



The U.S. Navy announced that it will be unable to maintain an aircraft carrier in the Persian Gulf this fall due to increased demand, a strain on sailors and ships, and a decreased budget.

This aircraft carrier gap is both a symbol and a symptom of deeper problems with the U.S. Navy.

It illustrates just how critical it is that Congress and the administration provide more funding to the Navy and reinforces the following facts:

1. The Navy and Marine Corps have too much demand and not enough supply.

The demand on the Navy-Marine Corps team is high and continues to grow, as crises emerge from the South China Sea to the Middle East and Europe. Yet the supply of ships and crews is constrained by the size of the force, the condition of its ships and aircraft, and the proficiency of its Sailors and Marines. Today's demand exceeds supply: The U.S. Navy simply does not have enough Sailors, Marines, and ships for the missions necessary to protect and sustain our national defense, our leadership in the world, the strength of our economy and the health of the global economy.

2. Decreased U.S. Navy budget is impacting real-world operations.

It was aircraft from a U.S. Navy carrier that stopped Islamic terrorists as they advanced across Iraq. For 54 days—the time it took other forces to secure land-basing rights—U.S. aircraft carriers were the only thing standing between ISIS and disaster for the region. Without a carrier in the region, the nation's ability to respond to a crisis is severely limited.

3. The nation does not have enough carriers.

The current carrier fleet is too small. The demand for aircraft carriers exceeds the supply. Carriers deploy "heel to toe," or one after another leaving no flexibility in the scheduling of training and maintenance. Any delay throws off the schedule and results in gaps; gaps which present opportunities to those who would do us and our allies harm

4. Funding for maintenance of ships is not enough.

Lack of funding has resulted in hiring and overtime freezes for government shipyard and aviation depot maintenance workers, and has created a shortage of ships and aircraft. The U.S. Navy usually has three aircraft carriers and strike groups ready to deploy in a crisis; today, it has only one due to backlogs at air and ship maintenance depots.

5. Sailors and Marines are being forced to spend too much time away from home and family.

The gap in carrier duty is part of an effort by the U.S. Navy to reduce the marathon deployments that have taken a heavy toll on morale among Sailors and Marines. The USS *Carl Vinson* (CVN-70) recently finished a deployment of more than nine months, the longest scheduled deployment since the Vietnam War. The USS *Bataan* Amphibious Ready Group completed its second extended deployment in 18 months. The submarine USS *Pennsylvania's* (SSBN-735) deployment was extended a record 140 days due to maintenance issues on another submarine.

6. Platforms do matter.

U.S. Navy aircraft carriers and carrier strike groups are unique. No other weapons system in the world can provide their capability.