Navy to Combine F-35C Replacement Training Squadrons in 2019

Navy to Combine F-35C Replacement Training Squadrons in 2019ARLINGTON, Va. — The Navy plans to deactivate one of its two F-35C fleet replacement training squadrons next year and combine its aircraft and personnel within the other replacement training squadron.

According to a Navy internal directive dated Sept. 10, the Navy intends to deactivate Strike Fighter Squadron 101 (VFA-101) on July 1. VFA-101 is based at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida, and is mainly involved in training instructor and test pilots for the F-35C.

The Navy will "realign" VFA-101 assets into VFA-125, the fleet replacement training squadron based at Naval Air Station (NAS) Lemoore, California.

"This will co-locate the fleet [replacement] squadron production of pilots directly into the operational squadrons scheduled for transition to F-35C and meet testing and evaluation requirements for initial operating capability of VFA-147 as the first [F-35C] joint strike fighter deployer in fiscal year '21," the directive said. "The move of VFA-101 personnel and aircraft also supports Naval Aviation Warfighting Development Center advanced training at NAS Fallon, Nevada."

VFA-101, a former fleet replacement squadron for the F-14 Tomcat fighter, was reactivated in 2012 and began flying the F-35C in 2013.

CNO Richardson: Columbia SSBN Program on Track, Help on Margin Needed

ARLINGTON, Va. — The Navy's top officer said the program schedule to build the Navy's next-generation ballistic-missile submarine (SSBN) is very tight and some more margin in the program would help.

"What I am pushing the team to do is stay on track," said Adm. John M. Richardson, chief of naval operations (CNO), answering a reporter's question while speaking Sept. 5 at the Defense News Conference. "But it is right on track. We need to find some margin in that program, largely in schedule, in particular."

The Columbia-class SSBN is being built to replace the Ohio-class SSBN as the platform for the Navy's contribution to the national nuclear deterrent, the Trident D5 ballistic missile. The Navy plans to build 12 boats to succeed the 14 Ohio SSBNs as they reach the end of their service lives. Critical is the need for the first Columbia to be ready to deploy for its first ballistic-missile patrol in fiscal 2031.

"In a program of this complexity, it's just a fact of life that there are going to be things that will surprise us going forward," Richardson said. "So we need to build in enough margin to accommodate those surprises and also — very important — we make sure that the entire team — the industrial base, the Navy, everybody — understands that a program of this importance, with that little margin, perhaps requires increased oversight so that we're not making mistakes and

eating into a program that has very thin margins already.

The Columbia-class SSBN program is expected to cost $128 billion for acquisition.

Navy's Faller Nominated for U.S. Southern Command

ARLINGTON, Va. – A Navy admiral has been tapped to be the next commander of U. S. Southern Command. Vice Adm. Craig S. Faller, currently serving as the senior military assistant to the secretary of defense, also has been for appointment to the rank of admiral by Defense Secretary James N. Mattis, according to the Aug. 16 Defense Department announcement.

If confirmed, Faller, a nuclear-qualified surface warfare officer, would succeed Adm. Kurt W. Tidd, also a surface warfare officer.

U.S. Southern Command is responsible for all Defense Department operations and security cooperation in the 45 nations and territories of Central and South America and the Caribbean Sea, an area of 16 million square miles, according to the command's website.

Faller, a native of Fryburg, Pennsylvania, is a 1983 graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy and the Naval Postgraduate School. Below are excerpts from his official biography:

"At sea, he served as reactor electrical division officer, electrical officer and reactor training assistant aboard USS South Carolina (CGN 37); operations officer aboard USS Peterson (DD 969); station officer aboard USS Enterprise (CVN

65); and executive officer of USS John Hancock (DD 981). As commanding officer of USS Stethem (DDG 63), he deployed to the Arabian Gulf and participated in maritime interception operations in support of United Nations sanctions against Iraq. During his tour as commanding officer of USS Shiloh (CG 67), he assisted victims of the devastating tsunami off Indonesia. Finally, as commander, Carrier Strike Group 3, he deployed to the Middle East supporting Operations New Dawn (Iraq) and Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan).

"Ashore, Faller was assigned to chief of legislative affairs for the secretary of the Navy; served as deputy chief of naval operations (Plans, Policy and Operations); served as a legislative fellow on the staff of Sen. Edward M. Kennedy; served as head of Surface Nuclear Officer Programs and Placement at Navy Personnel Command and served as executive assistant to the chief of naval operations.

"Finally, he served as commander, Navy Recruiting Command; as executive assistant to the commander, U.S. Pacific Command and commander, U.S. Central Command; and as director of operations, U.S. Central Command."

Navy Set to Establish First CMV-22B COD Squadron at NAS North Island

ARLINGTON, Va. – The chief of naval operations has set a date for the establishment of a new carrier-onboard-delivery (COD) squadron that will be the Navy's first squadron to operate the new CMV-22B Osprey tiltrotor transport aircraft. A CMV-22B training group also will be established.

Fleet Logistics Multi-Mission Squadron 30 (VRM-30) will be established at Naval Air Station (NAS) North Island, California, on Oct. 1, according to an internal Navy directive. When equipped with CMV-22Bs, VRM-30 will deploy detachments of CVM-22Bs with each carrier air wing from the West Coast and Japan, succeeding the C-2A Greyhound COD aircraft of Fleet Logistics Support Squadron 30 (VRC-30).

To support the Navy's transition from the C-2A to the CMV-22B, the Naval Aviation Training Support Group (NATSG) will established the same date at Marine Corps Air Station New River, North Carolina, where the Marine Corps' V-22 fleet replacement squadron, Marine Medium Tiltrotor Training Squadron 204 (VMMT-204) is based. The NATSG will "liaise with the United States Marine Corps, and oversee United States Navy pilot, aircrew, and aircraft maintenance personnel through the training pipeline at VMMT-204," the directive said.

Currently a detachment of Commander, Airborne Command & Control and Logistics Wing, the type wing for the two VRC squadrons as well as the E-2D squadrons, supervises the Navy's V-22 training at New River.

Eventually, a new type wing will be established at North Island as the reporting command for the two planned VRM squadrons, VRM-30 and VRM-40, the latter squadron being planned to replace VRC-40, the C-2A squadron based at Norfolk, Virginia.

Also, a third squadron VRM-50, eventually will be established at North Island as the fleet replacement squadron for the CMV-22B community when the training shifts from New River.

SECNAV Spencer: Navy, Marine Corps 'More Ready, Lethal' Now than Last Year

ARLINGTON, Va. – The civilian head of the Department of the Navy said that measures taken over his first year in office have improved the condition of the Navy and Marine Corps forces and enabled future growth of the fleet.

"We're a more ready and lethal force than we were last year – in both services," said Navy Secretary (SECNAV) Richard V. Spencer, speaking Aug. 7 to reporters at a media roundtable in the Pentagon.

Spencer said that as he dove into his job last year he "did not have a full appreciation of the readiness hole, how deep it was, how wide it was."

Having commissioned his Strategic Readiness Review, Spencer set out to change the culture of the Navy and Marine Corps, adopting best practices from corporations that executed successful turnarounds from crises.

A data sheet for the roundtable said that "all of the recommendations of the Readiness and Reform Oversight Council are in progress; 78 will be implemented by the end of the fiscal year (out of 111 under review)."

Spencer cited improvements in aviation readiness, particularly progress in processing aircraft through depot-level maintenance and saving labor time when the aircraft were returned to their squadrons.

Regarding sustainment, Spencer said the historical emphasis on acquisition of new systems lacked focus on sustainment over the life of the systems. He said the Navy is trying to bake

that sustainment into the total process.

Surface ship maintenance, which the Navy has struggled to sustain for years, is an area that remains of concern to the secretary.

“We have a capacity issue that we are going to have to deal with,” he said, a challenge that will increase as the fleet grows to the mandated 355-ship battle force.

One measure undertaken by the secretary was to streamline and clarify the chain of accountability, with the type commander being “the belly button that’s responsible for the maintenance of the ships.”

Regarding the Optimized Fleet Response Plan’s record of ships emerging from planned maintenance on time, Spencer said he had seen demonstrable evidence that it’s better.

“I’ve seen little pockets of sunshine here and there. This is getting to the mantra that ‘You’ve got to keep to schedule.’ What will lit take to get us back to a fleet schedule? That is about two years away.”

He also cited a savings of approximately $4 billion with multi-year procurements of the Virginia-class attack submarine, the F/A-18 Super Hornet strike fighter, the E-2D Advanced Hawkeye early warning aircraft and the SM-6 surface-to-air missile.

Talking with defense industry representatives was critical to acquisition success and sustaining readiness, he said. He also pointed out that shared risk results in shared benefits, and that industry needs to make a profit to be able to provide the needed weapons.

The SECNAV also pointed out success in strengthening U.S. partners and allies with new and more weapons, with $25 billion of Foreign Military Sales (FMS).

“FMS now operates at the speed of relevance,” he said.

Spencer also pointed to the new initiative to develop a hypersonic weapon was benefiting from inter-service cooperation, with a tri-service memorandum of agreement in place to synchronize resources and expertise.

The focus on continuous education of the acquisition work force has yielded good results, he said, with 97 percent of the 55,000 workers having earned their respective certifications.

In a wrap-up, Spencer said that “we’re going to get to 355 [ships] — I’m totally convinced.

“We’re going to have to self-fund some of our expansion,” he added later in response to a reporter’s question.

Navy’s Next Carrier Shuffle Slated

ARLINGTON, Va. — The Navy has announced plans for its next shuffle of nuclear-powered aircraft carriers (CVNs), a quadrennial event governed by the Refueling and Comprehensive Overhaul (RCOH) schedule of the Nimitz-class and, in this case, also including another shift of homeport for maintenance.

In an Aug. 2 release, a spokesman for the commander, Naval Air Forces, announced “that three Nimitz-class aircraft carriers, USS Carl Vinson (CVN 70), USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) and USS John C. Stennis (CVN 74) will conduct homeport shifts.

“USS Abraham Lincoln, currently located in Norfolk, Virginia,

will rejoin the Pacific Fleet, making San Diego [Coronado, California] its homeport," the release said. "Abraham Lincoln, commissioned in 1989, previously served in the Pacific Fleet from 1990-2011 before moving to Norfolk for midlife refueling."

USS George Washington (CVN 73) currently is going through its mid-life RCOH at Newport News Shipbuilding, which typically takes up four years and extends the life of a carrier up to 50 years. The RCOH of the Nimitz class is more than halfway completed. The fleet includes 10 Nimitz-class CVNs.

The announcement also said that John C. Stennis [CVN 74], commissioned in 1995 and currently homeported in Bremerton, Washington, will change homeport to Norfolk in advance of its RCOH.

The Navy also announced that USS Carl Vinson (CVN 70) will conduct a homeport change from Coronado to Bremerton "in advance of its docking-planned incremental availability at Puget Sound Naval Shipyard."

Los Angeles SSN Life-Extension 'Creates Own Issues'

WASHINGTON — The ranking member of the House Armed Services Seapower and Projection Forces subcommittee said failure to fund extra Virginia-class attack submarines (SSNs) in 2022 and 2023 will aggravate the submarine shortage in the next decade, and a plan to extend the lives of five older Los Angeles-class SSNs has "its own set of issues."

U.S. Rep. Joe Courtney, D-Conn., told an audience at the Hudson Institute, a Washington think tank, July 18, that the option of extending the lives of Los Angeles-class SSNs should be looked at carefully.

The Navy's SSN force stands at 53 boats today and is on track to decline to 42 in the mid-2020s. One plan to mitigate the decline is to fund three Virginia-class SSNs in both 2022 and 2023, when the submarine contractors Electric Boat and Newport News are building the first Columbia-class ballistic-missile submarine.

"If we don't do that, we're really going backwards," Courtney said, referring to the shipbuilding plan, now a matter of law, to build the Navy's fleet to 355 ships.

The Navy also is looking at extending the service life of up to five Los Angeles SSNs to help mitigate the gap.

"I'm not religiously opposed to that, but [life extension] creates its own set of issues," said Courtney, whose district includes Electric Boat. "These are old boats, built in the 1980s and '90s. They don't have the same capabilities that a Virginia-class [SSN] has. We have to refuel the reactor and you have to check the hull to make sure that it's okay. They've been running hard in the decades they've been out there.

"There's a whole separate issue," he added. "Technologies change in terms of shipbuilding: where you get the spare parts, where you find the [blueprints]. This thing is not as easy as it sounds. It's not like putting a quart of oil in your 10-year-old car and hope it runs for the next five years."

Zumwalt DDG's Gun Munition Still on Hold

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Navy's program executive offer in charge of most shipbuilding said that development of a new munition for the Advanced Gun System (AGS) on the DDG 1000 Zumwalt-class ship continues to be on hold.

Speaking July 11 at a Navy League Special Topic Breakfast, Rear Adm. William J. Galinis, program executive officer, Ships, said a replacement for the Long-Range Land-Attack Projectile (LRLAP) developed for the AGS "is on hold at this point."

The LRLAP was canceled in part for its high cost given economies of scale when the DDG 1000 program was reduced from 32 planned ships to only three, leaving the AGS without a round available in quantity.

"Last fall, the Navy made the decision that we were going to transition [the Zumwalt] from a primary land-attack mission to more of a surface strike mission set," Galinis said. "As we brought this platform on line and learned about the capability of the platform, it fits that mission requirement very well. There are some changes we need to make to the ship, but they are not significant."

Galinis said the Navy has had challenges with getting the desired ranges from rounds fired from the AGS.

"Last summer, we had essentially a fly-off of four or five different rounds," he said. "We've taken the analysis of those test firings. It's kind of on hold at this point as we transition to surface strike."

Galinis said that USS Zumwalt is expected to return to sea at the end of next month following installation of its combat

systems in San Diego. The second hull, Michael Monsoor, is in Bath Iron Works shipyard in Maine for a post-delivery availability. One of its main turbine engines suffered a casualty and will be replaced.

The third hull, Lyndon B. Johnson, is expected to be launched by the end of the year and to begin sea trials by the end of 2019.

PEO Ships: 'A Little Risk,' 'Evolutionary Approach' to Shipbuilding Needed

ARLINGTON, Va. — The Navy admiral in charge of building most of the Navy's ships advocates taking a bolder approach to ship design, but one that also leverages existing hulls and technology to incrementally develop new ship classes.

Speaking July 11 to an audience at a Navy League Special Topic Breakfast, Rear Adm. William J. Galinis, program executive officer (PEO), Ships, said the Navy spending "far too much time studying a problem in trying to minimize risk really gets us to an unresponsive [acquisition] system."

Galinis said that the Navy's top leadership is encouraging the acquisition community to "take a little bit of risk" given the current sense of urgency in the renewed climate of great power competition.

"Include that in your business practices," he urged the defense industry representatives at the event.

Galinis said the Navy is taking a more "evolutionary approach

to new ship classes [and] introducing new technology, leveraging parent designs."

He cited the DDG 51 Flight III program, the new guided-missile frigate program and the Flight II of the San Antonio-class amphibious platform dock ship as examples of the evolutionary approach. Another example he mentioned is the evolution of the America-class amphibious assault ships, the most recent of which – Bougainville – will feature restoration of a well deck and be equipped with the new Enterprise Air Search Radar that uses technology in common with the Air and Missile Defense Radar being installed on the DDG 51 Flight III.

Galinis pointed out the success of incrementally modernizing ships in the example of the third Arleigh Burke guided-missile destroyer USS Barry (DDG 53), which emerged from a recent modernization availability with the same capability of USS John Finn (DDG 113), a new ship commissioned last year.

He said Navy's Future Large Surface Combatant design will represent "more of an evolutionary approach as we migrate from the DDG 51 Flight III to the Large Surface Combatant" [and] will be "operationally driven."

The first two ships of DDG Flight III are under construction by Huntington Ingalls and Bath Iron Works.

"The revolutionary piece certainly plays a part," Galinis said, referring to new technologies that are being developed for shipboard use. The Navy has been developing laser weapons, electromagnetic rail guns and integrated power systems for newer ships.

Boeing to Build 28 Super Hornets for Kuwait

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Navy has awarded to Boeing $1.5 billion for 28 F/A-18E/F Super Hornet strike fighters for the Kuwaiti Air Force.

According to a June 27 Defense Department contract announcement, Boeing will build 22 single-seat F/A-18E and six two-seat F/A-18F versions for Kuwait.

The sale of the Super Hornets was approved by the U.S. Department of State in February.

Deliveries of the strike fighters to Kuwait is expected by January 2021.

Kuwait's air force previously ordered 32 older F/A-18C and eight F/A-18D Hornets during the 1980s. It will be the second foreign nation to order the Super Hornet, Australia being the first.