NAVSEA Officials Tout Progress in Building the Future Fleet

ARLINGTON, Va. – Two years of higher defense budgets and the 2019 funding approved early for the first time in a decade enable Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA) to make significant progress in building the future surface fleet, four of its top officers said Jan. 17.

The increased pace of surface ship construction also was helped by the new emphasis and authorities for accelerated acquisition from Congress and the Navy leadership, and by NAVSEA's drive for greater commonality and modularity in programs across the wide range of surface warfare platforms, the panel led by Vice Adm. Thomas Moore, NAVSEA commander, told a Surface Navy Association symposium audience.

Rear Adm. William Galinis, program executive officer (PEO) for ships, cited a long list of accomplishments, including the five-year contract for 10 DDG 51 Flight III destroyers, the contract for the first six of 12 John Lewis-class fleet oilers, delivery of the second DDG 1000 Zumwalt-class destroyer, advances on two major amphibious ship programs and continued work on defining the next large surface combatant.

"The big thing for us was getting funding in September," ahead of the Oct. 1 start of the 2019 fiscal year. "We were able to get a number of ships under contract," Galinis said.

Rear Adm. John Neagley, PEO for unmanned and small combatants, touted delivery of five littoral combat ships (LCSs) last year and four planned to deliver this year, nearing design completion for the new frigate and developmental work on a family of unmanned systems.

Getting the budget on time allows program officials to take advantage of economy of scale, Neagley said. He also noted being challenged by James Geurts, assistant Navy secretary for research, sevelopment and acquisition, “to go faster.”

And Rear Adm. Douglas Small, PEO for integrated weapons systems, noted the “big push for us to get modular, scalable systems for a lot of ships,” ranging from the LCS, proposed frigate and unmanned craft to aircraft carriers.

The common combat systems for a range of vessels will not only save money but reduce crew training as Sailors move between ship types, and could speed up integration of systems in new ships, Small said.

“We’re also pushing very hard on how we integrate new systems faster,” he said.

Moore asked his PEOs what they were doing to speed up ship programs and reduce costs, and they noted the advantages of block buys, applying lessons from early ships to cut time and cost of follow-on contracts, and earlier and expanded contact with industry.

The panel also talked about efforts to reduce life-cycle costs by considering sustainment factors in ship design and construction and allowing modernization of electronic systems by new software rather than hardware.

Moore said the effort to reduce costs and construction time went beyond surface warships. “We talk about one NAVSEA,” he said, noting the constant coordination with PEOs for submarines and aircraft carriers and more coordination between the public and private shipyards.

Getting more ships for a limited budget also can be aided by the push for more unmanned systems, which range from small to large diameter and include both surface and undersea vessels.