CNO Richardson: Technology Agility a 'Strategic Achilles' Heel'

WASHINGTON – The Navy's top officer said that he is concerned about the agility of the Navy to outpace its potential adversaries in the current era of great power competition.

"This is a strategic Achilles' heel for us," Chief of Naval Operations Adm. John M. Richardson said March 13, speaking at the McAleese Defense Programs Conference in Washington. "We are just not moving capability forward to the hands of our sailors as fast as we need to."

"I worry sometimes that we say, this conflict is going to go OK because our sailors are better trained than their sailors," Richardson said. "That margin is too close for me. But when I'm relying on the quality [of our sailors], it's true, but when I'm relying on the quality of our training, that's far too close a margin.

"Or we say, 'Hey, we're mechanically a more innovative people' – that may be true," he said, noting that still is too close a margin.

"Part of this is to make sure that our worst pilot can beat their best pilot because we put him or her in an aircraft that is just that vastly superior," Richardson said. "We don't send our teams into a fair fight."

"We've got to get that capability moving faster," he said. "We've done a lot in our budget to try to accelerate these things. We've got about $1.3 billion in what we call accelerated acquisition programs."

As examples, Richardson listed some accelerated programs such

as high-power lasers (including one being installed on a ship this year); unmanned systems such as the MQ-25 unmanned aerial refueling aircraft; new family unmanned underwater and surface vehicles; Conventional Prompt Strike; the Digital Warfare Office; and live virtual constructive training.