Readiness, affordability, speed will win future for Navy

NAVAL AIR SYSTEMS COMMAND, PATUXENT RIVER, Md. -- Rear Adm. Paul Sohl (standing), Commander, Fleet Readiness Centers (COMFRC), Brig. Gen. Greg Masiello (left, seated), assistant commander for Logistics and Industrial Operations (AIR 6.0); and Dennis West (center, seated), deputy commander COMFRC, stressed the need for strategic partnerships with industry and across the Naval Aviation Enterprise (NAE) to fulfill Vice Adm. Grosklags' imperatives of readiness, speed to fleet and affordability. The leaders presented "Key Enablers to Fleet Readiness" at a Patuxent Partnership program Feb. 2 at the Southern Maryland Higher Education Center, California, Maryland. (U.S. Navy photo)

NAVAL AIR SYSTEMS COMMAND, PATUXENT RIVER, Md. – The spotlight is on at the Naval Air Systems Command (NAVAIR) and Rear Adm. Paul Sohl, Commander, Fleet Readiness Centers (COMFRC), drove that point home as he addressed the crowd at a Patuxent Partnership program Feb. 2 at the Southern Maryland Higher Education Center, California, Maryland.

"It's not just the Fleet Readiness Centers (FRCs) who are responsible for readiness," Sohl said. "There are lots of stakeholders. It's that important. We know the problems; we must move to solutions."

Sohl, along with Brig. Gen. Greg Masiello, assistant commander for Logistics and Industrial Operations (AIR 6.0); and Dennis West, deputy commander COMFRC, spoke to the attendees about "Key Enablers to Fleet Readiness," stressing the need for strategic

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partnerships with industry and companies and across the Naval Aviation Enterprise (NAE). They reinforced NAVAIR's two strategic imperatives: aligning resources to better support today's readiness and increasing speed of products to the fleet.

“The discussion we have every day is ‘How do we fill the Ready Basic Aircraft (RBA) gap?’“ Sohl said referring to a chart showing a box for each aircraft that the fleet requires to be ready for a mission at any moment and an empty box to represent those that are in for scheduled repair or maintenance, or down for repair. “Our challenge is to fill the empty boxes on our charts.”

The trio acknowledged that there are many factors that contribute to the RBA gap but were optimistic that Naval Aviation is focusing on the road to recovery.

“We now have enterprise-wide activities -- including Critical Chain Project Management (CCPM), Condition Based Maintenance (CBM), Integrated Logistics and Support Management System (ILSMS) -- that are improving the health of naval aviation,” Masiello continued. “The right metrics, tools and skills are leading us to be more predictive and less reactive.”

West presented the path to regaining readiness and for optimizing capability and capacity: the COMFRC strategic plan -- dubbed “Vision 2020” -- and its framework that includes seven “threads” to achieve the plan’s goals. “If there’s ever been an effort that will require industry, companies and the organic side all teaming together as a family to make this happen, this is it,” he said.

The plan and its threads are the result of fact-finding interviews and benchmarking visits to the FRCs to identify the constraints in the organization that were contributing to the decrease in fleet readiness and effectiveness within the production process.

“We’ve got to fix this,” West said referring to regaining readiness and closing the RBA gap, “and what I’ve been concerning myself with is not only can we fight tonight or fight tomorrow, but also for how long can we fight? Where do we need to be with the Enterprise in five years? In ten?”

The ultimate achievement of “Vision 2020” will be the inception of a global maintenance management system. The system “will recognize a failing aircraft as soon as it happens,” West said, “and we can immediately get parts, materials, artisan, equipment, testing -- whatever you need -- to the aircraft to fix it in real time.”

A global maintenance management system will be headquartered at an operations center hub and will be a new way of providing support for the fleet. All three leaders stressed that this way forward, with readiness and sustainment, has cultural acceptance from not only NAVAIR leadership, but from leadership across the NAE.

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Before closing the session, Sohl and the leaders took questions from industry members and invited them to bring ideas for industry cooperation forward.

NAVAL AIR SYSTEMS COMMAND, PATUXENT RIVER, Md. -- "Enabling a globally responsive fleet that is ready, affordable and effective -- that is our job," Brig. Gen. Greg Masiello, assistant commander for Logistics and Industrial Operations (AIR 6.0) said. "We need to innovate and make things happen and we need to sustain emphasis on readiness and an in-service mindset." Masiello spoke to several lines of effort, including In-Service Repairs (ISRs), depot capacity and supply that will lead to increasing the number of Ready Basic Aircraft (RBA). To support these lines of effort, there are several activities being employed across the enterprise such as additive manufacturing (AM), Critical Chain Project Management (CCPM) and an impending web-based version of the Integrated Logistics Support Management System (ILSMS) tool. (U.S. Navy photo)

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NAVAL AIR SYSTEMS COMMAND, PATUXENT RIVER, Md. -- Dennis West, deputy commander, Commander, Fleet Readiness Centers (COMFRC), presented the COMFRC strategic plan -- dubbed Vision 2020. “The maintenance system that we currently have in place,” West said, “is essentially the same system we’ve had in place for the past 50-100 years, the same age as our facilities.” The goal of Vision 2020 is to have a real-time, global maintenance management system. (U.S. Navy photo)