

Navy Looking at Options for Next-Generation Attack Submarine



Vice Adm. Daryl Caudle delivers a speech during a change of command ceremony in Norfolk, Va., Nov. 12, 2019. During the ceremony, Caudle relieved Vice Adm. Charles A. Richard as Commander, Submarine Forces/Submarine Force Atlantic/Allied Submarine Command. U.S. Navy / Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Alfred A. Coffield

ARLINGTON, Va. – The commander of the U.S. Navy’s submarine forces said the service’s submarine community is looking at several options for the basis of the next-generation nuclear-powered attack submarine (SSN).

Vice Adm. Daryl Caudle, commander, Submarine Forces, speaking Nov. 16 in a webinar for the annual symposium of the naval Submarine League, said the service is looking at three options: a development of the Virginia-class SSN; a development of the Columbia-class nuclear-powered ballistic-missile submarine; and a new-from-scratch SSN design.

“We’re going to get alternatives and make decisions on how to make this new SSN match what we need to stay ahead of our peers,” Caudle said.

Caudle discussed some characteristics and capabilities that would be desirable in the next SSN. Increased speed is one characteristic he said is a requirement.

“Speed is basically important to every improve every single joint warfare function,” he said. Speed “plays out so well in all of our wargaming [because] it helps compensate for bad decisions. It also helps us get to the fight faster and helps sustain an all-domain maneuver warfare.”

The admiral said, "We can never get enough payload capacity, so we do want submarines with large payload capacity."

He also said that stealth is important and not limited to acoustic stealth, but across all spectrums.

"When this new SSN rolls out, we're going to have peer competitors that are going to be able to detect us not just acoustically but through algorithms that are going to break the water interface."

Caudle stressed that the Navy would have to make research and development investments to achieve the characteristics desired in the new SSN.