

AFCEA WEST Takeaways

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Earlier this month at WEST 2020, a naval and industry conference co-sponsored by the Armed Forces Communications Electronics Association (AFCEA) and U.S. Naval Institute (USNI), we heard from leaders across the military who continue to drive toward a culture of excellence and meet the challenges of a renewed Great Power Competition. Leaders across the Navy, including Vice Adm. Richard Brown, Commander, Naval Surface Forces and Naval Surface Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet discussed the three key ingredients for the surface fleet to complete its missions:

Manning

Vice Adm. Brown maintains that manning is currently the most crucial activity of the Surface Force. After achieving incredible progress in training and equipping the Force, manning continues to be the most challenging mission principle. Budgetary issues are pivotal here, as continuing resolutions undo the progress the Navy and Marine Corps have made over the recent years.

Data is informing the Surface Force that it's moving the needle in this domain. It began two years ago when Brown mandated that all Forward Deployed Naval Forces and deploying ships were at 92 percent fit with proper ratings and Navy enlisted classifications, and 95 percent filled with manpower (<https://href.li/?https://www.public.navy.mil/surfor/Pages/CNSP-Focuses-on-Manning-Training-and-Equipping-at-WEST-2020.aspx>). The data collected by the Navy shows a direct correlation with better performance when ships entered their advanced and integrated phases with less casualties and more manning.

Another manning takeaway discussed at WEST is Navy and Marine Corps integration (<https://href.li/?https://www.navy.mil/cno/docs/CNO%20FRAGO%20012019.pdf>). Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Mike Gilday announced that a Joint Maritime Strategy outlining partnering capability with the Marine Corps will be released this summer. Gilday sees integration moving forward in cyberspace operations, war-game and exercise programs, development of the Naval Tactical Grid, and potential Dynamic Force Employment options.

Gen. David H. Berger, Commandant, U.S. Marine Corps says the end result of this integration will be a much more capable force that maintains the asymmetric advantage.

Training

Training is the greatest equalizer between manning and equipping shortfalls. The Navy has recently virtualized several training environments, transforming the way the Navy gets its Sailors ready for sea by delivering realistic and relevant training opportunities against advanced and complex threats so that Sailors are combat-ready and battle minded.

In the last two years alone, several state-of-the-art training facilities have launched, allowing Sailors to hone their mariner skills with reps and sets in simulators:

- On Demand Trainer (ODT) (<https://href.li/?https://www.dvidshub.net/news/358550/navys-newest-combat-simulator-trains-its-first-ships>)
- Junior Officers of the Deck (JOOD) (https://href.li/?https://www.navy.mil/submit/display.asp?story_id=110261)
- LCS Training Facility (LTF) (<https://href.li/?https://www.dvidshub.net/news/334575/mayport-lcs-sailors-train-fight-virtual-reality>)
- Combined Integrated Air and Missile Defense (IAMD)/Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) Trainer (CIAT) (https://href.li/?https://www.navy.mil/submit/display.asp?story_id=108320)

The Surface community set the precedence for Ready, Relevant, Learning (RRL) (https://href.li/?https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OJ_U-m3sTmw), which is a key pillar in the Navy's Sailor 2025 (<https://href.li/?https://www.public.navy.mil/bupers-npc/career/talentmanagement/Documents/Sailor2025Glossy.pdf>) initiative to improve how Sailors are prepared to meet the challenges of global operations and use equipment to the full end of the technical spectrum. This is a long-term investment that the Surface community has put in place to enhance fleet readiness.

Afloat Training Group (ATG) is working hand-in-hand with the Surface Force to ensure shipboard crews continue their training. Brown said that thanks to 64 Afloat Bridge Resource Management workshops in the Pacific Fleet – 43 of which had a post major command Commanding Officer mentor, none of the 43 ships have reported a Class A or B mishap since their training.

Equipping

Gilday said at the WEST Town Hall that based on the Fiscal Year 2021 budget, we can afford a 305 to 310 ship Navy. This figure differs from the originally proposed 355-ship fleet plan announced in December 2019 (https://href.li/?https://www.navy.mil/submit/display.asp?story_id=98160), but Gilday recognizes that if the Navy is going to have a lethal, capable, and ready fleet, the new numbers are a better projection, rather than a larger fleet that is not equipped to be all of the above.

Brown recognizes that the Surface Force actively looks at its data and the numbers tell him ship maintenance is improving. Two years ago, only 25 percent of Arleigh-Burke-class guided missile destroyer Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) maintenance availabilities finished on time. Since destroyers make up 40 percent of all CNO availabilities, the Navy decided to focus improving CNO availability completion times through its Perform to Plan (P2P) program (https://href.li/?https://www.navy.mil/strategic/DONBOP_2020.pdf). By closely managing, documenting, and tracking execution of availabilities, 43 percent finished on time in 2019 and 75 percent are on track to complete on time this year.

The Surface Force continues to focus on these three readiness pillars, so we are ready for the fight. It also recognizes and embraces a long history of mission command, which makes the U.S. Navy the premier Navy in the world. By deploying the best manned, trained, and equipped ships that leave no redundancies at the pier, Vice Adm. Brown has full confidence that the Surface Force will bring the fight to the enemy and win.

Tagged:

AFCEA,
Afloat Bridge Resource Management,
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