

2015 Navy League Youth Scholarship – Winning Essay

Ohio Replacement Program - No Price Too High

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The importance of the Ohio Replacement Program to the United States' national security cannot be understated. As the most survivable leg of the nuclear TRIAD it is imperative that this program be funded and implemented immediately due to the long lead time from conception to full implementation. The USS Ohio, the first of 18 Ohio class submarines, was commissioned in 1981. Fourteen of these serve as nuclear strategic deterrent submarines and four serve as tactical guided missile submarines. The first is expected to be decommissioned in 2029, so the first Ohio Replacement class submarine must be fully operational by then. The budget cycle and contract awarding process can take up to five years and the original USS Ohio took over seven years from contract to commissioning. Due to fiscal concerns, this program has been delayed, and the Ohio class service life extended, several times. Originally intended for a 30 year service life, the Ohio class has now been extended to 42 years of deployment life. To keep Ohio Replacement costs more palatable, only 12 submarines have been requested and they are being designed with a new 40 year reactor core that never needs to be re-fueled. This will decrease refueling costs and non-operational time, which will allow the United States to meet its operational commitments with only 12 submarines. Re-fueling typically takes 2 to 3 years and was needed every 15 years with the original Ohio class submarines. Not having to re-fuel would add approximately six years of operational time per submarine over its lifetime. The additional 72 years of fleet deployment time is equal to two submarines and a savings of over \$10 billion.

The air and land-based legs of the TRIAD are even older and have even greater funding problems. Since air and land-based ICBMs can be targeted and destroyed by the enemy prior to a nuclear strike, the stealthiest leg of the TRIAD must be preserved. Our nation's very existence could depend on it, as such there is NO more important item in the national budget.

The best national defense is a powerful, credible, and reliable strategic deterrence, especially considering the current global security uncertainties. The assured response of the Ohio class program over the past 30 plus years has helped ensure stability and security for the United States and its allies, while deterring enemies from developing or using nuclear weapons. Countries like Iran and North Korea either have or are close to developing nuclear weapons, and the Independent State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) is causing instability throughout the Middle East and Europe. Taking into consideration the extreme nature of ISIS' recent violence such as bombings, burning people alive, and be-headings, one must assume that if they were to acquire a nuclear weapon that they would certainly use it. Fear of reprisal from our nuclear strategic deterrent submarines would surely make them consider the consequences of an attack, even when considering their radical ideology. They would have to seriously analyze if killing infidels and meeting Allah is worth the extinction of their newly formed caliphate. America needs to show the world its commitment to global security by funding this program now. Nuclear sea-based strategic deterrence is survivable, reliable, dependable and essential to global stability. Failure to fund and maintain the Ohio Replacement Program would damage our global influence with our allies and adversaries alike. It could even put our survival as a nation at risk. For these reasons the Chief of Naval Operations has made the Ohio Replacement Program his number one funding priority.

My dad has spent his naval career aboard submarines for over 23 years defending this great nation. I have seen him come and go over the years on many deployments. He has sacrificed time with his family for what he believes is of the utmost importance to our country. We must continue to strive to keep our submarine fleet as current as we possibly can and fitted with the most up-to-date and efficient systems available.

No cost is too high to defend our great nation, the ideals it stands for, and the freedoms its security affords the world's people!

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