

A Navy of 1,000 Ships



The Honorable Carlos Del Toro sees a global navy as vital to our future

Keynote speakers: The Honorable Carlos Del Toro, Secretary of the Navy and Admiral Mike Gilday, Chief of Naval Operations

In a ballroom filled to capacity, the Honorable Carlos Del Toro once again took the stage to provide leadership, guidance, and a vision for the future of our Navy at the annual Navy League Luncheon at Sea-Air-Space 2023.

That vision includes a commitment to allies and partners from navies across the globe. Indeed, he prefaced his formal remarks by asking the entire Finnish delegation to stand and be recognized in honor of that commitment – the ballroom echoed with the claps and cheers of a standing ovation.

“Isn’t it great to be back in force?” Del Toro said as the applause died down. “Our national defense strategy calls upon

the joint force to be ready to meet our nation's challenges, from countering China in the Indo-Pacific, to reassuring our allies and partners in Europe as Russia continues its campaign in Ukraine, annexing territory in a flagrant violation of Ukraine's sovereignty. And we will not give up. We will continue to support the Ukrainian people and the Ukrainian military for as long as it takes," he said.

"We're working to strengthen our partnerships both internationally and here at home," said Del Toro, asking for all the international partners in attendance to stand and be recognized. "Now, I'd love to have a thousand ship navy myself. Maybe one day we'll get there. Let's work on it incrementally [with] the power of all our allies and partners working together across the world," he said.

Del Toro also acknowledged the contribution of the legislative and executive branches, praising the "president's administration and the Congress for their commitment to our Navy and Marine Corps team," and citing the budget increase from \$210 billion in 2021 to over \$250 billion in the upcoming fiscal year.

We Can Do More

"There's still a lot more work and a lot more commitment that needs to come here at home," Del Toro said. "We are working with our defense industrial based partners, all of you, to reduce the maintenance delays for ships and submarines, to improve our shipyard infrastructure, develop a skilled workforce to deliver game changing technologies and capabilities to our sailors and marines and subs. If there's one thing that's easy to do in Washington, D.C., it's to criticize, to constantly criticize the efforts that are going on. Let me tell you, this leadership team here, the CNO, the entire aviation team, has worked [...] tirelessly to produce these ships faster and work with industry to come up with solutions that make sense," he said.

Del Toro went on to laud the innovations and efforts of small businesses as vital contributors to the success of our fleet. "Between my previous experience as small business owner in the defense ecosystem and current position as a secretary, I'm aware of how critical our planning, partnership and industry is to fielding advance capabilities," he said. "We have to continue to grow the department, the Navy and Partner Defense Marketplace, inviting new small businesses, medium sized businesses, and even large businesses that don't traditionally do work with the department. It's the only way that we're actually going to fix the problems that we face today," said Del Toro.

A Hybrid Navy

Admiral Mike Gilday, Chief of Naval Operations reiterated the need to partner with new companies able to innovate and expand technological capabilities that can "improve our ability to command and control this ocean of things that a manned and unmanned Navy brings to the fore."

He also spoke of the need for a hybrid navy that routinely employed an increased number of unmanned systems and craft, citing Task For 59 as a way to, "bring together the very best in platform engineers and software designers so that we make the magic happen and improve maritime domain awareness."

Speaking about the vast coastline of the Middle East, Gilday remarked that, "These waters are vital to the global economy. With these [hybrid] systems and artificial intelligence, we're building a better picture of the surrounding seas by getting our hands on new systems. We've got to figure out what works and what doesn't. Or apply what we've learned with a suite of unmanned systems deployed across the region right now. Adding value to the mission by enabling human operators to make smarter decisions faster," Gilday said.

Del Toro ended with enthusiasm for the future. "I cannot

express to you how excited I am about our endeavors in unmanned in both the Fourth and Fifth Fleet areas of responsibility as we advance towards our integration of unmanned platforms to the fleet and support of distributed maritime operations," he said.

"If that doesn't excite you, I don't know what will," said Del Toro.