

**Naval Submarine League
Corporate Benefactors Recognition Days
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VADM Kirkland H. Donald
COMNAVSUBFOR**

(AS PREPARED)

Good morning everybody. It is a pleasure to be here. Admiral DeMars, Admiral Bowman, Admiral Reynolds, Corporate Benefactors, fellow flag officers, and guests ... this is a true pleasure. My first opportunity in front of this august group. First of all let me start off by thanking the Naval Submarine League not only for sponsoring this event, but more importantly, for really serving as one of our touchstones for remaining connected to our past, present, and future. Whether it be through meetings like this, symposia, regional chapter luncheons, or The Submarine Review, the League keeps us all informed, they keep us interested, connected, and quite honestly, proud to be Submariners. Keep up the great work! I like to give a special thanks to Mr. Mickey Garverick and his staff for organizing this event. And I will just go ahead right off the bat and check the block, and thank the Corporate Benefactors, what you do is critically important to what we do, and I thank you.

I look at this opportunity to not only do those special thank yous that we need to do for great people that have supported us all these years, but really also to give you a "State of the Force" at least from my perspective as Commander Naval Submarine Forces. And I will just go ahead and get to the bottom line up front – And that is that the Force is READY, the Force is CAPABLE, and we're getting better everyday. Now I have made my way around to homeports, ships, shipyards, and what sometimes seems to be my second home here in Washington DC. What I see are motivated sailors and they are eager for the challenges we give them. We have well maintained and modernized ships out there, world class support facilities, and some exciting technologies. I also see many challenges. I will include a status on some of these key issues and some of the challenges we face in my remarks.

We commissioned USS Holland in 1900 and have maintained a steady pace of submarine building ever since. My historians tell me this is true, but did you realize that, until the most recent submarine building holiday following the Cold War, the longest gap between commissioning a submarine was two years, and that happened between 1905 and 1906. It is hard to believe, but it has been 5 years since the last submarine, USS CONNECTICUT, was commissioned. That is about to change. I have had the opportunity to visit Electric Boat, Northrop Grumman/Newport News, and Quonset Point construction yards, and if you haven't had a chance to do that, you really need to. It is so impressive. They are using revolutionary techniques in building ships. We are going to commission VIRGINIA in, as appropriate, Norfolk, VA this summer; We will christen and deliver JIMMY CARTER; will christen TEXAS; and will lay the keel for NORTH CAROLINA all in 2004. As Admiral Bowman mentioned last night, we have 11 submarines under construction or contract. Let's don't forget, we also have the OHIO and the FLORIDA, our first two SSGNs, which are well into their refueling and conversion and on track to deliver in 2007. The last time, again my historians tell me, we had this many submarines under construction was in 1996.

What else looks different this year? The Submarine Force is integrated into the Fleet Response Plan. And what the FRP is, it supports flexible rotational deployments while also giving you a robust surge of Naval forces to meet emergent requirements. Now, the Submarine Force had a running start at the advent of this concept, and we ought to take credit because a lot of foresight was done by some of the leaders who are sitting in this room right now. They did the hard work several years ago at the end of the Cold War to align our deployment, our training, and our maintenance processes to efficiently deliver as much forward presence as we could with our force structure, and to implement an orderly, objective, building block approach to developing readiness during our interdeployment cycle.

Capitalizing on that work, we demonstrated a robust surge capacity during OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM. In the Atlantic, two submarines were surged and two others left early on deployment; you can call that a surge. In the Pacific, four submarines were surged to support both OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM and Western Pacific commitments. We had a total of 17 submarines operating forward on March 19, the day hostilities commenced, and we could have surged more if that had been required.

Now we have been able to synchronize our model of the Fleet Response Plan with that of the surface and air forces such that we are an integral part of every Carrier Strike Group and Expeditionary Strike Group. When a submarine returns from deployment, we immediately designate them as “emergency surge ready”, which means they would be one of the last to go in the event we had to surge. During their maintenance availability, they become “not ready” while they are getting their deep maintenance and modernization. Following their maintenance, they again become “emergency surge ready” while they are training to raise their proficiency. And then finally, about six months prior to deployment, they will be called “surge ready” and they would be among the first to go. “Emergency surge” and “surge” readiness are directly related to the proficiency of the crews in their individual warfare areas. Now we are executing the Fleet Response Plan, at the same time we strive to meet theater and national demands for independent submarine operations. We recently completed the calendar year 04 Submarine Deployed Presence Allocation Process, it is a Joint Staff led process, and if you look at the rules for deployment length, PERSTEMPO, and the like and you look at our force structure and our depot maintenance loading, we are able this year to generate a forward presence of about 9.0. That is compared to the Combatant Commanders requirements of about 12.

Now, I am not going to tell you we have the merger of the Fleet Response Plan and our independent submarine deployments all figured out. We are always having to address competing demands and too few ships. In fact, my schedulers have accused me of taking away their Excel spreadsheets and replacing them with Ouija boards and chicken bones. The force is working closely with the CSG and ESG Commanders, the Numbered Fleets, and the Combatant Commanders to distribute this presence as efficiently as we can, as effectively as we can, all the while managing expectations as to what and when we can deliver.

We are having some successes. Paul Sullivan is going to give you an extensive brief on what is going on in the Pacific Fleet, and I think you will feel very good about that. The ESG and CSG commanders that I have talked to are pretty pumped up as well. PELELIEU ESG, RADM Bob Conway, actually had tactical control of USS PHILADELPHIA during our first real world operation involving Special Operations Forces employed from the submarine using the Dry Deck Shelter and the Swimmer Delivery Vehicle in support of the Global War on Terrorism. RDML “Gronk” Bullard, the JFK Carrier Strike Group Commander, is integrating the USS TOLLEDO, equipped with a sophisticated Information Operations suite and armed with tactics, techniques, and procedures that have been derived from recent fleet experimentation. His Carrier Strike Group is going to focus on IO as a mission area in its upcoming deployment. CONNECTICUT is deploying with the WASP Expeditionary Strike Group. In this strike group, they are going to focus on organic strike in support of expeditionary forces. We are also trying to integrate, in fact successfully so, with strike forces in the virtual world. We invested for years in high fidelity shore based trainers and access to high bandwidth connectivity, so that we can participate in the synthetic battlespace like the Third Fleet sponsored Multi Battle Group Inport Exercise. There will be three Carrier Strike Groups merged together in the virtual environment and they will participate to include the crew of USS MONTPELIER operating out of Submarine Training Facility, Norfolk.

The linchpin, as we all know, to all of our success has been, is, and will continue to be our great people. How many of you noticed the USS MEMPHIS Sailor of the Year, MM1 Stephen Kuczirka, seated next to Mrs. Bush at the State of the Union Address? Sharp looking Sailor! We continue to enjoy a healthy recruiting and retention environment.

If you look on the enlisted side, we continue to see a positive trend in retention numbers. In fact, so much so that in 2002 we actually lowered the Selective Reenlistment Bonus in an effort to drive retention numbers a little bit lower. And if you look at our manning right now, at sea, we are typically over 100% on the SSBNs and SSNs. We actually did want to drive those numbers a little bit lower, and it did have the desired effect, but only temporarily, what we didn't count on was the spring-back that we saw in 2003. Now I am not exactly sure why that spring-back occurred, other than we do deliver a pretty good product to our sailors, there is a good quality of service that they are experiencing out there, OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM could have something to do with it, and the job market, depending on how you look at it. What we do know is that we have the opportunity to define our human resources strategy such that we have some selectivity so that we can keep and develop the right people for our future Force. Our personnel strategy is also producing some positive results in our officer corps. Retention is slightly higher than we predict necessary to man our future Force and it looks like we are on track to maintain those numbers. I was just at Service Selection Night at the Naval Academy, a week ago last Friday night, where I saw 123 very young looking First Class Midshipmen who, Admiral Bowman informed me, all had better class standing than I did.

Our O-6's today look different from what they did just a few years ago. They are undersea warriors, to be sure, but we are also requiring them to master a much broader set of skills. These officers are more joint, more educated, and with no intentional disrespect to present company, they are probably a bit worldlier than we were. Our officers are better prepared to lead across a broader spectrum of joint warfighting. They are also more broad and versatile staff officers. But that comes with a downside. That is the sheer competition for their time and the risk that they become "Jacks of all trades, and masters of none." And that competition gets more intense by the day. Just for an example, for an O-6 to be promoted to Flag rank on the FY08 O-7 selection board, he will have to be a Joint Specialty Officer (JSO); that means a full joint tour, joint professional military education phases I and II, a little over a years worth of work, and he has to be screened as a JSO. Additionally, if you listen to the Navy vision for the future, it is going to include more access to graduate education than our officers have already. I have also previously mentioned the key role our officers will play in CSGs and ESGs. It is a very, very tall order. It's certainly a landscape not without risk. It is our challenge to strike the balance among all these demands. We are, after all, undersea warriors and nuclear operators first and foremost. It is our responsibility to give our future leaders the training and education that they need, as efficiently as we can do it. It is our moral obligation not to waste their time or their talent and to give them the opportunity to develop their skills to the extent of their abilities.

Accordingly, what we are looking at in PERS 42 and the submarine leadership is giving the submarine officer career path a hard scrub. And some changes are coming. For example, we are moving the tactical portion of the PCO course prior to the Executive Officer tour. We believe passing that crucible event makes for a more confident and skilled Second-in-Command and that experience and confidence will have a trickle-down effect into our wardrooms, further spreading that same confidence and training level. Further, with many of our ships in depot maintenance, we are aggressively split touring Department Heads to ensure we build operational as well as valuable shipyard experience for those affected officers. We are taking advantage of a burgeoning market of distance learning, I am an example, that is how I got my masters degree, to help our future leaders expand their portfolio of naval and joint warfighting, business practices, and technology through masters programs, certificate programs, and joint professional military education. And there will be more. It is a full plate, but I have got to tell you, if you'd been where I was a week ago Friday night, and saw the look in the eyes of those young Midshipmen, you would be optimistic as well. They are bright young kids; eager for the challenges we are going to give them.

I talked to you a little bit about depot maintenance and the impact it has on our people and our ships. If you look across the Force today, we have 18 ships in major availabilities in 6 different public and private shipyards. We are now in the thick of the depot maintenance bow wave that we have always known was coming, and it's here. We're living it.

There is good news and some not so good news in this story. First, you can almost see the end in sight as the workload tails off in 2008 and we will see the Force maximum operational availability, the coin of the realm in our surge ready Navy, go from today's number of about 67% up to about 76% once we exit the bow wave. There are some real success stories out there in the performance of our submarine enterprise and many of you had a part in this. In 1974 we projected that a LOS ANGELES class submarine would last 30 years and it would require over a million man-days of depot level maintenance over an operating cycle of 70 months between overhauls.

Today, based on sound engineering, investment in modernization that keeps our ships relevant, and a disciplined execution of the class maintenance plan, our ships are going to last 33 years and they will notionally require less than half of those maintenance man-days over an operating cycle of 120 months between overhauls. Portsmouth Naval Shipyard is on the cutting edge of production techniques and has shown that we can capitalize on our lessons learned to efficiently conduct depot level maintenance. One of the initiatives that they have put in place up there that has paid off handsomely is the implementation of the Knowledge Sharing Network. Now I like this particularity from my C4I days because I got constantly pounded by Admiral Fargo who asked "what are all these networks going to do for us and when are we going to start seeing some return on investment." A common battle cry that I am sure Admiral Reynolds would be ready to talk to any day. We single out the most expensive elements of a work package and then benchmark them against the shipyard that can perform them the most efficiently. That benchmarked process is shared with the other yards so that they, too, can benefit. The Knowledge Sharing Network takes that information in a web based collaboration tool that allows the shipyards to work together in a virtual environment on work package development, installation of alterations, and the baseline project management plans.

Our challenge, now, is to capitalize on these best practices, this one among others, throughout our entire ship repair enterprise and raise the bar of overall performance. Additionally, we have a repair infrastructure right now in the Navy, that I will say has been "right-sized" to the point of "embrittlement" and our flexibility to absorb things like surges is severely challenged. We see that today in the Pacific Northwest, our consolidated depot and intermediate maintenance capacity has in fact been overstretched, resulting in schedule delays and corresponding rising costs. As more repair work flows into the private sector to compensate for our thinly stretched public yards, we have to translate that long ledger of lessons learned from ship repair in the public sector into meaningful efficiencies in our private shipyards that have long been focused on construction. Additionally, we have to think carefully about how we manage our submarine repair industrial base as we head down the backside of that maintenance backlog and capacity exceeds the available work. It's particularly important when we think about critical engineering, design expertise, and trade skills that will be very, very difficult, if not impossible, to replace, should they atrophy due to lack of work.

I am going to shift gears here for a little bit. I want to go back and hit the rewind button to my presentation at the NDIA Clambake last fall and talk a little bit about submarines and their place on the future battlefield. (Editor's note: See the January 2004 issue of *The Submarine Review*, page 7). Everything I read and hear tells me that we cannot count on being so fortunate in the next significant conflict to have essentially unimpeded access like we enjoyed during OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM. And it is the capability to render access difficult that is proliferating worldwide, which leads me, and I bet most people, to believe that the collective submarine attributes of stealth, endurance, flexibility, and lethality will be critical, critical to the success of the joint warfighter. We will be expected to go and stay places where others cannot be, and survive. We must be able to operate with impunity across our mission spectrum in that contested littoral. Today, submarines deliver real capability, surveilling that battlespace, collecting intelligence, developing situational awareness and building a body of experience in those tactically significant areas of future conflict. If things go hot, we have weapons, ADCAP and Tomahawks. We demonstrated in OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM that we are joint, connected, and lethal. We worked in chat rooms for strike tasking, technical support, and strike group situational awareness, and we delivered about 30% of the Tomahawks in IRAQI FREEDOM.

What I want to see in the Force of the future is an extension of our realm of influence in the undersea and terrestrial domain. Pardon my weak analogy here, but I see the submarine entering the battlespace undetected and undeterred, well in advance of hostilities. Like a spider working in the dark of the night, an intricate web will be woven. A web of netted sensors precisely placed in the most strategically significant areas covering tens, if not hundreds, of square miles. A net that is fully integrated with onboard sensors and with that of the distributed battle force. And much as the spider waits on the perimeter of his web, unseen to the prey, we will wait, undetected, for the slightest disturbance of our organic and distributed web. Not only will we feel the intrusion, but the Joint Force Commander will feel the intrusion, through a network of seamless, high data rate connectivity. Prior to the outbreak of hostilities, the submarine will maintain exquisite situational awareness, he will hold the enemy at risk, and be ready to interdict when directed or when rules of engagement allow. At the time of the Joint Force Commander's choosing, we can strike, whether it be directly, force on force, or from distributed weapons woven into our web, or from long-range weapon systems that originate from outside the contested area.

I think the vectors are aligned in the right direction for us to achieve this vision. We are positioned quite nicely. We have the finest people in the World. We have the most robust undersea warfare capability this world has seen. We operate routinely in littoral waters and we are improving our ability to penetrate anti-access environments and to kill enemy diesel submarines and thwart mining efforts. We will soon have the VIRGINIA along with her sister ships, the SSGN, both ships optimized for littoral warfare. With the SSGN comes volume, payload, and ocean interface, precisely what will be needed for our future of unmanned vehicles, netted sensors, and precise, lethal, time sensitive fires. VIRGINIA, with Tactical Tomahawk, configurable torpedo room, enhanced SOF capability, ADCAPs, and connectivity is formidable, as well. Add an advanced sail to VIRGINIA and with it, volume and payload that will further enable our vision of extended reach, greater lethality, and increased speed in the kill chain. Now if we are going to realize this dream, we must today, OPERATE in the real environment, boldly EXPERIMENT with technology and tactics, INVEST in those with promise, and ADAPT to change.

We want to dream, to be sure, we want to experiment, we want to score some wins, and yes, we want to have a couple failures, because if you're not failing, you're not trying hard enough. However, through all this, we need to stay grounded in the realm of the real and be ready to deliver real capability, real ordnance on "real" targets TODAY, tomorrow, and in fact the next day! The Country expects it! In the words of Bertrand Russell, "Change is one thing, progress is another. 'Change' is scientific, 'progress' is ethical; change is indubitable, whereas progress is a matter of controversy."

Tom Peters, in his book *In Search of Excellence*, picked several companies that routinely outperformed the average market and investigated them for commonality. One of the common traits that he found was an institutional encouragement to take smart risks. We, the Navy, have institutionalized a process to take such risks, and it is the budding Sea Trial process. Last year, the Submarine Force conducted the first Navy Sea Trial experiment, GIANT SHADOW. It explored how the SSGN-SOF Strike Group could be used clandestinely in an independent operation. This year, we are taking it to the next level. This year we are going to conduct SILENT HAMMER, by investigating how the SSGN-SOF Strike Group will be integrated into a joint campaign.

It is not just the Submarine Force that is excited about this, but the special operators are equally as excited. They are anxious to explore command relationships and they have offered to activate a joint reach back center in support. The Marines want to link their SEA VIKING experiment to SILENT HAMMER. The SSGN-SOF Strike Group will provide more exquisite battle space preparation for Joint Forcible Entry Operations, by sewing that web of distributed sensors both on land and at sea. SEA VIKING will also stand up a Joint Task Force command structure with supporting component commanders, which will allow us to interact in real time and explore those relationships.

Commander, Navy Network Warfare Command conducts an annual experiment, that they call TRIDENT WARRIOR, and what they do is install “real” command, control, and communications enhancements on ships of an upcoming strike group, they experiment to determine the utility of the enhancements, and then they will leave that capability installed and supported for the strike group deployment. We are going to link TRIDENT WARRIOR and SILENT HAMMER in areas where we can achieve some synergy and that linkage is going to allow us to explore more fully some of the command and control relationships in the conduct of Information Operations in concert with other warfighters

During SILENT HAMMER, we are going to explore several technologies key to the expansion of submarine payloads and sensors. First will be the encapsulated launch of an instrumented test vehicle as a surrogate for an Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV). Encapsulation is the key to converting current DOD capability to undersea payload. Next we will recover and reconfigure an Unmanned Undersea Vehicle (UUV) to explore its flexibility to conduct several types of missions in a single campaign. And third, we will emplace a land-mesh network to further extend our web ashore. By the time we complete this experiment in October, we should have a much better understanding of the SSGN-SOF Strike Group and how it contributes to the Joint Task Force Commander.

We are also pursuing future concepts for assuring access in a littoral environment with another experiment called UNDERSEA DOMINANCE. It will explore how we create a Sea Shield for maritime forces in preparation for and during major combat. We will set up local tactical networks and distributed sensors that will enable collaborative participation in the areas of anti-submarine and mine warfare. All of the members of the joint force will be able to collaboratively exploit the undersea environment and coordinate fires through a prototype Common Undersea Picture. We will experiment with communications at speed and depth. The experiment is designed to further the concepts necessary to fight a major war with a near peer competitor.

Now OHIO is going to come on line in 2007 and we have a unique opportunity now with the GEORGIA, who has come out of strategic service, to test our Concept of Operations for SSGN. Submarine Group Nine, under Rear Admiral Mel Williams, has broken apart the CONOPs into specific tasks that the crew of the GEORGIA will be stepping through either to validate or recommend changes. By the time OHIO comes back on line, we will have a very refined idea and plan of how she will operate. We are working in coordination with Commander, Second Fleet and Naval Warfare Development Command to deliver the SSGN CONOPs to the Chief of Naval Operations by the end of this year.

Let me give you one last challenge, and that is the reality that we are going to face this year, and likely for several years to come, is the increased focus within the Navy to reduce our operating costs. The effort to recapitalize our fleet, combined with budget pressures derived from world and national events are the key drivers in this initiative. At headquarters we are working on trying to better understand our actual costs of operations and to develop a finer sense of the relationships between those costs and the readiness that we deliver to the Combatant Commanders. We are looking closely at our tooth-to-tail ratio. As an example, we have recently completed a rationalization of our type commander staffs, our CONUS group staffs, and our waterfront staffs consisting of squadrons and the support commands.

We approached this not as your typical bogey drill where we were allocated cuts merely to pay a bill. Rather, this was a bottom up review designed to align our staff functions, redistribute our precious manpower resources to lengthen the tooth while shortening the tail, and then, where it made sense, to give some billets back to the Navy. We are leaner, we are much less layered, and, I believe, more effective as a result of the effort. We still have work to do. We are looking for efficiencies across the spectrum of our operating accounts: whether they be personnel, maintenance, or combat support.

Our objective is to wring every ounce of readiness that we can out of every single dollar. Try as we might, this is not, nor should it be, an effort isolated to the operating forces. If we do that, at best we will create more inefficiency than we eliminate as we make decisions disconnected from our key partners in Phil Balisle's or Charlie Young's organizations, for example. At worst, we will too closely approach that fine line that separates prudent risk taking from just plain bad decision-making that will impact our ability to operate safely and effectively in the undersea environment.

I will close by saying, we in the Submarine Force have a long history of "oneness of purpose" and that is the key attribute you will see as we deal with all these issues and challenges I have discussed with you today. Solutions will come from the "Submarine Enterprise" – SUBLANT, SUBPAC, NAVSEA, SP, N77, and others – all working as a team. My intention for telling you this is not to whine or tell you how tough life is. First of all, you have all heard it before in some form or the other. Second, the guy who has the best job in the Submarine Force, me, wouldn't deserve any sympathy anyway. I tell you, because I view you, the Corporate Benefactors of the Submarine League, as key members of the Submarine Enterprise. I need your help in delivering cost effective and efficient readiness. Whether it is through better performance on our contracts, suggestions to improve business practices, or innovative operational or logistical concepts. We will take all comers and we welcome your advice, your counsel, and your good ideas.

We have radically adapted and improved over the years from the tactics and equipment to change a relatively weak scout to the Fleet Boat of World War Two, to radical transformation such as of the POLARIS program, nuclear power, and success for our Cold War operations. These changes have always been accomplished through a strong partnership between industry and the military. Through support of the Corporate Benefactors and the Submarine League, that partnership will stay on the path to success. I am confident of that. I ask you, keep the press on and keep up the great work. Have a great Navy day and thank you very much for your attention today!