Navy Strategic Systems Official: Hypersonics 'Coming to a Theater Near You'

WASHINGTON – The Navy's Strategic Systems Program (SSP) office is planning two more test flights to demonstrate conventional prompt strike (CPS) capability, a program official said, to capitalize on the first test conducted a year ago.

"Hypersonics is coming to a theater near you," Capt. Doug Williams, the SSP's technical director, said at the third annual Triad conference.

"As part of a program of record within the Office of the Secretary of Defense, we [SSP] have been working a hypersonic glide technology demonstration," Williams said. "We called it Flight Experiment No. 1. FE-1 flew about a year ago, Oct. 31. We took an old A3 [Polaris] rocket motor built in the late '80s, made it a stack, and launched it off of Hawaii, flew it a couple thousand miles. It landed at Kwaj [Kwajalein Atoll].

"It was brilliant. The whole time we had telemetry pumping down. We saw everything in a virtual model, real time, and it was one of those things that makes your hair on the back of your neck stand up. And you stand up as you see the body do what the body did and the body land exactly where it was supposed to land. It was awesome," he said.

Williams said that hypersonics is the No. 1 priority of Michael D. Griffin, undersecretary of defense for research and engineering.

"We're leaning forward," Williams said. "We have two more experiments to fly. We are working with the Office of the Secretary of Defense and with ASNRD&A [assistant secretary of the Navy for research, development and acquisition] staff to

understand conventional prompt strike. For the Navy it is going to be indeed a program."

Williams noted that even with the potential of conventional prompt strike, the primary mission of SSP is to provide a nuclear deterrence capability with the Strategic Weapon System. He cautioned that "if we don't do that right, no one is going to care about CPS. We are on a path to ensure that we firewall this conventional capability. That, no doubt, will be a heavy lift. We cannot have CPS drain Trident [the Navy's submarine-launched ballistic missile program]."

Coast Guard Releases 'Maritime Commerce Strategic Outlook'

ARLINGTON, Va. — The Coast Guard has released a 10-year vision for enabling maritime commerce, which "emphasizes the critical need for a ready, relevant, responsive Coast Guard," the service said in an Oct. 11 message.

The Coast Guard "Maritime Commerce Strategic Outlook" will guide the service's efforts in securing the strategically critical maritime environment while enabling its impact on the nation's economic prosperity.

A message to the service signed by Vice Adm. Daniel B. Abel, deputy commandant for Operations, noted that "America is a maritime nation. It is a nation shaped by seafarers who recognized the tremendous economic potential derived from unrestricted access to the oceans, internal waterways, deep-water ports, and protected straits and bays. Our American

prosperity remains inextricably linked to the fate of the maritime environment.

“Our waterways, a wealth of natural resources and marine transportation networks, remain critical to our prosperity, our security and our identity as a nation. Americans have come to expect goods to be shipped safely and efficiently, and the Coast Guard has a vision for how our nation’s waterways can meet the increased demand.”

In the “Maritime Commerce Strategic Outlook”, the Coast Guard outlined three lines of effort (LOEs) that are critical to the success of the strategy.

■ LOE 1, “Facilitating Lawful Trade and Travel on Secure Waterways. The ease of moving people and cargo on America’s waterways is a competitive advantage and wellspring for economic prosperity and national security. The Coast Guard will manage risks to critical infrastructure, ensure efficient delivery of Coast Guard services, support vessel and facility standards, and promote resiliency and unity of effort among Marine Transportation System stakeholders.”

■ LOE 2, “Modernizing Aids to Navigation and Mariner Information Systems. Through technological advancements such as artificial intelligence, mobile and cloud-based computing, and data analytics, the Coast Guard will keep the service in step with emerging trends in the maritime industry. The Coast Guard must modernize information technology networks and applications that enable the Coast Guard to assess, monitor, and manage risk. The service will optimize maritime planning in order to address competing uses and growing demands for commerce, energy, food, resources, and recreation in U.S. waters. The service must also balance traditional navigation systems while building next generation waterway management systems, modernizing inland and coastal aids-to-navigation cutters, and applying emerging technologies. Regulatory frameworks, applications, and standards will be adapted to

accurately incorporate the implementation of emerging technologies that will transform maritime operations, such as autonomous systems."

■ LOE 3, "Transforming Workforce Capacity and Partnerships. The Coast Guard needs to develop an adaptive force that is proficient operating in a highly complex environment amid rapid acceleration of technology. The service needs to strengthen the workforce with the digital competencies to respond to changes in commercial markets and the maritime industry. The Coast Guard will leverage robust auditing capabilities of third-party organizations to improve vessel plans, surveys, and certain required certificates to ensure the highest standards of compliance oversight. It is imperative to transform the workforce and roles of other enabling organizations to have the capability, experience, and expertise to address the broad spectrum of threats to our national interests."

Navy Elevates TACAMO Weapons Tactics Detachment to Full Command

ARLINGTON, Va.— The Navy has upgraded the TACAMO strategic communications community's weapons tactics detachment to a full command.

According to an internal Navy directive, the Detachment Weapons Tactics Unit of commander, Strategic Communications Wing One, at Tinker Air Force Base, Oklahoma, was disestablished on Oct. 1. In its place, on the same day, TACAMO Weapons School was established with a commanding

officer instead of an officer in charge.

TACAMO, an acronym for “Take Charge and Move Out,” is a system of survivable communications designed to maintain communications between the national command authority with the elements of the U.S. strategic deterrent triad: Air Force bombers and intercontinental ballistic missile bases and Navy ballistic-missile submarines.

The Navy’s two operational TACAMO squadrons, Fleet Air Reconnaissance Squadrons Three and Four, also based at Tinker, fly 15 Boeing E-6B Mercury aircraft in support of U.S. Strategic Command.

Marine Commandant: 2018 Recruiting Goal Met, but Dearth of Qualified Youth ‘Should Scare You’

WASHINGTON — The Marine Corps met its recruiting goal in fiscal 2018, said the service’s commandant, Gen. Robert B. Neller, despite a more challenging recruiting environment.

“We’ve made our recruiting goal every year,” Neller told reporters Oc. 10 at a Defense Writers Group breakfast.

The Marine Corps met 100 percent of its goal in 2018, while the Army failed to meet its goal for the first time since 2005.

The improving U.S. economy, with the lowest unemployment rate since 1969, is adding to the stress of military recruiters.

Neller said the Corps achieved its goal without lowering standards.

“If anything, we’ve raised our standards,” he said.

Neller pointed out that today less than 30 percent of the nation’s youth are qualified – physically and otherwise – for military service.

“That should scare you,” he said.

He said that in the Marine Corps, 62 percent of the force – about 120,000 of 186,000 Marines – is 25 years old or less. The average age of Marines is the youngest of the U.S. armed forces.

“We’re getting good folks,” he said.

As a manpower-intensive service, the Marine Corps spends 65 percent of its budget on personnel costs.

Navy Air Warfare Director: C-2 Aircraft Retirement Moved Up to 2024

WASHINGTON – The replacement of the Navy’s C-2A Greyhound carrier on-board delivery (COD) aircraft with the CMV-22B Osprey tiltrotor transport aircraft has been moved up three years because of accelerated procurement of the needed Ospreys, a Navy admiral said.

“The initial plan was to sundown the C-2 in 2027,” Rear Adm. Scott D. Conn, director of Air Warfare in the Office of the

Chief of Naval Operations, testified Sept. 28 before the House Armed Services Seapower and Projection Forces subcommittee. “With additional adds [CMV-22Bs] we’ve been able to push that left to FY ’24. The CMV-22 will IOC [reach initial operational capability] in the Navy in 2021. That is mapped to our first F-35 deployment for [F135] engine [transport] considerations. Transition will be complete by FY ’24.”

The Navy operates two squadrons of C-2As (for a total of 34 aircraft) which send out detachments of two aircraft with each carrier deployment.

Conn noted that the C-2A is more than 30 years old and is accordingly more difficult to sustain.

“We have gone from a 32 percent mission-capable rate in 2017 to 40 percent in ’18, so the trend is in the right direction, but it is nowhere near where we want it to be,” he said. “We’re going to continue to make those investments to make sure those aircraft are safe to get airborne until the end of its service life. I have to fully fund that aircraft until I’m completely done with it.”

He said the CMV-22 on a hot tropical day fully loaded with 10,000 pounds of cargo will be able to fly in excess of 1,100 nautical miles, “which meets our requirements for combat operations.”

The first CMV-22B in being built at the Boeing plant in Ridley, Pennsylvania, and will be delivered in 2020.

Conn said the CMV-22 will enjoy a shortened test program because its modifications are slight.

“We have to do a modified operational test,” he said. “The only thing we’re testing are that things that are different on the CMV-22 as compared to the MV-22. That’s going to be a very compressed test.

“We then IOC and get our first three aircraft to deploy in 2021,” he said. “There is no means by which I can accelerate that any further when you look at the [facilities construction], the training that’s required for our Sailors to operate and maintain, and the aircrew that have to fly it and get the hours they need. We’re going as fast as we can go. Any additional aircraft at this point would relieve or provide a shock absorber during the transition as we go from transition to deployment to follow-on detachments until we’re completely divested of our C-2.”

New Navy Unit to Replace Special Projects Patrol Squadron

ARLINGTON, Va. — The Navy has established a new unit to sustain a special mission capability in its maritime patrol community with the coming retirement of the P-3 Orion aircraft.

A Sept. 10 internal directive from the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations directed the establishment on that date of Fleet Support Unit One at Naval Air Station Jacksonville, Florida, one of two sites that serve as home bases for the Navy’s P-8A Poseidon maritime patrols aircraft.

According to the directive, Fleet Support Unit One “will configure and operate P-8 aircraft to provide a follow-on special mission capability in place of [special] projects patrol squadron (VPU) P-3 aircraft due to sundown in 2019.”

The mission of the unit will be to provide “oversight,

training, operations, maintenance, and configuration management for the P-8 quick reaction capability aircraft," according to the directive.

Fleet Support Unit One will have an officer in charge rather than a commanding officer, who will report to commander, Patrol Reconnaissance Wing 11, at Jacksonville.

The Navy's sole VPU squadron, VPU-2, operates several specially configured P-3C Orion aircraft from Marine Corps Air Station Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii. The squadron is scheduled for deactivation in fiscal 2019 in concert with the phase-out of the P-3C from operational active-duty patrol squadrons.

Navy Nuclear Reactor Chief: Industrial Base Healthy, but Sustainment Requires High Energy

WASHINGTON – The Navy's nuclear propulsion industrial base is meeting the needs of the Navy, but it requires a lot of attention to sustain it to ensure its availability.

"The [nuclear industrial] base is small," Adm. James F. Caldwell, director, Navy Nuclear Propulsion Program, said Oct. 2 at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington think tank. "The base is healthy and capable of supporting our Navy nuclear propulsion needs. It's sustainable through the program of record but it takes a lot of energy to sustain that."

Caldwell noted that the nuclear vendors, particularly the principal vendors, share the culture of the Navy nuclear propulsion program.

“What matters the most to the Navy nuclear propulsion program is a stable 30-year shipbuilding plan and a stable budget,” he said. “These are the things that stimulate our commercial vendors to support us. If they know that they’re going to have the business, they will invest their facilities and stay the course with us.”

Caldwell noted that “in the 1990s, when the force structure went down, it resulted in our major suppliers operating significantly below capacity. We were worried that the demise of the nuclear industrial base would result in the loss of the last critical skills that we needed. Since then we focused on right-sizing the industrial base to sustain the critical skills and facilities that we need, and the optimal words were low-rate production, consolidation and down-sizing as appropriate to sustain the skills that we need.”

He also said that “since the 1970s, the Navy nuclear propulsion program has been the sole source that has been driving [the delivery of] new reactors. We’ve done so through first-tier suppliers who don’t specifically rely on commercial business for their business. We have commissioned some 99 vessels since 1979.

“Today, our industrial base is made up of hundreds of vendors of various sizes, but we’re focused mostly on about 28 principal vendors,” he said. “Many of these have been with us for 40 or 50 years and some going on even 60 years. The portion of Navy work for these vendors ranges from 15 percent to 95 percent, some even a little more; the average is around 60 percent. Many of them are seeking opportunities to grow their business in the commercial sector.”

Caldwell regards the nuclear industrial base in three levels:

reactor plant heavy components; flow components such as valves and pumps; and reactor instrumentation.

He said the Navy is down to one vendor for reactor plant heavy components, for which the Navy's requirements are very stringent.

"In the flow control [components], there's some degree of competition, but the barriers for entry are high," he said. "It does take many years to develop vendors to be able to develop the equipment. Probably the most competition is in reactor instrumentation and control. A lot of our vendors have other government business. In this area we have structured our approach to maintain a level of competition while also preserving some redundancy in the vendor base."

Navy Air Warfare Director: C-130 Fleet Will be Full Up in Fiscal 2019

WASHINGTON – The Navy expects to have all of its C-130 Hercules transport aircraft back flying this fiscal year after grounding many for problems with their propellers.

"We'll have all the aircraft up by FY '19 and all the aircraft to the NP2000 [propeller] by FY '20," said Rear Adm. Scott D. Conn, director of Air Warfare in the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, testifying Sept. 28 before the House Armed Services Seapower and Projection Forces subcommittee.

The Navy Reserve operates 24 C-130T and KC-130T transports, as well as 15 C-40A Skytrain II airlift jets. They are used to

support deployed fleet operations by transporting personnel, cargo, spare parts and mail to ships and stations. The C-130 will become even more important in the future.

“The C-130T is the only Navy aircraft capable of moving all modules of the F-35’s engine,” Conn said.

Many Navy and Marine Corps C-130s were grounded as a precaution after a Marine Corps Reserve KC-130T crashed in Mississippi in July 2017, with the possibility that a propeller separated from an engine and cut through the fuselage. The crash killed 15 Marines and one Sailor.

Congress supported the Navy in procuring new propeller blades and new NP2000 propellers for the legacy C-130Ts and KC-130Ts with $121 million.

The Air Force and Navy formed an Independent Review Team at Warner Robins air logistics complex in Georgia to revamp C-130 propeller overhaul requirements, with the Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and partner-nation C-130 operators also invested in the process.

The logistics complex began build-up of 54 propellers in March in support of naval C-130s. The propellers were assembled using new production blades procured from the original equipment manufacturer who currently is increasing delivery from 30 a month to 48 a month by October, Air Force Lt. Gen. Donald E. Kirkland, commander of the Air Force Sustainment Center, also testifyied at the hearing.

The Navy also is upgrading the mission systems of its C-130s.

“For fiscal 2019 the Navy requested $28.5 million for avionics and communications obsolescence upgrades to keep the aircraft compliant with FAA and ICAO [International Civil Aviation Organization] standards to be able to enter air traffic management systems throughout the world,” Conn said. “These modernization efforts are critical to maintaining Navy

logistics support to our deployed forces.”

The Navy completed procurement of the C-130Ts in 1996.

“We’re now looking at recapitalizing our effort beginning with advance procurement and buying three [C-130J] aircraft in FY ’23,” Conn said.

President Signs Budget Boosting Navy Ship, Aircraft Procurement

ARLINGTON, Va. — The fiscal 2019 defense budget, part of a multiagency appropriations bill signed into law Sept. 28 by President Donald J. Trump, reflects the will of Congress to plus-up Navy Department ship and aircraft procurement.

The law appropriates $606.5 billion for base defense spending and $67.9 billion for Overseas Contingency Operations funds, totaling $675 billion. This is $20.4 billion over fiscal 2018 funding levels and matches the fiscal 2019 request.

The law, the first defense budget in 10 years that was passed before the fiscal year it funds began, added two littoral combat ships, two F-35B and four F-35C Lightning II strike fighters, two E-2D Advanced Hawkeye early warning aircraft and seven MV-22B/CMV-22B Osprey tiltrotor transport aircraft. The law deleted funding for two C-40A Skytrain II transport aircraft.

The law funds 13 ships in 2019 at $24 billion, $2.3 billion more than the Navy’s request. These include:
■ Two Virginia-class attack submarines ($4.3 billion)

■ Three Arleigh Burke-class Flight III guided-missile destroyers ($5.3 billion)
■ Three littoral combat ships ($1.6 billion)
■ One expeditionary sea base ship ($647 million)
■ One Spearhead-class expeditionary fast transport ($225 million)
■ Two John Lewis-class fleet replenishment oilers ($1 billion)
■ One towing, rescue and salvage ship ($80.5 million)

The law also funded advance procurement for several ships:
■ $350 million for an LPD Flight II amphibious transport dock ship
■ $350 million for the LHA 9 amphibious assault ship
■ $250 million to purchase an additional Arleight Burke guided-missile destroyer in fiscal 2020
■ $3 billion to support the construction of the Colombia-class ballistic-missile submarine
■ Adds $18 million for industry studies and requirements definition for the Common Hull Auxiliary Multi-Mission Platform (CHAMP) to replace sealift and auxiliary vessels and directs the Navy to present an updated acquisition strategy for CHAMP.

Aircraft funded for fiscal 2019 ($20 billion, $1 billion more than the Navy’s request) include:
■ 22 F-35B and 13 F-35C Lightning II strike fighters ($3.5 billion)
■ 24 F/A-18E/F Super Hornet strike fighters ($1.9 billion)
■ 10 P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft ($1.8 billion)
■ Nine E-2D Advanced Hawkeye early warning aircraft ($1.1 billion)
■ Three MQ-4C Triton maritime patrol UAVs ($544 million)
■ Two KC-130J Super Hercules refueler/transports ($150 million)
■ 13 MV-22B and CMV-22B Osprey tiltrotor transports ($1.1 billion)
■ Eight CH-53K King Stallion heavy-lift helicopters ($1

billion)
■ 25 AH-1Z Viper attack helicopters ($798 million)
■ Six VH-92A presidential transport helicopters ($49 million)

Sara Fuentes, staff vice president, legislative relations, contributed to this report.

Navy Acquisition Chief: Navy Moving to Use Block Ship Maintenance Contracts

ARLINGTON, Va. — The Navy's top acquisition official said the service is moving toward block bidding of ship maintenance rather than issuing contracts for single ship availabilities. The Navy also is working to rapidly address unplanned repair needs for its ships.

"We've got a real challenge and opportunity ahead on how we operate [the Navy's] repair enterprise at speed," James F. "Hondo" Geurts, assistant secretary of the Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition, told reporters Sept. 26 at the Modern Day Marine expo in Quantico, Virginia. "We've already instituted a number of changes in contracting, how we deal with over-and-above and unplanned work.

"Traditionally, we've taken a very bureaucratic approach to resolve each one of those," he said. "[We're] coming up with a new contract mechanism that allows us to rapidly adapt to that unknown work as it pops up, so that we aren't keeping ships in the yards longer than they have to be."

Geurts said the Navy is "looking at how do we put multiple

ships together so that there is a longer planning window and industry can provide better solutions because they have a longer-term look, whether that's workforce, or training, or yard planning. Ideally, we would contract for all the ship repairs for the next six months in a block as opposed to our more traditional [method of] each ship's repair independently. That way industry would better plan and [facilitate] for the long haul."

He also said that with the number of ship repairs needed, "we don't have the capacity now without improving our efficiency and working with industry to figure how to become more efficient, as well as looking at their scale and how we bring more players into the marketplace to help us with that growing need."

Geurts cited a recent request for proposals in which three or four repairs were bundled together in a single bidding action.

"We've revised how we're doing this unplanned of over-and-above work, which is adding great efficiencies," he said. "We have approved [the] grouping together of contracts."

He also said the Navy conducted a survey of shipyards across the country, including those not currently doing business for the service, to determine repair capacity, location of dry docks, etc., "and proactively going out and, where there is opportunity, certifying those facilities and enabling them to compete and add into the marketplace."

The Navy received last month feedback from shipyards numbering in "double digits."

"Ultimately, we want a vibrant repair capability that can both do the work we know really well, efficiently and effectively, as well as give us capacity for work that we didn't know as it pops up," he said.

As to the block bidding, Geurts said that "if you have the

right competitive market you will absolutely save money, because right now we're doing it single bid by bid. It's really hard for a company to do that efficiently."

He also spoke of a workforce challenge across the country, "whether it's in the public yards or in the private repair yards. We right now don't have the full workforce we need to meet the demand."

Geurts sees the Navy's efforts as "providing a better stability and a better planning horizon" for the ship maintenance enterprise.

According to the Marine Corps, fielding for the JLTV will begin in spring 2019. In all, the Army plans to purchase 49,000 JLTVs and the Marine Corps will purchase 9,091.