

SECNAV Impressed with Improvements in Surface Warfare Training



Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro gives remarks during an event at the International Seapower Symposium. *U.S. NAVY / Chief Mass Communication Specialist Nicholas Brown*

ARLINGTON, Va. – Just five weeks into his tour as secretary of the Navy (SECNAV), Carlos Del Toro has checked up on the training and readiness of the Navy's surface warfare ship crews and likes what he sees.

"Crew readiness and training is incredibly important. It is the utmost responsibility of the commanding officer at sea, and I would argue that it is the utmost responsibility of the secretary of the Navy in the Pentagon," Del Toro said, speaking Sept. 17 at a media virtual roundtable after his return from Newport, Rhode Island, where he attended the 24th International Seapower Symposium.

As a former destroyer commanding officer, Del Toro was asked by *Seapower* about whether he had concerns about issues with surface warfare crew training and readiness that came to light in 2017 with the collisions of the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers USS Fitzgerald and USS John McCain, both of which resulted in the deaths of crew members.

"I've taken a hard look at this over the last five weeks," the SECNAV said. "I've even gone up to Surface Warfare Officers School as well to meet with the leadership and junior officers up there. I have a lot of experience in this arena being a former commanding officer that sailed in those Pacific waters.

"I am overly impressed with the major investments that have

been made subsequent to those two horrific disasters that we had," he said. "It's really apparent to me that the entire surface community has come together – I would argue that the entire Navy has come together – in very serious ways with major, major investments in technology, in training [and] in trying to understand the cultural impacts of decisions that have been made in the past on the surface warfare community. We have come out of this like a shining star. When I look at the professionalism of our junior officers, our mid-grade officers today, the changes that were made to the executive officer pipeline [and] commanding officer pipeline, I have really been blown away these past two weeks, really taking a deep dive into all those issues."

Del Toro said that while in Newport this week he "spent a substantial amount of time up there taking a look at their curricula, their training, their simulators. For example, just alone in the world of simulators for their training – the pilot house, the combat information center – it was so impressive."

The SECNAV said that he is "really of the belief that we've come a long way here and that we have largely corrected the deals of the past that have been made and we're on the right path moving forward. And of course, we will continue to give this our utmost attention because the safety and the effect of our operation of our Navy vessels is of utmost importance."