Geurts Closes Navy Unmanned Systems Secretariat, Citing Progress, Integration

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Navy has eliminated the position of its "drone czar" in its secretariat after only two and a half years, citing goals achieved and integration progress.

In an April 30 directive, James F. Geurts, assistant secretary of the Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition, directed the disestablishment of the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Unmanned Systems) (DASN(UxS)) effective May 7.

Under then-Navy Secretary Ray Mabus, the Navy established DASN(UxS) to put appropriate bureaucratic horsepower and centralized leadership behind the development of unmanned systems. Mabus made the announcement on Oct. 27, 2015, that retired Marine Brig. Gen. Frank Kelley would be the first head of the office.

Geurts cited the completion of the Navy Department's comprehensive Unmanned Systems Roadmap and its submission to Congress as "a logical point to move forward as expressed in our Goals and Roadmap. Both documents state that the integration of manned and unmanned systems into a seamless fighting force is an objective of our unmanned systems strategy and critical to our future naval force."

Geurts said the DASN(UxS) had satisfied Mabus' Nov. 13, 2015, directive to "Treat unmanned as unmanned.

"That work continues, but that work, to integrate unmanned systems into all that we do, now belongs to all of us," Geurts said.

Earlier this year, the Unmanned Warfare Systems Division (N99) in the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations was eliminated and its mission merged into the directorate of Warfare Integration. N99 had been established on Sept. 15, 2015, with now-retired Rear Adm. Robert Girrier as director.