

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 4, 2009

The Honorable Robert M. Gates
Secretary of Defense
Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

The Honorable Ray Mabus
Secretary
US Department of the Navy
1000 Navy Pentagon
Washington, DC 20350-1000

Admiral Gary Roughead, USN
Chief of Naval Operations
United States Navy
2000 Navy Pentagon
Washington, DC 20350

Dear Secretary Gates, Secretary Mabus and Admiral Roughead:

In recent weeks, there have been media reports suggesting that the shipbuilding plan, to be submitted with the Fiscal Year 2011 budget, could include a reduction in attack submarine procurement. We write today in strong opposition to such a plan.

As you know, last year the Department of Defense and the Navy reached an important milestone when it signed a \$14 billion, five year multi-year procurement (MYP) contract with General Dynamics Electric Boat, and their partner Northrop Grumman Shipbuilding, for the procurement of eight *Virginia*-class submarines between 2009 and 2013 -- including the increase to two a year starting in 2011. This "Block III" contract capped a two year effort to accelerate the increased procurement of new *Virginia*-class submarines from 2012 to 2011. This was an important step towards ensuring that the submarine force has the resources it needs to accomplish its diverse array of missions, and protect the security of our nation.

Yet, based on the Navy's own stated force requirements in the FY2009 shipbuilding plan -- the last one submitted to Congress -- our nation will still have fewer than the 48 submarines we need for a 12 year period between 2022 and 2033. Further, in 2008, the attack submarine force was only able to meet a total of 49 percent of all missions requested of it -- and it will be asked to continue to "do more with less" as the demand for their unique stealth and intelligence capabilities increases while force levels decline.

That is why we are concerned that the Department of Defense may be considering a potential one-boat reduction in the number of submarines it plans to procure between 2011 and 2015, the period covered by the next shipbuilding plan to be submitted to Congress with the FY2011 budget request. If these reports are accurate, it would represent a significant step backwards from clear Congressional support for a sustained two a year attack submarine build rate, as well as from

clearly identified needs within the submarine force and our domestic industrial base.

As such, we hope you will reconsider any proposals to reduce the submarine build rate during this period and fully support a sustained two-a-year procurement rate beginning in FY2011. We believe that such a policy is in interest of our long term submarine force structure requirements, our industrial base and our nation.

We look forward to your response. As always, thank you for your service to our nation and dedication to the men and women of our Armed Forces.

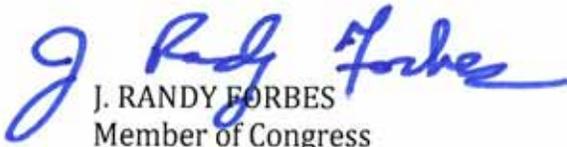
Sincerely,



JOE COURTNEY
Member of Congress



ROBERT J. WITTMAN
Member of Congress



J. RANDY FORBES
Member of Congress



JAMES R. LANGEVIN
Member of Congress



GENE TAYLOR
Member of Congress



W. TODD AKIN
Member of Congress



ROSCOE G. BARTLETT
Member of Congress



TIM HOLDEN
Member of Congress



CAROL SHEA-PORTER
Member of Congress



JOHN B. LARSON
Member of Congress



ERIC J. MASSA
Member of Congress



BRAD ELLSWORTH
Member of Congress



GLENN C. NYE
Member of Congress



ROSA L. DeLAURO
Member of Congress



KEN CALVERT
Member of Congress



CHRISTOPHER S. MURPHY
Member of Congress



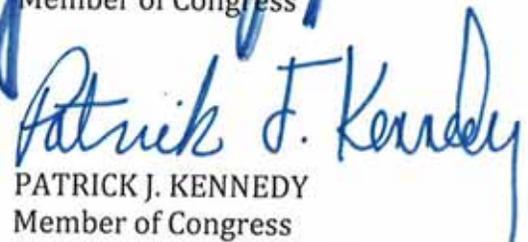
MARCIA L. FUDGE
Member of Congress



GABRIELLE GIFFORDS
Member of Congress



ERIC CANTOR
Member of Congress



PATRICK J. KENNEDY
Member of Congress



DAVID P. ROE
Member of Congress



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Member of Congress



GERALD E. CONNOLLY
Member of Congress



G. K. BUTTERFIELD
Member of Congress


JOHN ABNEY CULBERSON
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JOHN A. BOCCIERI
Member of Congress


CORRINE BROWN
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PAUL TONKO
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JAMES A. HIMES
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BETTY SUTTON
Member of Congress


ROBERT C. "BOBBY" SCOTT
Member of Congress