CNO Richardson: 'Looking at 25-50 years of a maritime-centric world'

WASHINGTON – The role of the U.S. Navy as a diplomatic and economic actor in U.S. foreign policy and execution is as strong as ever and likely to remain so for the next several decades, the Navy's top officer said.

"In general, we're looking at 25 to 50 years – easy – of a maritime-centric world," said Adm. John M. Richardson, chief of naval operations, speaking Feb. 6 to an audience at the Atlantic Council, a Washington think tank. "[There will be] lots of responsibilities for maritime forces coming in the next 50 years.

"Those responsibilities are not the only military dimension of national power, but the Navy has a tremendous history of enhancing the diplomatic element of national power," Richardson said. "There have been major treaties and leader summits conducted on U.S. warships. Gunboat diplomacy—there is something to that still. When we visit foreign ports, it's almost a given that the U.S. ambassadors to that country will host a reception on the ship because its sovereign U.S territory."

The CNO noted the Navy's rich role in U.S. diplomatic history, saying that there is "a role for that going forward."

Regarding influence on economic power, Richardson said the Navy's role "in preserving sea lines of communication – 90 percent of the world's trade goes over the seas."

Richardson said the maritime rules set developed over decades since World War II "provide that level playing field" that has benefited the nations, "perhaps most especially China, which

has grown tremendously.

“We need to advocate for preserving that,” he said.

Richardson has advocated consistency in complying with and enforcing international rules regarding freedom of navigation in current areas of tension – the South China Sea and the Taiwan Straits – as necessary to preserve the freedom of maritime commerce in international waters.

CNO Richardson: Rail Gun Is a ‘Case Study’ in ‘How Innovation Maybe Shouldn’t Happen’

WASHINGTON – The Navy’s effort to field an electromagnetic rail gun has taken too long to develop but is yielding other technological advances, the Navy’s top officer said.

“I would say that rail gun is the case study that would say, ‘this is how innovation maybe shouldn’t happen,’” said Adm. John M. Richardson, chief of naval operations (CNO), speaking Feb. 6 to an audience at the Atlantic Council, a Washington think tank.

“[The rail gun project] has been around 15 years, maybe 20; ’rapid’ doesn’t come to mind in a time frame like that,” the CNO said, having just addressed the need for rapid prototyping and acquisition agility in order to maintain a technological edge in great power competition.

“Now we’ve learned a lot [from the project], and the

engineering of building something like that that can handle that much electromagnetic energy and not just explode is challenging," he said. "So, we're going to continue after this – we're going to install this thing, we're going to continue to develop it, test it. It's too great a weapon system so it's going somewhere, hopefully."

Richardson said that it was not uncommon in innovative approaches to yield unforeseen benefits.

The projectile conceived for the rail gun "is actually a pretty neat thing in and of itself," he said. "The high-velocity projectile is also usable in just about every gun we have. It can be out in the fleet very, very quickly independent of the rail gun. So, this effort is breeding all sorts of advances. We just need to get the clock sped up with respect to the rail gun."

Navy Successfully Conducts SPY-6 AMDR Ballistic Missile Test

KAUAI, Hawaii – The U.S. Navy's AN/SPY-6(V)1 Air and Missile Defense Radar (AMDR) successfully tracked a ballistic missile target, Jan. 31, the Naval Sea Systems Command said in a Feb. 5 release.

The short-range ballistic missile target was launched from the Pacific Missile Range Facility. An AN/SPY-6(V)1 AMDR searched for, detected and maintained track on the target as predicted. The flight test, designated Vigilant Nemesis, is the final developmental test in a series of ballistic missile defense

flight tests for the AN/SPY-6(V)1 AMDR.

“The radar performed exactly as predicted. This completes our rigorous developmental test program to support the on-time delivery of the Navy’s newest Flight III destroyer,” said Capt. Seiko Okano, major program manager for Above Water Sensors, Program Executive Office-Integrated Warfare Systems (PEO IWS).

Based on preliminary data, the test successfully met its primary objectives. Program officials will continue to evaluate system performance based upon telemetry and other data obtained during the test.

Integrated air and missile defense testing commenced in March of 2017 with the successful completion of the first live ballistic missile flight test mission for the AN/SPY-6(V)1 radar named Vigilant Hunter. Vigilant Nemesis was the capstone ballistic missile test for the AN/SPY-6(V)1 AMDR and the 15th live ballistic missile test for the radar’s development phase.

GD Bath Iron Works Awarded $719 Million for Planning Yard Services for DDG 51s

BATH, Maine – General Dynamics Bath Iron Works, a subsidiary of General Dynamics, has been awarded a Navy contract to continue providing planning yard services for DDG 51 Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyers. The contract is valued at $126 million for the first year with four option years, which, if exercised and fully funded by the Navy, would bring the total value of the contract to $719 million.

Planning yard services include design, material kitting, logistics, planning and execution. The majority of the planning yard services work will be performed in Maine.

Bath Iron Works also currently manages post-delivery maintenance and modernization activities for DDG 1000-class ships and LCS-class ships.

Navy Orders Two Utility Landing Craft from Swiftships

WASHINGTON – The Navy has awarded contract for the second and third utility landing craft (LCU) of a new class.

The Naval Sea Systems Command awarded a $26.7 million contract modification to Swiftships LLC of Morgan City, Louisiana, for LCU 1701 and 1702. The craft will follow the prototype of the LCU 1700 class, which is replacing the old LCU 1610 class on a one-for-one basis.

“LCU 1700 will be a similarly rugged steel craft, which will recapitalize the LCU 1610 capabilities and have a design life of 30 years,” the contract announcement said. “LCU 1700 craft will be a highly reliable and fuel-efficient heavy-lift platform whose capability will be complementary to the faster air cushion landing craft, which have a significantly shorter range, smaller payload capacity, no habitability and operating hour limitations.”

The Navy’s amphibious warfare ships equipped with well decks routinely deploy with LCUs embarked.

Work on the two craft is expected to be completed by May 2021.

Navy Secretary Names Independence-Variant Littoral Combat Ship After South Dakota's Capital

WASHINGTON – Navy Secretary Richard V. Spencer announced that the next Independence-variant Littoral Combat Ship will be named USS Pierre (LCS 38), his public affairs officer said in a Feb. 5 release. The future USS Pierre is named in honor of the capital city of South Dakota and is the second ship to bear the name.

"I am proud to name a future Independence-variant LCS after the capital city of South Dakota," Spencer said. "The citizens of Pierre and the entire state of South Dakota have a great history of service in the Navy and Marine Corps team, and that legacy will live on in the future USS Pierre."

The future USS Pierre will be built by Austal USA in Mobile, Alabama. This ship will be 419 feet long, with a beam length of 104 feet and capable of operating at speeds in excess of 40 knots.

The Navy has accepted delivery of 17 littoral combat ships (LCSs). Including the recent contract modifications, a total of 35 LCSs have been procured with 11 ships under construction (LCS 17, 19-26) and seven more ships in preconstruction stage (LCS 29 – 32, 34, 36, 38).

The LCS is a highly maneuverable, lethal and adaptable ship, designed to support focused mine countermeasures, antisubmarine warfare and surface warfare missions. LCS

integrates new technology and capability to affordably support current and future mission capability from deep water to the littorals.

Blue Blasters Hornet Sundown Ceremony Marks the End of an Era

VIRGINIA BEACH, Va. – Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 34 hosted a sundown ceremony and fly-over for the legacy F/A-18C Hornet aircraft at Naval Air Station Oceana in Virginia Beach, Virginia, Feb. 1.

Active-duty service members, aviation leadership, local media and visitors were in attendance to commemorate the aircraft's 35 years of active service in the fleet.

"Today our VFA-34 family and the operational farewells an old friend," said Cmdr. William Mathis, commanding officer of VFA-34. "Born more than 40 years ago, the Hornet entered operational service for the U.S. Navy in 1984, and for the next 35 years she proudly served the nation from the flight deck of aircraft carriers in all the seas across the globe."

The Blue Blasters of VFA-34 were the last fleet squadron in the Navy flying the Hornet, most recently joining USS Carl Vinson (CVN 70) to conduct freedom of navigation patrols in the South China Sea in 2018.

"First, it's a great feeling being the last squadron to take these hornets into combat because we made history," said Master Chief Gene Garland, command master chief of VFA-34.

“Secondly, this represents the ending of an era because these jets have been around for a long time, and the professionals you see all around you in this squadron maintained our Hornets and kept them flying. I thank God for the mindset of my Sailors. They are hard-workers, dedicated and they truly are a reflection of the culture of our squadron. This final flight means we and the legacy Hornets have accomplished the mission.”

Lt. Frank McGurk, who piloted one of the three hornets that were part of the ceremony alongside the squadron’s Commanding Officer and Operations Officer, shared some details of the historical experience.

“We went out to one of our working areas over the ocean about 80-100 miles out,” said McGurk. “From there, we left the area and flew northbound along the coast up past the [Wright Brothers] First Flight Memorial around Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, where we took a few photos over the area then made our way back to Oceana for the fly-over.”

Lt. McGurk also spoke on how he felt regarding the Hornet’s last flight.

“This aircraft has been super reliable for us and has proven itself over the years,” he said. “I believe there are many aviators out there who know how good of an airplane this is to fly. Although I’ve only had a taste of it, I can feel the history and lineage of that. There were a lot of people who came here to this base to see this old bird take her last flight, and I think that’s pretty cool.”

The F/A-18C Hornet is being replaced by the F/A-18E Super Hornet, which is capable of executing the same missions as the Hornet, but with significant advancements in mission systems that will dramatically enhance its effectiveness.

“The Hornet is known as many things,” said Cmdr. Mathis. “Legacy, highly reliable, multirole attack fighter … but to

us, she will always be an old friend. The Hornet will continue to serve with the Marine Corps and Navy support units but for the operational Navy, it is time to say goodbye. So from the men and women who flew and maintained the legendary F-18 Hornet, we say thank you for your service and job well done."

USS South Dakota Commissioned

NEW LONDON, Conn. – USS South Dakota (SSN 790) became the newest and 17th Virginia-class fast-attack submarine in the U.S. Navy during her commissioning ceremony at Naval Submarine Base New London, Feb. 2, Submarine Force Public affairs said in a release of the same date.

The U.S. Navy, with assistance from Deanie Dempsey, the ship's sponsor, gave the command, "Man our ship and bring her to life!" spurring the crew into action and all ship's systems to be tested, including alarms, bells, radars and scopes.

USS South Dakota's commanding officer, Cmdr. Craig Litty, highlighted South Dakota's capability to dominate the undersea domain and enable military success in any engagement.

"South Dakota was built to be on scene and unseen, forward-deployed and ready to take the fight to our adversaries and protect our shores here," said Litty. "We do that through executing the seven mission areas that the United States Submarine Force, which focus primarily on antisubmarine warfare and antisurface warfare, but we are also very capable of reconnaissance operations and operations in littoral waters. As the commissioning crew, we've developed a special bond with the ship itself, which we will use to maximize our capability on our first deployment."

“South Dakota will soon enter the fleet with stealth, flexibility and endurance,” said Vice Adm. Chas Richard, commander, addressing the crew and attendees. “Traveling silently through the world’s oceans undetected, collecting information, preparing for battle and, if necessary, striking from the deep swiftly without warning; answering the nation’s call. To the South Dakota crew, as your motto attests, ‘Under the Sea, We Rule,’ because the nation the Navy and the Mount Rushmore state are depending on you.”

Dempsey expressed what the moment and her role as the ship’s sponsor means to her.

“It is my privilege to be the sponsor of USS South Dakota,” said Dempsey. “I’ve been here from the very beginning, watching both the boat and her crew grow, and that gives me a tremendous sense of pride. When I said those words and the Sailors responded ‘Aye, aye, ma’am!’ it gave me goosebumps.”

The first South Dakota (ACR 9), a U.S. Navy Pennsylvania-class armored cruiser, laid down on Sept. 30, 1902, by the Union Iron Works, San Francisco and launched

on July 21, 1904, was sponsored by Grace Herreid, daughter of Charles N. Herreid, governor of South Dakota.

The second South Dakota’s (BB 57) keel was laid down on July 5, 1939, at Camden, New Jersey, by the New York Shipbuilding Corp. She was launched on June 7, 1941, sponsored by Harlan J. Bushfield, wife of the governor of South Dakota. The lead ship of her class, South Dakota was considered to be the most efficient battleship designed under the limitations of the Washington Naval Treaty during World War II.

Though in their nineties, some of the Sailors from the submarine’s namesake made it out to the event to see that the history and traditions were passed on to the next generation.

“It is very impressive, and I am very honored to be a part of

this," said Richard Hackley, a Seaman 1st Class (Radar Striker) aboard the battleship USS South Dakota during World War II. "I've got fond memories from serving on South Dakota, and to be included in the new South Dakota is quite an honor for me."

South Dakota is the seventh of eight Block III Virginia-class submarines to be built. The Block III submarines are made with the new Virginia Payload Tubes designed to lower costs and increase missile-firing payload possibilities.

The first 10 Block I and Block II Virginia-class submarines have 12 individual 21-inch diameter vertical launch tubes able to fire Tomahawk Land Attack Missiles (TLAMS). The Block III submarines are built with two-larger 87-inch diameter tubes able to house six TLAMS each. "It is flattering to be chosen to a part of this tradition," said Sonar Technician (Submarines) 2nd Class Casey Strickland, a South Dakota plankowner. "It sets us aside from other boat crews, and I think it is an honor to be part of this."

South Dakota is a flexible, multimission platform designed to carry out the seven core competencies of the submarine force: antisubmarine warfare; antisurface warfare; delivery of special operations forces; strike warfare; irregular warfare; intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance; and mine warfare.

The submarine is 377 feet long, has a 34-foot beam, and will be able to dive to depths greater than 800 feet and operate at speeds in excess of 25 knots submerged. It will operate for over 30 years without ever refueling. Construction on South Dakota began 2013; the submarine's keel was authenticated during a ceremony on April 4, 2016; and the submarine was christened during a ceremony Oct. 14, 2017.

General Atomics Awarded Contract for Prototype LiFT Battery System for LDUUV

SAN DIEGO – General Atomics Electromagnetic Systems (GA-EMS) announced today that it has been awarded a contract from Advanced Technology International (ATI) to develop and demonstrate a prototype Lithium-ion Fault Tolerant (LiFT) battery system for the U.S. Navy's prototype "Snakehead" Large-Displacement Unmanned Undersea Vehicle (LDUUV), GA-EMS announced in a Feb. 4 release.

The LiFT battery system will power the LDUUV's propulsion and support systems. The Snakehead LDUUV is intended to increase endurance, range, and payload hosting capabilities to support a variety of future mission and operations requirements.

"Our LiFT battery systems are designed to withstand the rugged marine environment and provide safe, reliable power that is critical to keeping propulsion and support systems operating throughout a mission cycle," said Scott Forney, president of GA-EMS. "We look forward to expanding our efforts to develop and demonstrate prototype LiFT battery systems to support the LDUUV as we continue to provide LiFT systems for various other critical manned and unmanned underwater platforms used by the Department of Defense."

"LiFT batteries are designed with passive safety features not found in other solutions," stated Rolf Ziesing, vice president of programs at GA-EMS. "Some lithium-ion battery systems rely on an active forced water cooling system to cool batteries and mitigate thermal events. Active systems add more equipment,

weight and certification requirements to qualify a platform for use in a maritime environment. LiFT battery systems eliminate those complexities, simplifying installation, operation, and maintenance without compromising safety and reliability.”

The LiFT battery system’s modular design and single cell fault tolerance is designed to prevent uncontrolled and catastrophic cascading lithium-ion cell failure, improving the safety of personnel and platforms while keeping power available for high mission assurance. The flexible architecture of the high-energy-density LiFT battery system can be configured to meet the most demanding needs of manned and unmanned underwater vehicles. LiFT battery systems have undergone at-sea testing, including use in other undersea vehicles that have been classified by Det Norske Veritas Germanischer Lloyd, an international accredited registrar and classification society for the maritime industry.

Navy Secretary Names Independence-Variant Littoral Combat Ship USS Kingsville

WASHINGTON – Navy Secretary Richard V. Spencer announced that the next Independence-variant Littoral Combat Ship will be named USS Kingsville (LCS 36), the secretary’s public affairs officer said in a Feb. 4 release.

The future USS Kingsville (LCS 36) is named in honor of the city of Kingsville, Texas, and is the first ship to bear the name.

“I am pleased to name a future Independence-variant LCS USS Kingsville,” said Secretary of the Navy Richard V. Spencer. “The citizens of Kingsville have been steadfast partners to the Navy and Marine Corps team, and their enduring support of our future strike fighter pilots have helped make the city of Kingsville the gateway for naval aviators. I am confident this ship will continue that legacy of service for decades to come.”

The future USS Kingsville will be built by Austal USA in Mobile, Alabama. This ship will be 419 feet long with a beam length of 104 feet and be capable of operating at speeds in excess of 40 knots.

The Navy has accepted delivery of 17 littoral combat ships (LCS). Including the recent contract modifications, a total of 35 LCSs have been procured with 11 ships under construction (LCS 17, 19-26) and seven more ships in preconstruction (LCS 29 – 32, 34, 36, 38).