

Sea-Air-Space 2021 Prequel: Cruisers' Combat Systems Lagging Behind Threat, CNO Says



Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Mike Gilday (from left) speaks with Naval Undersea Warfare Center Headquarters Director of Undersea Warfare Eugene Hackney Jr. as Christopher DeMastro, head, Division Newport's Platform and Payload Integration Department, listens, during a visit to the Division on June 28, 2021. *U.S. NAVY*

ARLINGTON, Va.—The U.S. Navy's 2022 budget proposal to decommission seven guided-missile cruisers is not just based on the age and material condition of the ships. According to the chief of naval operations (CNO), the lethality of the cruisers' combat system is lagging behind the developing threat capabilities.

CNO Adm. Michael Gilday, speaking in a prerecorded webinar of the [Navy League's Sea-Air-Space Prequel](#), noted that the seven Ticonderoga-class cruisers are equipped with the SPY-1A or early SPY-1B radars, which are the oldest radars that are the main sensor of the Aegis Combat System. The SPY-1A is an analog system, increasingly anachronistic in the Digital Age.

The radars “are approaching obsolescence ... and they have difficulty actually seeing the threat, based on the speed and the profiles that we see threat missiles flying at these days.”

Gilday said the cost to own and operate the seven CGs over the five-year Future Years Defense Plan would come to \$5 billion.

“These ships on average right now are 32 years old,” he said. “We are seeing cracks. We are seeing challenges in the material condition of these ships that are, to a certain degree, unpredictable. So, they’re ‘unknown unknown.’ When we tried to deploy a ship most recently [USS Vella Gulf] and had to bring it back twice because of fuel tank cracks, is an example of something we just couldn’t predict that we have to react to, and it does have an impact on reliability. We need to be able to provide the secretary of defense reliable assets that they can count on to do the nation’s business.”

The CNO said the above factors “really came into play from a realistic standpoint in terms of making the argument for the best of those cruisers. The cost alone with respect to cruiser modernization is running tens of millions of dollars above what we had originally estimated, largely due to the unknowns that come into play with hulls that are over three decades old.”

The seven cruisers marked for decommissioning are USS San Jacinto (CG 56), USS Lake Champlain (CG 57), USS Monterey (CG 61), USS Hue City (CG 66), USS Anzio (CG 68), USS Vella Gulf (CG 72), and USS Port Royal (CG 73).

Navy Cybersecurity Director: 'No Relaxation of Defenses' During Telework Time



Sailors stand watch in the Fleet Operations Center at the headquarters of U.S. Fleet Cyber Command. U.S. Navy ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Navy is maintaining a vigilant cyber watch over its data networks as it balances network security and protecting the health of its Sailors amid the COVID-19 pandemic, a Navy admiral said.

“We’re trying to balance two different priorities,” Rear Adm. Kathleen Creighton, director of cybersecurity in the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, said during an April 17 webcast that was part of the Navy League’s Sea-Air-Space 2020:

Virtual Edition. “One is keeping our Sailors and civilians safe and to enable them to work remotely and second is to ensure operational readiness.”

To register and then watch this Sea-Air-Space 2020: Virtual Edition webinar live online, click [here](#).

Creighton said the Navy has had to go through a big cultural shift from working in offices to “ensuring as many people as possible can work from home remotely.”

She said that, in addition to Defense Department partners, the Navy’s industry partners had taken a “first responder-type approach to helping the Navy” by adding infrastructure to handle the ballooning demand for secure telework.

“We’re trying to balance two different priorities. One is keeping our Sailors and civilians safe and to enable them to work remotely and second is to ensure operational readiness.”

Rear Adm. Katherine Creighton

The admiral cited the need for significant expansion of capacity, the need to maximize collaboration capabilities, and determination of any need to change cybersecurity policy “to ensure we can take advantage of remote telework options.”

She said that “on any given day probably only a few thousand people accessed the Navy’s network remotely ... before COVID-19. Now, we are seeing upwards of 150,000 or more people accessing the network remotely.”

The great increase in telework required an expansion in capacity requirement for laptop computers, mobile phones, iPads and the VPN servers that they connect to as well as an expansion of Microsoft Outlook 365 use. Circuitry also had to be added to handle the increased use of devices as well as more people manning the help desk for the network.

Creighton said the Navy “has been on a road to modernize and to start using more collaboration capabilities, and this crisis has pushed us to roll those out faster. We’re using some temporary capabilities, and we’re looking to accelerate our permanent capabilities.”

She said the Navy is discovering where the bottlenecks in the network are and fixing them on a piece-by-piece basis. In addition to expanded circuitry, the Navy has been cleaning up user accounts and increasing licenses.

“Every time we increased the capacity, it was used. It filled right up,” she said. “So, the Navy is taking working from home very seriously, trying to protect our Sailors and civilians.”

“Our adversaries in cyberspace know we were doing business differently, so they are responding in kind,” she said, “so we have made sure that anything we have done has not relaxed our cybersecurity standards.”

“There has been no relaxation of any defenses,” she said. “We are securely connecting with that same network from home.”

Creighton said a temporary cloud is being set up to handle a faster roll-out of Office 365.

Looking to the future after the COVID-19 pandemic, Creighton said she believes “there would be a desire to continue a greater level of telework than we saw in the past, so we need to be sure that our network has the capacity to do that, that we have the procedures in place to do it, but most importantly we’re able to do it securely to protect our information and our people’s identity and other things we value as a Navy.”

Navy, Marine Officials: AI Will Augment – Not Replace – Humans



Rear Adm. David Hahn, chief of naval research, and Jennifer Edgin, the U.S. Marines Corps' assistant deputy commandant for information, were the guests on a webcast April 16 for the Navy League's Sea-Air-Space 2020: Virtual Edition on the two sea services' possible uses for artificial intelligence.

ARLINGTON, Va. – U.S. Navy and Marine Corps officials close to the effort to develop artificial intelligence in machines say the technology is advancing rapidly and will be used where it can add value.

Discussing AI in an April 16 webcast of the Navy League's Sea-Air-Space 2020: Virtual Edition were Rear Adm. David Hahn, chief of naval research, and Jennifer Edgin, the Marines' assistant deputy commandant for information. They said AI has an "incredible capability" and will have a "huge role to play" in warfighting.

To register and then watch this Sea-Air-Space 2020: Virtual

Edition webinar live online, click [here](#).

Hahn said that AI can help sort the enormous amounts of data available to the warfighter and perform many tasks that previously were performed by humans.

“Things advance faster when artificial intelligence is applied,” Hahn said.

He stressed, however, that AI will not replace humans, but will augment them.

“I don’t think you should look at it as replacing [humans], he said. “I think you should look at it as a value add. That value add will come in speed of decision, or the efficiency of the operation, or the effectiveness of that decision or that event. I think that this [AI] is a force multiplier for the humans who are engaged in these activities.

“It’s up to us to find the combinations of artificial intelligence and other technologies like autonomy to apply the appropriate ways to naval warfare,” he said. “I don’t think it’s a one-for-one, and we’re not going to trade out a human for a machine. We’re going to make the whole team better with this human-machine teaming concept.”

“I don’t think you should look at [AI] as replacing [humans]. I think you should look at it as a value add.

Rear Adm. David Hahn

Hahn stressed that AI and autonomy are not the same, but where they intersect, AI can add value to autonomy.

“Autonomy is going to move along a pathway, and when machine learning or some other method of artificial intelligence can add to that autonomy to accomplish a mission, then there will be an intersection,” he said. If it adds value to the mission, then it will make sense to do it.”

Humans are still required for many types of decisions and the services are working on the issues that arise with the use of AI.

“That conversation is maturing,” Hahn said.

The admiral said that he sees a “democratization” of the tools of AI, in which it becomes the domain not just of academia but will eventually spread to general use by the military and the public. A disadvantage of that democratization is that the AI in use will be available to adversaries, and AI that can be used for beneficial purposes also can be used for nefarious purposes.

AI “is an incredible capability that we in the Marine Corps seek to harness,” Edgin said. “Our philosophy is how do we want to pair Marines with machines to be more effective on the battlefield. We don’t want Marines to be spending their time putting a whole bunch of data into a spreadsheet. We want Marines to be able to make judgement decisions. We want them to use that Level 4 fusion capability that we have as humans to develop courses of action to lead at the small-unit level.”

“One of the most beneficial tools we have today is actually the individual Marine,” she added. “What we try to do is unleash their potential to identify technologies, identify problems, and then quickly implement a solution.

“If there is one truth in AI, there will always be something new and exciting that can potentially provide benefits to us.”

Space, the Hostile Frontier: Panel Explores Defense of Earth Orbit



A Falcon 9 rocket launches on Jan. 6 at Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, Florida. The rocket, carrying an installment of Starlink satellites, was the first official launch of the U.S. Space Force. U.S. Air Force/Joshua Conti

Space is not benign – no longer just the domain of unmanned scientific probes and occupied by astronauts in capsules or space stations exploring and conducting research, panelists stressed during a webcast that was aired on April 16 as part of the Navy League's Sea-Air-Space 2020: Virtual Edition.

“Space, internationally, is very important to our way of life. It's of strategic importance. We see our adversaries starting to weaponize space,” said Rear Adm. Marcus Hitchcock, director

of strategy, plans and policy at U.S. Space Command, the unified combatant command responsible for American military operations in outer space.

To register and then watch this Sea-Air-Space 2020: Virtual Edition webinar live online, click [here](#).

Other guests in the panel discussion, which was moderated by Francis Rose, included Derek Tournear, director of the Space Development Agency, and Christian Zur, executive director of the Procurement and Space Industry Council of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

“We’ve seen a massive explosion in everything space, at the national level and in our military,” Hitchcock observed, noting the establishment last year of the newest branch of the military, the U.S. Space Force. “Every morning we leap out of bed and we come in and stand the watch to maintain our space domain.”



The discussion during the webinar for the Navy League’s Sea-Air-Space 2020: Virtual Edition included (clockwise) moderator Francis Rose, Christian Zur, executive director of the Procurement and Space Industry Council of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Derek Tournear, director of the Space Development Agency, and Adm. Marcus Hitchcock, director of strategy, plans

and policy at U.S. Space Command.

The admiral observed that space has already seen its share of incidents, such as the 2017 launch of a missile by the People's Republic of China, a "Great Power Competitor" along with Russia, that shot down a satellite in low-earth orbit. "This is a very real example of our adversaries or potential adversaries developing counter-space offensive weapons that can test our supremacy."

A satellite recently launched by Russia also is believed to have the capability to damage or disable U.S. Military assets in orbit, Hitchcock added.

To maintain America's strategic high ground in space, Tournear said the U.S. needs to maintain its technological advantage but speed up the frequency of its launches of defense assets.

"Space, internationally, is very important to our way of life. It's of strategic importance. We see our adversaries starting to weaponize space."

Adm. Marcus Hitchcock, U.S. Space Command

"In the last National Defense Strategy, it basically said we have the new technology, we have the best digital base, but we do not have the speed, and our adversaries are able to get capabilities in orbit in three- to five-year timeframes at the longest. At the shortest, we can do it in 10 years [but] usually it's closer to 15."

It's the mission of the Space Development Agency to field U.S. capabilities to orbit faster, he added.

Moderator Rose observed that the NASA-based model had "flipped over the past few years," where instead of U.S. efforts in space being led by the vaunted civilian government agency, space efforts are being pioneered by

private industry – scientific and commercial endeavors but most especially defense applications.

Tournear countered that this development has led to companies building “hundreds of thousands” of satellites, commoditizing them and getting them to orbit quickly. “No longer does the government need to lead to make sure we develop the best technology,” he said. “We need to make sure we can get technology up there every two years.”

Zur picked up the discussion from private industry’s perspective.

He said the pairing of industry and defense technology for space started early, in the 1950s. Once the Defense Department started seeking technology for space, notably computer chips, costs per chip started going down. That trend has stretched into today, Zur said.

Rose touched on the responsibility that commercial industry and governments hold to mind how they maintain low-earth orbit. Zur talked about space debris but also private industry’s role as caretaker.

“While I could argue that there aren’t really enduring procedures that are accepted among all the players, and in large part militaries around the world have different objectives, we in the U.S. have kind of taken the lead in the commercial use of space. These norms and procedures have to be established, not only from a regulation standpoint, it’s simply best business practices. We’re just at the beginning stages of this.”

Hitchcock agreed with Rose that it’s important for U.S. Space Command to know what commercial assets are in orbit, where they are and what function they are serving. The U.S. is “getting better at looking up and understanding what is in space,” he added.

He described a new radar that recently went active that can map and track assets of all kinds – U.S. governmental, foreign and commercial. Older tracking counted some 25,000 objects in orbit, only 2,000 of which were actual satellites or other platforms, he said. “The rest of it was debris, trash. We think our understanding of what’s up there will increase tenfold as this ‘space fence’ comes online, and we might see as many as 250,000 different objects up there.”

Foggo: U.S. Military in All-New Territory in Fight Against Virus



Hospitalman Recruit Jacob Cortes monitors the level of oxygen

in a tank aboard the hospital ship USNS Mercy on April 14, docked in Los Angeles in support of COVID-19 response efforts. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Luke Cunningham
ARLINGTON, Va. – The scope of the COVID-19 pandemic shows the new domain that the U.S. military must prepare to operate in, according to the top commander of U.S. naval forces in Europe and Africa.

“That seventh domain is just simply germs. It’s the biosphere we operate in,” Adm. James Foggo III said April 15 during a webcast for Navy League’s Sea-Air-Space 2020: Virtual Edition. “And I think we’re going to have to take that into account in our preparations for deterrence and defense in the future.”

To register and then watch this Sea-Air-Space 2020: Virtual Edition webinar live online, click [here](#).

Foggo, commander of Allied Joint Force Command, which is based in Naples, Italy, as well as U.S. Naval Forces Europe and U.S. Naval Forces Africa, said the challenges of a massive NATO exercise, Trident Juncture 2018, which involved 50,000 personnel, 70 ships, 10,000 ground vehicles and 165 different aircraft, taught him that logistics should be added to the five battlespace domains of land, sea, air, space and cyber. However, the coronavirus outbreak that has sickened 1.9 million people worldwide, killed more than 123,000 and devastated Italy shows that there’s now a seventh domain.

“That seventh domain is just simply germs. It’s the biosphere we operate in.”

Adm. James Foggo III

“It hit us earlier, here in Italy,” where the Joint Force has facilities at Aviano Air Base in the north, Naval Air Station Sigonella in Sicily and Gaeta, near Naples, where the amphibious command ship USS Mount Whitney, the flagship of the 6th Fleet, is based.

Foggo credited Microsoft founder, billionaire and philanthropist Bill Gates for suggesting in a 2015 speech that, in addition to traditional wargames and tabletop exercises, pandemic planning take priority.

Foggo also cited a fast-spreading virus wargame, Urban Outbreak 2019, co-sponsored by the U.S. Naval War College, the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences and Johns Hopkins University's Applied Physics Lab, as "a start in preparation for the future and incorporation into our planning processes."



Adm. James Foggo III, commander of Allied Joint Force Command, U.S. Naval Forces Europe and U.S. Naval Forces Africa, spoke on April 15 during a Navy League Sea-Air-Space 2020: Virtual Edition webcast.

The admiral stressed the importance of testing for COVID-19 to determine if someone is infected and whether persons they've come in contact with be isolated.

"Testing works in our favor," Foggo said. "We can't afford to take anybody off the line in a day of Great Power Competition, where we have adversaries, competitors and, most importantly, we have violent extremists who take advantage of any chink in

the armor.”

In the future, “we’re going to have to plan ahead on how we’re going to protect the force against something like the coronavirus until we get a vaccine against COVID-19, and then beyond that there will be a next coronavirus, and I think we’ll be much better prepared for that in the future.”

**Geurts: Accelerated
Acquisitions Position Navy,
Industry for Period After
COVID-19 Crisis Wanes**



An artist rendering of the Columbia-class ballistic missile submarine. The Navy's top acquisition official said April 15 during a Navy League Sea-Air-Space 2020: Virtual Edition webcast that work is proceeding on such programs as the Columbia SSBN and the next-generation guided-missile frigate, despite the disruption of COVID-19. U.S. Navy

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Navy's top acquisition official said the service's efforts to accelerate contract awards in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic are helping the defense industry sustain its economic health at all levels and positioning the Navy and industry to emerge from the crisis without falling behind on work and ready to resume normal operations.

James F. Geurts, assistant secretary of the Navy for research, development and acquisition, speaking during an April 15 webcast of the Navy League's Sea-Air-Space: Virtual Edition, said the Navy and the defense industry are working to keep on task and be in a position to accelerate "out of the crisis."

To register and then watch this Sea-Air-Space 2020: Virtual Edition webinar live online, click [here](#).

“Ships still have to come out on time,” Geurts said, noting that the Navy can’t afford to lag once the world starts to recover from the crisis.

Geurts said the Navy has moved up the award of some contracts to inject “a lot of money in the system” to “get funds in the contractor hands” and “bring that work to the left” – meaning getting in started sooner. An example is the award last week – months early – of LPD 31, the second Flight II San Antonio-class amphibious transport dock ship.



James F. Geurts (right), assistant secretary of the Navy for research, development and acquisition, and Sea-Air-Space 2020: Virtual Edition moderator Francis Rose discuss Navy and defense industry acquisitions preparedness during and after the pandemic.

Accelerating contract awards enables shipyards and other contractors to stack a backlog of work and keep their workers employed. The contractors also can push funds to their lower-tier subcontractors to the same effect.

Geurts said it was “counterintuitive ... that the best way to

secure [the health of the defense industrial base] was to accelerate going into a crisis. Most folks would want to slow down, wait and see, and that would exactly create the wrong conditions.”

“The risk is being too risk-averse in our approach. The other risk is being reckless in our approach.”

“Ships still have to come out on time,” even as the Navy and industry weather but eventually recover from the pandemic.

James F. Geurts

He said that all of stakeholders are going at the situation “deliberately but urgently and thoughtfully. A challenge for us will be [that] it’s not a one-size-fits-all solution. This crisis hits different areas of the country, different sectors differently at different times. The key to success will be great networks, leveraging the data we have and building on a foundation of trust.”

As the Navy worked to advance contract awards, Geurts said he saw his now “massively distributed,” largely teleworking work force shows greatly improved performance as it works to help the defense industry get through the pandemic.

The Navy also is ordering spare parts sooner to build up the supply and to shore up the suppliers who provide them.

Geurts said he confers with shipyard presidents or CEOs every other day to assess the status of work and provide opportunities to share lessons learned and to discuss best practices, ways to avoid disruption and how to speed up recovery.

“It’s been awesome,” he said of the response from the defense industry.

The assistant secretary said the Navy’s acquisition priorities

have not changed in the pandemic, citing that work is proceeding on such programs as the Columbia-class ballistic-missile submarine and the next-generation guided-missile frigate. He stressed the Navy's ongoing efforts to minimize delays and disruptions to the service's programs.

Jones Act Defenders Challenge Economic Arguments for Repealing Century-Old Law



The usefulness today of the 100-year-old Jones Act was the main topic of discussion during a webinar aired on April 14 as part of the Navy League's Sea-Air-Space 2020: Virtual Edition. ARLINGTON, Va. – The 100-year-old Jones Act is far from an outdated law that keeps shipping prices high and hurts the nation's economy, a panel of maritime policy experts argued on April 14.

“The biggest misconception of the Jones Act is the cost impact, the final cost to delivered goods,” John McCown, founder of Blue Alpha Capital, a maritime financial services firm, said on a webcast for Navy League’s Sea-Air-Space 2020: Virtual Edition. “Many of the critics have distorted what that number is, cherry picked it, taken it out of context,” McCown added.

To register and then watch this Sea-Air-Space 2020: Virtual Edition webinar live online, click [here](#).

The Jones Act – also known as the Merchant Marine Act of 1920 – bars foreign-built, foreign-owned or foreign-flagged vessels from conducting coastal and inland waterway trade within the United States and between the United States and some of its territories such as Puerto Rico. The law also generally applies restrictions that effectively prohibit Jones Act-compliant ships from being overhauled at foreign shipyards. Ship crews must be composed of U.S. citizens or legal U.S. residents.



John McCown, founder of Blue Alpha Capital, a maritime financial services firm, joined the discussion on the Jones Act during a webcast for the Navy League’s Sea-Air-Space 2020:

Virtual Edition.

Opponents say it's time to repeal the law because it has led to higher shipping costs, which pass along higher prices to vendors, retailers and consumers. They also maintain higher costs have driven the commercial shipbuilding industry overseas, leading to a smaller pool of qualified U.S. merchant mariners.

That claim has turned the Jones Act into a scapegoat for "all sorts of economic ills," McCown said. He noted that after Hurricane Maria devastated Puerto Rico in 2017, critics claimed the Jones Act was strangling Puerto Rico's economy and, without the law, there would be a 15% drop in consumer prices. Such a price cut "translates to \$9 billion a year," which, McCown said, was a ludicrous estimate many times the total annual revenue of the Jones Act.

"The biggest misconception of the Jones Act is the cost impact, the final cost to delivered goods. Many of the critics have distorted what that number is, cherry picked it, taken it out of context."

John McCown, founder of Blue Alpha Capital

U.S. Navy and Coast Guard officials have defended the law, saying that without it, there would be no pool of U.S. noncombat ships – or trained American seafarers to man them – in a war or other national emergency. If cost becomes the deciding factor in maritime trade, leading to elimination of the Jones Act, then commerce on U.S. coastal waters and internal waterways like the Mississippi River would be taken over by another nation, most likely China, the second-biggest economy and shipbuilder in the world, and a "Great Power" competitor, proponents of the law argue.

Given medical supply shortages in the current COVID-19 pandemic, dependence on foreign vessels and foreign crews could pose not just a national security risk, but economic and

homeland security risks if the U.S. remains dependent on foreign supply chains, especially for medical equipment and pharmaceuticals, noted former Oklahoma Rep. Ernest Istook, a senior fellow at the Frontiers of Freedom, a conservative think tank. “If they decide to do something that might cut us off, then we are at their mercy,” he added.

MARAD’s Buzby: Readiness of Sealift, Ready Reserve Force Suffering



The U.S. Military Sealift Command large, medium speed roll-on/roll-off ship Benavidez transits the English Channel. U.S.

Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Jordan R. Bair
ARLINGTON, Va. – U.S. strategic sealift fleets need recapitalization and some increased manning to achieve the readiness that the nation needs to sustain its maritime power, the U.S. maritime administrator said April 14.

“The readiness is suffering,” a fact that sealift stakeholders recognize, Maritime Administrator Mark H. Buzby said during a webcast that is part of the Navy League’s Sea-Air-Space 2020: Virtual Edition.

To register and then watch this Sea-Air-Space 2020: Virtual Edition webinar live online, click [here](#).

Buzby pointed out that rusting ships, obsolete equipment, unavailable parts and repairing and replacing ships are the materiel challenges faced by the Maritime Administration (MARAD) and the U.S. Navy’s Military Sealift Command (MSC).

MARAD’s Ready Reserve Force of 46 ships and MSC’s 15 sealift ships all need recapitalization, Buzby added.

He said the federal government is taking three approaches to recapitalizing the fleets and that a combination of those “will help us renew the fleet”:

- Extending the service lives of some existing ships to possibly 60 years.
- Replacing 25 to 26 ships with new or converted used vessels.
- Procuring built-for-purpose sealift ships “from the keel up.”

Recruiting and retaining enough mariners remains a challenge as well, Buzby said. Commercial mariners in the U.S. Merchant Marine – including those in the Ready Reserve Force, on Maritime Security Program ships available for mobilization and the declining U.S.-flag merchant fleet – and the government’s civilian mariners who work for the MSC are

part of the pool that man the sealift ships.



Maritime Administrator Mark H. Buzby participates in a webcast for the Navy League's Sea-Air-Space 2020: Virtual Edition

He said that 24 ships in the Ready Reserve Force are steam-powered, operated by a shrinking pool of technicians qualified to operate and maintain the obsolete propulsion system.

Buzby said the mariner pool is "enough for a steady state today" but inadequate for a substantial mobilization requirement.

Of help would be to place more merchant ships "under the U.S. flag so it gets the pool ... where it needs to be," he added.

Building up the U.S.-flag merchant fleet is a considerable challenge, he said, because competitors such as China that have state-run enterprises can undercut the U.S. in terms of lower-cost shipbuilding and manning and can therefore compete more effectively for cargo business.

"We're asking our merchant marine to play on an unlevel playing field," he said.

Coast Guard: Illegal Fishing in Oceans a National Security Issue



Boarding officers from the U.S. Coast Guard and Canadian Conservation and Protection navigate to board a fishing vessel in the South Pacific in January 2019. Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans

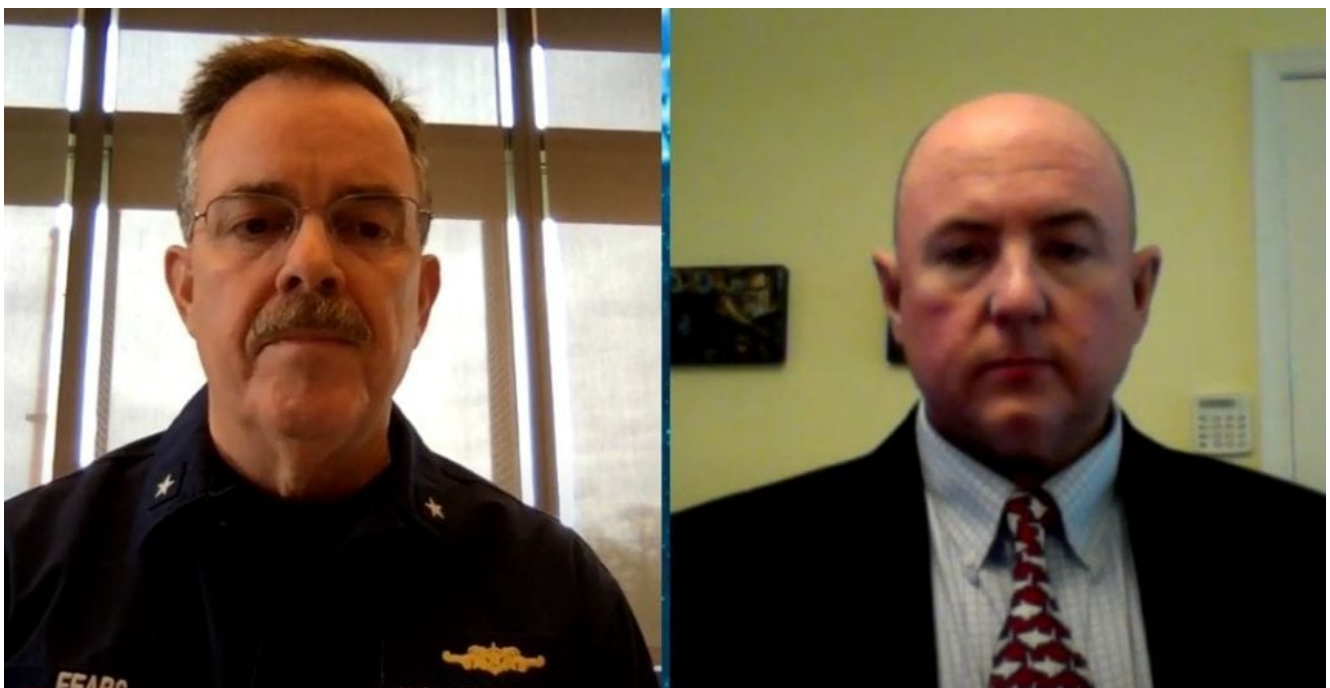
WASHINGTON – Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU) is a national security issue that threatens global economic order and the sovereignty of nations and that enforcement is over-stretched to counter the threat, U.S. officials said.

IUU includes fishing without a permit, catching over a legal limit, catching the wrong species and catching fish that are too small.

To register and then watch this Sea-Air-Space 2020: Virtual Edition webinar live online, click [here](#).

Speaking during a Navy League Sea-Air-Space: Virtual Edition webcast on April 13, Rear Adm. Doug Fears, the Coast Guard's assistant commandant for response policy, said that IUU "is an issue of sovereignty and a national security issue because the competition for global fish stock and protein is ongoing."

Fears said the Coast Guard "is as an internationally trusted partner and is a supporter of an international rules-based governance structure that benefits each country that has an economic exclusion zone."



Rear Adm. Doug Fears (left), the U.S. Coast Guard's assistant commandant for response policy, and Dave Hogan, acting director of the Office of Marine Conservation with the U.S. State Department, discuss Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing during a Navy League Sea-Air-Space: Virtual Edition webinar.

Dave Hogan, acting director of the Office of Marine

Conservation with the U.S. State Department, who also spoke during the Navy League webcast, said the State Department negotiates with international and regional partners to establish the rules to manage the fish stocks on the high seas in cooperation with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Fisheries Service, the Coast Guard and other agencies.

"Each nation exercises sovereignty over its economic exclusion zone," Fears said. "When another nation violates that, [IUU] is harming the fish stock that may not be recoverable."

Fears also pointed out that some nations are engaging in aggressive behavior against others in driving away fishing boats of other nations that are legally fishing and thus violating the sovereignty of those nations. He cited a recent example of Chinese coast guard activity against an Indonesian fishing vessel. The U.S. Defense Department on April 9 called out China's coast guard for [sinking a Vietnamese fishing vessel](#).

"The United States Coast Guard has the authorities, the capability, the global reach – we're trusted partners. Our model is a well-respected model. Our limiting factor is capacity."

Rear Adm. Doug Fears

Hogan said the United States has an ongoing dialogue with China on IUU issues. He said the State Department has asked China to "do better" with its distant-water fleet fishing in the waters of other countries.

He said IUU fishing is going on in all the world's oceans, and that the violators include stateless high-seas drift-net vessels in the North Pacific. Whereas most fishing companies worldwide are privately owned, China's are state-run.

“The United States Coast Guard has the authorities, the capability, the global reach – we’re trusted partners,” Fears said. “Our model is a well-respected model.”

“Our limiting factor is capacity,” he added. “While we operate around the world, we can’t operate in all the places that deserve the attention in IUU fishing.”

Fears cited the South China Sea, the waters off West Africa and the central and western Pacific and the Gulf of Mexico as prime areas where IUU occurs.

Hogan said the United States is still trying to find a multilateral solution to the competing claims in the South China Sea. He also said he encourages nations to cooperate, despite their disputes, so fish stocks aren’t depleted and that their own economic security and the environment aren’t undermined.

Fears said that IUU often is networked by organized crime, such as the drug cartels, which have “tentacles” in human trafficking and other smuggling operations. “A lot of the drug cartels and similar organizations monetize illicit activities, whatever they be,” he said.

Fears also said a Coast Guard presence is an effective counter to IUU fishing but that the sea service needs more ships, aircraft and personnel to project that presence.

COVID-19 Piles on Coast Guard’s Funding, Readiness

Challenges, Says Commandant



Coast Guard Petty Officer 3rd Class Evan Grills is fitted for an N95 respirator at Air Station Kodiak, Alaska, on March 24. Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, aircrews are taking additional measures to reduce potential exposure to the virus while also maintaining full mission readiness. U.S. Coast Guard/Petty Officer 1st Class Bradley Pigage

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Coast Guard, already facing longer term readiness and funding issues, is shifting manpower and equipment to meet the new challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic, the commandant of the Coast Guard told Navy League’s Sea-Air-Space 2020: Virtual Edition on April 13.

With the novel coronavirus also forcing the U.S. Navy, Marine Corps, Army and Air Force to come up with new ways to shield the force while still protecting the nation, Adm. Karl Schultz said his primary focus is on “maintaining a ready, healthy workforce to accomplish the Coast Guard’s primary missions” to facilitate the marine transportation system.

To register and then watch this Sea-Air-Space 2020: Virtual Edition webinar live online, click [here](#).

[See: As Part of Investments, Coast Guard Creates Major S.C. Base](#)

“Right now, we’re focused on people, readiness and enabling the economic prosperity and security of the nation,” Schultz said, noting the Coast Guard’s role as part of the Department of Homeland Security and its mission.

In addition to safeguarding the nation’s 355 seaports and 25,000 miles of commercial waterways as well as conducting maritime search and rescue and counter-narcotics operations, the constantly moving COVID-19 challenge has added new obstacles like offloading tens of thousands of cruise ship passengers, some of them ill with the virus. Coast Guardsmen [did so](#) April 2, helping to escort the cruise ships Zaandam and Rotterdam to port in Port Everglades, Florida.



Commandant Adm. Karl Schultz participates in the Navy League’s Sea-Air-Space: Virtual Edition.

Schultz also noted that there are between 75 and 100 commercial vessels in U.S. waters with as many as 100,000

crewmembers on board who may need Coast Guard assistance at some point during the crisis.

Before the coronavirus outbreak, the Coast Guard was facing a readiness challenge with aging ships and aircraft, deteriorating infrastructure ashore and an information-technology system on “the brink of catastrophic failure,” the commandant said in his State of the Coast Guard address in February.

“But the focus right now is [a] ready Coast Guard, men and women, to get into the fight and get after these COVID-19 challenges that are in our wheelhouse.”

Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Karl Schultz

Schultz said thousands of Coast Guard personnel are now teleworkers because of social-distancing rules, but thousands more are still front-line operators in the air and on the water. “This is really showing just how critical this C5I [command, control, communications, computers, cyber and intelligence] issue is,” Schultz said. “Clearly there’s a money piece to this,” he added. “We’ve got to stop patching old systems.”

When he took command of the Coast Guard in June 2018, Schultz said his focus was on people – getting better facilities and equipment for them, an improved retirement system and recruiting for a more diverse force representative of the nation.

“People remains the absolute center of gravity for Coast Guard readiness,” he said in a live-streamed question-and-answer session during Sea-Air-Space 2020: Virtual Edition.

“But the focus right now is [a] ready Coast Guard, men and women, to get into the fight and get after these COVID-19 challenges that are in our wheelhouse,” he added.

The Sea-Air-Space 2020: Virtual Edition event was created after the annual live exposition had to be canceled due to a prohibition against large gatherings in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.