

## Marine Corps Commandant Stresses Need For Larger Expeditionary Force

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(WASHINGTON, D.C.) &ndash; Today, the Congressional Shipbuilding Caucus, co-chaired by Representatives Gene Taylor (D-MS) and Rob Wittman (R-VA), hosted a meeting with the Commandant of the Marine Corps General James T. Conway to discuss the Marine Corps's ship force structure needs, emerging global threats, and the U.S. shipbuilding industry. Other Members of the Caucus in attendance were Representatives Todd Akin (R-MO), Rodney Alexander (R-LA), Jason Altmire (D-PA), Joe Courtney (D-CT), Susan Davis (D-CA), Darrell Issa (R-CA), Mike McIntyre (D-NC), Tom Perriello (D-VA), Bobby Scott (D-VA), and Joe Wilson (R-SC).

In his remarks, General Conway highlighted the Marine Corps accomplishments in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and its overwhelming humanitarian response following the earthquake in Haiti. He emphasized that in order for the Marine Corps to fulfill its missions, the Nation must maintain a fleet of 38 amphibious ships. He stated that budgetary constraints force the Marines to reduce requirements to 33 ships and that any fewer would become "untenable" as the risk to the Marine Corps and America's security interests would be too great. He noted that the capability of the Marine Corps' fleet remains in high demand around the world and stressed that the "value of the amphibious fleet cannot be questioned."

The General commented that America's naval capability is often "taken for granted" and that it is a struggle for the Navy to ensure adequate funding for all its platforms. The General noted that the Navy, which is responsible for purchasing the ships for the Marine Corps, has competing priorities. In order to elevate the importance of maintaining a strong amphibious fleet, the Marine Corps continues to emphasize the flexibility of the amphibious platforms and their contribution to forcible entry and maintaining a presence off shore. In response to a question on how the Marine Corps approaches its ship requirements with the Navy, the General said that his approach has been to emphasize the number of ships it needs, rather than a particular dollar amount to give the Navy flexibility in buying amphibious ships.

The General said that whenever shipbuilding is addressed, the Navy and Marine Corps always take into consideration the industrial base and how the work is distributed among the Nation's shipyards. According to him, the Navy, Marine Corps, and shipbuilding industrial base together form a vital component of America's national defense, and "that capability must not be allowed to dwindle."

Established in January 2005, the Congressional Shipbuilding Caucus seeks to educate lawmakers about the U.S. shipbuilding industry and works for the enactment of budgets and policies to rebuild America's sea services and shipbuilding industrial base. The Caucus currently numbers 115 members of the House of Representatives. It is one of the largest and most proactive caucuses in the House.

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