

Chief Calls On Congress To Fund Stealth Destroyer DD(X)

July 21 2005

Testifying before the House Armed Services Committee's Projection Forces Subcommittee July 19, Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Adm. Vern Clark strongly urged Congress to fully fund the Navy's next generation destroyer, DD(X).

Clark testified along with the Honorable Kenneth J. Kreig, Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics; Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition John Young; and Rear Adm. Charles Hamilton, program executive officer for Ships.

The CNO began his opening statement by thanking those House members in attendance for their support.

"Thank you for the chance to be here, and I appreciate the fact that all of you are here, investing in this discussion, and by doing so, investing in the national security of the United States," he said.

He also said he felt it was a particularly important discussion, one that "we need to have, so we can get this very important ship and its tremendous combat capability off the drawing board and into the fleet."

The tone for the testimony was set early, as Clark stated that, "For the record, I am unequivocally in full support of the DD(X) program. It is time to get the next generation of capabilities to the fleet," he stated.

"The projected threats - both conventional and the ongoing war against terrorism - absolutely requires this kind of capability."

Clark made his strongest point when he said that failure to build this next generation of capabilities comes "at the peril to the future sons and daughters of America who are going to serve in the United States Navy."

He pointedly described the peril ships face while operating close to shore, describing those operations as taking place in "the most challenging maritime battle space, the contested littoral."

He explained that DD(X) differs from the Navy's current class of destroyer, DDG 51, as DD(X) will be built from the keel up for these littoral operations, while the DDG 51 class was built to operate on the high seas.

"We need DD(X) for the type of things it will bring to the fight," Clark explained. "These capabilities include persistent and long range power projection to the fight without a permission slip; 80 missile cells - and not just for today's tactical Tomahawks, but tomorrow's hypersonic missiles."

DD(X) is also automated to reduce crew size to 114 Sailors. "In addition to enabling the U.S. Navy to fight and win against future threats and reducing the combat risk to the men and women serving in our nation's Navy, the DD(X) manning reduction achieves operational cost savings of \$13 million per year per ship compared to a DDG," Clark noted in his written testimony.

Other capabilities that DD(X) will bring to the fleet are a 10-fold improved capability against anti-ship cruise missiles, 10 times the operating area in shallow water regions against mines, and improved naval surface fire coverage.

According to Clark, one of the most critical capabilities DD(X) will have is a 50-fold radar cross section reduction compared to the current class of destroyer. Clark clearly spelled out what advantage this will bring to the battlespace.

"If you're an adversary of the United States of America, looking for a DD(X) will be like looking for the proverbial needle in an American haystack," Clark said. "With the capabilities inherent in DD(X), the enemy's going to have to be sucked into our network to ever find out who we are," he added.

Clark said that that he is more convinced now than ever before that DD(X) is a ship that the Navy must build, and that this kind of consistent combat capability is a must-have in the fleet.

"I'm also morally bound to do all I can do to provide for and protect the men and women in the United States naval service - those who are serving now, and those who will serve in the future," he emphasized, "and provide them with the means to win in combat, and that is what DD(X) is all about."

Clark finished his opening statement by stating for the record that "DD(X) is a warfighting imperative. The United States Navy needs it now, and the technological door that it opens to the future."

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