Navy's I-Boss Aeschbach: Fleet Sees Greater Need for Information Warriors

*****

ARLINGTON, Va. — The U.S. Navy's operational climate is generating a growing need for the Navy Information Forces, challenging the capacity of the forces to meet that need.

The Navy's information warfare forces include personnel specializing in intelligence, electronic warfare, cyber warfare, oceanography, nuclear command and control, and information warfare.

Vice Admiral Kelly Aeschbach, commander Naval Information Forces—known informally as the "I-Boss" — speaking July 18

with retired Rear Admiral Frank Thorp IV in the U.S. Naval Memorial's SITREP series, said the Navy's intelligence and cryptologic specialists were not as busy in the maritime environment during the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq as they have now become with the great power competition with China and Russia.

"We were really not challenged in the maritime, and our global competitive environment has changed substantially, and we are now facing a near-peer competition — in some areas, we are being outpaced by our competitors — that I think demands now that you need information warriors to deliver our capability full-time," Aeschbach said.

The admiral cited the Navy's submarine force as an example where what is now information warfare was a collateral duty for a submarine officer, but now, with the increased demands of high-end warfare, the capabilities of information warfare specialists are needed to handle the flood of information and allow the other personnel to concentrate on the areas in which they excel.

"We're a better team for it, if we're there bringing the detailed information warfare capability," she said.

With the increasing demands on information warfare forces, the Navy is challenged to prevent burn-out of the force, which—unlike ship or aircraft crews—does not have a routine sustainment cycle.

"We are operating all the time, and so one of the challenges we have as a type commander is: how do you do the care and feeding and re-generation of a force that is always in demand," Aeschbach said. "So that has challenged us in terms of how we maintain an appropriate operational tempo for our personnel, effectively train them, and afford them enough time to re-charge and be most effective and most ready for the missions for the missions they're supporting."

Aeschbach is working to develop and use live virtual constructive technology to provide realistic training for information warfare forces, which, because of the nature of their capabilities, are more difficult to exercise realistically in a peacetime environment.