

TRANSCRIPT

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Representative Randy Forbes
Chairman, Seapower and Projection of Forces

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DWG: Good morning everybody. Thank you for coming in. Our guest, as you know, is Congressman Randy Forbes, Republican of Virginia. HE is the Chairman of the Seapower and Projection of Forces Subcommittee on the HASC. Sir, thanks again for making the time to meet with us this morning. As usual, we have 60 minutes and we are on the record, and we will get right to it.

Let's begin with one of your favorite topics, I do believe, which is the Ohio Class Replacement Program. Can you give us your current assessment on the likelihood and the need for a National Sea Base Deterrent Fund, and can this model work for other national priorities like Long Range Strike Bomber, ICBM replacements, pot hole repair. How applicable is this?

Congressman Forbes: First of all, thank you all for letting me be here, and thank you for being here. I know you had a lot of other options.

The Sea Based Deterrent Fund I think is an important fund. When you say what is my outlook on the Ohio Class Replacement, I think you have to look at some of the votes we had on the House Floor which were pretty overwhelming for not just the fund but for the program itself. And I always tell people this and they laugh because they think it's kind of a comical situation but it really is more telling, Joe Courtney likes to say that that was one of was one of his votes, I think it was 74 percent Democrat and 74 percent Republicans. It's a pretty bipartisan vote. But one of the things that was more interesting, if that vote had occurred maybe a year before, two years before, I'm not sure if it would have been the same vote. Maybe, but we didn't know as we were looking. But the interesting thing after the debates is I was having Members come up to me, actually from both sides of the aisle, and they'd say, so Randy, let me get this right. If I love America -- And I said that's right. You need to vote this fund.

It's kind of comical, but it shows kind of to me a momentum shift where there is an understanding today that we do have to increase the size of the Navy, that the Ohio Class Replacement is an important part of what we're going to be doing.

Answering the question on the Sea Based Deterrent Fund, we don't care if they have another alternative, put another alternative forward. We think the Sea Based Deterrent Fund works. As you know, we've had CBO come back and actually say this thing's going to save a lot of money. They've talked 10 to 15 percent. So essentially here's our question. We know we're going to buy 12 of those boats. Do we want to pay for 12 or would we like to buy 12 and only have to pay for 11? That's what the Sea Based Deterrent Fund actually does based on all of the testimony that we've had before our subcommittee.

But I think Joe Courtney would agree, I certainly feel this way, if they can come up with an alternative. If they want to call it something other than the Sea Based Deterrent Fund but do exactly the same thing, we don't care. But it just doesn't make sense to us in these days of dwindling funds that you'd want to pay for 12 boats when you could get it for 11, the price of 11.

Could we use it for pot holes? Well, there's a big difference I pot holes or anything else along the continuum.

One of the things that you always worry about when you purchase assets in advance or in volume or in bulk or do some of the things that we've given with the authorities on the Sea Based Deterrent Fund, is there's always a worry, well, we thought we were going to build 12 but now we're only going to build 8.

We know, we know, we know we're going to build 12 of these boats. So that gives a certainty that takes away any of that risk that we really haven't had with few other programs, especially with our pot holes. But it can be anything else along the continuum.

Are there aspects of this fund that we could incorporate into other programs? Sure. And I think you put them on the table and you look at them.

But this program simply lines up because of the clarity of exactly what we know we need, we know we're going to build them, they're 70 percent of our nuclear capacity.

Now what happens if we don't change some of the things we're doing? Be it Sea Based Deterrent Fund or whatever. You guys probably listened to Eric [Lab's] testimony when he was before our committee and he said if everything pretty much stays the same and we don't decrease the funding because, as you guys know, we've got, we can argue the number, but around a \$4 billion gap between kind of what they're projecting in historic collars we get in there, that Eric's projection was based upon his testimony that we would be at 237 ships, not at 308 ships.

I think that's something that ought to be a neon sign going off to us, that we need to at least put on the table.

DWG: Good morning.

As you know next week about this time the Pentagon budget [inaudible], and I was wondering if you might be able to give us some insight into what elements you're looking at, what concerns you see, what are you hoping for, what don't you want to see.

Congressman Forbes: Grace, what I would like to see is more money in the budget. And I say that a little bit laughing as we do, but you know, one of the things that still concerns me, well, first of all as you know we don't have the budget yet and the President normally doesn't call us and chat with us about what he's going to put in there. We have primarily what we read from you guys right now, and you have what somebody has essentially tried to leak to you. But based upon that it looks like the big gap for me, Grace, is not going to be how much is different in our OCO spending versus their OCO spending and our projections, but if you look at Secretary Gates' budget before we went into BCA and the cuts that were made to national defense, we had a projection that's going to be about a \$75 billion delta between what that budget would have been this year and what the President's budget is going to be. That's a big delta.

Is that delta too big? Should it be \$50 billion? Is it too small? Should it have been \$100 billion? But we know it's there.

What really concerns me is the continued discussions of national defense as if it's something we can simply say this is how much we want to spend, now let's spend that and make our strategies compliant with our budget. Or should we not be changing that analysis and saying okay, what do we need to defend the country? True, you always have realities of how much you can have. Here are the dollars we have. But here are the things we need to try to come up with dollars for to fix because they're real threats that we need to guard against.

My worry is that analysis is not being done at the White House. I think it's being done at the Pentagon. And our challenge, Grace, is going to be to say how do we do that analysis so that we put before not just policy-makers but the American people, should we fill these gaps? And I think at the end of that discussion, you know and I know I won't get \$75 billion, but if I get \$15 billion it's better than zero.

So I think of all the things that we looked at in the budget that's still the elephant in the room and the one that I will try to focus on both with my colleagues and with our analysis as it comes over.

DWG: What about Navy specific programs? There's been a lot of churn, a lot of discussion leading up to this. A lot of things that might be changing. So I was wondering if you have any thoughts about what you would like to see the Navy [inaudible].

Congressman Forbes: We would have to spend, you know, a little more time today than you'd want to look at me today I'm afraid. But the answer is yes. And if I can give you a global view, and then I'm happy to laser in wherever you'd like.

I think one of the exciting things for me, and oftentimes when I get in forums like this I don't get to tell all the good things because we've got a few seconds to talk and you're narrowing in on a program that sometimes we don't like because we disagree or whatever.

The great thing is what we've seen changing in the debate overall with the Navy. I think there are two things. I'm going to just use their phrase de jure, rebalance. There's been a rebalance I think intellectually at the Pentagon which is good, where they're starting to look at things, whether you're talking about offset strategies that we were talking about before offset strategies were cool; you know, whether you're talking about just higher end types of things we need to do; whether it's with the Navy or military in general. But if I can just take you back to presidential debates. Go back to 2008. Did you hear anybody talk about the Navy? I mean, did you hear anybody really talk about national defense? Then fast forward to the debate between President Obama and Mitt Romney, and you remember that little dialogue where the President was kind of pooh-poohing him on things that he wanted to do to the Navy. Nobody's pooh-poohing that today. So virtually every Republican, I believe, now I haven't gone through and analyzed them but I'm pretty sure you'll find this to be the case. They're not just talking about increasing national defense, they're talking about rebuilding the Navy and increasing the number of ships we have and the size of the Navy.

That's not a narrative that just fell out of the sky because of something somebody sat home one night and turned on the TV and said oh my gosh, we need more ships. You guys know we started writing this narrative I mean the day they passed sequestration. And I've had the opportunity to discuss with you guys, a lot of people look at sequestration as kind of the boogey man in the room, but sequestration came behind \$780 billion of cuts that took place to get us to where sequestration could get us to be the boogey man in the room.

But I remember when sequestration was talked about, and I remember having the debate. I shared this with you guys before. And Mr. Boehner was the Speaker and with the Armed Services Committee, and he told the Armed Services Committee well we've got to pass, and I said if you pass it it's going to be the beginning of the dismantling of the greatest military in the world. And I remember him looking at me in a good way, it wasn't a bad way, and some other people and said nobody cares. And he didn't mean that in a negative, a real negative fashion. What he meant was he said it's only polling 6.5, 7 percent. And I said it's only polling 6.5 or 7 percent because nobody's told the narrative. They don't understand what's really happening.

We set out around the country, you know, we've written so many things on what we needed to do to rebuild the Navy and where this is, and I'm not saying we're the only people, but we were pretty much on the bow of that wave. We've talked to most of the presidential candidates' campaigns, and the thing that I'm most excited about now is

this new kind of understanding that we need to rebuild and increase the Navy, and we're not in this mindset now that you just have to sit in for mediocrity and to continue to reduce it.

So Grace, above everything, that's what I'm excited about is kind of this rebalance of one, intellectual analysis at the Pentagon of what we need to be doing; and second, this kind of rebalance of discussion about the fact that we need to grow the Navy. Now it's more of a question of how big we do regrow it and [what areas].

Again, I'm happy to laser down into the programs.

DWG: I [inaudible] because it recently [inaudible] yesterday. They were saying that the Navy is deciding to basically restructure the program to make it a cargo, aerial, refueling aircraft. Could you talk about that? Because I know you've been supportive of the strike platform operating off of a carrier. And what your plans are [inaudible].

Congressman Forbes: They have discussed this with us. And kind of every side over there has discussed this with us. I'll just say that.

I think two things that I would look on that.

One, if you remember, and I think even the last time we got together I said this. Our big concern was that we measure twice and cut once. We felt they were headed in a direction where they had not measured twice to really analyze and make sure this is what we need. If you look at where they're coming, whether we ultimately agree or not, because we haven't seen all the analysis and we want them to give us the analysis so we can see it. But if you look at where they are, the Navy was heading down a road that had really two things. They said one, the main thing we need is ISR, and the second thing they had was this kind of bridge to somewhere concept that you start here and we have this bridge that's going to get us to long range strike demonstration capability.

What we said was a number of things. We said first of all, you need to do the analysis and make sure we've got this right.

Number two, we said we know you need the ISR, but we think you can get that from other assets that we have out there.

But the third thing is, we don't think the bridge works. We don't think you can go from Platform A to Platform C, you know, the physics doesn't work in that.

I think we're seeing that realization today coming back, and what you have is OSD kind of saying yeah, if we look at a bigger picture maybe they didn't need, they need the ISR, but we can get it from other assets, but what they need is this refueling capability. Once again, I haven't looked at the analysis. We will do that as they present it to us. But I have discussed a lot of [inaudible].

But we remain committed to the fact that we need a long range, deep strike penetration capability. I think you will not hear anybody at the Pentagon disagree with that. And I remain committed to the fact that this is not going to go from whatever platform they develop to that long range strike penetration capability. But I think what you see is when you come back to what Grace and I were discussing, when you have a \$75 billion deficit between what some could argue we need and what the President's going to put in, we aren't going to be able to get everything now. But I do think that's something that we will be seeing, and we'll be seeing that on the horizon.

DWG: One of the central points of the Secretary Carter speech this morning, at least according to the press reports that I already saw, is a request to quadruple the funding for U.S. military presence in Europe in 2017. And it also deals with the increased troop levels, et cetera.

Do you personally support this? Do you think the Congress will endorse this initiative? And how do you think this will play out in the larger scale of things?

Congressman Forbes: Dimitri, an excellent question. I have argued on the Floor against some of the cuts that Congress was trying to do with some of our presence in Europe. Many times I lost that argument, quite honestly. So if I could jump to the second part of your question, will Congress support it? I honestly don't know. That's not something I'd come in here and tell you because it kind of has a populace ring to say no, we don't want our troops all over, we'd rather spend the money here and have bases here.

Do we need an increased presence? Absolutely. I think this false dichotomy, or maybe false choice that we've been given between presence and surge capacity and all, I mean I think they're false choices that we should be making. And I think presence is very important.

Now whether we need it at the level that we've had reported, I'm just like you, I'm reading what I'm hearing and that is not something that I've had conversations with anyone about. We look forward, again, to analyzing that but the best I can tell you at this point without seeing the analysis of how many, what size, you know, those kind of things, I can't answer that with specificity today because I just haven't seen that. But I can tell you I do support that direction and think we need that increased presence.

DWG: And the bigger picture. Do you think it will help the [inaudible] relationship get any better? It's obviously producing sort of a [inaudible] direction from the Russians. It's the central military logic. The reaction has [inaudible].

Congressman Forbes: Maybe. I do think this, Dimitri. I think, and I've said this before and I don't say this with any derogatory connotations. I tend to think that as I look at militaries around the world, and let's say our three big ones that we normally love to chat about -- Russia, China and the United States -- and I look at the current leadership in each of those, I have to say that based on Mr. Putin's actions, especially getting rid of a lot of his officer corps when he came in, he is not as strategic as, let's say,

one might like. I think he is oftentimes opportunist, but I don't say that in a bad way. Oftentimes we use opportunist as a negative connotation.

What I mean by that is I think oftentimes Mr. Putin kind of looks, he says okay here's something, I move into it, and then I'm going to assess what the rest of the world does.

I think the Chinese are very strategic. Their 100 Year Strategies and their 100 Hour Strategies.

I think we used to be strategists. I think we've become more reactionary now, and I'm hoping that we move back to strategic thinking.

So I think sometimes that presence actually, instead of provoking Mr. Putin, may send a message to him that maybe these opportunist situations are not in the best interest of his country as well as the rest of the world. So I don't think it follows like the night to the day that our increased presence creates any kind of provocative actions there.

And when you talk about increased or better relations, you know, it takes two to dance. And while I think we have a role in that, I think Mr. Putin has a role in that as well. Hopefully you're going to see that happen as we get a new President and move forward into kind of a new era for the world.

DWG: Thank you.

DWG: Good morning, Congressman. I'd like to ask you a bit about the U.S. anti-ISIS strategy. There's been this kind of steady trickle of more and more troops and greater involvement in various areas in the world, but it seems as though at least the rhetoric has taken a bit of an uptick in recent weeks, and I'd be interested to get your sense on whether that's what you've been hearing as well, particularly with Chairman Dunford's comments that we need to have a decisive victory against ISIS in Libya, and Secretary Carter's mentioned Libya as well. Does it seem to you that we're about to get a significant uptick in that country?

Congressman Forbes: If I could, and again I want you to drill down on me wherever you want to. Your phrase was actually, have we had an uptick in rhetoric, and we have had an uptick in rhetoric. That doesn't mean we've had an uptick in strategy. And I don't mean that, again, in a negative fashion.

You heard General Dunford when he was before our committee and I asked him, you know, just some of the basic questions. I think this administration, rightly or wrongly, has taken the philosophy that if we don't talk about it it won't exist. And you remember when they first came in, they actually barred the phrase "war on terrorism" that nobody could use in the administration, and so they changed that whole [inaudible]. We felt like, or they felt like in China if you talk about them being competitors, somehow they wouldn't be competitors. If we didn't talk about ISIS somehow it would just not be there.

The President would talk about us having contained them, and then we had General Dunford coming out, when I asked him the question were they contained, he said no. We have not contained them. He also indicated that the strategy that we had had never been resourced properly.

So I think what you are seeing now is the administration's uptick, if you would, in realizing this is a big problem not just in terms of ISIS, but in terms of what the public is demanding [inaudible] about ISIS.

So I think the uptick in rhetoric is not always connected to what we do in terms of strategies and resources. Sometimes it's saying oh look domestic, everybody's turning on their TV and they're seeing ISIS and the President couldn't keep telling them don't pay attention to the man behind the curtain, you know. He had to say this is a problem and so we're changing what we're doing.

Having said that, I do feel that you're seeing additional moves, both strategically and from a resource point of view to deal with ISIS. As always, the more you delay the greater those resources are and the greater the risk. We had testimony before our committee, for example, by an Ambassador that said in 2009 we basically had them defeated; and then he said you know, the President was advised that if you pulled out not just the military staff but the political [inaudible], how it was going to kind of light these guys up and they were going to expand. Nobody I don't think predicted them to do as much as they've done. But still, that they would do it.

So what he would say, and I think rightly so, is it wasn't just pulling back our military engagement and resources we had, but it was the political engagement that we pulled back as well.

So I think what you're seeing now is kind of a renewed realization that we've got to fill that leadership vacuum, that we've got to have a strategy to do that, and it's got to be more than just political, I mean military, it's got to be some political things too.

I'm not so sure, though, if we brought everybody in yet that we could sit down and they could tell you here is our strategy and this is you know, what we're going to do. I think they could do these bits and pieces of it, but I think that's okay because the movement I see now is moving in at least the right direction, but I think the problem is they have let this gap go so long. This is a pretty big problem they're dealing with. And as you know, everybody that testifies now says this isn't going to be a six-month fix; this is going to be a longer fix.

So I don't think we're going to have a strategy that we can come to you guys, or they're going to have a strategy and come to you guys and say here's the right strategy, here's the right resources. I think you're going to see this constantly evolving and moving as this problem continues to move.

DWG: So do you expect we're going to see any kind of military expansion into Libya more than we have seen so far on occasional --

Congressman Forbes: We have not had an indication that that is going to happen. Whether they do that or not, I can't read tea leaves on where this administration is, but I can tell you they haven't given us an indication that they were going to do that.

DWG: Does that surprise you then, that General Dunford came out and talked, used terms like decisive victory --

Congressman Forbes: No. General Dunford's a Marine. No, no, that's a good thing. Look, General Dunford is a guy when the Pentagon was bleeding these resources out, General Dunford before a hearing that I had was the first guy to turn around and say wait a minute, this is what's happening with these cuts. And I went to him, we always have four guys, I love them all, all the services, but we normally don't start with the Marines. You know, we start with Navy or Army and I said go to the Marines because these guys, they're not quite as politically correct as everybody else sometimes is. They aren't quite as filtered. And they're going to tell you what I think General Dunford believes that's what we need, and I think as he begins to say that, I think it may create kind of an incentive to try to move in that direction. But no, it doesn't surprise me that he would say that because we do. We do need some decisive wins, for a lot of reasons. One, I think the American people need that; but secondly, I think the more these guys are seen as winners, the more their recruiting is. If we see them as starting to take some big hits, it really impacts their recruitment capabilities. So I think General Dunford is right. What I can't answer for you is you know, what happens on stage two of that performance.

DWG: Just to follow up on Paul's question, sir, is the strategy right and they just need to do more of it?

Congressman Forbes: General Dunford's testimony to us, and I have enormous respect for him, was that he believed the strategy was now right, and not more strategy but more resourcing, and that they hadn't resourced it properly. I have to think, again, I have to give a lot of respect to General Dunford. If General Dunford believes that we now have the right strategy, then I have a lot of confidence we probably do have the right strategy. Whether or not that is a strategy that then we put in the vault somewhere and lock and say this is it forever, I don't think we can do that. So I think we constantly are looking at that strategy and saying how has it evolved. But Dunford would say today, yes we do and we're finally beginning to resource it.

DWG: You just recently referenced your concern over the creeping mediocrity of the Navy if budget cuts continue. You're the Chairman of the Sea Power Subcommittee. Did our sailors, were they so poorly trained that they drifted into Iranian territorial waters? Do you know more than we do about this --

Congressman Forbes: Let me tell you what I know. The CNO did call me immediately when that happened. We had a conversation about it. He told me what was accurate. He said we don't know all the facts, we're going to do an analysis and an investigation and as soon as that's completed we will be with you and give you that. And

Mike, I think it's only fair for me to say I have a lot of questions, probably the same questions you have, and many of them I threw out to him that day. I didn't expect him to answer them, but I said here they are. I am still waiting for that investigation to come back. When that investigation comes back I'm happy to sit down with any of you guys. I know, look, I'm with you but I can't ratchet up those kind of time frames. What I can say though is, I think that will be near rather than far when they give me that breakdown, but as of today I haven't received it yet.

In fairness, though, we did have a snow week when we were out. So I'm not justifying that because I'm like you, I would have liked to have had it an hour after, and I have some of the same questions that you have. A lot of questions on that. I probably have a lot more even maybe than we could offer on the table.

DWG: Did you think the administration handled it properly, the way they got the folks back.

Congressman Forbes: It depends on the questions that come out. I have huge problems with the Iranians boarding our vessels, pointing guns at our sailors. I have huge problems with awarding medals to people for having done that. But Mike, again, I have many of the same questions that you and I could sit down and talk about, and I'm just as concerned about answering those. But I think I do owe it to the Navy to let them come back to me after their investigation. But then come back to you. I owe it to you then after they've done that to answer all the questions that you want to throw out. It's just that at this point in time they haven't given me any of those answers yet either, but they will.

DWG: The election officially started yesterday. I wanted to --

Congressman Forbes: I thought it started before that. [Laughter].

DWG: -- project forward to what the next President would do, and to, you know, you mentioned earlier the poll numbers on national defense previously being very low. Are you seeing a shift in those poll numbers for national defense? Is it more of a concern? And how do you think the next President should be handling defense resources?

Congressman Forbes: Great questions. First of all I don't think national defense wasn't a concern and then all of a sudden something happened where it became a concern. I think if I was really looking at and analyzing it, it was a big concern all along. But I think sometimes the American public gets their information from what they see on TV, what they may be reading on the internet or whatever, and it was not the thing that was you know, captivating them at that particular period of time. I'm not even disputing that maybe they were right on their poll numbers when they were telling me six percent, seven percent, because if you ask people national defense [inaudible], I think it's beyond their agenda. And again, it goes back to presidential candidates, like them or not like them, they normally live and die by their focus groups and their polls and if something is big they're probably talking about it. And they weren't talking about it, 2008, either side, but they are now.

I think one of the things that's happened if you look at those polling numbers, just six, seven, eight months ago, almost 70 percent of the American people were saying we don't want any more cuts to the military. People start paying attention. Big difference from six percent to seven percent.

The second thing, though, that I think is real important, again, is the anecdotal stuff. So let me give you some of that.

Just a few months ago I was walking back from the House Floor where we'd had some votes to Rayburn House Office Building. And I had a friend of mine from Texas, and he's not related to defense stuff. He doesn't do, he's not on any of the committees and normally doesn't get involved in it. And he came up to me and he said Randy, I need to tell you something. I said sure. He said, I went back last week and I had I don't know how many town hall meetings, but a lot of town hall meetings, and he said some of them were the normal Republican fare, you know, he said but most of them weren't. He said I was in communication classes at universities, I met with nurses, I had a cross-section of people. And he said I always ask them what's the number one, two, three things on your mind? He said this is the first time ever that national defense was one or two in every single town hall meeting that I had. I thought that was pretty indicative, sometimes to me maybe more than what the polling numbers are. I hear that repeated over and over again by other Members who are telling me the same thing.

So I think what the public is saying, I think sometimes for the wrong reasons, quite honestly. I think sometimes they see ISIS and I don't think that necessarily shows them what China's doing with military spending or what we're seeing in Iran or some of these other places. But I do think they're getting a sense now and that sense is coming across in their prioritizing of issues, that national defense is hugely important. Number two, that the world is a lot more global than maybe even they thought, and what we do in one part of the world now does really impact what happens here at home.

DWG: What do you think precipitated that? Did those town halls follow Paris, San Bernardino?

Congressman Forbes: No, they were actually before some of that.

I think there's been kind of a, I don't think public opinion always shifts based on one event or the other. I mean it can, but I think this has been a growing situation that they've seen.

Look, they see people being lined up and beheaded. They see ISIS attacks in places around the globe. They see things happening in Paris. They see things happening in the United States. And I think all of a sudden that the combined weight of that is beginning to shift public opinion. And I'll tell you somewhere else where it's reflected. If you look at some of these votes we've had on keeping 11 carriers, on Sea Based Deterrent Fund, funding for the military. Three years ago or four years ago we wouldn't have won some of those funding fights. These votes were overwhelming as they came in.

So I do definitely think there's that change and again, I think one of the biggest proofs of that is what you're hearing all of these candidates talk about. I mean first of all, they're not just talking about national defense. Almost to the person they're talking about the Navy and the importance of rebuilding the Navy. I say rebuild, increasing the Navy.

DWG: Another budget question. I was at a [CSDA] briefing yesterday, a few of us were. And the gist of it was the [budget preview] seemed to be the OCO opportunity, political back and forth [inaudible]. Whether the current level is going to be treated as a floor or a ceiling by the various parties, I wanted to get your sense of how you see that working out. Also the fact that we have the \$50 or so billion for the Afghanistan [inaudible] that's going to stay, assume that will stay pretty stable. But things are being moved into OCO to protect them. The Navy is moving [inaudible].

Do you see that as a threat, not as a threat, but as an issue once they have to deal not only with caps that they have to reabsorb those costs that they've been moving into that?

Congressman Forbes: That's always a concern that we have to do it. I think it's a fair analysis that you have between the floor and the ceiling, and I don't think that's necessarily Republicans versus Democrats. I think that is the Congress maybe versus White House. I think overall the Congress kind of viewed those as floors and I think clearly we're going to see the White House viewing them as ceilings.

I think the larger debate, the kind of peripheral date that you have, what is OCO, how much can you spend [inaudible], what can you do in OCO? My bigger debate is not there, Dan, it is what I started out with. It is that gap, and I used the \$75 billion figure not because it's magical, not because it may even be the right figure, but it is the image of where we were if we didn't say okay, we're just worried about budgets. And he really said what do we need to defend and protect the United States of America. It's probably the last true measurement that we had of that.

I think what's glaring to me is that difference between where the President's going to be and where we probably need to be.

So I think the bigger discussion for me is how I move closer to that figure and whether or not I have to do OCO to do that or whatever. It may not be my preferred method of getting there, but the most important for me, these ships are sailing, these men are trained. You know, those kind of things. I'm not nearly as concerned with the accounting of what item they come out of.

So I think we'll see some of that in the debates, but I think the bigger debate will be what size military do we need, and I think that's what will ultimately drive it.

DWG: I have a question on Virginia politics.

Congressman Forbes: Sure.

DWG: If you could provide us with a snapshot of your perspective on how [inaudible] change in the next election cycle in Virginia. Also like what your considerations are as you decide what district to run in.

Congressman Forbes: Joe, the redistricting decision will be a major impact on how things change in a lot of ways. First of all, based on the Supreme Court coming out yesterday and not granting a stay of this, you pretty much know that something is going to change. Now I don't think these lines are necessarily like the night to the day. They stay. But I think you will see something change.

I think that change will result in a couple of different things.

If you look right now on a selfish basis, don't look overall, look very selfish, Virginia centric. And then you look at where most of the naval assets, military assets are, they would be in Hampton Roads. Well right now about 45 percent of the economy and 36 percent of the jobs in Hampton Roads are supported by Department of Defense spending, so that's pretty big. They've got 82,000 uniformed people in Hampton Roads today, about 42,600 DoD civilian employees. A big number.

Historically they've always had four legislators in the Hampton Roads area. First District, Second District, Third and Fourth. Regardless of what happens and how these lines ultimately get shifted, you will probably have Rob Whitman in the First District moved up further north, so he'll no longer really be in the Hampton Roads area, as such. And the Fourth District, my old district, will become more of a Richmond centric district. That means you'll really have two House seats for Hampton Roads, Congressman Scott in the Third and then whoever it would be in the Second District.

So if you look at the Fourth District, they really made the Fourth District where it's going to be incredibly difficult if not impossible for a Republican to win in that district. It's about 61 percent Democrat. And while you can carry maybe 10 percent, I mean it's hard for a Democrat to take a 22 percent deficit in a district and it's hard for a Republican to take a 22 percent on makeup.

So I think our question will probably be a question, as you know, Scott Rigell has said he's not going to run again. The moment he made that decision he picked up the phone and said you know, you need to run in this district.

We have had an incredible outcry, Republicans and Democrats. Many Democratic elected officials who say if you say this publicly I'll deny it, but we've got to have you there, you know. So that's our evaluation. We'll make that decision probably sometime next week of what we do and how we do it. But that's kind of the shifting that I see. And I'm happy to answer in more specificity.

DWG: It sounds like that's the direction that you're leaning in, is towards running in that district.

Congressman Forbes: I can't really say that right now. You can draw whatever conclusions you want, but I can tell you that you have to do the analysis of everything. And you know, congressional races are not the only thing that's out there either. I'm saying we've had a lot of people that have contacted us about other things other than the House, you know, that we could do.

I will tell you this, though. I have no, my passion is not to be in Congress. My passion is the military and national defense. And that's what I really believe very strongly in doing, so we'll look to see how we can do or help in that regard. We'll see where we are.

Did that help some?

DWG: Yeah, thank you.

Congressman Forbes: So we'll have an answer for you by probably Monday.

DWG: Hope, then we'll open things up for round two.

DWG: Back to the Navy for a second. The Carter LCS memo that [inaudible] kind of highlighted this merger [inaudible] the Defense Department [inaudible] purchasing strategy there. More of the [inaudible] weapons [inaudible]. And I was just kind of curious [inaudible] any kind of purchasing strategy [inaudible]? What other insights [inaudible]?

Congressman Forbes: It's a great question, and one that's been a lot of buzz within the office [inaudible] and other places. It's one of those memos that was designed to be leaked. I don't know if you can say it was leaked. It's like having a press conference and saying now don't anybody write this and hand it all out.

I would say this, though, I think there are two things on that. One is, I'm not so sure how much that is just an analysis as much as that is even an administration kind of coming back saying boom, we need to -- I don't know that.

But the second thing is, I kind of alluded to it, I think this is a huge false choice. If you start ever saying okay, do we want capacity or capability, you miss what national defense is all about. If you start asking, Dmitri, your question, presence versus surge, you miss that.

You all know the old adage that capacity becomes capability at some particular point in time. The real question we need to ask and we have said this over and over again, is what does it take to defend the country? And the reality is, both of these guys are right. They're just wrong when they say you have to choose. Because what you need is, we definitely need more ships. Every analysis that you have, every lay-down you have, you've got to have more ships. You simply can't, we're not on Star Trek. We don't get to beam them one place or the other. You have to sail them there, so you've got to have ships, they've got to do what Dmitri raises. You've got to have presence and you've got to have surge capacity. I am very concerned about carrier gaps that we have. I'm very

concerned if we get in a new fight in an A2AD environment, one cruiser, one destroyer is not enough. I mean you can't do a 360-degree fight with one cruiser. You're going to have to have more and more destroyers.

So I think what we have to do to them is not pick do we want your choice or your choice. I think what we have to say, both you guys need to come and say this is what we need for the country, and how do we get the ships we need and how do we get the additional capabilities that we need?

Nobody would argue, my argument is, and I've told them. I've told them in hearings. If Mike walked in today and he was from the Pentagon and he says this, he says --

Congressman Forbes: I wasn't talking about you.

DWG: Sorry.

Congressman Forbes: No, Mike is one of the admirals over there that, I'm sorry. Mike comes over and briefs us a lot of times, so I'm just saying -- you can pick any name you want for the admiral, but Mike comes over and he's briefing me. He comes over, he's an admiral and he comes in and he sits down and he says this. I look at him and say Mike what do you need? And he says, here's what we need. We need to have fuel in our ships. We can't have ships without fuel. I've got to look at him and say Mike, you're exactly right. We've got to have fuel in the ships. Nobody's going to argue that. But if you just have one ship, you can't win this conflict. You just can't do it. So I've got to ask him, Mike, how many ships do you need? And then we've got to make sure you've got the fuel in the ships.

So I think this is a very false choice and I think that false choice has been put on them not by Mike coming over with his analysis from the Navy, but by this push-down of the \$75 billion gap and not putting enough. So I think what we need to do really is overall raise the amount of money for national defense and the amount of money that we're spending on the Navy. And that's one of the reasons that I have told the Mikes of the world who come over and brief us, I said look, here's the problem we're looking at. We need to be able to say this one-third, one-third, one-third allocation we've always used, maybe we don't need to do that anymore. And everybody at the Pentagon agrees that's an arbitrary allocation that you have, and that maybe we need to at least put the facts on the table.

So answering your question, I think it's a false choice, kind of a Sofi's choice that you have there. I think what we really need to do is overall increase the overall spending that we need [inaudible].

DWG: Sir, I'd be interested to follow up again on the question of the Iranian sailors. So leaving aside the specifics of that instance, and assuming generally two small boats, one of them may be disabled, and they drift into the waters of a foreign country that we may not have the best kind of relationships with. Does the Navy equip, as you understand it, does the Navy equip its small boat commanders with the training and the

mandate and the resources to be able to get out of a situation where you get surrounded by a foreign military with their guns drawn and not end up in a propaganda video? s that a possible situation, getting out of it? Or is that just --

Congressman Forbes: I thought it was. I mean it would have been my, if I take my hypothetical Mike who comes over and sits down with us and I would look at him and I have asked him that before this occurred, you know what he'd have told me. Oh yeah, yeah, we're training them to do that.

But all of a sudden you get a real world situation and you say why did all that go to wherever it went, you know? But there's a lot more questions.

I'm wondering how do you just kind of wake up and all of a sudden the Iranians are all around you? You know? And you didn't know that. I'm worried about how did you get that far away from where you were supposed to be and nobody say we're going to go get you. I'm worried about do we have rules of engagement that stop these guys from doing this? And I wish I could answer all those questions. I can't answer any of those questions because as we were talking about earlier, the CNO has told me hey, here's the situation. And he did it right away. He didn't drag his feet. But he also has not come back to that investigation and given me answers.

If you and I had sat down last year and we talked and you asked me those questions, I would have thought we had the training to do all those things.

DWG: Do you think it would make a difference that the opposing ships were Iranian ships?

Congressman Forbes: I can't answer that based on not knowing what these rules of engagement were that they had. It wouldn't make a difference to me if I were you know, looking at what training we need for the folks that we have and where they are. I'm very troubled by not just one aspect of this but a lot of aspects of this. That's why we want to find out how much of it's training, how much of it's equipment, how much of it's rules of engagement. Again, I just don't have more facts to tell you, but I have all the same questions that I think you and I would agree we need to put on the table and find out.

And It'll tell you, when my hypothetical Mike comes over from the Pentagon and sits down to brief me, I would ask him those questions, but you know what he's going to tell me. He's going to tell me wait until we get the investigation in and then we'll [inaudible].

DWG: You'd never make a reporter, sir.

Congressman Forbes: I would.

DWG: Speaking of intelligence failures, Vice Admiral "Twig" Branch, Director of Naval Intelligence, hasn't had access to classified information since September of '14. Is this any way to play this game?

Congressman Forbes: I think we have some huge concerns with our intelligence apparatus. I think part of that is how we get that information, disseminate it between entities here at home. I think the second part of it is resourcing and how much intelligence and capability that we have got [now]. And the third of it, quite honestly, is an ever-changing world that makes that intelligence more and more difficult to do.

But you, I think most of us would agree in here, so goes our intelligence, so goes most of our successes on combat effectiveness.

So no, I think that that should not be the case. But we run up against a lot of walls sometimes when we're trying to ask it, because it's the easiest thing in the world to simply say we can't disclose that information, so it's hard to break through --

DWG: So should they put a new DNI in?

Congressman Forbes: Well, I can't answer that. I mean I really don't --

DWG: So you're okay with this 15, 16 months --

Congressman Forbes: No, no. I'm not okay with that. What I'm saying though is we have been talking to them about that and I don't think everybody at the Pentagon is okay with that either, I guess is the best that I can say. But whether or not, what changes we need to make I really can't answer right now for you. I don't know the exact answer to that.

DWG: I wanted to get your thoughts on the prospect of the service chiefs being more involved in the procurement process. Does that add another layer of unnecessary bureaucracy? Do you see it being useful for there to be a [inaudible] at different levels? I know for the Navy, I cover the Marine Corps, right now their two biggest deal-breakers they have after years and years and years finally they pulled the trigger and now they're in major lawsuits. Maybe that wouldn't have happened if the process heretofore had been smoother or more reliable requirements. How do you see that [inaudible]?

Congressman Forbes: Dan, you know, some people argue very strongly the chiefs should be more involved in it. It seems like sometimes every time we try to do something it has the exact opposite effect. You look at the Tax Reform Acts, they normally, or one of them, I really laugh when they say Tax Simplification Act. You know, because they make it more complex.

I think you've got this whole look now, not just on acquisition, but Goldwater/Nichols and all of that. Some people want to throw it all out, some want to tweak it. I think on acquisition here's what we do know though. We know there's got to be more accountability all through the program cycle, and if somebody can walk in and spend two years and then they're gone and there's no accountability, I don't know how we ever do what we need to do.

Counter-balance to that though is also what we're hearing over and over again now, and I think it's rightly so. When you get some of these items that we're trying to obtain and it takes a year at the Pentagon for a budget cycle and then a year over here to get it -- If everything works good, and very seldom does everything work good, and then you've got something that only has a three-year shelf life anyway, we've got to do something to change that.

So I hear this movement of how do we have more accountability, but also how do we get things where we can go from the need to where we've got them deployed faster?

Then here's what we do. You guys have watched the hearings. I don't care who comes over, I will hear them say Congress has put too many restrictions on us and every time we look and say you know, here's the pen, tell us what we should change. And in every testimony that I've heard, probably that you've heard, they all say well, we think we've probably got it just about right. You know?

So I think you'll continue to hear that discussion. I'm not sure who's right or wrong on it. But I do think we have got to find a way to get that accountability across the life of those programs and we've also got to find a way to do this faster. Because we can't compete with what we're seeing our competitors across the globe do. They're fielding things in three and a half, four years, that's taking us nine to fifteen years to do.

Dan, did I not clear that enough for you?

DWG: I'm hearing that you're a proponent of this "fail fast" approach to acquisition, or at least a trend in that direction. Is that possible with the current system?

Congressman Forbes: It doesn't seem to be in a lot of programs that we're able to do that. And I think when you use the word fail, the buzz words, or the easy talking point is obviously we can't afford something to fail in the field. Nobody's questioning that. But on our initial stages of finding out what we need, failure's not always a harmful thing. We used to have a culture where you realized failure was a part of development and learning, and it's just been of late that we've kind of developed this thing that you can't have any failure. And I think that culture kind of creates a pressure to hold onto things that ultimately will fail down the road.

DWG: Since we're talking about lengthy acquisition I wanted to just quickly ask about the Joint Strike Fighter. There's some new reports out by the DOT&E talking about some additional problems with that, and I wonder where you come down on the issue like a block buy. Is it time to still go big for the Joint Strike Fighter? Or does it need to slow down where [inaudible] the numbers on the purchase of the international buys can stay strong? Or [inaudible]? Do you think you'd save money doing that?

Congressman Forbes: No. I think scaling back always costs you more money, and I think yes, on do we need to continue; and yes on do we need the foreign sales. We need all of those because the problem is, it's kind of a circle chasing our tail. Every time we

make cutbacks, whether there's any rationality to it or not, our foreign sales get cut back too. And that increases the overall cost.

This is one of these situations, we're married to the Joint Strike Fighter, whether we like it or not. It's going to happen, and there's a need that's there. This is not one of the programs like Dan talked about that oh, this could be a failure, do I need to change it? We're there. This is a need we've got to have. I think everybody from the Pentagon that would sit down and look at you would say we've got to have this and we're going to need it.

General Welsh used to have the best analogy. You'd take Generation 5 against Generation 4; Generation 4 dies. And the question will continue to be, though, which comes back to Adam's question initially on why we could do sea based deterrence. We know we're going to have [12 boats]. We don't know totally how many Joint Strike Fighters that we're going to ultimately get. But I think it's important for us to get the number that we need and to keep the foreign sales up if we can keep the price points where we want the price points to be.

DWG: Congressman Forbes, it's been a pleasure, I wish we had more time. I do thank you again for coming in, and sharing your thoughts, and hopefully we'll have some answers soon about what happened to those sailors on those boats.

Congressman Forbes: Yeah, and look, that's, it's fair for y'all to have that, whether it's you, Mark, or Dan, whoever. You all pummel me once we find out. But again, I don't know yet so I can't answer those questions.

DWG: You can always call the CNO back.

Congressman Forbes: Let me tell you, the CNO's really good. He is not one that plays hide the ball with me so I don't have any criticism at all of where they are. They're very good at taking our calls when we call, and they're good at getting back to us, and I'm sure they will.

DWG: Do you read anything into the fact that we haven't heard from these sailors yet? It's been what, two weeks now and --

Congressman Forbes: It bothers me too. Yeah, sure. I mean I'm concerned about the same thing. And like I said, I'll bet you almost every question that you would ask me, we have asked. But we're trying to be patient and trying to get our answers when they come.

Guys, thank you so much for having me.

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