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COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON DEFENSE

STATEMENT OF
VICE ADMIRAL JOHN B. MUSTIN, U.S. NAVY
CHIEF OF NAVY RESERVE
BEFORE THE
SENATE SUBCOMMITTEE ON DEFENSE
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
FISCAL YEAR 2025 NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE
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Vice Admiral John B. Mustin
Chief of Navy Reserve
Commander, Navy Reserve Force

Vice Admiral John Mustin is a native of Alexandria, Virginia. He is a graduate of the United States Naval Academy, where he earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Weapons and Systems Engineering and was commissioned in 1990. He holds a Master of Science in Operations Research from the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, CA, and a Master of Business Administration (cum laude) in Finance and Management from the F. W. Olin Graduate School of Business at Babson College. He earned his Joint Professional Military Education from the Air University's Air Command and Staff College at Maxwell Air Force Base.



Mustin's sea duty assignments include command of Expeditionary Strike Group 2/Task Force 29; commissioning operations officer on USS Donald Cook (DDG 75), and aboard USS Vincennes (CG 49), where he served as combat information center officer, navigator and the Air Warfare Commander of the Independence (CV 62) Battle Group.

Affiliating with the Navy Reserve in 2001, Mustin served at Navy Reserve (NR) Carrier Strike Group 2 / USS George Washington (CVN 73) Strike Group during Operation Enduring Freedom. Other staff assignments include NR Chief of Naval Operations for Operations, Plans and Strategy (N3N5) at the Pentagon Navy Command Center; Maritime Expeditionary Security Squadron 14; NR Carrier Strike Group 10 / USS Harry S Truman (CVN 75) Strike Group; and Personnel Mobilization Team 101. Additionally, he served as the inaugural Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) Navy Reserve Enterprise Director, responsible for the reserve manning, training and equipping of the 1000-billet LCS surface reserve force.

Other command tours include NR Joint Staff South; NR U.S. Fleet Forces Command Maritime Operations Center, Greensboro; NR Maritime Expeditionary Security Squadron 6; and Inshore Boat Unit 22, including a mobilization to Kuwait during Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. His other flag assignments include deputy commander of Naval Surface Forces, spanning the Surface Type Commanders of the U.S. Pacific and Atlantic fleets; as a plankowner and the deputy commander of the re-established U.S. Second Fleet; and as Vice Commander, U.S. Fleet Forces Command.

Mustin became the 15th Chief of Navy Reserve on 7 August 2020. As Commander, Navy Reserve Force, he leads approximately 59,000 Reserve Component personnel who support the Navy, Marine Corps and joint forces.

His awards include the Defense Superior Service Medal, Legion of Merit, Meritorious Service Medal, Navy Commendation Medal, Navy Achievement Medal, Navy Battle Efficiency 'E', Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal and various service, expeditionary, unit and campaign awards.

Introduction

Chair Tester, Vice Chair Collins, distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify and illuminate the pivotal role played by the Navy Reserve in safeguarding our nation. On behalf of Navy Reserve Sailors, civilians, and their families, thank you for your continued leadership and support as we continue to optimize the warfighting readiness of your Navy Reserve Force for strategic competition.

In 2020, the Navy Reserve began a multi-year transformation to improve and modernize the way we organize, man, train, equip, and mobilize to generate the combat power and critical strategic depth the Navy requires to prevail in conflict. We embraced the imperative to redesign the Reserve Force – structurally, procedurally, and operationally – to align with strategic priorities calibrated for a competitive security environment. With a singular focus on generating warfighting readiness, this generational transformation provides the most capable force to our Navy’s Fleet Commanders and delivers integrated all-domain naval power to the Joint Force.

Throughout its rich 109-year history, the Navy Reserve has demonstrated its role as an elite fighting force – a deep well of strategic depth enabling our great nation to prevail in competition, crisis, and conflict. The talent our Navy Reserve Sailors bring to bear provides an unequivocal asymmetric advantage. As we transformed the organization, training, and mobilization processes of the Force, we also remained focused on our collective responsibility to recruit and retain our nation’s precious talent.

On any given day, the Navy Reserve has about 60,000 Sailors, nearly 150 aircraft, two SEAL teams, three expeditionary medical facilities, and almost half of the Navy’s expeditionary combat command and intelligence capability standing at the ready...24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year...with nearly 15,000 serving on active duty orders. I remain in awe of the

dedication and professionalism of Navy Reserve Sailors, civilians and the families that support them. They provide the foundation that underwrites more than a century of successful contribution to the Navy and our Joint Force, and the reason I gaze optimistically to the future.

Timely, predictable, and relevant funding from Congress enables the Navy Reserve to deliver this strategic depth and meet operational mission requirements, so we are grateful for your continued support and enduring interest. Continuing Resolutions result in the cancellation or deferment of limited and sometimes irreplaceable training opportunities, negatively impacting the warfighting readiness of the Navy Total Force. Maintaining the Reserve Personnel Navy account funded at President's Budget levels enables the Reserve force to deliver trained Sailors ready to fight and win in the early stages of conflict and to sustain combat operations. Continued Congressional support will ensure the Navy Reserve provides relevant, modern capability, capacity, a resilient surge force, and cumulative warfighting readiness through training orders, facilities, and equipment today and into the future.

Warfighting: Deliver Decisive Combat Power

For more than two decades following the unprovoked attacks of 9/11, and during our global fight against violent extremism, the Navy Reserve provided operational support in land-based combat environments. The strategic shift to address peer adversaries in the maritime domain has forced an evolution to the ready force the Navy Reserve is designed to deliver. With the resurgence of a global pacing challenge, generating warfighting readiness required a force design process focused on modernization and the accelerated delivery of relevant, current capabilities.

Multi-domain Warfighting Capability and Capacity

Multi-domain warfighting capability and capacity relevance is a mandate for the modernized Reserve Force. As such, we are investing heavily in capabilities that directly align with winning future wars, including Maritime Operations Centers, contested logistics, surge maintenance, integrated fires, Naval Special Warfare, and Maritime Expeditionary Security Squadrons. Additionally, new technologies and capabilities in space, cyber, imagery analysis, battle damage assessment and repair, autonomous and un-crewed platforms, artificial intelligence, machine learning, data analytics, and additive manufacturing represent growth areas that capitalize on the unique skills and experiences of Reserve Sailors and the civilians that enable the Reserve Force.

The Navy Reserve delivers these modern capabilities through three employment models: readiness units that augment active Navy units with trained, warfighting-ready Reserve Sailors; individual Sailors with unique skills that enhance the Total Force; and stand-alone operational units that supplement active component capabilities. The Navy Reserve's operational units require investments in modern equipment to ensure relevancy and strategic depth in logistics, aviation, security, medical capacity, special warfare and other critical capabilities.

Navy Unique Fleet Essential Airlift

The Navy Reserve continues to prioritize intra-theater lift to enable rapid deployment, movement, and logistical support to the Fleet Commanders and Joint Force, particularly through the recapitalization of the KC-130 Juliet. The C/KC-130T aircraft are the Navy's only long-range aerial logistics platform capable of transporting bulk cargo, such as boats, diver recompression chambers, submarine masts, and F-35 engines. Operated solely by the Navy Reserve, the

category known as Navy Unique Fleet Essential Airlift (NUFEA) consists of 27 C/KC-130T and 17 C-40A aircraft that comprise the totality of the Navy's organic intra-theater air logistics capability. In *Navigation Plan 2022*, Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Mike Gilday emphasized resilient logistics in contested environments as a critical force design imperative and directed recapitalization of the C-130 fleet, a reserve-only capability, by 2030. Compared to the legacy "T" variant, the more efficient and reliable "J" model improves operational performance while realizing a cost savings of approximately \$1,000 per flight hour - while increasing mission capable rates nearly threefold.

Last year, Navy Reserve air logistics aircraft transported 90,846 passengers and 17.9 million pounds of cargo for the Navy and the Department of Defense. This capability saved the Department \$1.24 billion in expenditures relative to alternative means of transportation. Despite their demonstrated necessity and value, the C-130T's age, lack of available parts due to obsolescence, and increasing cost per flight hour, drive a growing gap between the Fleet's demand for this mission and the Navy's capability to fulfill it. For these reasons, the recapitalization of the KC-130J fleet is the Navy Reserve's number one equipment priority.

Aviation Adversary

The aviation adversary mission ensures the readiness of the Navy's carrier-based tactical aircraft and develops Navy pilots' air-to-air combat skill. The Navy Reserve's Tactical Support Wing (TSW) maintains 12 F-16Cs and 12 block 1 F/A-18E/Fs aircraft that replicate high level threats, and 28 F-5N/F and 2 F-5N+/F+ aircraft that replicate low-to-mid level threats. The Navy Reserve is modernizing the F-5N/F avionics suite to improve safety of flight and resolve obsolescence limitations given an average age of over 40 years per airframe. The current fleet of F-5s will reach the end of their service life by the early 2030s; however, eleven upgraded F-5s

purchased in FY20 will come into service over the next three years to ensure adversary capacity does not lapse prior to fielding a replacement aircraft. While the F-5 lacks the speed, sensors, and signature to accurately represent the high-end pacing threat, it adequately provides a live adversary platform required for basic airwing air-to-air training, and serves as a bridge until the replacement aircraft is fielded.

In April 2022, the Navy Reserve received twelve F-16C aircraft from the Air National Guard that provide dissimilar aircraft training and high-end adversary support to the fleet. These aircraft have sufficient airframe hours remaining to sustain adversary missions through 2035. Ongoing efforts to upgrade these F-16s, together with investments in Live-Virtual-Constructive technology, increase the fidelity of modern threat replication and ensure Reserve adversary training remains relevant to the fleet until follow-on platforms become available.

Maritime Patrol and Reconnaissance (P-8A and MH-60Rs)

The Navy Reserve completed its transition from the P-3C to the P-8A in 2024. The P-8A aircraft is the nation's only full-spectrum, broad-area Anti-Submarine Warfare platform. Additionally, it provides armed Anti-Surface Warfare and networked intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capability. The Navy Reserve's Maritime Patrol and Reconnaissance Aircraft (MPRA) squadrons mirror the active component units in design and mission, and integrate seamlessly into the Global Force Management (GFM) deployment cycle. In addition to receiving three P-8As in FY23, VP-62 received one aircraft last month, and is scheduled for two more deliveries in FY24 for a total of six aircraft. VP-69 began the transition process to the P-8A in April 2023, with the first aircraft delivered on August 2023. The active component has transferred five P-8s, and the remaining six are scheduled for delivery between FY24 and FY25.

VP-62 conducted its first forward P-8A operations to Keflavik, Iceland in November of 2023. They detached within 72 hours of notice of threat submarine operations, successfully flying over 60 hours of Anti-Submarine Warfare missions with exquisite on top tracking of real-world adversary forces. VP-69, supporting Commander Third Fleet (C3F), will surge P-8A detachments during FY24 SUMMER-EX for Homeland Defense (HLD) missions and participate in the Rim of the Pacific Exercise (RIMPAC) 2024 supporting joint, partner, and allied interoperability. Transitioning reserve VP squadrons to the P-8A sustains the joint forces' military advantage over our pacing threat by providing worldwide, continuous deployed presence to deter adversaries and provide robust airborne support of maritime operations.

Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron 60 (HSM-60), delivers strategic depth and surge force capabilities, providing ready assets to support operational tasking on short notice. Last year they supported high-profile anti-narcotic operations in the Eastern Pacific Ocean, cooperating with USS Farragut and the U.S. Coast Guard. This interdiction not only disrupted significant illegal narcotic trafficking, valued over \$69 million, but also highlights Navy Reserve rotary wing capabilities to help project dynamic maritime power and maintain regional stability.

Warfighters: Strengthen the Navy Team

Sailors are our most precious resource – they are the backbone and the heart and soul of the Navy Reserve. Our focus remains on creating formidable warfighting teams, attracting and retaining skilled individuals from America's diverse tapestry, and offering them top-tier training and education. We are dedicated to enhancing our Sailors' service quality, encompassing both their quality of life and work, and ensuring Sailors and their families are supported, valued, and prepared for the future.

Administration and Management of the Individual Ready Reserve

The Navy Reserve is comprised of 57,200 drilling Selective Reserve (SELRES) and TAR Sailor billets, and 37,292 Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) members, totaling 94,492 Ready Reserve Sailors. The IRR is a critical component of the Navy Reserve, enabling additional surge capacity for the Navy Reserve Force at a significantly reduced cost. The IRR service requirement is a component of a Sailor's Military Service Obligation (MSO), requiring them to maintain basic readiness standards while affording them opportunities to voluntarily perform training and/or active duty to provide strategic depth to the Navy. IRR Sailors also maintain many of the primary benefits associated with military service such as access to military exchange, commissary and Morale Welfare and Recreation facilities, Space-Available travel, Psychological Health and Outreach Program (PHOP) and Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) services.

The Navy Reserve's multi-year transformation includes reimagining the management of the IRR to better align with the requirements of Adaptive Mobilization and strategic competition. Accordingly, we have defined critical skills for the IRR, shifting the focus from the Global War on Terror and Individual Augmentee (IA)-specific skills to those focused on maritime skills, while optimizing IRR muster processes. Additional enhancements include a web-based application in 2023 that improves the screening of IRR members and provides real-time readiness data of the IRR force. Since its implementation, screening has increased nearly two-fold over the past year, improving mobilization availability, recruiting, and warfighting readiness. In line with efforts to improve overall Navy Reserve retention, we have also invested in Sailors' education regarding the requirements and benefits associated with service in the IRR.

Recruiting and Retention

We are competing for talent within a discriminating labor force under rapidly evolving economic conditions. The labor market in the United States is the tightest in recent memory, with more job openings than people to fill them. However, the turmoil and uncertainty of the last few years have shown that many Americans are biased to pursue work for organizations that provide purpose to their lives and align with intrinsic values. We believe the Navy Reserve is the employer of choice for those seeking challenge, purpose, and personal growth within a cohesive community of diverse and motivated individuals. To reach our goals, we are at General Quarters to spread this message to talented Americans who are eager to serve.

The Navy Reserve is projected to miss New Accession Training goals by 973 Sailors and to finish approximately 1,200 Sailors short of the authorized FY24 End Strength of 57,200. To address end strength shortfalls, reserve component recruiters have implemented parallel efforts to access new Sailors as well as those with prior service. To ensure we can fill critical gaps, the Navy Reserve must maintain a deep reservoir of talent, which requires active duty Sailors with prior service to affiliate with the Navy Reserve after leaving active Navy service. In 2023 the Navy established the Navy Recruiting Reserve Command (NRRC) and subordinate Navy Reserve Talent Acquisition Groups, charged with retaining Sailors transitioning from active duty for continued service in the Reserve Component. To better support these new commands the Navy also established the TAR Permanent Professional Recruiter community and designator. These professional recruiters deploy to fleet concentration areas to establish market penetration, facilitating the recruitment and retention of Navy Reserve Sailors. Additionally, NRRC established Prior Service Detachments in the five continental fleet concentration areas and at two

locations outside the continental United States. These detachments are staffed with Reserve Benefits Advisors whose purpose is to educate Sailors on the transition process, as well as the benefits and opportunities associated with service in the Navy Reserve.

The Reserve Force is proactively engaging in accession and retention strategies, including promoting transitions from Active Component to Selected Reserve (AC2SELRES) in Transition Assistance Program sessions and mandatory career development meetings. In 2023 we launched programs to promote enlisted SELRES members volunteering for critical mobilization positions to the next higher pay grade. Other efforts include increased bonus programs for affiliation and retention, broadening High Year Tenure policies for greater flexibility, and in the continuation of SELRES Sailors within the fiscal year. Tuition Assistance has been extended to SELRES members and exit surveys have been implemented to pinpoint further improvements for recruitment and retention. Additionally, the Navy also revised the Military Service Obligation contract to mandate two years of SELRES service following the initial 4-year active-duty enlistment for Sailors meeting specific Reserve Force needs, thereby retaining essential skills for strategic depth.

Culture of Excellence

In transforming the Reserve Force for strategic competition, Sailors form the foundation of our readiness and remain our most important stakeholders. The Navy Reserve Force forges a culture based on trust and respect, where connectedness and inclusion are key ingredients in every command dynamic. The Navy's Culture of Excellence (COE) campaign was updated with the launch of "Forged by the Sea, COE 2.0." Forged by the Sea is an approach to building great sailors, great teams, and great culture in every Navy command. It emphasizes cultivating

exceptional individuals, outstanding leaders, and cohesive teams, recognizing this is the best way to prepare for victory in combat, innovate and solve hard problems, and prevent harmful behaviors. In 2023, the Navy Reserve implemented the Integrated Primary Prevention Workforce (IPPW) capability with other components of the DoD. This dedicated workforce addresses multiple primary prevention functions including suicide, substance misuse, harassment, and sexual assault. By the close of FY24, the Navy Reserve will have assigned nine Integrated Prevention Coordinators qualified as public health and behavior health SMEs spanning each region to focus on risk and prevention factors.

The Navy Reserve is an exponentially more effective warfighting-ready force when it capitalizes on the diverse backgrounds, experiences, perspectives, and talents of those who serve. With this as our guiding principle, the Navy Reserve is committed to fielding a force as diverse as the country and harnessing the asymmetric advantage of our Sailors to accelerate our warfighting advantage. In aggregate, the diversity of the Reserve Force has increased across all categories over the previous five-year period. The Reserve Force will continue to foster inclusion and equity to harness the diverse and unique capabilities of our Sailors.

Quality of Service

The Navy's Quality of Service (QoS) initiative embodies a steadfast commitment to bolstering Sailors' well-being, both on and off duty, through robust leadership support, the institution of rigorous, enforceable standards coupled with transparency, and the vigilant maintenance of every Sailor's mental and physical health. At the heart of QoS are the dual pillars of Quality of Life—encompassing the lived experiences of Sailors and their families beyond the workplace—and Quality of Work, which pertains to the professional working environments.

This fusion is critical for fostering a Culture of Excellence, ensuring our reserve warfighters and teams are unequivocally prepared to excel in their missions.

The Navy Reserve has significantly improved the support and educational development for Reserve Sailors through the launch of the Weekend Drill Childcare (WDCC) and Tuition Assistance programs for SELRES Sailors. These initiatives directly tackle the well-being and operational preparedness of our force. The WDCC program provides critical childcare support during drill weekends, effectively removing a major barrier to our Sailors' participation and focus. Launched in 2023, the WDCC opened the pilot to fleet-concentration areas in San Diego, CA; Kitsap/Bremerton, WA; Jacksonville, FL, and later expanded to Baltimore, MD; Fort Worth, TX; New Orleans, LA; and Ventura County, CA. The expansion of the Navy's Tuition Assistance program to our SELRES Sailors is an investment in future Navy Reserve leaders by supporting the higher education goals and professional development of all SELRES Sailors in good standing. These initiatives are not solely retention benefits; they represent strategic investments in our Force's professionalism, resilience and skills.

Suicide Prevention

Fostering and maintaining the well-being of Reserve Sailors, civilians, and their families is an imperative for a healthy, whole force. While the Navy Reserve has realized a consistent year-over-year decrease in suicide related behaviors since 2019, we continue efforts to offer and destigmatize mental health treatments and ensure they are available to all service members and their families. The Psychological Health Outreach Program (PHOP) provides counselors, coordinators and resources 24/7/365. Electronic behavioral health screenings are available to every Sailor and family member for immediate access to PHOP services while Resiliency

Check-ins provide screening and referrals as necessary. In FY23, PHOP completed a total of 656 Reserve Center on-site visits and 35 virtual visits, a 21% increase from FY22, and 3,337 Navy Reserve Referrals. Reserve Sailors, civilians and their families are critical to our warfighting readiness and remain our most important asset – the importance of their health, wellness and safety remains central to our planning, investment, and assessments.

Foundation: Build Trust, Align Resources, Be Ready

The Navy Reserve has undergone profound enhancements, moving from routine monthly drills to implementation of scenario-based exercises that mirror the complexities of current and projected future conflicts. Focusing on Warfighting Readiness ensures that Reserve Sailors are prepared and proficient in their designated billet, and ready to contribute effectively from day one of any mobilization. The Navy Reserve Force has modernized legacy models of mobilization, personnel and pay systems, and Navy Reserve Center’s functions and locations to better support the fleet by increasing responsiveness and performance. The Navy Reserve Force is committed to ensuring its Sailors are relevant and ready to deliver maritime dominance in today’s unpredictable security environment.

Adaptive Mobilization

The legacy approach to mobilization, in which individual reserve Sailors processed through a single centralized facility to receive specialized training over the course of several months, no longer meets the demands of a complex and rapidly changing security environment. To rapidly mobilize the Reserve Force at scale, Adaptive Mobilization (AM) processes were

designed, developed and tailored to each billet, and distributed mobilization pathways were instituted to bring mobilization-ready Sailors into their active duty warfighting role efficiently. Employing the AM model, six regional Readiness and Mobilization Commands (REDCOMs) and their subordinate Navy Reserve Centers (NRCs) support distribution of current and future-activations by mobilizing the entire Selected Reserve population – roughly 47,200 Sailors – within 30 days. This model capitalizes on the strategic placement of TAR staffs, located at the REDCOMS, NRCs and within the Fleet, and leverages the nationally distributed Reserve Center infrastructure unique to Reserve Forces to decentralize mass mobilization requirements across globally distributed regions. The Navy Reserve is aggressively exercising these processes through force-wide mobilization exercises that stress-test our capabilities and throughput, and drive future improvements. In 2024 the Navy Reserve Force conducted four mobilization exercises to validate the mobilization readiness of 100% of our Sailors, and to specifically identify and address barriers within the AM process.

Navy Reserve Center Optimization

The 111 Navy Reserve Centers (NRC) spread across the United States, Puerto Rico and Guam make up a critical support network for Reserve Sailors across the world. In Fiscal Year 2020, the Navy Reserve began an effort to optimize this network by strategically realigning TAR personnel to better support reserve Sailors at under-staffed NRCs and REDCOMs, and strategically closing a small number of NRCs. The effort supported and aligns with the Secretary of the Navy's 10-year infrastructure reset strategy, which directed the divestment of the Navy's facility footprint, in this case reducing the Navy Reserve infrastructure footprint by 10.3%. Additionally, the NRC optimization effort reduces the number of stand-alone, off-installation

NRCs, decreasing risk to the force and eliminating the expense and Sailor dwell impact of additive Armed Watch Stander programs.

Conclusion

My unambiguous focus remains warfighting readiness. We have transformed the Navy Reserve and delivered ready units of action and augmentation manpower to support Navy warfighting throughout the spectrum of conflict. To remain ahead of our pacing threats in the coming decades, we must continue to transform our force with urgency, to face the challenges of today while preparing for the war of tomorrow. Strategic and tactical guidance supports this singular goal, with the enduring foundation of professional, empowered, proficient Sailors at the core. As it has for well over a century, America's Navy Reserve remains "Ready Now." We have made great strides in modernizing how we man, train, equip and mobilize the force. But we still have much to do.

Today, we face a new era with new challenges. On behalf of the men and women of the United States Navy Reserve, thank you for your steadfast support of Navy Reserve Sailors, civilians, families, and employers. With your continued support, we will lead the transformation of our Navy Reserve to address the current and future global environment with speed and agility.