

# THE NAVY TODAY AND TOMORROW

Secretary of the Navy Donald C. Winter speaks at a Briefing sponsored by the New York Council of the Navy League.

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**O**n 13 October, the Council hosted the first in a series of breakfast meetings intended to act as a vehicle for fostering candid communication between the sea services and the private sector at a high level. At this first meeting, Secretary of the Navy Donald C. Winter updated 40 leaders from major banks, investment houses and other Wall Street firms on what "the Navy is doing right now and where we hope to go in the future." Secretary Winter explained to *The Log* the significance of the meeting: "It is about having an outreach to our expanded partnership. One of the things that is fascinating about this job is that it is a job of communications management, building coalitions and that includes industry. This is about trying to enhance communication with the critical financial sector." Secretary Winter kindly gave permission for *The Log* to report his comments.

After commenting briefly on the status of USS NEW YORK (LPD 21), Secretary Winter began his formal remarks with an overview of the current activities of the Navy and the Marine Corps. Given the intense public interest in the topic, the place to begin such a review was the Navy/Marine Corps team's role in the ongoing conflict in

Iraq. "We have about 25,000 Marines in Iraq, principally in Anbar province which is one of the most challenging areas in Iraq. It encompasses most of the country south and west of Baghdad all the way out to the Syrian border. In addition to the 25,000 Marines, we have about 22,000 Sailors in theater, with about 10,000 actually on the ground in Iraq.



Secretary Winter (center) with New York Council President Daniel Thys and Rear Admiral Robert Ravitz, USN (ret.). (Photo: R.H. Wagner).

"Our Sailors are filling a number of roles there; many of them are classical support roles that the Navy has provided for many years - - Navy medical capability; and Seabees that have historically provided support for Marines everywhere in the world. In this case, the Seabees are not only doing reconstruction of damaged infrastructure, but they are also building

new facilities for U.S. and Iraqi forces. In addition to these traditional roles, we have a large number of what we call individual augmentees. These are Sailors who have volunteered to go into Iraq and provide support in a wide variety of key areas - - everything from intelligence and communications support, to explosive ordnance disposal. They are providing this support throughout Iraq and throughout the Central Command region, and they're having a huge impact. In addition to our Sailors on the ground, we have about 12,000 sailors at sea in the region flying air patrols and providing maritime security."

"I don't think I need to tell many of the people here about the tremendous impact the threat to the oil supply in that area has had on world economy. One of the most fascinating experiences I had a few months ago was to go out into the Gulf on one of the oil platforms and see the environment - - all of the large vessels coming in and out with oil, as well as the dhows and other local vessels, doing everything from fishing to the local transport. The security environment is obviously very challenging. You might recall back in 2004 there was an attempted attack on a platform, and a resulting spike in oil prices. If you look at the impact of that on the worldwide economy you can understand the vital importance of our Sailors providing maritime security in that region."

"Everything in the region is not just focused on war and war activities per se. I think many of you are aware that we recently conducted a very successful noncombatant evacuation operation, or NEO, where we took all the American citizens who were trapped in Lebanon during the recent crisis there

[and] evacuated them safely back to the United States. It was a tribute to the Navy/Marine Corps team that we were able to do that so successfully. We've also conducted a wide range of coalition building activities with a number of countries around the region - - large operations around the Horn of Africa and in Djibouti, as well as activities all the way over to the West Coast of Africa in the Gulf of Guinea. We're trying to bolster maritime security and support of the idea of the 'Thousand Ship Navy,' a coalition of the navies and coast guards to provide security in areas that are critical to the world economy and to the peaceful transit of the seas."

"Coalition building activities extend all the way out to the Pacific where we recently had a very successful cruise of the USNS MERCY [(T-AH 19)]. The hospital ship transited from San Diego to the subcontinent and back, visiting many ports where medical facilities are exceedingly limited. This was a very unique cruise because for the first time not only did we have medical personnel from all the services, but we also had a number of NGOs [Non-governmental organizations, e.g., the Hawaii-based Aloha Medical Mission] aboard. This was the first time we had an extended operation with the NGOs, and it provided an opportunity to work with each other and learn how each does business."

"Overall, we have a very diverse set of activities going on all over the world. I think the Navy and Marine Corps are doing an absolutely extraordinary job. If you go out there and talk to them, you get a sense of great comfort about the future of this nation."

Secretary Winter then turned to planning for the future. A principal part of this planning is the Navy's

shipbuilding program. The changing geopolitical scene complicates this process. "It used to be that we would build the fleet, and maintain the fleet to deal with the challenges posed by the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact. That is no longer the issue. That's not to say that we don't have a threat out there. If anything, we have a very diverse threat, diverse in terms of the types of threat and in terms of the area where that threat may come from. The threat ranges from everything from pirates off the Somali coast or in the Straits of Malacca, all the way to rogue nations like Korea that are greatly investing and enhancing their war fighting capability. The regions we may have to deal with literally span the seven seas. So, the net of it is that we have to make sure our fleet is sized to be able to respond no matter what happens in the future. Also, we have to recognize the time lag associated with shipbuilding -- building ships takes a number of years. It is not the sort of thing that you can just turn on and turn off, and say 'we will wait and see what Korea does, or we will wait and see what transpires in the Middle East.' You have to always be planning and projecting out a number of years ahead."

After reviewing all of these variables, the Navy has determined that it "needs about 313 ships - - warships, not including support ships. Right now, to give you a point of reference, we have about 281 commissioned-warships. This means we have to build back the Fleet and that is a significant challenge in front of us."

When he became SECNAV, Secretary Winter examined the assessments done by his Department and was pleased with the breath and rigor of the analyses that were used in projecting the Navy's shipbuilding needs. The

analyses indicated that there would have to be an increase in shipbuilding investment of between 25 and 30 percent over what was done in the past. "That brings up two questions: First, can we really buy the number of ships we are talking about at the prices we have built into our budgets? [Second], can we afford to allocate that percentage of our budget into the shipbuilding accounts? We think the answer to both these questions is 'Yes,' if we are able to achieve efficiencies throughout the acquisition programs and within the Navy budget."

"It is going to be a challenge. In the past, our shipbuilding programs have seen a number of cost growths. A lot of these [were] driven by requirements changes, and changes caused by the scheduling of the acquisitions, - - uncertainties that resulted in cost growth. We're going to change that mode of operation. We're going to have to provide a greater surety of our plans and our requirements as part of a partnership with industry. I believe that if we are able to provide a firmer basis of planning and projection for industry that it will support their needs of establishing the business case for their needed investments. We're looking for business to make investments in terms of their workforce and their processes -- the way in which they do their fabrication and construction, as well as their engineering activities - and also their capital plant. We are hoping to give them the means by which they can make those investments in a supportive environment. If we do all of that, and if we are able to make the same type of efficiency improvements throughout the entirety of the Navy budget, we do think we will be able to achieve our goal of 313 ships."

Change is key to another Defense Department initiative: transformation. "From the Navy perspective, we have done very well in terms of taking the steps that we need to in order to transform our force. Let me give you a couple of very specific examples. First, a program called 'SSGN'. We have taken four of our ballistic missile submarines and converted them to a conventional platform that can be used by special operation forces to support the Global War on Terror. We have converted the ballistic missile launch tubes with an insert which allows them to launch cruise missiles. We have also converted two of the tubes to provide the capability to insert and extract special forces, SEALs, ashore from these platforms, wherever they are needed in the world. I think it is notable that after only three years, the program has converted two of the four ships and we are proceeding very effectively on the last two. I submit it is a very significant and effective use of what had been a Cold War deterrent capability, now an asset that is very relevant in the Global War on Terror."

"The other program I would like to note is LCS, the Littoral Combat Ship. This is a new program that began four years ago. We just christened the first of these ships, the FREEDOM. It is being constructed up in Wisconsin. We actually have two different prime contractors in three shipyards, involved in this program. We are eventually going to build 55 of these littoral combat ships, so this is a very significant investment."

"This ship is very different. People tend initially to look at it and say: 'This is a very fast ship intended for operations in the littorals' - - the very shallow waters in areas such as the

[Persian] Gulf where we have to be able to operate very effectively, very rapidly, in a very agile manner, notwithstanding the depth of the water. Aside from its speed, I would like to note a couple of other features of the ship."

"First, it is the first ship that we have built that is truly modularized. It is designed to be able to take a variety mission modules which allows us to tailor the ship's war fighting capability. If, for example, we need to provide additional mine warfare capability or ASW capability, we can adjust the capability of these ships by putting in different modules that are separate and distinct from the ships themselves. This gives us a huge degree of flexibility and, quite frankly, given the difficulties of projecting the future, the uncertainty of the threat, this is going to provide us with great flexibility of response."

"The other interesting aspect of this ship is the way we will man it. If you look at this ship in terms of its length and displacement, it is not much different than a WWII Fletcher-class destroyer. These ships were typically crewed by between 300 and 350 Sailors. The basic crew on an LCS will be 40 -- eight officers and 32 enlisted. We'll add a few additional Sailors associated with the individual mission modules but, we have no plans to ever have more than 75 Sailors on an LCS."

The small size of the LCS crew reflects not only technological improvements, but also the new type of Sailor that will man the ship. "Transformation has a lot more to do with the people than it does with just the equipment. We need to have a new Sailor. We are in the process of recruiting, training, and developing a new generation of Sailors that will

provide this hi-tech support and operating capability for our future."

Speaking of people, what is the current state of morale? "The one metric that I look at which I think says more about the real morale in the Fleet and in the Marine Corps is our reenlistment/retention numbers. These are the people who know us best - our Sailors and Marines, and these numbers reflect what they really think. Right now, we are exceedingly all our reenlistment targets. Whether you look at the latest monthly, quarterly, or latest fiscal year, we are exceeding all of our numbers, in both Navy and Marine Corps. The recruitment figures are running at 101 to 107 percent. The retention numbers are above everything that we have been looking for. The force is doing just great and the morale is good. They are real great Americans."