



Investing in the
Navy-Marine Corps Team



Pushed To The Brink: U.S. Navy-Marine Corps Aviation

Wednesday, June 3, 2015

Remarks by Sheila McNeill, Campaign Chair

Today's forum will examine the importance of U.S. Navy-Marine Corps aviation to the nation and the threats to its continued success.

This event is one in a series of forums hosted by the National Navy League's America's Strength campaign.

The grassroots America's Strength campaign is working to illustrate and reinforce the many ways in which the Navy-Marine Corps team is currently overextended and underfunded.

Today's forum is an important opportunity to highlight that the health of the Department of the Navy must be measured by more than just the number of ships it has.

The health of the Department of the Navy must be measured also by the readiness and availability of many capabilities, including aircraft.

And even if the Navy-Marine Corps can't or won't admit it, we will break our Navy-Marine Corps aviation force if the pace of operations continues without a significant investment.

This forum is an important opportunity to state that, while we understand the political and fiscal realities of Washington today, our leaders in Congress and the administration must recognize the realities of the world and the strain they are putting on the Navy-Marine Corps team.

In the past 18 months, sailors and Marines have been called upon to

- Demonstrate the nation's resolve in contesting China's territorial claims in the South China Sea;
- Protect container ships from harassment and seizure by Iranian naval forces;
- Face down Russian aggression in the Black Sea; and
- Deliver disaster relief to the victims of the earthquake in Nepal.

They have done all of this while aircraft from the USS *Theodore Roosevelt* have flown missions every day to degrade and defeat ISIS in Iraq and Syria.

Navy-Marine Corps team members are always patrolling the oceans of the world to protect free trade and counter the threats presented by rogue nations and terrorists.

Unfortunately, the success of these missions is masking the need for the increased support that would allow the Navy and Marine Corps to be as successful in the future as they have been in the past.

The combination of increased daily operations and having to respond to crisis after crisis, combined with underfunding and delayed maintenance, acquisitions and modernization, is crippling the Navy and Marines Corps.

We cannot allow this erosion of capabilities to continue.

Without a significant investment by Congress and the administration in the future of Navy-Marine Corps aviation, we are placing our national defense, our leadership in the world, the strength of our economy and the health of the global economy at great risk.

Conclusion

Before we start the question-and-answer session, I ask that you remember four points from today's presentations:

1. The demand for the Navy-Marine Corps team is at a historically all-time high and growing.
2. The health of the Department of Navy must be measured by the readiness and availability of many capabilities, including aircraft...not just ships.
3. We must continue to invest in future aircraft capabilities and technologies if we are to avoid a loss of our competitive and technological advantage and limit our future options for modernization.
4. Congress and the administration must make a serious investment in the Navy-Marine Corps team. Without it we are placing our national defense, our leadership in the world, and the strength of our economy and the health of the global economy at great risk.