SECNAV Spencer: Navy Problem Solvers 'Need to Look Outside the Wire'

WASHINGTON – Naval officials need to seek solutions from industry and academia to meet the technological and acquisition challenges of the future, the civilian head of the Navy and Marine Corps said.

"One of the drums that I beat to everybody up and down the ladder is, if you are acquiring things, if you are looking for solutions to your problem, look outside the wire," said Navy Secretary Richard V. Spencer, speaking Feb. 8 at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), a Washington think tank. "Because I will almost guarantee you: some organization out there, whether large corporate, middle corporate, or small company has probably gone through the same problem you are or have a solution or something that looks like your solution.

"This goes to 'should cost' before you find out what it does cost," he said. "Frame your argument, frame your data which you can glean from the outside. One thing that we have learned in this exercise is that corporate America and academic America will bend over backwards to help the services of this country."

Spencer said that the Department of the Navy and the defense industry are partners in solution-providing and that the department needs to be a "responsible client" of the defense industry.

"I have to be clear on what I need and what I can provide," he said, speaking of the need to set clear and firm requirements in an acquisition program.

With the additional resources for readiness provided by Congress in the fiscal 2017 to 2019, "the foundation for readiness has been set," Spencer said. "Everyone understands

they have the resources. This is all being done now to the mantra of urgency.

“We have money, we have plans, we cannot buy time, and that is the biggest stressing point we have right now,” he said.

Spencer said the department is “reviewing every single platform that we have as far as how we’re going to go forward with modernization, what we’re looking at to acquire, and what I call the Force 2.0, which are those weapons systems and concepts that we’re developing.”

Spencer was appearing at CSIS with his Army and Air Force counterparts, Secretary Mark Esper and Secretary Heather Wilson, respectively.