

Moran Stresses Speed, Urgency in Building Navy of the Future

ARLINGTON, Va. – Speed and a sense of urgency will be the keys to delivering the Navy of the future “for all the young officers and Sailors” now working their way up through the ranks, Vice Chief of Naval Operations (VCNO) Adm. Bill Moran said during his keynote address at the Surface Navy Association annual symposium Jan. 15.

After asking for the young Sailors and Midshipmen in the audience to stand and be recognized, Moran noted, “I hope you are excited about the future. ... There is a lot to look forward to.”

Addressing more senior military and industry leaders, he then emphasized that, “The mission we have is to deliver a Navy that’s bigger and more capable, a Navy focused on innovating and iterating the current force while growing new platforms and capabilities for the future.

“These young men and women deserve a Navy that moves faster, buys and delivers faster, orients and decides faster and, ultimately, puts a weapon on target faster than our adversaries. They deserve a Navy that places an aggressive, determined and unrelenting focus on readiness and warfighting in the here and now.

“Let’s do this together and take full advantage of the time we spend here this week to do something to ensure that we build and maintain a Navy worthy of the young men and women in the audience today,” he said.

Recent history has presented challenges in accomplishing that goal, Moran noted, with sequestration, continuing resolutions

and spending caps compounded by nearly 20 years of land- and air-based operations in Afghanistan and Iraq and an expanding mission profile for the fleet worldwide that have stretched resources thin and established a “mindset of scarcity” that has been hard to shake.

“We’ve garnered a whole bunch of experience meeting urgent requirements. Yet I would argue we have very little memory of the strategic long game. We became accustomed to staring at 1-meter targets instead of preparing for future uncertainties,” he said.

“In this new age of rising competition, meeting near-term mission at the expense of long-term investment in people and equipment will no longer be an option. It won’t prepare us for the high-end fight, and it won’t allow us to grow and maintain the Navy our Sailors and American people deserve.”

The larger budgets of the past couple years have allowed the service to address maintenance backlogs and manning shortfalls and improve training, but it has taken time to make wise investments in readiness, he said, time the Navy can ill afford. But the tide does seem to be turning.

“After a year of run-time and lessons learned, and an unrelenting focus on process improvements and a greater sense of urgency, we are now seeing concrete signs of progress. Our leaders are thinking different, planning for the future and owning readiness again,” Moran said.

“We’ve got a long way to go, but we’re on the right path,” he said. “There is renewed energy in the force about doing things the right way, re-establishing good habits, raising the bar and doing things better than we’ve done for some time and, ultimately, better than ever. This builds confidence, and confidence is essential in an uncertain world,” one where great power competition on the open seas is back in play.

The VNC0 stressed that speed remains one of the biggest

challenges for service leaders, noting “it will determine how we position ourselves in a world where everything is moving faster than the way our system was built to respond or anticipate.”

But, he said, “believing in our Sailors, their ingenuity, their intellect and courage to innovate,” can help overcome this challenge. “Our success depends on their imagination. Our reliance on their ability to create, to think critically, to imagine and unknown future is truly the only certainty that we have for tomorrow.

“I don’t think I’ll ever be satisfied that we are fast enough in any domain. But I am very encouraged by the amount of collaboration and cooperation ... in the effort to get at pace.”