

# 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.

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# **CNO Selects Fleet Master Chief Smith as 15th MCPON**

ARLINGTON, Va. – Following a comprehensive review of potential candidates, Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Adm. John Richardson selected Fleet Master Chief Russell Smith to be the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy (MCPON) Aug. 29, the Navy's Office of Information said in a release of the same date.

"After a thorough and deliberate review process, I am confident that Fleet Master Chief Smith is the right leader to be our Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy," said Richardson. "I look forward to working with him to advocate for our Sailors and their families selflessly serving around the world."

As the Navy's 15th MCPON, Smith will serve as the senior-ranking enlisted leader and adviser to the CNO.

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# **Coast Guard Repatriates Migrants to the Dominican Republic**

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – The Coast Guard Cutter Joseph Napier repatriated five of 12 migrants to the Dominican Republic Aug. 23 after Caribbean Border Interagency Group law enforcement

authorities interdicted a boat just off the coast of Desecheo Island, Puerto Rico, the 7th Coast Guard District said in a release.

Six of the interdicted migrants, five Dominican and one of Mexican nationality, were brought ashore to Puerto Rico where they face potential federal criminal immigration charges for attempted illegal re-entry into the United States. One other Dominican migrant, also brought ashore, is undergoing further immigration processing.

“The coordination and swift response by the Caribbean Border Interagency Group law enforcement authorities involved in this case led to a rapid interdiction and safe removal of all 12 migrants,” said Cmdr. Christopher Douglas, Sector San Juan chief of response. “Migrants should not take to the sea, they not only risk going to jail, but also endanger their lives by entrusting smugglers to bring them across the dangerous waters of the Mona Passage aboard grossly overloaded makeshift boats with little or no lifesaving equipment onboard.”

During a routine patrol in the Mona Passage Aug. 21, the crew of a Customs and Border Protection maritime patrol aircraft detected a 20-foot migrant boat just off Desecheo Island traveling without navigational lights toward the west coast of Puerto Rico. Coast Guard Sector San Juan watchstanders diverted Joseph Napier to interdict the vessel and alerted Puerto Rico Police Joint Forces of Rapid Action of the situation. An MH-65 Dolphin helicopter from Air Station Borinquen also responded to support the interdiction and provide any needed rescue assistance.

Shortly thereafter, the Puerto Rico Police marine unit came alongside and stopped the migrant vessel as Joseph Napier arrived on scene. The crew of Joseph Napier safely embarked all 12 migrants, 10 men and a woman of Dominican nationality and another man who was a Mexican national.

Once aboard a Coast Guard cutter, all migrants receive food, water, shelter and basic medical attention. Ramey Sector Border Patrol Agents in Puerto Rico took custody of the migrants facing prosecution, while the Joseph Napier transported the remaining migrants to Dominican Republic waters, where they embarked a Dominican Republic Navy patrol boat.

Joseph Napier is 154-foot fast response cutter homeported in San Juan.

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## **HII Announces Leadership Changes to Submarine Construction Programs**

NEWPORT NEWS, Va. – Huntington Ingalls Industries (HII) announced in an Aug. 22 release leadership changes to the submarine construction programs at its Newport News Shipbuilding division.

Jason Ward has been promoted to vice president of Columbia-class submarine construction. Dave Bolcar, who served as vice president of all submarine construction, encompassing both the Virginia- and Columbia-class submarine programs, has assumed the role of vice president of Virginia-class submarine construction.

“These changes reflect the significant growth and opportunities our submarine programs bring to the business,” said Newport News Shipbuilding President Jennifer Boykin. “The Virginia-class program is one of our largest programs, and the Columbia-class program has significantly increased in design,

planning, material procurement, cost estimating, facility design and early manufacturing. The increased scope of responsibility for these critical programs now requires full and dedicated leadership attention.”

Ward, who joined Newport News in 2014, previously served as director of Columbia-class submarine construction, where he has responsibility for the design, engineering, program management, planning and construction of the Navy’s next ballistic-missile submarine. He has held several leadership positions, including director of integrated digital shipbuilding and program manager of AP1000 shield building fabrication at Newport News Industrial. Ward earned an MBA from the College of William and Mary and a Bachelor of Science degree in mechanical engineering from Pennsylvania State University.

Bolcar joined Newport News in 1988 as an engineer in the Los Angeles-class submarine engineering division. Since then, he has held several positions of increasing responsibility, including director of the Columbia-class program, manager in Ford-class component engineering and Columbia-class propulsion engineering, and director of submarine engineering. Bolcar earned a bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering from Pennsylvania State University.

Both will report to Ken Mahler, Newport News’ vice president of Navy programs.

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## **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.”

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## **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.

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## **Industry Offers Alternatives to Achieve 38 Amphibious Warships, Recapitalize MSC Fleet**

QUANTICO, Va. – Three of the Navy's biggest shipbuilders offered alternative plans they said would enable the Navy to get the 38 amphibious warships it needs and to recapitalize

the Military Sealift Command's (MSC) ancient fleet faster and cheaper than what the Navy now plans.

Their proposals included moving up construction starts for the two newest classes of amphibious ships, to avoid creating a cold shipyard, to gain the efficiency of block buys, and to drop the concept of a single common hull design to replace all of MSC's widely different ship classes and instead adapt several of the amphibious and auxiliary ships currently being built.

Speaking Aug. 9 at the closing day of the Seabasing Operational Advisory Group's 2018 session, the officials from Huntington Ingalls Industries (HII), General Dynamics NASSCO and Austal also agreed that the U.S. shipbuilding industrial base is capable and ready to make the major increase in construction that would be necessary for the Navy to reach its goal of a 355-ship fleet.

They were joined in that view by Jeff LeLeux representing Swiftships, which builds a variety of patrol craft and has the contract for the Landing Craft Utility 1700, formerly called the ship-to-shore connector program.

Congress and others have expressed concern that the industry could not ramp up production enough to help the Navy reach its 355-ship goal.

Jon Padfield of HII said the "amphibious ship availability doesn't seem to be getting any better and may be getting worse," despite the Navy's commitment to meeting the long-standing requirement for 38 amphibs.

To avoid making the situation even worse, the Navy should accelerate construction start on LHA-9, the fourth in the America-class amphibious assault ships, and the LPD-17 Flight II replacements for the aged Dock Landing Ships, Padfield said.

The first three America-class LHAs are operational, being built or set to start construction next year, he said. But there is a multi-year gap between construction of LHA-8 and the planned start for LHA-9, which would force HII to close the line. "In order to keep the production line hot and to get to 38, we need to accelerate LHA-9," Padfield said.

He also said the Navy could save money by moving up production of LPD-31 and 32, the second and third of the Flight II ships, formerly called LX(R).

General Dynamic's Tom Wetherald and Austal's Larry Ryder criticized the Navy's proposed Common Hull, Auxiliary Multi-purpose Platform (CHAMP) concept to replace MSC's fleet, which includes maritime prepositioning (MPS), strategic sealift, crane, Marine Corps aviation maintenance, submarine tenders, command and hospital ships.

Wetherald said the CHAMP concept made sense for the large MPS ships, but suggested the expeditionary transport dock and expeditionary seabase ships that NASSCO builds would be better fits for other types. He joined Ryder in proposing variations of Austal's expeditionary fast transports as more reasonable forms for other MSC ships.

They also proposed the LPD class as a better platform for some of those auxiliary ships than the CHAMP idea, to which Padfield nodded agreement.

Later in the day, two MSC officials highlighted the problems the command has with its outdated fleet, most of which are steam-powered, which are difficult to maintain and take larger crews to operate. But they indicated they had not been involved in creating the CHAMP concept.

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# 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.

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## **MARAD Needs More U.S.-Flag Ships to Strengthen Maritime Commerce and Transportation**

ARLINGTON, Va. – Kevin Torkarski, associate administrator for Strategic Sealift for the Maritime Administration (MARAD), said strengthening maritime commerce and transportation are vital to controlling the sea, but MARAD can’t meet those demands in its current state.

“It’s great to have a naval force. The naval force isn’t as strong as we want it to be, and we know that. But how are we doing with controlling the sea with maritime commerce? We’re not,” said Tokarski, during a Navy League special topic breakfast on Aug 3.

Our power as a nation comes from the ability to move weapons, ammo and resources to the right place, Torkarski explained. In that way, transportation not only enables the nation's economy but protect our nation as well.

"There are a lot of very important pieces," Torkarski clarified, "but when it comes to it at the end of the day, you got to be able to move people, put things in certain places. As we say in the transport community, 'Nothing happens until something moves.'"

Torkarski explained if you can't get resources to your bases of operation, you've more or less lost the battle – a lesson other nations have learned from watching the U.S as a powerhouse of the sea.

"All of us from a maritime perspective need to come together with the realization that we need a stronger maritime presence at sea," he said.

According to Torkarski, the current administration understands the need to strengthen maritime transportation. The next step, however, is how. How do you revive the U.S. maritime commerce to its former glory? Tokarski believes providing more U.S.-flag ships would change a lot, including adding much-needed mariners.'

"Cargo preference is not a dirty word. Cargo preference is a sound policy that when the federal government buys things and ships goods and services, we're going to use U.S.-flag ships ... to the maximum extent. My agency believes in that."

To further support the law, Tokarski added, "Cargo preference buys us readiness."

Tokarski knows him and his colleagues have been frequently repeating their cry for support as of late, but because of their consistent message, he believes MARAD could see beneficial changes to come in the near future.

“It is a message that is worth repeating,” Tokarski said. “It’s almost like sending out an SOS. You don’t do it one time. You got to keep doing it. I think it’s a good parallel of where we are at as a maritime nation.”

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## **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."