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Navy LPD-17 Flight II Amphibious Ship Program: Background and Issues for Congress

Updated April 23, 2019

Congressional Research Service
https://crsreports.congress.gov
R43543

CRS REPORT
Prepared for Members and
Committees of Congress

Summary

The Navy wants to procure a total of 13 LPD-17 Flight II amphibious ships. LPD-17 Flight II ships cost roughly $1.8 billion each to procure. The first LPD-17 Flight II ship, LPD-30, was procured in FY2018. As part of its action on the Navy's proposed FY2019 budget, Congress provided $350 million in unrequested advance procurement (AP) funding for a second LPD-17 Flight II ship, LPD-31, to be procured in FY2020. This was consistent with the Navy's FY2019 budget submission, under which LPD-31 was planned for procurement in FY2020 and the remainder of its procurement cost was to be requested in FY2020. The Navy's FY2020 budget submission, however, proposes deferring the procurement of LPD-31 by one year, to FY2021, and the Navy's proposed FY2020 budget, rather than requesting the remainder of LPD-31's procurement cost, instead requests $247.1 million in AP funding for the ship.

Navy officials state that if no LPD-17 Flight II ship is procured in FY2020, the $350 million in FY2019 AP funding that Congress provided for the LPD-17 program would become unexecutable, because that funding was provided specifically for use in building an LPD-17 Flight II ship procured in FY2020, not an LPD-17 Flight II ship procured in FY2021. The $350 million in FY2019 AP funding can be made executable by procuring LPD-31 in FY2020 or by passing legislation permitting the FY2019 AP funding to be used for an LPD-17 Flight II ship procured in FY2021. One alternative for procuring LPD-31 in FY2020 would be to do so with full funding (i.e., with the remainder of the ship's procurement cost provided in FY2020). Another alternative would be to pass legislation giving the Navy the authority to procure LPD-31 in FY2020 using incremental funding. Navy officials state that under the latter alternative, the amount of procurement funding needed for LPD-31 in FY2020 would be, at a minimum, roughly $200 million, and not more than the requested amount of $247.1 million.

As part of its action on the Navy's proposed FY2019 budget, Congress also provided $350 million in unrequested AP funding for a different kind of amphibious ship—an amphibious assault ship called LHA-9. This ship is considerably larger and more expensive than an LPD-17 Flight II ship. The Navy's FY2020 budget submission estimates LHA-9's procurement cost at $4,076.4 million (i.e., about $4.1 billion). Under the Navy's FY2019 budget submission, LHA-9 was planned for procurement in FY2024. The $350 million in FY2019 AP funding that Congress provided was intended to encourage the Navy to accelerate the procurement of LHA-9 from FY2024 to an earlier fiscal year, such as FY2020 or FY2021. Under the Navy's FY2020 budget submission, the Navy continues to show LHA-9 as a ship planned for procurement in FY2024, and the Navy's proposed FY2020 budget does not request any additional procurement or AP funding for the ship.

Issues for Congress include whether to procure LPD-31 in FY2020 or FY2021; whether to procure LPD-31 (if it is procured in FY2020) with full funding or incremental funding; the amount of procurement or AP funding to provide for LPD-31 and LHA-9 in FY2020; and more generally whether the Navy is placing too much, too little, or about the right amount of emphasis on amphibious ships in its FY2020 budget submission, particularly compared to other Navy shipbuilding programs.

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Introduction

This report provides background information and issues for Congress on the LPD-17 Flight II amphibious ship program. The Navy's FY2020 budget submission defers the planned procurement of the second LPD-17 Flight II ship, LPD-31, by one year, to FY2021, and requests $247.1 million in advance procurement (AP) funding for the ship.

This report also discusses LHA-9, a different kind of amphibious ship that the Navy wants to procure in FY2024. The Navy's proposed FY2020 budget does not request any procurement or AP funding for this ship.

Issues for Congress include whether to procure LPD-31 in FY2020 or FY2021; whether to procure LPD-31 (if it is procured in FY2020) with full funding or incremental funding; the amount of procurement or AP funding to provide for LPD-31 and LHA-9 in FY2020; and more generally whether the Navy is placing too much, too little, or about the right amount of emphasis on amphibious ships in its FY2020 budget submission, particularly compared to other Navy shipbuilding programs. Congress's decisions on these issues could affect Navy capabilities and funding requirements and the shipbuilding industrial base.

For an overview of the strategic and budgetary context in which the LPD-17 Flight II program and other Navy shipbuilding programs may be considered, see CRS Report RL32665, *Navy Force Structure and Shipbuilding Plans: Background and Issues for Congress*, by Ronald O'Rourke.

Background

Amphibious Ships in General

Roles and Missions

Navy amphibious ships are operated by the Navy, with crews consisting of Navy personnel. The primary function of Navy amphibious ships is to lift (i.e., transport) embarked U.S. Marines and their equipment and supplies to distant operating areas, and enable Marines to conduct expeditionary operations ashore in those areas. Although amphibious ships are designed to support Marine landings against opposing military forces, they are also used for operations in permissive or benign situations where there are no opposing forces. Due to their large storage spaces and their ability to use helicopters and landing craft to transfer people, equipment, and supplies from ship to shore without need for port facilities,[1] amphibious ships are potentially useful for a range of combat and noncombat operations.[2]

[1] Amphibious ships have berthing spaces for Marines; storage space for their wheeled vehicles, their other combat equipment, and their supplies; flight decks and hangar decks for their helicopters and vertical take-off and landing (VTOL) fixed-wing aircraft; and well decks for storing and launching their landing craft. (A well deck is a large, garage-like space in the stern of the ship. It can be flooded with water so that landing craft can leave or return to the ship. Access to the well deck is protected by a large stern gate that is somewhat like a garage door.)

[2] Amphibious ships and their embarked Marine forces can be used for launching and conducting humanitarian-assistance and disaster-response (HA/DR) operations; peacetime engagement and partnership-building activities, such as exercises; other nation-building operations, such as reconstruction operations; operations to train, advise, and assist foreign military forces; peace-enforcement operations; noncombatant evacuation operations (NEOs); maritime-security operations, such as anti-piracy operations; smaller-scale strike and counter-terrorism operations; and larger-scale ground combat operations. Amphibious ships and their embarked Marine forces can also be used for maintaining

On any given day, some of the Navy's amphibious ships, like some of the Navy's other ships, are forward-deployed to various overseas operating areas. Forward-deployed U.S. Navy amphibious ships are often organized into three-ship formations called amphibious ready groups (ARGs).[3] On average, two or perhaps three ARGs might be forward-deployed at any given time. Amphibious ships are also sometimes forward-deployed on an individual basis to lower-threat operating areas, particularly for conducting peacetime engagement activities with foreign countries or for responding to smaller-scale or noncombat contingencies.

Types of Amphibious Ships

Navy amphibious ships can be divided into two main groups—the so-called "big-deck" amphibious assault ships, designated LHA and LHD, which look like medium-sized aircraft carriers, and the smaller (but still sizeable) amphibious ships designated LPD or LSD, which are sometimes called "small-deck" amphibious ships.[4] The LHAs and LHDs have large flight decks and hangar decks for embarking and operating numerous helicopters and vertical or short takeoff and landing (V/STOL) fixed-wing aircraft, while the LSDs and LPDs have much smaller flight decks and hangar decks for embarking and operating smaller numbers of helicopters. The LHAs and LHDs, as bigger ships, in general can individually embark more Marines and equipment than the LSDs and LPDs.

Amphibious Lift Goal

The Navy's 355-ship force-level goal, released in December 2016, calls for achieving and maintaining a 38-ship amphibious force that includes 12 LHA/LHD-type ships, 13 LPD-17 class ships, and 13 LSD/LPD-type ships (12+13+13).[5] The goal for achieving and maintaining a force of 38 amphibious ships relates primarily to meeting wartime needs for amphibious lift. Navy and Marine Corps officials have testified that fully meeting U.S. regional combatant commander requests for day-to-day forward deployments of amphibious ships would require a force of 50 or more amphibious ships.[6]

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forward-deployed naval presence for purposes of deterrence, reassurance, and maintaining regional stability.

[3] An ARG notionally includes three amphibious ships—one LHA or LHD, one LSD, and one LPD. These three amphibious ships together can embark a Marine expeditionary unit (MEU) consisting of about 2,200 Marines, their aircraft, their landing craft, their combat equipment, and about 15 days' worth of supplies. ARGs can operate in conjunction with carrier strike groups (CSGs) to form larger naval task forces; ARGs can also be broken up into individual ships that are sent to separate operating areas.

[4] U.S. Navy amphibious ships have designations starting with the letter L, as in amphibious *landing*. LHA can be translated as landing ship, helicopter-capable, assault; LHD can be translated as landing ship, helicopter-capable, well deck; LPD can be translated as landing ship, helicopter platform, well deck; and LSD can be translated as landing ship, well deck. Whether noted in the designation or not, almost all these ships have well decks. The exceptions are LHAs 6 and 7, which do not have well decks and instead have expanded aviation support capabilities. For an explanation of well decks, see footnote 1.

[5] For more on the Navy's 355-ship force-level goal, see CRS Report RL32665, *Navy Force Structure and Shipbuilding Plans: Background and Issues for Congress*, by Ronald O'Rourke. For a more detailed review of the 38-ship force structure requirements, see Appendix A of CRS Report RL34476, *Navy LPD-17 Amphibious Ship Procurement: Background, Issues, and Options for Congress*, which is an archived report.

[6] For example, in testimony to the Seapower and Projection Forces subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee on February 25, 2015, Marine Corps Lieutenant General Kenneth J. Glueck, Jr., Deputy Commandant for Combat Development and Integration and Commanding General of the Marine Corps Combat Development Command, stated that the number needed to fully meet regional combatant commander demands for forward-deployed amphibious ships is "close to 54." (Source: Spoken testimony of Lieutenant General Glueck, as reflected in transcript of hearing.)

Current and Projected Force Levels

The Navy's force of amphibious ships at the end of FY2018 included 32 ships, including 9 amphibious assault ships (1 LHA and 8 LHDs), 11 LPD-17 Flight I ships, and 12 LSD-41/49 class ships. The LSD-41/49 class ships, which are the ships to be replaced by LPD-17 Flight II ships, are discussed in the next section.

The Navy's FY2020 30-year (FY2020-FY2049) shipbuilding plan projects that the Navy's force of amphibious ships will increase gradually to 38 ships by FY2026, remain at a total of 36 to 38 ships in FY2027 to FY2034, decline to 34 or 35 ships in FY2035-FY2038, increase to 36 or 37 ships in FY2039-FY2046, and remain at 35 ships in FY2047-FY2049. Over the entire 30-year period, the force is projected to include an average of about 35.8 ships, or about 94% of the required figure of 38 ships, through resulting amount of lift capability provided by the ships would not necessarily equate to about 94% of the amphibious lift goal, due to the mix of ships in service at any given moment and their individual lift capabilities.

Existing LSD-41/49 Class Ships

The Navy's 12 aging Whidbey Island/Harpers Ferry (LSD-41/49) class ships (**Figure 1**) were procured between FY1981 and FY1993 and entered service between 1985 and 1998.[7] The class includes 12 ships because they were built at a time when the Navy was planning a 36-ship (12+12+12) amphibious force. They have an expected service life of 40 years; the first ship will reach that age in 2025. The Navy's FY2020 30-year shipbuilding plan projects that the 12 ships will retire between FY2026 and FY2038.

LPD-17 Flight II Program

Program Name

The Navy decided in 2014 that the LSD-41/49 replacement ships would be built to a variant of the design of the Navy's San Antonio (LPD-17) class amphibious ships. (A total of 13 LPD-17 class ships [LPDs 17 through 29] were procured between FY1996 and FY2017.) Reflecting that decision, the Navy announced on April 10, 2018, that the replacement ships would be known as the LPD-17 Flight II ships.[8] By implication, the Navy's original LPD-17 design became the LPD-17 Flight I design.

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[7] The class was initially known as the Whidbey Island (LSD-41) class. The final four ships in the class, beginning with *Harpers Ferry* (LSD-49), were built to a modified version of the original LSD-41 design, prompting the name of the class to be changed to the Harpers Ferry/Whidbey Island (LSD-41/49) class. Some sources refer to these 12 ships as two separate classes. The first three were built by Lockheed Shipbuilding of Seattle, WA, a firm that subsequently exited the Navy shipbuilding business. The final nine were built by Avondale Shipyards of New Orleans, LA, a shipyard that eventually became part of the shipbuilding firm Huntington Ingalls Industries (HII). Avondale, like Lockheed Shipbuilding, no longer builds Navy ships. HII wound down Navy shipbuilding operations at Avondale in 2014, after Avondale finished building LPD-25, the ninth LPD-17 class ship. HII continues to operate two other shipyards that build Navy ships—Ingalls Shipbuilding in Pascagoula, MS (HII/Ingalls), and Newport News Shipbuilding in Newport News, VA (HII/NNS). HII's construction of amphibious ships, previously divided between Avondale and Ingalls, now takes place primarily at Ingalls.

[8] Megan Ecsteain, "Navy Designates Upcoming LX(R) Amphibs as San Antonio-Class LPD Flight II," *USNI News*, April 11, 2018. Within a program to build a class of Navy ships, the term *flight* refers to a group of ships within the class that are built to a particular version of the class design. The LPD-17 Fight II program was previously known as the LX(R) program. In the designation LX(R), the X meant that the exact design of the ship had not yet been determined, and the R meant that the ships are intended as replacements for the LSD-41/49 class ships. Prior to being

Figure 1. LSD-41/49 Class Ship

Source: U.S. Navy photo accessed May 7, 2014, at http://www.navy.mil/gallery_search_results.asp?terms=lsd+52&page=4&r=4. The Navy's caption for the photo states that the photo is dated July 13, 2013, and that it shows the *Pearl Harbor* (LSD-52) anchored off Majuro atoll in the Republic of the Marshall Islands during an exercise called Pacific Partnership 2013.

The first LPD-17 Flight II ship is designated LPD-30. Subsequent LPD-17 Flight II ships are to be designated LPD-31, LPD-32, and so on. Whether the LPD-17 Flight II ships constitute their own shipbuilding program or an extension of the original LPD-17 shipbuilding program might be a matter of perspective. As a matter of convenience, this CRS report refers to the Flight II shipbuilding effort as a separate program. Years from now, LPD-17 Flight I and Flight II ships might come to be known collectively as either the LPD-17 class, the LPD-17/30 class, or the LPD-17 and LPD-30 classes.

Design

Compared to the LPD-17 Flight I design, the LPD-17 Flight II design (**Figure 2**) is somewhat less expensive to procure, and in some ways less capable—a reflection of how the Flight II design was developed to meet Navy and Marine Corps operational requirements while staying within a unit procurement cost target that had been established for the program.[9] In many other respects,

referred to as the LX(R) program, the program was referred to as the LSD(X) program, meaning an LSD-type ship whose design had not yet been determined. The program's designation was changed to LX(R) in 2012 to signal that the replacement for the existing LSD-41/49 class ships would be an amphibious ship that would best meet future Navy and Marine Corps needs, regardless of whether that turned out to be a ship that one might refer to as an LSD. For an article discussing this earlier change in the program's designation, see Christopher P. Cavas, "Different Missions Might Await New USN Amphib," *Defense News*, November 12, 2012.

[9] The Navy's unit procurement cost targets for the LPD-17 Flight II program were $1,643 million in constant FY2014 dollars for the lead ship, and an average of $1,400 million in constant FY2014 dollars for ships 2 through 11. (Source: Navy briefing on LX(R) program to CRS and CBO, March 23, 2015.) The cost target for the lead ship was greater than the cost target for the subsequent ships primarily because the procurement cost of the lead ship incorporates much or all of the detail design and nonrecurring engineering (DD/NRE) costs for the program. Incorporating much or all of the

however, the LPD-17 Flight II design is similar in appearance and capabilities to the LPD-17 Flight I design. Of the 13 LPD-17 Flight I ships, the final two (LPDs 28 and 29) incorporate some design changes that make them transitional ships between the Flight I design and the Flight II design.

Figure 2. LPD-17 Flight II Design

Artist's rendering

Source: Huntington Ingalls Industries rendering accessed April 22, 2019, at https://www.huntingtoningalls.com/lpd-flight-ii/.

Procurement Quantity

Consistent with the Navy's 38-ship amphibious force-level goal, the Navy wants to procure a total of 13 LPD-17 Flight II ships.

Procurement Schedule

The first LPD-17 Flight II ship, LPD-30, was procured in FY2018. Under the Navy's FY2019 budget submission, the second LPD-17 Flight II ship, LPD-31, was to be procured in FY2020,[10] and the remaining 11 were to be procured at a rate of one per year starting in FY2022. The Navy's FY2020 budget submission proposes deferring the procurement of LPD-31 to FY2021 and the procurement of the third ship (LPD-32) to FY2023, with the final 10 ships to be procured at a rate of one per year starting in FY2025. As shown in **Table 1**, when compared to the Navy's

DD/NRE costs of for a shipbuilding program into the procurement cost of the lead ship in the program is a traditional Navy shipbuilding budgeting practice.

[10] The Navy had planned to procure the first LPD-17 Flight II ship in FY2020. Congress, as part of its action on the Navy's proposed FY2018 budget, accelerated the procurement of the first LPD17 Flight II ship to FY2018. The Navy's FY2019 budget submission, which was submitted before Congress finalized its action on the Navy's FY2018 budget, programmed the procurement of an LPD-17 Flight II ship in FY2020. Under the Navy's original plan, the ship programmed for procurement in FY2020 was to be the first Flight II ship. With the first Flight II ship having been procured in FY2018, the Flight II ship scheduled for procurement in FY2020 became the second Flight II ship.

FY2019 budget submission, the Navy's FY2020 budget submission reduces from four to two the total number of LPD-17 Flight II ships to be procured during the period FY2020-FY2024.

Table 1. LPD-17 Flight II Annual Procurement Quantities for FY2020-FY2024

As shown in Navy's FY2019 and FY2020 budget submissions

Budget Submission	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY20-FY24 Total
FY2019 submission	1	0	1	1	1	4
FY2020 submission	0	1	0	1	0	2

Source: Table prepared by CRS based on Navy's FY2019 and FY2020 budget submissions.

Procurement Cost

Under the Navy's FY2020 budget submission, LPD-17 Flight II ships cost roughly $1.8 billion each to procure.

Program Funding

Table 2 shows LPD-17 Flight II procurement and advance procurement (AP) funding for FY2020-FY2024 as presented in the Navy's FY2020 budget submission.

Table 2. LPD-17 Flight II Funding for FY2020-FY2024

Millions of dollars, rounded to nearest tenth

	FY20 (req.)	FY21 (proj.)	FY22 (proj.)	FY23 (proj.)	FY24 (proj.)
Procurement	0	1,590.9	0	1,738.9	0
Advance procurement (AP)	247.1	0	0	0	0
Total	247.1	1,590.9	0	1,738.9	0
(Procurement quantity)	*(0)*	*(1)*	*(0)*	*(1)*	*(0)*

Source: Table prepared by CRS based on Navy's FY2020 budget submission.

LHA-9 Amphibious Assault Ship

The most recently procured LHA/LHD-type amphibious assault ship is LHA-8 (**Figure 3**), which was procured in FY2017 and is scheduled under the Navy's FY2020 budget submission to be delivered in January 2024.

The Navy wants to procure the next LHA/LHD-type ship, LHA-9, in FY2024. LHA/LHD-type ships are considerably larger and more expensive than LPDs. The Navy's FY2020 budget submission estimates LHA-9's procurement cost at $4,076.4 million (i.e., about $4.1 billion).

Some in Congress and elsewhere are interested in the potential for accelerating the procurement of LHA-9 from FY2024 to an earlier year, such as FY2020 or FY2021, in part to achieve better production learning curve benefits in shifting from production of LHA-8 to LHA-9 and thereby reduce LHA-9's procurement cost in real (i.e., inflation-adjusted) terms. For example, the Senate Armed Services Committee's report (S.Rept. 115-262 of June 5, 2018) on the John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019 (S. S. 2987) stated:

> The committee remains concerned with the Navy procurement profile for large deck amphibious assault ships, which includes a span of 7 years until the next large deck amphibious assault ship (LHA–9) is procured in 2024.
>
> The committee notes that efficiencies could be gained by reducing this span, which could enable a steadier workforce with an increased learning curve, material and equipment suppliers on more reliable and fixed delivery contracts, and a more effective continuous improvement schedule.
>
> The committee urges the Secretary of the Navy to accelerate procurement of LHA–9 to not later than 2021…. (Pages 82-83)

Figure 3. LHA-8 Amphibious Assault Ship

Artist's rendering

Source: Photo accompanying Tyler Rogoway, "The Next America Class Amphibious Assault Ship Will Almost Be In a Class of its Own," The Drive, April 17, 2018. A note on the photo credits the photo to HII.

As part of its action on the Navy's proposed FY2019 budget, Congress provided $350 million in unrequested AP funding for LHA-9, in part to encourage the Navy to accelerate the procurement of LHA-9 from FY2024 to an earlier fiscal year, such as FY2020 or FY2021.

Under the Navy's FY2020 budget submission, the Navy continues to show LHA-9 as a ship planned for procurement in FY2024, and the Navy's proposed FY2020 budget does not request any additional procurement or AP funding for the ship. Consistent with past practice for procuring LHA/LHD-type amphibious ships, the Navy's FY2020 budget submission anticipates using two-year incremental funding (i.e., split funding) to procure LHA-9, with the bulk of the ship's procurement cost to be divided between FY2024 and FY2025. **Table 3** shows FY2020-FY2024 funding for the ship under the Navy's FY2020 budget submission.

Table 3. LHA-9 Funding for FY2020-FY2024

Millions of dollars, rounded to nearest tenth

	FY20 (req.)	FY21 (proj.)	FY22 (proj.)	FY23 (proj.)	FY24 (proj.)
Procurement	0	0	0	0	1,617.8
Advance procurement (AP)	0	0	0	170.6	0
Total	0	0	0	170.6	1,617.8
(Procurement quantity)	*(0)*	*(0)*	*(0)*	*(0)*	*(1)*

Source: Table prepared by CRS based on Navy's FY2020 budget submission.

Amphibious Warship Industrial Base

Huntington Ingalls Industries/Ingalls Shipbuilding (HII/Ingalls) of Pascagoula, MS, is the Navy's current builder of both LPDs and LHA/LHD-type ships, although other U.S. shipyards could also build amphibious ships.[11] The amphibious warship industrial base also includes many supplier firms in numerous U.S. states that provide materials and components for Navy amphibious ships. HII states that the supplier base for its LHA production line, for example, includes 457 companies in 39 states.[12]

Issues for Congress

Issues for Congress for FY2020 include the following**:**

- whether to procure LPD-31 in FY2020 or FY2021;
- whether to procure LPD-31 (if it is procured in FY2020) with full funding or incremental funding;
- the amount of procurement or AP funding to provide for LPD-31 and LHA-9 in FY2020; and
- more generally whether the Navy is placing too much, too little, or about the right amount of emphasis on amphibious ships in its FY2020 budget submission, particularly compared to other Navy shipbuilding programs.

Regarding the first issue above, supporters of procuring LPD-31 in FY2020 could argue that it could put the Navy on a path to achieving the 38-ship amphibious ship force-level goal sooner than FY2026, permit the $350 million in AP funding that Congress provided for the program in FY2019 to be executed as intended, and leave more budgetary room in FY2021 for funding other Navy programs. Supporters of procuring LPD-31 in FY2021 could argue that FY2026 is an acceptable date for achieving the 38-ship amphibious ship force-level objective, particularly given the challenges the Navy faces for meeting some of its other force-level goals in coming years (such as those for attack submarines and aircraft carriers); that in a situation of finite Navy or Department of Defense (DOD) funding, procuring LPD-31 in FY2020 might require

[11] Amphibious ships could also be built by U.S. shipyards such as HII/Newport News Shipbuilding (HII/NNS) of Newport News, VA; General Dynamics/National Steel and Shipbuilding Company (GD/NASSCO) of San Diego, CA; and (for LPDs at least) General Dynamics/Bath Iron Works (GD/BIW) of Bath, ME. The Navy over the years has from time to time conducted competitions among shipyards for contracts to build amphibious ships.

[12] Source: HII statement as quoted in Frank Wolfe, "Navy Budget Plan Delays Buy of Amphibious Ships," *Defense Daily*, March 15, 2019.

reductions in funding for other Navy or DOD programs, with an uncertain net result on Navy or DOD capabilities; and that Congress can make the FY2019 AP funding executable by passing legislation permitting the funding to be used on an LPD-17 Flight II ship procured in FY2021.

Regarding the second issue above, supporters of procuring LPD-31 with full funding could argue that it would leave more budgetary room in FY2021 and perhaps one or more years beyond that for funding other Navy programs, and that Navy surface ships other than aircraft carriers and LHA/LHD-type amphibious assault ships have generally been procured with full funding rather than incremental funding. Supporters of funding LPD-31 with incremental funding could argue that doing so would reduce FY2020 funding needs for LPD-31, preserving more FY2020 funding for other Navy or DOD programs, and that there have been a few instances over the years in which Navy surface ships other than aircraft carriers and LHA/LHD-type amphibious assault ships have been procured with incremental funding.

Regarding the third issue above, factors that Congress may consider include whether the Navy has properly scheduled and accurately estimated the work on these ships it is proposing to do in FY2020, and how the type and amount of work to be done on these ships in FY2020 would change if LPD-31 were procured in FY2020 instead of FY2021, and if procurement of LHA-9 were accelerated from FY2024 to an earlier fiscal year, such as FY2020 or FY2021.

Regarding the fourth issue above, supporters of amphibious ships might argue that by deferring the procurement of LPD-31 to FY2021, reducing the number of LPD-17 Flight II ships to be procured in FY2020-FY2024, and not accelerating the procurement of LHA-9 from FY2024 to an earlier fiscal year, the Navy's FY2020 budget submission is placing a reduced emphasis on amphibious ships in its shipbuilding plans, particularly compared to other type of Navy ships, such as attack submarines, destroyers, and frigates, all of which experienced additions or accelerations in FY2020 or FY2021 under the Navy's FY2020 budget submission.[13] Amphibious ships, they could argue, are as important as these other types of ships, and are in high demand by U.S. regional combatant commanders. Other observers, while acknowledging the value of amphibious ships, might argue that within a finite Navy budget, the Navy needs to make difficult choices about what type of ships to procure; that attack submarines, destroyers, and frigates are critical for countering China's improving naval capabilities and for performing other missions; and that the Navy currently has substantial shortfalls in attack submarines, large surface combatants (such as destroyers), and small surface combatants (such as frigates) relative to its force-level goals for those types of ships.

Legislative Activity for FY2020

Summary of Congressional Action on FY2020 Funding Request

Table 4 summarizes congressional action on the Navy's FY2020 funding request for the LPD-17 Flight II and LHA-9 programs.

[13] See, for example, Megan Eckstein, "LPD Flight II Amphib Delayed in Favor of 3rd Attack Sub in FY 2020," *USNI News*, March 14, 2019; Frank Wolfe, "Navy Budget Plan Delays Buy of Amphibious Ships," *Defense Daily*, March 15, 2019.

Table 4. Summary of Congressional Action on FY2020 Funding Request

Millions of dollars, rounded to nearest tenth

		Authorization			Appropriation		
	Request	HASC	SASC	Conf.	HAC	SAC	Conf.
LPD-17 Flight II program							
Procurement	0						
Advance procurement (AP)	247.1						
(Procurement quantity)	*(0)*						
LHA-9 amphibious assault ship							
Procurement	0						
Advance procurement (AP)	0						
(Procurement quantity)	*(0)*						

Source: Table prepared by CRS based on Navy's FY2020 budget submission, committee and conference reports, and explanatory statements on FY2020 National Defense Authorization Act and FY2020 DOD Appropriations Act.

Notes: HASC is House Armed Services Committee; **SASC** is Senate Armed Services Committee; **HAC** is House Appropriations Committee; **SAC** is Senate Appropriations Committee; **Conf.** is conference agreement.

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