

# Submarines Among Last U.S. Asymmetric Advantages, Admiral Tells Symposium



The Ohio-class ballistic missile submarine USS Alaska arrives in Scotland for a scheduled port visit on July 2. U.S. Navy ARLINGTON, Va. – The commander of the U.S. Navy’s submarine forces said the sub fleet has focused on battle readiness in view of the current era of great power competition and is taking steps to increase its effectiveness, speed of technological development and integration with the larger Navy.

“Undersea warfare, which underpins the survivable piece of strategic deterrence, is truly one of the last asymmetric advantages we have,” Vice Adm. Charles A. “Chas” Richard, commander of Submarine Forces, said Nov. 6 at the Naval Submarine League’s annual symposium here. “We have to earn the ability to say that. It is the thing our competitors have no answer for, although they’re working awfully hard to come up with one.”

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*Vice Adm. Charles A. “Chas” Richard*

“Part of that advantage lies in the inherent stealth of our platforms, something we have to guard very jealously and can’t take for granted,” Richard added. “But we’re going to have to be more innovative. We’re going to have more initiative, [in] the submarine force, across the Navy, across academia, across the defense industry.”

Noting that the ability to avoid detection in the acoustic and electronic radiation realms is a submarine's greatest asset, Richard said that "we need to add 'disturbance of the environment' as a way in which adversaries may be able to detect submarines in the future, such as wake detection.

"We are never going to periscope depth again unless we want to," he predicted.

"One of the biggest challenges we still face in this nation today is that we are not fast enough in our ability to adapt," the admiral said. "We're just too slow, whether it's rigorous development and testing of concepts or the enterprise-wide ability to feed technology at fleet-scale."

Mentioning the success of the U.S. space program in achieving the moon landing in 1969 only two and a half years after the disaster of the Apollo I fire, Richard said: "We have got to get back to a world where we can move at that kind of speed."

"A submarine force is more than a collection of boats," he said. "When we go into battle it is the entire Navy that goes, not just submarines. I need every other piece of the Navy to be at the standards that my fleet can go to today."

Richard said the submarine force has established an aggressor squadron to assess the threat and present realistic threat simulation. He also is fostering competition between submarine crews.

"We're getting spectacular results," the admiral said. "You ought to see what happens when you put two boats against each other head-to-head in an attack center. The book goes out the door in about the first five minutes. It's a furious type of tactical development that's going on."

"I could not be more proud of the submarine force and what they have accomplished in a little over a year, after they got

the order to pivot to warfighting readiness," he said. "In a word, it has been breathtaking to watch how the fleet responded to this. But we're not done."