

VIRGINIA PAYLOAD MODULE (VPM)

PRESERVES CRITICAL UNDERSEA STRIKE CAPACITY



The Virginia Payload Module (VPM) is a cost-effective way to preserve the U.S. critical undersea strike capacity. Nuclear-powered attack submarines (SSNs) and guided missile submarines (SSGNs) provide this capability using Tomahawk cruise missiles. When the last SSGN retires in 2028, the U.S. will lose 60 percent of its undersea strike capacity. Adding VPM to 20 planned future Virginia-class submarines will mitigate this drop in capacity, improve payload distribution across the force, and complicate adversary planning—all at a much lower cost than building replacement SSGNs.

The Navy has a critical need for undersea strike capability

- Submarines can penetrate an adversary's defensive perimeter unseen and conduct offensive operations with disproportionate military effects.
- Undersea strike capability is important to the Joint Force. It may be the only strike available against air defenses to pave the way for follow-on forces.
- The capabilities delivered by undersea forces with their assured access are even more important as potential adversaries increasingly invest in anti-access and area denial (A2/AD) systems designed to destroy or impede our ships and aircraft.

VPM closes the undersea strike gap caused by SSGN retirement

- All SSGNs will retire by 2028, reducing undersea strike capacity by 60 percent.
- Adding VPM to 20 planned Virginia-class submarines is the most cost-effective way to close the strike gap. It will provide over three times the firepower of current Virginia-class submarines for approximately a fifteen percent increase in the cost of each submarine.
- VPM development must continue in FY16 in order to incorporate the capability into Virginia-class submarines procured in FY19–23 (Block V) to prevent a lapse in undersea strike capability.
- VPM-equipped Virginia-class submarines maintain SSN performance to meet all existing missions.
- VPM capitalizes on the proven Virginia-class construction process.

The VPM design will include room to accommodate future payloads

- Provides time sensitive strike capability
- Can deploy Large Displacement Unmanned Undersea Vehicles, seabed sensors and other unmanned systems
- Could replace Special Operating Force support capacity lost with the retirement of SSGNs
- Open Architecture System Payloads—deploying existing Navy payloads from VPM with little modification—would enable submarines to hold more targets at risk from under the sea (e.g. aircraft, small fast ships, and mobile land targets).



REQUEST FOR ACTION

Support funding of \$168 million in FY16 for development of the Virginia Payload Module (VPM)