Service Chiefs Tout Agility, but MARAD in Need of Funding to Flex Muscle



The sea services chiefs (from left) – U.S. Navy CNO Adm. John M. Richardson, Marine Corps Commandant Gen. Robert B. Neller, Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Karl Schultz and Rear Adm. Mark Buzby of the U.S. Maritime Administration – during their panel discussion May 6 at Sea-Air-Space 2019. Lisa Nipp

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. – The sudden order to send the Abraham Lincoln carrier strike group to the U.S. Central Command theater in response to threats from Iran is a great example of the value of the Navy's dynamic deployment concept, Chief of Naval Operations Adm. John M. Richardson said at the Navy League's Sea-Air-Space 2019 exposition.

Although the Lincoln's deployment into the Mediterranean had been planned, "this is a great demonstration of what we've been working on, dynamic deployment," Richardson said May 6. Naval maneuver forces are "dynamic by design," but Richardson said he found it encouraging that if the national command authority needed the Lincoln strike group to go to the Middle East it can do so immediately.

At the opening session of the Navy League's annual Sea-Air-Space exposition, Richardson responded to a question about National Security Advisor John Bolton's announcement that the administration had ordered the Lincoln and its escorts to

cut short its planned Mediterranean exercise and sail to the Persian Gulf region after warnings that Iran may be planning attacks on U.S. forces. Bolton said an Air Force bomber unit also was being sent to the region.



The sea services chiefs at their panel discussion at SAS. Lisa Nipp

Asked how the Navy would respond to President Donald Trump's decision to reverse the 2020 budget proposal to skip the mid-life refueling of the aircraft carrier Harry S. Truman, Richardson noted that he had told Congress, which has opposed the decision, that the Truman's early retirement was reversable. "Now we will have to find the resources going forward," to invest in the new technologies, such as unmanned systems, that were to be funded with money saved from retiring Truman.

Appearing on the same panel, Marine Corps Commandant Gen. Robert B. Neller agreed with Richardson that the challenge of effective leaders was to anticipate the need to change their organizations and policies, rather than waiting to respond to a disaster. Neller cited the changes the Marines are making to respond to the growing threats of cyber and electronic warfare attacks from peer competitors as an example. The first shot of a major conflict would be against the networks

and the U.S. forces must prepare to operate without the assured communications
they have become accustomed to, Neller said.

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>
> *Chief of Naval Operations Adm. John M. Richardson*

Also on the
panel, Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Karl Schultz said his service was engaging
in more national security operations, such as the recent freedom of navigation
transit of the Taiwan Straits, in addition to its heavy load of maritime
security and safety missions. Schultz said the Coast Guard was looking forward
to getting its first new Arctic icebreaker and hoped to get initial funding for
a second one in the fiscal 2021 budget.

Retired Rear Adm.
Mark Busby, administrator of the Maritime Administration, said the materiel
readiness of his 46 sealift vessels, which have an average age of 44 years, had
gotten a bit worse since his warnings last year. Busby was hopeful Congress
would fund the three-part program MARAD and the Navy have urged to modernize
his fleet by updating some ships, buying some newer commercial ships and
building a small number of vessels. Asked about the threat to global
shipbuilding industry from China’s rapidly growing ship production

capabilities, Busby said U.S. shipbuilding survived only due to Navy production
and commercial ships for the Jones Act, which required U.S. built ships for
commerce between U.S. ports.