Century of Dominance

Much has changed, but underlying naval aviation principles 'just as valid today'

U.S. NAVY

Vice Adm. Allen G. Myers IV has the privilege of serving as commander of both Naval Air Forces and Naval Air Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet, as U.S. naval aviation moves into its second century of service in 2011.

Myers fills three roles and authorities. As Naval Air Forces commander, he delivers policy and requirements for U.S. Fleet Forces Command and U.S. Pacific Fleet. He delivers readiness for U.S. Pacific Fleet as the commander of its Naval Air Force. He also is lead for the Naval Aviation Enterprise (NAE), with the Marine Corps' deputy commandant for aviation as co-lead and support from the commander, Naval Air Systems Command. Myers guides a collaboration of stakeholders to maximize readiness of a significant sector of the fleet for the entire range of naval roles, from high-intensity combat to humanitarian assistance.

Myers has served in five fighter squadrons, commanding Fighter Squadron 32 before moving on to command a fast combat support ship and the aircraft carrier USS *Kitty Hawk*. He later commanded Carrier Strike Group Eight and led the *Eisenhower* Carrier Strike Group in Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom during 2006-2007.

Myers' numerous staff assignments, including director of warfare integration and director of air warfare for the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, have prepared him to lead U.S. naval aviation.

He discussed the state of U.S. naval aviation with Managing Editor Richard R. Burgess. Excerpts follow:

How will the new wave of platforms enhance naval aviation? Are they affordable?

MYERS: There's been a lot of effort extended to plan for these next-generation platforms and recapitalize all of our naval air forces that now offer a lot of capability.

In most cases, naval aviation is the combat system for our ships. We provide the anti-submarine warfare (ASW) capability for our ships and we deploy with the carrier wing. The MH-60R [Seahawk helicopter] offers a tremendous capability in ASW and anti-surface warfare.

The EA-18G [is] a state-of-the-art electronic warfare system that leverages the multimission capability — long range, increased survivability and lethality — of the Super Hornet. Electronic attack is a Navy core competency. We've stepped forward and recapitalized this effort in the form of the EA-18G and plan to continue to do so.

The F-35C, an all-aspect stealth, strike design [with] fully fused mission systems and [an] unrefueled combat radius of 650 miles is a real game changer.

The E-2D detects and tracks targets, informing an integrated air defense network while simultaneously detecting and tracking surface targets and contacts. It seamlessly flows information valuable to the operational commanders along with all of its network-enabled long-range sensors. What an airplane this is!

The P-8A [maritime patrol aircraft], our replacement for the P-3, is going to be impressive, with state-of-the-art ASW sensors and operating with net-ready technologies.

[Regarding the Broad-Area Maritime Surveillance (BAMS) system], the [BAMS Demonstration] is currently forward deployed. This is going to be a land-based, autonomously operated system that provides maritime patrol and reconnaissance capabilities all over the world. Once we have this, we're going to be grateful for the foresight to plan and program for it.

From the Naval Aviation Enterprise lens, the affordability of these aircraft is a major focus. Specifically, the current and future readiness cross-functional teams are looking at each type/model/series and the transitions of each type/model/series with an eye toward sustainability and total ownership cost. The total force cross-functional team is working to map out the manpower requirements and all the transitions to enable to risk/balance decisions in this area.

U.S. NAVY

Vice Adm. Allen G. Myers IV, commander, Naval Air Forces and Naval Air Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet, visits with a 2010 chief petty officer selectee at Naval Air Station North Island, Calif., Aug. 27.

What are the top challenges facing naval aviation today?

MYERS: Our No. 1 challenge is the same one that faces our services: the war. We want to make sure that our naval aviation forces are ready, trained and equipped to fight. Naval aviation flies about half the aerial combat missions in Afghanistan and, when it comes to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, we're on station now providing aerial lift in Pakistan, similar to the way we did earlier this year with USS *Carl Vinson* and Carrier Air Wing 17 in Haiti.

Secondly, to make sure we can continue to support and deliver all the effects that we provide the combatant commanders. I'm focused on budget constraints, essentially, ensuring that we have the resources we need to maintain a ready naval air force.

Third is future readiness and having an industrial base to support our future readiness. Underscoring all of that is our enduring commitment to take care of our people.

For decades, critics have said the aircraft carrier was too expensive and is irrelevant to warfare of the future. What are your thoughts?

MYERS: With a carrier in the carrier strike group is embedded speed, utility, adaptability and persistence. Since the conversion of [USS] *Langley* in the 1920s, the Navy had seen relevant mission sets for all of our aircraft carriers, which accomplish everything in the maritime strategy from power projection to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. It's that capability that ensures they will remain an extremely integral part of our naval force.

We can't predict where the next threat is going to come from and we need to be ready to confront a range of challenges whenever and wherever they may happen. The Navy is ideally suited for this kind of world and carriers are especially adaptable and will play a large role. They're fast, flexible and forwardly present. We can go anywhere in the ocean on short notice. We don't need airstrips on the ground. In humanitarian crises like the Asian tsunami or the Haiti earthquake, the Navy can deliver huge amounts of supplies to provide medical care.

The February 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review Report noted that "the Navy plans to adjust its force posture and basing" to provide at least six carriers in the Pacific, with one moving from the Atlantic. Will a carrier air wing (CVW) also shift coasts?

MYERS: Currently, we have no CVW staff planned to permanently shift, but as an example of naval aviation's agility, *Carl Vinson* rode around South America for a homeport shift with CVW-17. Although CVW-17 is an East Coast-based wing, some of the elements remain here [in San Diego] on the West Coast. Naval aviation has the speed and agility to move, not just people and parts, but aircraft and squadrons and CVW staff as required from coast to coast so that we can most efficiently use our resources to provide the desired effects overseas.

"One of the things that naval aviators and those assigned to naval aviation have in common is we fight to fly. Naval aviation is a passion. We fight for the sortie. We compete for the qualification. It's something that has carried us for 100 years, and that warfighting ethos will carry us for the next 100 years and beyond."

What's in the future for precision-guided weapons?

MYERS: The Dual-Mode Laser Guide Bomb [LGB] is an upgrade of an existing Paveway II LGB, with replacement of a computer control group system with an inertial navigation system [INS] and Global Positioning System [GPS] capability, which makes it an all-weather guided system that provides the dual-mode guidance and enables a "fire-and-forget" capability.

The Laser JDAM [Joint Direct-Attack Munition] expands the capabilities of the JDAM by providing a modular laser sensor kit easily installed in the field. The Laser JDAM [allows] the flexibility to prosecute targets of opportunity, including mobile targets, to an already outstanding GPS/INS all-weather capability.

The Small Diameter Bomb II, or SDB2, provides the warfighter with capabilities to attack mobile targets from stand-off in weather. SDB2 addresses a number of follow-on requirements: attacking mobile targets, adverse weather [operations], multiple kills per pass. We can carry more of them. It minimizes the potential for collateral damage and provides migration path for a net-centric ops capability. That is very important to us in the future.

The AGM-154C Joint Staff Weapon, with GPS/INS guidance, has an autonomous target acquisition capability with an infrared terminal seeker and a unitary warhead to enable it to attack a blast fragmentation kind of target.

Will the Unmanned Carrier-Launched Airborne Surveillance and Strike (UCLASS) system blend in well with the carrier air wing and even displace a strike fighter squadron?

MYERS: Absolutely blending in. The services will need to evaluate whether the capability the UCLASS provides will displace part or all of a fighter squadron in the future. Every airframe competes for space on the flight deck and, as these systems get tested and mature, I fully expect to see unmanned platforms operating from a carrier by 2018.

The mission set for UCLASS is still under development, but the current vision is to produce four to six units with a limited operational capability by 2018 and, at that time, the UCLASS will be able to perform unmanned, persistent [intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance] and include limited strike capability. These four to six vehicles will augment the air wing and be evaluated [as to] exactly how they will be integrated into the air wing [and] whether or not the Navy will pursue additional future capabilities and procurement.

Will there be a replacement for the C-2 carrier onboard delivery aircraft?

MYERS: No decision has been made. A new airframe, most likely, is not possible due to the fiscal constraints and [the] limited number of aircraft to purchase. The most likely options, a remanufactured C-2 or a V-22 [tiltrotor aircraft], are being explored thoroughly. We're currently doing a study to determine the cost feasibility of reworking the current fuselage and producing more C-2As with some upgrades.

Is the NAE working as a model of best business practices?

MYERS: I absolutely feel like it's working and working well. The NAE is about partnering for a better, smarter, faster combat-ready force now and in the future. The enterprise is modeled after best practices and aligns with all the recent efficiency guidance coming from the Department of Defense, specifically [Defense Secretary Robert M.] Gates' efficiencies initiatives memo.

The NAE model is based on collaboration, transparency and cross-functional processes that break down a lot of the traditional barriers we've seen in the past. By getting all the right aviation players talking and focused together on an issue, the NAE provides the Navy and Marine Corps aviation leaders a more complete or holistic look at information required to make sound decisions about readiness.

For example, using continuous process improvement tools and metrics collections, our fleet readiness centers returned nearly 600 aircraft, almost 5,000 engines and 34,000 component parts to the fleet in fiscal 2009, [accruing] a $308 million cost avoidance. We've [recovered through efficiencies] about 6,000 additional unfunded flight hours for training in fiscal '09, resulting in a cost avoidance of about $32 million. A good example is a [Marine] aviation logistics squadron in Beaufort, S.C., that reduced its overall time to reliably replenish [components] by about 47 days at a cost avoidance of almost $7 million in increasing aircraft ready for tasking.

What were the advantages of the NAE folding the chief of Navy Air Force Reserve and the chief of Naval Air Training (CNATRA) under your command at Naval Air Forces?

MYERS: I'm very big on alignment. The total force [concept of operations] — how to manage our people and equipment — allows for full integration and management of resources across the force, everything from flying hours to budget to production, which, in turn, enhances the readiness and capability that we deliver to the fleet.

The alignment of chief of Naval Air Force Reserve under Naval Air Forces provides the command and control needed to best integrate our active and Reserve personnel and equipment to meet the [combatant commander] demands. We do that in the P-3 community. We do that with [Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 84] in the rotary wing community as well.

Now, the alignment of CNATRA under Naval Air Forces has greatly enhanced the pilot, flight officer and enlisted air crew training processes by establishing single process ownership for training our air crews. So it's a straight-to-fleet alignment process that provides the flexibility and planning and execution to produce the right number of aviators to man the fleet.

The Naval Aviation Enterprise is a collaborative process that enables the efficient management of resources among principal stakeholders. There is no authority inherent in the enterprise process. The authorities fall under me as the type commander with Title 10 roles and responsibilities for readiness, or as a force commander with policy and requirements. The responsibility and authority to train men and equipment is traditional to the type commander. We continue to collaborate as an enterprise with our enterprise partners and execute and inform better decisions for the type commanders.

As the centennial of naval aviation nears, what lessons of the past do you think are germane to its future?

MYERS: The technology has changed over the last 100 years, [but] most of the underlying principles of naval aviation are just as valid today.

Two things that are unique to this branch of service: We influence coalitions and we maintain the sea lanes of communication.

By influencing coalitions, I mean we can either build them or disrupt them. With maintaining the sea lanes, we can either keep them open or we can close them. It's something that you can do only if you're forward deployed.

When you look at naval aviation over the years, [it] has expanded on these principles by continuing to extend the area a ship can influence with the adaptability inherent with naval aviation. From the early days of crow's nests, we advanced to dirigibles to biplanes and on through our history to the future where we [will] have the Joint Strike Fighter with 600 nautical miles of area of influence. We expect with the UCLASS an even wider area that we can influence. So technology has improved and the area the Navy can influence has also improved through the long reach of naval aviation.

U.S. NAVY

Myers served in five fighter squadrons and led the *Eisenhower* Carrier Strike Group in Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom during 2006-2007.

All of this has been improved on a bedrock of our warfighting ethos, which is founded on our all-volunteer force. One of the things that naval aviators and those assigned to naval aviation have in common is we fight to fly. Naval aviation is a passion. We fight for the sortie. We compete for the qualification. It's something that has carried us for 100 years, and that warfighting ethos will carry us for the next 100 years and beyond.

What things keep you awake at night?

MYERS: One is the pressures on our people right now. We're very passionate about naval aviation, whether we fly the aircraft or whether we're maintaining the aircraft. We expect a lot from our air crew and our Sailors. We expect a lot from them as individuals and from their families who support them. We need to monitor and make sure that we're taking care of them the best we can.

Second, maintaining our future readiness. There is a lot of attention paid to the fight in Afghanistan. Naval aviation is certainly pulling its share there, flying nearly a third of the close-air support. But we also have to be focused on the future of naval aviation, meaning beyond Afghanistan. We have to see the right recapitalization through to ensure that we maintain our dominance for the next 100 years. ■