

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

COMMITTEES:
APPROPRIATIONS
FOREIGN RELATIONS
SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE
SMALL BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

September 21, 2017

The Honorable Richard Spencer
Secretary of the Navy
2000 Navy Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20350

Dear Secretary Spencer:

First, I want to express my sincere condolences to the families of the 17 sailors who recently lost their lives while aboard the USS Fitzgerald and USS John S. McCain. They served our country honorably and our nation mourns with their families.

I commend the decision to institute an operational pause and review to ensure safe and effective environments for our sailors. While those who choose to serve in harm's way are aware of the inherent risks of performing their duties, as you know, recent collisions involving U.S. Navy warships have called into question the current state of readiness of not only our ships but also their crews. I am increasingly concerned that these incidents could have been avoided.

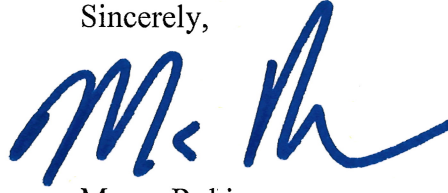
Florida is home to a significant number of military personnel and Naval Station Mayport, the second largest naval port on the East Coast. The safety of our sailors is of vital importance to me, and I request that you expand the scope of your evaluation so that it includes the ships such as those homeported at Naval Station Mayport.

Understanding the portion the fleet most affected by this conundrum is our forward-deployed naval forces, we must not lose sight of keeping the rest of the force safe. As you continue your investigative efforts regarding the recent U.S. Navy incidents at sea, I request that you:

- Increase the scope of the Readiness for Sea Assessments (RFSA) beyond ships assigned to Japan to include all ships across the globe. These assessments are intended to inspect and assess watchstander proficiency and material readiness to ensure ships are able to safely navigate, communicate and operate. Every ship should be reviewed to ensure safe operations for our sailors.
- Ensure the ships of every fleet are properly certified by standing up a Naval Surface Group for each region to oversee the training and certification of ships.
- Address fatigue concerns by ensuring shipboard routines allow sailors get sufficient sleep.
- Identify a plan for each fleet to regain currency and proficiency across all certification areas.

Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to working with you on these matters.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. Rubio', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator