

Admiral: Block VI Virginia SSN Leads to Next-Generation SSN



The Virginia-class attack submarine South Dakota (SSN 790). The Block VI version of the Virginia-class submarine will build on the acoustic advancements of SSN 790. U.S. Navy / Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Steven Hoskins
ARLINGTON, Va. – The Navy has announced features for the Block VI version of the Virginia-class nuclear-powered submarine (SSN), which will be the steppingstone to the next-generation SSN (SSNX).

“Block VI continues that trend of delivering increasingly capable and lethal platforms block to block,” said Rear Adm. Dave Goggins, program executive officer for Submarines, speaking Nov. 18 in a webinar for the annual symposium of the Naval Submarine League.

“Block VI will focus on building upon the acoustic superiority advancements of 790 [USS South Dakota, SSN 790],” Goggins said. “The key thing here is to really enable that organic subsea, seabed warfare capability for the first time.”

Goggins said the Navy is looking at improved stealth to operate in contested environments; enhanced sonar performance resulting in greater tactical advantage [found] in a bow conformal array; the ability to sense and interact with more of the water column and seafloor.

Other improvements being considered are additional payloads and an improved propulsor.

He said the “key thing is the capabilities chosen for Block VI also have to dual purpose of improving the VCS [Virginia-class

submarine] performance and also proving out technologies that will serve as the backbone for our future SSNX design.

“We will spend the next year evaluating the maturity [and] feasibility of these capabilities followed by a down-select next year. That allows us to mature the technology and develop the required line of paperwork in support the Block VI contract.”

The Navy plans to procure the Block VI boats in fiscal 2024-2028.