



Readiness Reform Oversight Committee: One year later

February 26, 2019 Special Reports

From the U.S. Navy

After two tragic, fatal collisions and other near misses at sea, the Readiness Reform Oversight Committee's (RROC) mandate was clear: make our Navy a safer and more combat-effective force that places the safety, readiness and training of our people first. As a team, we assessed the overall culture, health, and effectiveness of not just our surface force, but our entire Navy in order to remove barriers to safe and effective operations. In this effort, the RROC supported Surface Force Type Commander (SURFOR), Vice Admiral Rich Brown, as he empowered the sea-going leaders to create needed reforms and execute improvements rapidly in the Fleet. While our work is far from complete, the following report highlights progress made and areas demanding our greatest focus in order to ensure success.

Background/Strategy

After consolidating 117 recommendations from the Comprehensive Review (CR), the Strategic Readiness Review (SRR) and several other reports, the Committee took a three-tiered approach to its critical tasks:

1. Immediately identify and support measures targeted at *safe operations* through compliance with minimum safety standards.
2. Increase *fleet effectiveness* by focusing on improving overall fleet manning and training.
3. Ensure long-term sustained readiness by driving toward a stronger *culture of operational excellence*.

As of this date, 91 of the remaining recommendations of the Strategic Readiness Review (SRR) and Comprehensive Review (CR) have been implemented.¹ Each

recommendation includes plans to monitor and reevaluate the policies or procedures put in place. Building on lessons learned from private-sector leaders, we are developing new data hygiene procedures and digitized metrics to validate improvements as an institution, as individuals, units, and leaders. An enduring hallmark of effective Naval leadership is to invite scrutiny from all hands – our Sailors, Congress, our Navy families and of course, the American public. We owe nothing less to our shipmates and our Nation. The following is a high level summary of key actions and outcomes.

Safe to Operate (Tier 1)

As the CR identified, years of heavy operational tasking, underfunding our sustainment accounts, and process breakdowns combined to erode the acceptable margin for error during normal operations. Immediate actions to rectify included:

- **Elimination of Risk Assessment & Mitigation Plans (RAMPs).** Many of our ships at sea were operating under RAMPs which allowed operations without appropriate equipment and training, as dictated by instruction and good seamanship. All RAMPS were cancelled in October of 2017 and our Force Generation strategy, the process by which we certify ships for sea, was completely restructured. Today, any operations outside the guidance established by the Surface Force Commander requires notification of a Four-Star Fleet Commander to ensure visibility and accountability.
- **Ready-for-Sea Assessments (RFSA).** Fleet Commanders conducted Ready-for-Sea Assessments to ensure appropriate manning levels, training certification, and equipment status for every operational ship at sea. Fifteen of eighteen Forward Deployed Naval Force-Japan (FDNF-J) ships were assessed as ready for sea. The three remaining ships were immediately sidelined for additional training and maintenance prior to getting underway. RFSA's are now required prior to a ship's first underway period following a period of maintenance, and represent a cultural norm that empowers and encourages Commanders to prioritize safety and communicate their any concerns they have about readiness to operate before heading to sea.
- **Implementation of a comprehensive fatigue management policy.** In November 2017, SURFOR released a circadian rhythm-based fatigue management policy, including an individual crew risk management tool for use in evaluating crew rest. Even though all ships reported compliance with the policy, anecdotal feedback indicates uneven compliance during manpower intensive operational scenarios. During school house training and through intense follow-through by leadership at all levels, fatigue management has been incorporated at all levels in the surface fleet. Meanwhile, the Navy Postgraduate School is actively assisting with assessment of the policy's effectiveness through proven operational research methods.

Effective Operations (Tier 2)

The RROC focused on actions that would require institutional effort to ensure effective naval operations over a sustained period of time, including:

- **Prioritized Navy Manning in support of Operational Requirements.** FDNF manning requirements were formally assigned higher priority than Continental United States (CONUS) requirements for sea and shore billets, respectively. Short-term manning actions like temporary duty assignments and operational holds immediately ensured our forward deployed ships went to sea with the manpower they needed. Longer term, more rigorous personnel screening programs, increased incentives for overseas and at sea billets and increased tour lengths will improve stability on ships assigned to FDNF. Currently across FDNF, at-sea billets are filled at 100% in the aggregate, compared to the Navy-wide average of 95%.
- **Removed Optimized Fleet Response Plan (OFRP) Inefficiencies.** Leveraging industry best practices, we optimized processes, eliminated inefficiencies, and incorporated sophisticated human factors analyses, resulting in 63 fewer Inspections and Certification and Assist Visits (ICAVs). These well-received reforms return our most precious commodity after people – time – back to Commanding Officers for effective training and maintenance without reducing the rigor of the inspection program.
- **Reprioritized Maintenance for Forward Deployed Ships.** By the Chief of Naval Operations' order, Commander, Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA) committed greater resources to all our Total Ship Readiness Assessments, better informing contracted maintenance work and making ships more likely to complete availabilities on time. As a result, dedicated maintenance time has been increased by 30% in the OFRP for FDNF-J, with required training periods scheduled after every maintenance period. NAVSEA and Commander U.S. Pacific Fleet have also approved new maintenance strategies for Sasebo and Yokosuka shipyards to ensure more availabilities are delivered on schedule, adding more predictability to the operational schedule.
- **Establishment of Naval Surface Group Western Pacific.** This action provided Commanding Officers in FDNF-J a local advocate on the waterfront to actively manage maintenance availabilities, priorities, and ultimately, authority for certification in completing the basic phase of deployment preparations. To date, Naval Surface Group Western Pacific has managed fourteen Selected Restricted Availabilities (SRAs) and four Surface Incremental Availabilities (SIAs), representing stronger SURFOR oversight on the pier in Yokosuka.

- Optimizing Navigation System Currency, Redundancy and Standardization.** NAVSEA has awarded contracts for Commercial Off-the-Shelf radar systems for all surface ships (fleet delivery beginning April 2019), purchased a second Automated Identification System (AIS) laptop for all surface ships (March 2019, \$2.5M), and accelerated the Next Generation Surface Search Radar (\$71M in FY18-19) one year ahead of schedule, as well as the Electronic Chart Display and Information System upgrades (\$19M) for all surface ships. Additionally, SURFOR/NAVSEA collaboration is underway to improve management of Bridge/Combat Information Center (CIC) systems for the life-cycle of each ship class.
- Fleet-wide Officer of the Deck Competency Checks.** Surface Warfare Officer School conducted comprehensive, no-notice Officer of the Deck (OOD) competency checks on 164 officers across the fleet. Although 91% of those tested passed the written test, the assessment revealed deficiencies in practical applications of the Maritime Rules of the Road. The results of this competency test informed development of two new Junior Officer of the Deck (JOOD) courses, as well as incorporation of more rigorous simulator scenarios for individual and team training throughout the fleet. Surface Warfare Officer School (SWOS) is gearing up and is fully resourced to kick off their course by 1 June 2019.
- Surface Warfare Officer Training (SWO):** Increased at sea experience, better training, regular assessment. No aspect of SWO Training was considered sacred. Specific actions include:

 - More Time at Sea:** The revised SWO career path will increase time at sea during an officer's first sea tour (48 total months), ensure first division officer tour experience on either Cruiser/Destroyer (CRUDES) or Amphibious ships and remove Destroyer Squadron (DESRON)/Amphibious Squadron (PHIBRON) staff jobs from the Department Head slate, ensuring officers are gaining needed operational experience at sea. Experience at sea is tracked systematically via the new Mariner Skills Logbook.
 - More Effective Training:** The Maritime Skills Training Program (MSTP) takes a holistic view of the career path, delivering improved Junior Officer of the Deck training (May 2019), Officer of the Deck courses (May 2021) and the ability to integrate Bridge and Command Information Center (CIC) training via the Navigation Seamanship and Ship Handling Trainer upgrades (\$22M). Additionally, the newly introduced Bridge Resource Management Workshops (27 conducted to date) leverage Strategic Sealift Officers to provide COs an outside look at their Bridge/CIC team proficiency in a mentorship/training environment. Bridge Resource Management Workshop includes an assessment of the crew's planning, risk management skills, and fatigue management program. Temporary interim simulator

facilities, as well as permanent MSTP facilities are on track for construction in Norfolk and San Diego. Additionally, Enlisted Quartermasters and Operations Specialists are benefitting from significantly increased Automatic Radar Piloting Aid (ARPA), AIS, Lookout, and radar operator training. In July 2018, Surface Warfare Officers School (SWOS) trainers were recertified as U.S. Coast Guard Standards of Training, Certification, & Watchkeeping (STCW) compliant. Across the Fiscal Year Defense Plan (FYDP), MSTP will invest \$246M in more effective training for Navy Sailors.

- **Improved Assessments:** At particular points in their career following training, SWOs will have proficiency measured via ten Career Milestone assessments. Since implementation of the Go/No-Go assessment for Prospective Commanding Officers (PCOs), 103 assessments have been completed, resulting in five officers disenrolled from the command pipeline (5% attrition).
- **Systematic Feedback:** COs now provide feedback directly to the Type Commander (TYCOM) within 90 days of assuming command. This brief helps establish a direct line of conversation between COs and the Flag Officer responsible for their readiness, which continues through Commanders Training Symposiums, Board of Inspections and Survey (INSURV)/Pre-Deployment Briefs, Maintenance/Safety/Navigation summits, and waterfront visits.

Strengthening the Culture of Operational Excellence (Tier 3)

The natural tendency of organizations under stress is to seek greater control by creating more rules and enforcing compliance. While some of these reactions are understandable in the early stages of recovering from tragedy, this approach can restrain individual initiative and prevent team performance beyond the minimum standard. In a fast-changing era of renewed great powers competition, we cannot afford to enforce a checklist mentality that is merely satisfied with fixing what was broken: instead, we are looking forward towards making the Navy better than it was – more agile, more transparent, more proactive, and more sustainable. The RROC will continue to monitor and assess the effectiveness of the recommendations implemented to this point, incorporating fleet feedback and constantly monitoring new, best practices from industry, academia, and government. We will focus on outcomes, not inputs. Additionally, as charged in CNO's Design 2.0, we look for additional ways to:

- Empower transparent, data-driven decision-making at every echelon of command as foundational for achieving sustainable readiness. Safety and combat readiness are never mutually exclusive – rather, they are synonymous in the unforgiving medium of the sea.

- Invigorate and continually reinforce our culture of mission command, preserving the Commanding Officer's ability to execute with initiative, creativity, and clarity, while inspiring the best ideas from every rate and rank.
- Continue to improve and modernize naval talent management, maintenance, and all training systems – both digital and hands-on – towards their maximum potential.
- Place our Sailors and our Navy families at the forefront of our efforts to create a dominant naval force that produces outstanding leaders and teams, armed with the best equipment, and continually able to learn and adapt faster than our rivals.

Examples of ongoing efforts toward strengthening our culture of operational excellence:

- **Armor Up (SWOS Toughness Initiative:)** Beginning in July 2019, SWOS is adding an additional two weeks to the Surface Commander Course focusing on stress inoculation, coping skills, and significant additional simulator time.
- **Updated Manning Models:** An Afloat Work Week study found 4% fewer productive hours available than expected on ships conducting operations at sea, resulting in a requirement for an additional 1,400 billets across the fleet. A follow up study currently underway, including Condition V watch requirements and in port work requirements, is expected to yield similar results.
- **Human Factors Expertise:** Human Factors Engineers have been incorporated into TYCOM staffs in support of optimizing training/assessment processes and enhancing operational safety analysis. The presence of Embedded Mental Health (EMH) professionals is being enhanced across all Fleet Concentration Areas; to date, 33 additional EMH billets (17 officer, 9 enlisted, and 7 civilian) have been validated by the Bureau of Naval Medicine (BUMED) and funded across the FYDP.
- **Integrated Industry Lessons in Support of Team Effectiveness.** A new Learning Culture Steering Group, led by a Navy Reserve Three-Star Admiral who is also a Fortune 500 executive, conducted comparative analysis spanning 30 companies, 15 Navy commands, and the feedback of 25 culture experts in order to spearhead progress toward a learning culture that maximizes individual and team performance. This analysis will inform future RROC initiatives supporting a growing culture of excellence.

Closing

One year in, it would be naïve to believe we are close to completing RROC's work. However, due to the efforts of many professionals around the fleet, we are currently safe to operate and a more effective Navy than we were a year ago. But the hard work

has only just begun. We can influence behavior in the short term through policy; we can only change the culture with sustained commitment to integrity, transparency and excellence in all that we do, at every level. This will remain, in every way, a team effort. We owe our best to our shipmates, both the ones who we lost and the ones we serve alongside every day, around the world, in the unforgiving business of our nation's defense.

1 Of the 117 original recommendations, six were redundant with other efforts and removed by the RROC, leaving 111. Over the course of the last year, eight Strategic Readiness Review (SRR)/Comprehensive Review (CR) recommendations were reviewed, adjudicated and not recommended for implementation, leaving 103 to complete.

Editor's note: *This blog was adapted from RROC: One year later.*

<https://navylive.dodlive.mil/2019/02/26/readiness-reform-oversight-committee-one-year-later/>