

WASHINGTON, DC - Today, the Hampton Roads Congressional Delegation teamed up to advocate for maintaining the permanent force structure of 11 aircraft carriers. Congressmen Wittman, Nye, Scott and Forbes sent a letter to Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, citing concern over recent reports suggesting that Pentagon officials are contemplating a reduction in the nation's aircraft carrier fleet as part of the upcoming Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR).

In the letter, the Congressmen cited their support of Secretary Gates' recommended changes to future aircraft carrier construction schedules and his reiteration of the requirement for an 11 carrier force structure until at least 2040 as part of his presentation of the Fiscal Year 2010 DOD Budget Rollout.

The Members further noted that, "in recent years, Congress has approved several requests by the Navy for legislative relief in the deactivation and retirement of aging aircraft carriers. These requests led Congress to revise the original 12 carrier minimum and include the current 11 carrier minimum in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2007. However, we strongly believe that any further reductions below the current statutory minimum are not in our best national security interest."

**Congressman Rob Wittman, who serves on the House Armed Services Committee and is the Ranking Member on the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee, said:** "Our current carrier structure allows us the agility to maintain a worldwide presence and react efficiently to threats as they develop. Further reductions in carriers would hinder our reaction speed and place an increased burden on our sailors and marines around the globe."

**Congressman Glenn Nye, who serves on the House Armed Services Committee and the House Veterans Affairs Committee, said:** "Here in Hampton Roads, we understand the crucial role of aircraft carriers in keeping our country safe and protecting American interests abroad. We cannot afford to limit our ability to respond to new and uncertain threats, assist in humanitarian missions, or to support our troops in harms' way."

**Congressman Scott said:** "The strategic cost associated with these proposed reductions outweigh any anticipated savings and in today's climate, we should not take this risk."

**Congressman Forbes said:** "The Aircraft carrier has been the foundation of our national strategy and one of the most effective tools in protecting our national interests across the globe.

Reducing our carrier force would only remove vital security options and opportunities from the table. Perhaps even more concerning though, is that the Administration is considering these reductions without a long-term shipbuilding plan or certification that the budget will meet that plan, and therefore allowing the budget to drive our defense strategy."

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[Click here to view a PDF version of the letter sent by Congressmen Wittman, Nye, Scott and Forbes.](#)