



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
HOUSE OF DELEGATES
RICHMOND

ROBERT G. MARSHALL
POST OFFICE BOX 421
MANASSAS, VIRGINIA 20108-0421

THIRTEENTH DISTRICT

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS:
COUNTIES, CITIES AND TOWNS
FINANCE
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

March 20, 2011

Honorable Jim Webb
248 Russell SOB
Washington DC, 20510
Re: March 22-23 Battleship Gun Auction

Dear Senator Webb:

Please stop the Navy's pending scrap auction of the fifteen remaining 16" Battleship Gun Barrels now in storage (<http://www.govliquidation.com/auction/view?id=4229536&convertTo=USD>) which conflicts with Pub. L. 109-163. To let the March 22-23 auction proceed is to let a scrap metals dealer limit the military power and foreign policy options of the United States and applaud the Navy for spending \$6 Billion for the first Zumwalt class land attack destroyer, the DDG-1000, when refitting the battleship Iowa will cost \$250 million according to the Navy's own FY 2006 figures!

The GAO confirmed that two Iowa class battleships will meet the Marine Corps requirements at a cost significantly less than the current DDG-1000 program. Weapons procurement is for National Defense, not public works projects for select Congressional districts.

Since the removal of the Iowa Class Battleships in 1992 from active operations, the Navy has little to no capacity to provide Naval Surface Fire Support for our soldiers and Marines. WW II and Korean era Marines told me that the sight of a Battleship firing nine 16-inch guns onshore is intimidating to any enemy, fixes the attention of hostile troops, and is a powerful statement to civilians. A Lebanese friend told me he could not aptly describe the devastating effect of the USS New Jersey's 16 inch guns bombarding Druse and Syrian gun batteries in Lebanon in 1984.

When our Desert Storm allies came to us with the build-up in Iraq and asked our Navy to help provide this capability, our Navy in effect told them they could not. (Joint and Interdependent Requirements: A Case Study in Solving the Naval Surface Fire Support Capabilities Gap. by Col. Shawn Welch. Pg. 69 Ingram, Ivan. "Naval Gunfire Support for the Assault of the Al Faw Peninsula," Journal of the Australian Naval Institute, Number 109, Winter 2003.) The British and Australian Navies used their own ships. Fortunately, we were fighting an enemy that was not very capable in this area. With our Navy's lack of NSFS we seriously compromise, if not completely lose or forfeit, our ability to undertake forced amphibious assaults. The Iowa Class Battleships were and are an answer to this present deficiency. Yet, the Navy lobbied Congress in 2006 to remove Iowa class ships from the Naval Register claiming they were impeding their modernization effort to solve the Naval Surface Fire Support shortfall!

Since that retirement most, if not all, NSFS programs have been cancelled or have had little effect as a solution. Federal law in 1995 required the Navy to certify that they had a NSFS system equal to or greater than the Iowa's before the ships would be removed from the Naval Register. The Navy and

Congress in 2006 rescinded that provision. The 2006 NDAA Conference Report on HR 5122 for FY 07 noted: "United States Congress remains 'deeply concerned' over the loss of the naval surface gunfire support that the battleships provided, and has noted that 'Navy efforts to improve upon, much less replace, this capability have been highly problematic.'"

As a partial consequence, Congress passed Pub. L. 109-163, the National Defense Authorization Act 2006, requiring that the battleships be maintained in a state of readiness should they be needed again. The act requires: 1. Iowa must not be altered in any way that would impair her military utility; 2. The battleship must be preserved in her present condition through the continued use of cathodic protection, dehumidification systems, and any other preservation methods as needed; 3. *Spare parts and unique equipment such as the 16-inch (410 mm) gun barrels and projectiles must be preserved in adequate numbers to support Iowa, if reactivated;* 4. The Navy must prepare plans for the rapid reactivation of Iowa should she be returned to the Navy in the event of a national emergency.

Little has changed regarding the Navy's ability to provide credible NSFS for securing safe delivery of our troops ashore. The Navy has a history of pulling older ships and ship systems back as R&D platforms or testing systems. The ability to do this with USS WISCONSIN and USS IOWA should not be dismissed out of hand.

In 2007, a War College Study concluded that Major Caliber Guns were a lower cost solution to providing fire support. It was awarded the National Defense University best thesis award for Academic Year 2007. Pratt and Whitney, in 2001, stated that using a Major Caliber Gun as a launching system for Scamjets was feasible and cost effective. This is outlined in the thesis mentioned above.

The 3.6 million pound 16" Gun Tube Barrels up for auction are located at Hawthorne, NV Army Depot and are sitting in the desert where they have been for over 50 years. There is essentially no cost to allow them to continue to remain in storage at Hawthorne. If the Navy or Army (manager at Hawthorn Depot) states there is a cost, it needs to be specifically identified and subject to audit and Congressional oversight. However, it is highly unlikely that any true costs exist for this storage other than real-estate space (which is already paid for and therefore not a direct cost). If there is a statutory auditing requirement that drives costs, those should be prohibited by Congress to enable continued cost-free storage of these fifteen irreplaceable gun tubes.

It would be a highly unwise decision to scrap these precision Gun Tubes when it is clear they could have other uses in the future. I am reliably advised we lack the ability to easily manufacture these tubes now or in the future, and that these are the remaining barrels. Thank you for looking into this.

Sincerely,



Delegate Bob Marshall