

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 testified 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 Arleigh Burke guided-missile destroyer in fiscal 2020
- \$3 billion to support the construction of the Columbia-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/transport (\$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.

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

Navy to Combine F-35C Replacement Training Squadrons in 2019 ARLINGTON, 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 be 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 it 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."