Navy League's Harris Lays Out 'Musts' for Maritime Dominance



An artist rendering of the future Columbia-class ballistic missile submarine. A Navy League official, Sinclair Harris, a retired rear admiral and the Navy League's national vice president of military affairs, said the Columbia class is part of a critical U.S. strategy to maintain undersea dominance that must be maintained. U.S. NAVY

ARLINGTON, Va. – An official of the Navy League of the United States has delineated what the organization considers five key policy points for the sea services going forward in fiscal 2021.

Sinclair Harris, a retired U.S. Navy rear admiral and current national vice president of military affairs for the Navy League, spoke in a July 13 webinar co-sponsored by the organization, NatSec 2020: Coronavirus and Beyond. It also was sponsored by the Association of the United States Army and Government Matters.

"The Navy must – I repeat, must – maintain a position of dominance in the undersea domain," Harris said, underscoring the need for the second Virginia-class attack submarine in fiscal 2021 (the budget only calls for one), the Columbia-class ballistic-missile sub, and other undersea platforms, manned and unmanned. "We can't drop away from undersea dominance."

He said that sealift is critical for the nation's ability to project power and influence in times of war or peace. "The [Marine Corps] commandant's guidance is bold, innovative and creative and has to be supported going forward in order to meet the ever-evolving challenges that we see our global

strategic environment.”

Harris also stressed the need for allies and partners as an important part of the National Defense Strategy.

He also emphasized the need for transparency in future force structure planning.

“Transparency between the Pentagon and Congress builds trust,” he said. “And between government and industry, that allows industry to make proper plans so the industrial base can respond with what is needed. The industrial base is very fragile right now.

Harris commented on the issue of the legislated goal of a battle force size of 355 ships.

“We can see that when you don’t have a sufficient-sized fleet, you run the risk of over-burdening the fleet and the personnel that are operating it,” he added. “I served in the Navy 34 years. I’ve been there.”