Vice Adm. Houston: Integration of Women in Submarine Fleet Key to Future Force



Master Chief Information Systems Technician Angela Koogler, the chief of the boat aboard the ballistic missile submarine

USS Louisiana (SSBN 743), poses for an environmental portrait at Naval Base Kitsap – Bangor, Wash, Aug. 29, 2022. Koogler is the Navy's first female chief of the boat. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Brian G. Reynolds*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Navy's submarine force has taken major strides at integrating women into the submarine fleet, which will be key to building the most "talented, capable force" possible, the commander of submarine forces told attendees of the Naval Submarine League's annual symposium here Nov. 1.

Vice Adm. William Houston highlighted recent advancements women have made in the submarine fleet, such as the first female "chief of the boat" on the ballistic-missile submarine USS Louisiana (SSBN 743).

"And female XOs [executive officers] and commanding officers are not restricted where they can go," Houston said. "We are working to integrate the submarine force faster."

Houston said that in many cases women are retained at a higher rate than male officers, and that opening the door to more women in the fleet would help the Navy attract the talent that it needs at a time when retention is a challenge throughout the service.

"We want the most talented, capable force and we need to remove any barriers to integration," he said. "It is absolutely critical that we do that."

Houston highlighted other personnel priorities for the fleet, including a growing emphasis on the "cyber workforce."

"We have now established a cyber watch pilot where we actually have personnel watching our cyber systems underway, and we're looking to roll that out to the entire fleet," he said. "We have integrated more than we have with the IW [irregular

warfare] community. … We have cryptological technicians leading some of our EW [electronic warfare] efforts on those ships.”

Houston said the Navy would need to be bold in leveraging expertise throughout the service.

“We are not afraid to integrate with non-submarine communities,” he said. “We have tremendous capabilities in the Navy that we are taking advantage of because we need to do that to prepare for combat.”