

# Navy Command Seeks To Change With The Times

BY JOHN M. DONNELLY

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld says America is waging a "new kind of war." To help win it, the admiral in charge of the Navy's weapons-buying command says he is looking to conduct business in new ways.

Government auditors say the Navy still lacks many staples of a successful organization: adequate management controls, financial accountability, effective inventory systems, etc. And today's talk of reforming acquisition has been heard before over the years, though the rhetoric still has not produced anything near an efficient Defense Department.

However, six months into his role as the new boss of Naval Sea Systems Command, or NAVSEA, Vice Adm. Phillip Balisle is changing the organization's ways in order to respond more rapidly and effectively to the post-Sept. 11 world's manifold and uncertain threats. He is at least making the effort to alter the Navy's traditional approaches to acquiring and maintaining warships and weapons.

Those approaches won the Cold War, Balisle told reporters last week, but without modification, they won't necessarily win this new conflict.

"The playing field is different today," he said. "It is not an identifiable threat anymore. It's a real threat; but it's pretty fuzzy."

In response to those perils, he said, the Navy is "not building a force to go against a specific threat," but rather is setting up a "toolbox of capabilities."

Redesigning the Navy is in full swing. Over the last five years, NAVSEA has started six ship designs, and over the next five years, the command will launch nine more ship designs. These warships include futuristic vessels such as the DD-X destroyer, the CVN-21 carrier, the SSGN conventional-missile submarine and the Littoral Combat Ship.

Navy personnel are trying to design those 15 ships so that they will be more affordable to build and operate, with smaller crews, and supported remotely from shore locations, Balisle

said at a press briefing at NAVSEA's headquarters in Washington, D.C.'s Navy Yard.

Balisle highlighted several major changes in Navy shipbuilding and weapons purchasing. They include:

- \* the growing role of aerospace companies in shipbuilding and design;

- \* the increasing use of composites and electric-drive propulsion in warships;

- \* the greater reliance among warship manufacturers on commercial shipbuilding technologies and techniques;

- \* the fleet's increased need for bandwidth and connectivity;

- \* the Navy's need to be able to fight in the littorals;

- \* the requirement that ships be maintained so that the Navy can surge its forward-deployed forces on relatively short notice;

- \* the urgency of reducing the time it takes to develop and build ships;

- \* the importance of "open architecture," so that by the time the ships are built they are not outpaced by technology (of friend or foe);

- \* the imperative to explore novel means of buying ships, from multiyear contracts to incremental funding, to provide greater stability for contractors.

## Reorganizing

In November, NAVSEA was reorganized to help it move on these fronts. The command's buying directorates, or "program executive offices," were recast. And the organization added other new offices.

One of them, called Human Systems Integration, is meant to examine how fewer people on tomorrow's warships will accomplish at least as much as today's crews do, all while using many untried systems on newly designed ships.

"It is a situation where you don't build a ship and then put men on it; you build a ship around the human when you start it," Balisle said.

In addition, a Warfare Systems Engineering office will attempt to ensure that Navy systems are ready for joint

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and multinational warfare. The office intends to leverage the work other services are doing on similar systems in order to avoid the common problem of reinventing wheels already built by other branches of the U.S. armed forces. The other key objective is to assure that Navy systems are interoperable with those of other services and allies.

Excerpts from Balisle's comments follow:

**Adm. Balisle on new ways of supporting ships:**

*Historically, we have gotten our ships and battle forces ready to deploy using our shore/base infrastructure. We prepare them, do the maintenance, do all the things necessary with the training, and you send them forward to the point of the spear, and they go forward and they operate. Then they come back and the shore infrastructure takes over again to reconstitute that force and get it ready to go the next time.*

*That's not the Navy of the 21st Century. That's not where we're going to be.*

*That battle force when it's forward deployed will be connected and, in fact, is today through systems we characterize as distance support, where you are on-line with that force to do many kinds of support: maintenance support, administrative support, logistics support, medical support, even the chaplain support for those forward deployed units is coming over distance support. That distance support ties back to a shore infrastructure that has to be constructed in a very different way because when you enter it now it has to be connected so that we can go to any part of that organization in real time to get the best athlete for whatever is required for that function engaged in doing whatever support that ship needs. So connectivity along those shore nodes is very, very important, as well as connectivity for the afloat units and among those units themselves. That network is already being put into place.*

**On new ways of building ships:**

*In the past for that Cold War era there was a pretty predictable class or group of classes of ships that the Navy needed to do that mission. Again, we knew what it was, we knew how to build them, and we built them well as a nation. In fact, if you go today I think you'll find that those ships at sea are the envy of the world. They are the best that have been produced and*

*they did their jobs extremely well. And we had an industrial base, just as this country always has, that was geared to produce that kind of a Navy. This nation, if you go back in history, has won its wars not just by the bravery of the men and women on the point of the spear, but it's won its wars on our ability to bring together the natural assets of the entire nation.*

**On changes in maintenance:**

*We're not talking about a Navy now that's just a rotational force. We're talking about a Navy that rotates, but it also has a very flexible, surge-able capability as well. Because in this environment against this enemy, predicting the battlefield, predicting the day of the battle is impossible.*

*So you need a responsiveness that can deal with that kind of environment. And how we do maintenance and how we fix and repair our ships and prepare them to meet those kinds of circumstances will change as well.*

**On Enduring Freedom and beyond:**

*The Navy's responding quickly. You saw some of that in Enduring Freedom. You saw the Navy forward deploy ships and use them in fairly unorthodox ways to engage in a battle against a land-locked country hundreds of miles inland, flying missions and operating in ways that frankly even just a couple of years ago we would probably not have even been talking about. That is the beginning, I think, of a transition that's going to become even more dynamic in the months and years to come.*

**On stability in shipbuilding funding**

*The truth is that stability is the key. And stability is stability horizontally and vertically. Horizontally in the sense that you want a shipbuilding program, as it goes from year to year, to be logical and realistic so it's executable in that industrial base and people can plan to it.*

*You want a vertical stability in the sense that you want the right mix of ships. That also translates to the right industrial-base loading, but you want that right mix of ships because you are building a network force. You're building an operational readiness. And if you don't have the right mix in there then you're not going to have the effectiveness that you need, the right tool box, if you want to call it that.*

*So, as a result of that, I believe when you have ships that cost the amount that*

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*some of our larger ships now do-a carrier, a submarine, large deck amphib, ships that have a pretty hefty price tag on them. If in fact you put one of those in a year and you full fund it in that year, you create a spike that suddenly becomes, from the budget process, unmanageable. You then only have a couple of choices. I cannot build other ships in that year or I can find some new way of making all this stuff work.*

*Well, if you don't build the other ships, you lose all that continuity we just talked about. So the Navy is looking very energetically at how can we find new ways to make this work.*

*Now those new ways where possible need to give the people who husband our resources assurances the money is being spent wisely. They need to create as much flexibility as they can because we understand why people want that. But they also have to meet that operational, if you want to call it, requirement of allowing us to keep that shipbuilding infrastructure intact.*

*We this year worked very hard at looking at different approaches to funding. We've had a very active dialogue with OSD and OMB on that, and I think this year you will see some new ways of funding come to life.*

*It doesn't mean we're going to do every new way of funding this first year. I think what we have, though, is a very healthy dialogue going. We have people who, I believe, are starting to really appreciate that problem, and I think you can see from the progress that you'll see this*

*year in how some of the funding is done with R&D funds and other ways, that we're making progress in trying to come up with ways to create a stable base and a base that's very responsive to shipbuilding.*

*Don't forget, there are other factors in a stable shipbuilding program. I don't want to have a lot of change in the ship as it's being built that causes me to pay higher bills. So we want a funding approach that also gives us the ability to deal with that phenomenon a little bit better.*

*Another way in shipbuilding that I think you'll see us putting a lot of emphasis is in trying to change the time line. Sometimes you can, we think, sometimes you can't. But think about it. If it takes seven years, eight years, 10 years to build a ship, remember that guy standing on that pier in Norfolk looking at that ship? Look at the change in technology in 10 years. Look at how if you start with what you think the situation's going to require, how different would it be 10 years later? It can be tremendous. So how you capture that-one way is to shorten the shipbuilding time on it. We're going to work hard on that.*

**LCS:** *a great example of that. A ship with a different shipbuilding approach than we have used in the past, and one of the reasons is to shape the Sea Enterprise infrastructure to deal with the idea that we will build ships faster. Once you do that, the time from concept to delivery is faster.*