a budget north of $150 billion. But the numbers don't tell the story.

And what I'd like to do is spend just a very few minutes doing what I call Navy and Marine Corps 101. What do we do? Why do we need a Navy? Why do we need a Marine Corps in today's world? We are everywhere. The Navy, Marine Corps are America's away team. If we are doing our job, we are usually somewhere far from home. We are in combat today in the things that you see and what you report on day after day. More than 19,000 marines in Afghanistan. There are also, today in the Middle East, in Iraq, in Afghanistan, 12,000 sailors on shore doing things like running provincial reconstruction teams and doing counter IED duty. We have more sailors on the ground there than we do at sea in Central Command.

But today as well, we've got ships off the Horn of Africa fighting piracy. We have ships around Africa engaged in the Africa partnership station, ships in Asia engaged in the Asia partnership and around South America doing the same thing. We can do everything from high end conventional warfare through irregular warfare through humanitarian assistance and disaster relief to partnership building. And we do it all with the same equipment, we do it all on the same platforms, and we do it all using exactly the same people. We have to be flexible, we have to be ready for whatever comes over the horizon. Because as smart as the people who do the planning, as far-sighted as we can be, we simply cannot provide for every eventuality, and we have to be trained, we have to be ready, and we have to have a frame of mind that does not get us into one way of thinking, but is flexible to meet whatever challenge comes at us. Whether it is that rescue operation in Haiti, or whether it is flying combat over Afghanistan in support of our soldiers and our marines there.

One of the overlooked things about what we do in the Navy is the engagement around the world, day in and day out. You can surge people, you can surge equipment; what you cannot surge is trust. Day after day, American warships and American sailors and marines are going into countries and partnering with those countries doing humanitarian assistance missions, training the local navies and marines and meeting with local citizens and leadership. Oftentimes, the Navy is the only face of America that the

leadership of these countries will see, and particularly the population of these countries. So I think the Navy in that engagement, in that partnership building, has become an integral part of how people view America, and of our diplomatic efforts around the world.

The big difference in the United States Navy in the 40 years that has passed since I served, is not so much the equipment, although that's gotten a lot better, and it's not the technology, although that has advanced beyond my imagining four decades ago. It is the people who serve. I served with a lot of very dedicated, very skilled and very motivated people. But they simply could not touch the sailors and marines we have today in terms of skill level, in terms of education level, in terms of commitment, in terms of all the things they have to know how to do. And we're the only country on earth that can produce the numbers and the quality of people that today serve in our armed forces. We're the only country on earth that pushes the responsibility down to the second class seaman in the engine room, to the lance corporal on patrol. The Marines have a term, “the strategic corporal.” We have that in spades in the Navy and the Marine Corps.

I want to talk about one specific thing that we're doing that Alan mentioned in his introduction. We are trying to change the way the Navy gets and uses energy. We are simply too dependent on foreign fossil fuels. We would not let, we would not allow, our warships or our weapons to be built by the countries that we do allow our ships to be powered by their fuel. This is a strategic vulnerability for us and one that has to be addressed. And we are doing a lot to make sure that we meet this strategic imperative. It’s a matter of energy independence, it’s a matter of our security. It’s a matter of making sure that when we need those ships at sea, when we need those aircraft in the air, when we need the Marines on the ground, we have the energy produced right here in the United States to do that.

We use a lot of energy. The federal government uses about 2 percent of all the fossil fuels used in America. DOD uses 90 percent of what the federal government does. And the Navy is about a third of DOD's requirements. Outside the overall strategic reasons to do this, there's the tactical. And the example that I like to use is getting a gallon of gasoline to a marine front line unit in Afghanistan. You have to put that gallon of gasoline on a tanker. You've got to take it across the Pacific. You have to put it into a truck, and truck it over the Hindu Kush and down through Afghanistan. Now, as you do this, you've got to guard it. And one of the most dangerous assignments today in Afghanistan is convoy duty. We lose marines in convoy duty, we lose sailors in convoy duty. And we take marines away from what marines should be doing; fighting, engaging, helping to rebuild that country.

So if we can reduce the demand for energy and we can produce it locally there, we have made our marines better fighters. Today, we have solar powered water purification units in Afghanistan. Today, marines are using spray-on insulation for their tents. They are reducing the amount they need and they're changing the way we get energy. I've set five goals for the Navy in energy. The biggest one is one that Alan

mentioned; ten years from now, one decade, half of all energy usage in the U.S. Navy ashore and afloat will come from non-fossil fuel sources.

There's some others. In ten years, half our bases ought to be at net zero. They ought to produce at least as much energy as they use. We have one base today, China Lake, in California that thanks to geothermal energy produces more energy than it consumes and it's putting the excess energy into the local grid. We have done some things that some of you have reported on. Last week, we flew the Green Hornet, an F-18 Hornet. And if you recognize the Green Hornet, I know you are of a certain age. The Green Hornet, a regular off the shelf F-18 that flew last week, supersonic, on a mixture of regular gasoline and biofuel, biofuel made from camelina. Camelina is in the mustard family; small seed, not edible, and it can be used in rotation with wheat and it can be used-- it can be grown in every single state in this union.

Which brings me to one other thing that this energy push is doing. We can, through partnering with Tom Vilsack and the Department of Agriculture, we can help American farmers. We can help move America to a new energy economy. And it's a move that America has to make. It's a move that we cannot afford to fall behind on. We signed an MOU, Agriculture and Navy did, in January, to coordinate our research and to work together. We had our first big event in Hawaii. Hawaii's got a big Navy, big Marine presence. Hawaiian farmers are also having difficulty as sugar cane is leaving. And Hawaii is the most dependent of all 50 states on imported foreign energy.

We're going to help all three of those things. The two obstacles that we've identified to reaching our energy goals, one is the price of alternative fuels today. And second is the lack of infrastructure to deliver those fuels. In a flip on the line from *Field of Dreams*, if the Navy comes, they will build it. If we create the demand, if we create a market, if the military does what the military can do, which is be a market leader, which is create the demand early, we can drive the price down, we can help American farmers, we can help American small business, and we can cause that infrastructure to be built.

At the same time that we are moving towards these new forms of energy, it's imperative that we also use less to do the same job. We launched our first hybrid ship last fall. It was built in my home state of Mississippi at Pascagoula, and it uses an elective drive for speeds of 10 knots or less. On its first voyage from Pascagoula around South America to its home port in San Diego, the *U.S.S. Makin Island*, a big ship, a big deck amphib., saved almost $2 million in fuel costs. Over the lifetime of that ship, if fuel prices remain absolutely the same, we will save about a quarter of a billion dollars in fuel. We're prototyping that engine to be retrofitted onto our guided missile destroyers so that we can begin to move that further out into the fleet.

We're doing a lot of things, and we're getting a lot of help. Operation Free, which is a group formed of former military just out of the military whose made it their goal to wean not only the military but the United States off the dependence on foreign sources of energy, were getting help from, as I mentioned, the Department of Agriculture. We have five working groups going today with the Department of Energy to make sure that we are

coordinated. We're working with Karen Mills, the administrator of the Small Business Administration to make sure that small American businesses are included in this. Because so many of the good ideas, so many of the things that are going to affect us in the future come from those small, entrepreneurial businesses that have the audacity to think about things in a different way.

We're doing a lot of things, and we're doing it for one major reason. It makes us a better war fighting force. It makes us better at being the Navy and the Marine Corps that America needs. America, America's Navy, has always led when we have changed sources of energy. We changed from sail to coal in the 1850s. We changed from coal to oil in the early part of the 20th century. We went to nuclear for our subs and our aircraft carriers in the 1950s. Every single time, every single time, that we made one of those changes, there were people that said you are abandoning one source of proven energy for one that you do not know whether it will work, and by the way, it's too expensive.

Every single time, there were those naysayers. And every single time, they were wrong. And I have every confidence that they will be wrong again. The Navy and the Marine Corps do not back down from a challenge. The Navy and Marine Corps fulfill every mission given to them, including helping us become energy independent. Thank you very much. (Applause)

MR. BJERGA: And thank you very much for your time, Mr. Secretary. The questions are being passed along as we speak. First question, in terms of the approach you're taking towards reducing your fossil fuel use, could you talk a little bit about some of the initiatives that you are pushing more towards actually reducing your fuel use and what efforts you're making in terms of recycling fuel that you've been using?

SECRETARY MABUS: Reducing fuel use, I gave the example of the *Makin Island*. We're installing smart grid technology on all our bases using stimulus money. And I do want to say that this administration and the President has laid out a vision about energy conservation and the source of energy as an independence, a national security issue, as an economic issue as well as a climate issue. But we're doing that.

We're also doing a lot of smaller things. In San Diego, they did an analysis of where their energy was going. A lot of it was going to move water to irrigate plants, grass. So they went and changed it all out to artificial plants. Now, when they told me that, I thought, "Well, this is going to be ugly." And I was thinking of Astroturf in the 1970s. But, I couldn't tell the difference most of the time. And their energy bills have dropped dramatically, as well as their water usage, have dropped dramatically. Those are a few of the things.

We have 50,000 non-combat vehicles. They turn over about every five years. Just by changing the vehicles that we buy by buying more electric, more hybrid, more flex fuel vehicles, we are lowering the amount of energy that we're using an we're going to cut their fossil fuel use at least in half within five years.

MR. BJERGA: Related to energy questions are questions of climate change. Last year, the Chief of Naval Operations established a taskforce to make recommendations on how to respond to retreating arctic ice coverage. What steps is the Navy taking to develop surface ship and aviation capabilities in the newly-opening Arctic Ocean?

SECRETARY MABUS: The arctic could be ice-free in the summers within a quarter century. And it's going to require us to make that a normal part of our surface and our Navy patrolling and protection and making sure the sea lanes remain open. I don't think we need any different kinds of ships, or any different kind of aircraft. We just are going to have to think about it differently and include this as part of our normal tactical and strategic operations.

MR. BJERGA: How will the Navy's 286 ship structure be affected by competing demands of tighter federal budgets and competition from the expanding Chinese navy?

SECRETARY MABUS: As I say, we've got 286 ships in our fleet today. We put in earlier this year the President's budget, which calls for over the next five years building an average of 10 ships per year, so 50 ships over the course of that five years. Over the course of the next 10 years, we have put in a 30 year shipbuilding plan that shows us getting to 320 ships by 2020. The floor number that the Chief of Naval Operations has used is 313. So this administration has gotten us on a ramp to get to more than 313 by the end of this decade.

Now, in order to do that, we've had to be realistic about what ships are going to cost. We've tried to be realistic about how much funs Congress will appropriate for naval shipbuilding. And in order for us to build the ships that we think we need, build the ships that we have put into this plan, we cannot afford cost overruns, we cannot afford schedules to slip. And while we owe industry visibility into what kind of ships we're going to buy, we owe industry mature technology, not technology that is unproven to put on ships. And if technology improves, wait until the next block of ships.

We owe industry stable design. We shouldn't be designing ships at exactly the same time we're building them. On the other hand, if we do that, and I think the Navy is doing that through Sean Stackley, who's here today, industry owes us some things as their largest client. They have to make the investments in infrastructure. They have to train the workforce, and they have to show us that prices and number of hours taken to construct a ship go down with each successive ship in the class. And I'll give you two programs that are working very well right now. Virginia class attack submarines, which are coming in on budget and ahead of schedule; and TAKE dry supply ships that are--they have had a reduction. We're building number 12 right now in the class and the number of hours it takes to build that ship has gone down 40 percent since the first one of the class. So we've got to pay very, very close attention to how much these ships cost, or we simply won't be able to build enough.

MR. BJERGA: You have been publicly addressing the Navy's transition to allow females to serve aboard submarines. Could you please comment on the progress of that initiative. Have you selected the first group of candidates and when would deployment begin?

SECRETARY MABUS: We are in the process, in fact starting today, selecting the first group of candidates. And the reason we're starting today is that there was a notification period to Congress that expired yesterday. We will be looking at the Naval Academy, NROTC, and OCS. First group will be officers that go on. It's about an 18 month pipeline from initial selection to when they report to their ships. The first two types of submarines that women will deploy on are the SSBNs, ballistic missile submarines, and the SSGNs, the guided missile submarines. We've had a lot of interest, a lot of interest, from some very impressive young women. We are going to look case by case at lateral transfers and for every ship, there will be at least one more senior female officer who will transfer laterally, probably from the supply corps, to be a mentor for the brand new, newly minted officers that are going on board.

We have 20 years experience with women on surface ships. And frankly, we could not run the Navy without women. And this is something that is absolutely the right thing to do and it's going to make us a better Navy.

MR. BJERGA: What does the deployment of women say about changes in naval culture and about American culture?

SECRETARY MABUS: I think whatever it says is good. That there's more than half the technical degrees, engineering, science, are being granted to women today. And we simply have to be competitive and recruit in that group. I think it also says that we've recognized that when it comes to serving your country, there shouldn't be a gender impediment to that.

MR. BJERGA: In terms of training, this questioner asks, what can be done to help train soldiers with mindsets that lead to actions, especially in foreign deployments, that make people view them more as helpers rather than as potential outsiders who may not have their best interests at heart?

SECRETARY MABUS: You're seeing that kind of training today with sailors and marines. Every marine that goes to deployment takes a small paperback book that talks about the importance of cultural awareness. You get a lot of training before you go. Marines, in particular, have been very innovative in this. In Afghanistan, for example, they have teams of female marines that go into areas and talk to women that simply will not talk because of their culture to our male marines. Marines are involved a lot in engagement, involved a lot in making sure that what they do is not culturally offensive wherever they are.

And part of this partnership building that I've talked about is becoming very comfortable in a lot of different cultures. And I talked about the marines' notion of

strategic corporal, that corporal out there, that lance corporal, a lot of times is the only American people have seen. And he or she is the face of America. And they have been incredibly well trained at that.

MR. BJERGA: Moving to current issues, could you please comment on BP's request for naval assistance in oil spill cleanup off the Gulf of Mexico?

SECRETARY MABUS: This administration has been heavily involved ever since this began. Homeland Security is the agency that has the lead on this. NorthCom, Northern Command, which is the continental United States, is the DOD component in that. And we are standing by and ready to provide whatever assistance they need. But Homeland Security is the one agency that has the full picture of this, and they are doing a very good job right now of coordinating all the different responses that are being made to this crisis.

MR. BJERGA: Are you anticipating that Department of Homeland Security will ask you to play a role?

SECRETARY MABUS: Well, we're standing by whatever role that they would like us to play. They have a great grasp on the subject and whatever they need, we will try to provide.

MR. BJERGA: During the Cold War, we had an incidence at sea agreement with the Soviet Union to insure that an accident wouldn't cause World War III. Would you support such an agreement with Iran? What are you doing to insure that an accident in the Straits of Hormuz doesn't become a major international incident?

SECRETARY MABUS: Well again, I think our sailors, marines, the commanders of our ships and our taskforces are very well trained. They understand the difference between an accident and something that's not, but they also understand what steps have to be taken before any-- they have to operate under the rules of engagement. And I don't think an agreement like that is particularly necessary. I think that the Navy and the people who command the ships, and the people who serve on the ships, have a very good handle on, and are trained, to respond to things like this in the appropriate way.

MR. BJERGA: How will the role of men and women of the Navy and Marine Corps evolve play as fewer personnel are used and needed to operate future warships?

SECRETARY MABUS: The Navy has shrunk by about 60,000 people over the last few years. We're down to a corps of about 324,000 sailors today. And the warships that we are building, the one example I'll give is the littoral combat ship. The ship I served on, a light cruiser, had a thousand people. The DDGs of today, which the guided missile destroyers of today, which is as close to an equivalent ship as what I served on, have 280 in their crew. The littoral combat ship, which is very fast, able to fight in much shallower waters, has a crew, a core crew of 40, with their weapon system, the people that man their weapon system, their crew grows to only 80.

And I think it says a couple of things. One is that people have to be way more versed in way more things. They have to be good at a lot of things instead of good at just one single thing if you're going to sea. It also says that we have a lot of faith in those people, those 40 people that are commanding and running this pretty big warship.

But as time goes by, the world always changes. The things that we have to deal with are inevitably going to change. And that's why in our training, that's why in what we buy, that's why in how we plan, we have to be incredibly flexible. We have to not get stuck in one way of thinking about issues. And we have to be ready for whatever new comes over the horizon that we have to deal with. And I'm very comfortable and confident that the sailors and marines can deal with anything, and that we are buying platforms that are flexible enough that they can meet any eventuality as well.

MR. BJERGA: Congress has required that new service combatants and amphibious ships be nuclear powered. Is that feasible?

SECRETARY MABUS: Well, actually what Congress said was we should take a look at it every time. To make the business case, to make the financial case for nuclear power on surface ships, outside of aircraft carriers, oil has to be at about $150 a barrel for a sustained period of time. Absent that, the up front costs are just too big for us to build the number of ships that we need if they were nuclear powered. But again, we don't know what's going to happen in the future. We don't know what's going to happen to the other types of fuel, and we don't know what technology breakthroughs are going to happen with nuclear power. We're not ruling in or out any sort of propulsion for our ships, except we're trying to move away as rapidly as we can from fossil fuels.

MR. BJERGA: Do you support the House bill renaming the Department of the Navy as the Department of the Navy and Marine Corps?

SECRETARY MABUS: I'm going to quote the commandant of the Marine Corps, who is more of an expert than I am on this. Things have been working fine for the last 212 years. He think it's not necessary. My position on it is that whatever is named, I want to be the Secretary. (Laughter)

MR. BJERGA: When will we see the first nuclear destroyer or cruiser?

SECRETARY MABUS: We've already seen them. We've had nuclear powered cruisers in our fleet. They've all been retired, decommissioned now. But they came into the fleet, I believe, in the late '70s and began to decommission in the '90s and earlier in this decade. So you've already seen them. We've proven that the concept works.

MR. BJERGA: Will the U.S. Navy's expansion be able to keep up with the expansion of the Chinese navy ship for ship? Does that even matter?

SECRETARY MABUS: I don't think that's the test, regardless of who you're talking about. I think the test is your capabilities and not simply ship numbers.

MR. BJERGA: Looking at budgetary needs, how is the Navy going to pay for its new ballistic missile sub without torpedoing its budget?

SECRETARY MABUS: I talked about the fact that we were trying to be realistic in the 30 year shipbuilding plan that we put in. We were trying to be realistic in what ships cost. We were trying to be realistic in what Congress would appropriate. We also were trying to be realistic in what was coming down the road. The replacement for the Ohio class ballistic missile submarine will begin to-- the Ohio class will begin to retire in 2027, 17 years from now. Those ships, if they cost what we estimate they will cost today, will knock a big hole in the surface Navy, and also in attack submarines. But 17 years is a long time, and the requirements-- the reason we put that in there was to be realistic and to start the discussion of what sort of capabilities we're going to need as a Navy, not just in our ballistic missile submarines and not just in our surface fleet. But what sort of capacities are we going to need in our Navy?

What I can control, what this Congress can control, is about ten years in terms of what ships we're going to build. That comes a good ways after that. There are going to be decisions made along that will have a big impact on that. But, truthfully and realistically, five years to ten years is-- past five years to ten years, you're getting into far more speculative decision making than I'm willing to get into.

MR. BJERGA: Question from the audience. Why is the Navy buying another DDG 1000 destroyer when you've all said the DDG 51 is better suited to threats?

SECRETARY MABUS: We're buying three DDG 1000s, a Zumwalt class. Secretary of Defense, it started out as a 30-some-odd ship program. It was truncated several years ago a seven-ship program. Secretary Gates last April, almost exactly a year ago, truncated it to three ships. The three ships, one and two are already under construction. Long lead-time items are in train for the third one. The reason that we went to-- that Secretary Gates and now the Navy, is going back to restarting the DDG 51, the Arleigh Burke line, is that the DDG 51 offers us far more capabilities than the DDG 1000 at a lower price.

The President has given the Navy a large responsibility in terms of ballistic missile defense for the world. And the DDG 51 is the platform that can do ballistic missile defense. The DDG 1000 cannot, and that's the reason that the DDG 1000 was truncated, and the reason that we're opening up the line and beginning to build more DDG 51s. In fact, we've requested eight DDG 51s over the next five years.

MR. BJERGA: Will you release the Navy report investigating Congressman Murtha’s death at Bethesda Naval Hospital.

SECRETARY MABUS: I think it will be released when it’s finished. So, yes.

MR. BJERGA: What is the minimal number of sailors and marines that you could see on future warships in an effective Navy?

SECRETARY MABUS: I talked about the LCS, how we're reducing the number of crew down to 40 in the core crew and 80 in the entire crew. The rest of that question is one of those I learned-- I hope I learned-- pretty early in my career. It's hypothetical, and nothing good has ever happened when I have answered hypothetical questions.

MR. BJERGA: So hypothetically, how many ships do you think the U.S. Navy should have? (Laughter)

SECRETARY MABUS: Well, actually, not hypothetically, the U.S. Navy needs a floor of at least 313 ships in our fleet. We are on track. This administration is on track to get us to more than that in the next ten years, to 320 ships. Now, the CNO, Chief of Naval Operations, has said 313 is a floor and not a ceiling. And just as important as numbers are capabilities, and the mixture of ships that you're building. The littoral combat ship, the LCS, is going to be one of the backbones of the Navy. It's a very different kind of ship from previous U.S. Navy ships.

MR. BJERGA: Couple follow-ups from earlier questions. You mentioned earlier the challenge posed by piracy off the Horn of Africa. How is the Navy participating in these operations, and what progress is the U.S. making in coordinating such operations with non-NATO naval forces such as China's and India's?

SECRETARY MABUS: We have a taskforce, taskforce 151, off the Horn of Africa combating piracy. NATO also has a taskforce, as does the European Union. Theirs is taskforce, Atalanta. There are a lot of other countries, 16 in all, at last count, that have individual or more ships under the tasking of their home country. We engage in routine navy to navy communications in these waters. We have to. We're all out there for the same reason. We're all fighting the same people. And we all need to know where other people are. So, the coordination so far, and I anticipate in the future, has been very good at a ship to ship, navy to navy level and will continue to be.

MR. BJERGA: A follow-up on the BP question. You said the Navy is standing by to help with the oil spill. Given that the oil is already hitting shore, why are you standing by?

SECRETARY MABUS: Well, what I meant when I said standing by, which is sort of a Navy term, is that whatever is being requested of us, we are furnishing. And Homeland Security is the overall agency in charge. They are controlling this very big response effort and I have a piece of the picture. And I just don't want to piecemeal it in terms of talking about what's being sent there.

MR. BJERGA: If industry has to look at the efficiency of how ships are built, should they also be looking for ways to reduce maintenance costs? And what signs of those efforts have you seen?

SECRETARY MABUS: When the Marine Corps or the Army comes back from a war, they do a thing you call reset. The equipment, the vehicles, the weapons that have either been lost in combat or worn out and are just no longer useful, they have to buy new ones to get ready for whatever's coming next. The Navy resets every day. We reset in stride and our reset is called maintenance. We simply have to maintain our ships. And yes, we're looking at ways and we're working pretty closely with industry, in ways to reduce maintenance costs. But also, we're looking internally because we have to make sure that we get the maintenance and those shipyard availabilities that every one of our ships need if they're going to meet their lifespan.

So for the Navy, it's an account called O&M, operation and maintenance account. It's a crucial, crucial account for us to make sure that we have enough funds, and to make sure that we get those ships, the maintenance, on a routine basis that they need.

MR. BJERGA: How is the Navy being affected by the prolonged process of enlarging the Panama Canal?

SECRETARY MABUS: Can't get as big of ships through. I'll digress for a minute. The width of the Panama Canal was determined by a Navy ship. It was exactly two feet wider than the Iowa class battleship, which was the largest ship of its kind. We in the Navy have long since built much larger ships than the Iowa class battleship and we've adapted very well to getting to places in other ways than through the Panama Canal. So I don't think operationally it's going to mean that much one way or the other in terms of how we operate.

MR. BJERGA: When will the Navy decide whether it is going to have a multi-year deal for new Super Hornets?

SECRETARY MABUS: We're working on that right now. We've had a proposal from the manufacturer. It's being worked in terms of whether or not the savings are there that will justify multi-year and we're hopeful that it will be resolved very soon.

MR. BJERGA: How do you anticipate the U.S. nuclear submarine fleet to be affected by President Obama's proposals to reduce the size of the U.S. nuclear arsenal and U.S. strategic dependence on nuclear weapons?

SECRETARY MABUS: Well, the ballistic missile nuclear submarine fleet is one of the three legs of the deterrence triad, along with long-range bombers and ballistic missiles, the land-based ballistic missiles. And I think that it will always be an important leg of that triad. It probably, arguably, is the most survivable leg of that, and so it will be important.

The other thing is that a very large part of our fleet is not ballistic missile submarines. It's attack submarines, which are one of the most flexible platforms that we have.

MR. BJERGA: We are almost out of time, but before asking the last question, there are a couple of matters to take care of, if you'll just be patient with us for one moment. First of all, to remind our members and guests of future speakers. On May 19th, we have the Honorable Tim Kaine, Chair of the Democratic National Committee. He will be discussing his party's prospects in the 2010 elections. On May 21st, Ted Leonsis, owner of the Washington Capitals, will be addressing a luncheon. And on May 26th, we have Barbara Bush, the daughter of former President George W. Bush, and President of the Global Health Corporation, will be speaking.

Second, as is traditional at this part of the program, we'd like to present our guest with the traditional National Press Club mug. (Applause) And we do appreciate the time that you spent with us this morning. We understand you're going to be having a meeting shortly thereafter with other defense officials, and we'd love to hear how that works out for you later this afternoon if you can give us a call.

And it underscores that for close to a decade now, this has been a nation that has been in wartime and that are special strains for sailors and marines and all members of the services. As sailors and marines find themselves deploying four and five times to fight in Iraq or Afghanistan, how is the Navy and Marine Corps coping with what some would say are high multiple deployments? What is the Navy doing to help those families cope without their father or mother serving on multiple tours for what will soon be nine years?

SECRETARY MABUS: You're absolutely right. We have a very high operational tempo. There are a lot of deployments for both marines and sailors. At any given day, 40 percent of our ships are forward deployed and more than 50 percent are at sea. So, it's not, as you pointed out in your question, just the sailors and marines. It's also the families. And the Navy and Marine Corps, I think, are doing remarkable things in terms of reaching out to families and helping with childcare, helping with some of the stresses that multiple deployments have, healthcare issues, things like that.

And it's a truism, but it is no less true, that our force, the people in our force, the sailors and marines in our force, are the most valuable things that we have. And the last thing, and the thing I'd like to leave you with, is in spite of the high operational tempo, in spite of multiple deployments, in spite of the stresses that have been put on the Navy and the Marine Corps, this is the most resilient group of people I have ever seen. And the morale, the level of dedication, and the level of recruitment and retention that's going on right now in the Navy and the Marine Corps is simply astounding.

And you and all Americans should be exceptionally proud of the young men and women who wear the cloth of this country. It's fewer than 1 percent of our country, wear

the uniform of this country. They are the most skilled and the most resilient people I have ever, ever had the honor to meet. Thank you all. (Applause)

MR. BJERGA: And thank you again to Secretary Mabus for coming today. We would also like to thank the National Press Club staff, including its library and its broadcast operations center, for organizing today's event. For more information about joining the National Press Club, and on how to acquire a copy of today's program, please go to our website, www.press.org. Thank you very much, once again. This meeting is adjourned. (Sounds gavel.)

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