

SAS Panelists Express Full Support for Space Force; Warn of Personnel, Logistical Challenges of Standing Up New Military Branch



Sea services leaders at Sea-Air-Space – (from left) Navy Rear Adms. David Hahn and Christian Becker, Marine Brig. Gen. Lorna Mahlock and Coast Guard Capt. Greg Rothrock – showed support for the U.S. Space Force, but warned standing up a new military branch is a significant personnel and logistical challenge – and won't happen overnight. Lisa Nipp

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. – Sea services leaders expressed unwavering support during a May 6 panel discussion for the nation's future ventures in space – no matter whether the effort is split among the nation's existing military branches or a new United States Space Force is created.

The panelists at Navy League's Sea-Air-Space 2019 reiterated the need to increase the nation's space initiatives as rival nations such as

China, Russia, India and Japan build their push toward the stars.



The panelists debate the U.S. Space Force. Lisa Nipp "Space is no longer an uncontested environment," said Rear Adm. Christian Becker, commander, Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command.

As other countries stake their spots in space, the U.S. needs to hold its "ground," like when the maritime forces were first formed, Becker

explained.

“Space is very much akin to the maritime,” Becker said. “We first went to sea to trade, and then we went to sea when we realized other people could stop our trade. ... Made sure we can maintain freedom at sea.”

Don't expect the U.S. Space Force to appear overnight, however. Services like the Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard are still evaluating the personnel needed to staff an agency dedicated to the Final Frontier.

“Space is no longer an uncontested environment.”

Rear Adm. Christian Becker, commander, Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command

“We are assessing as part of the [Navy Department] how we can meet the mission needs of the Space Force,” Becker said. “We're not there yet at our level of understanding, but that's what we have to pursue.”

Finding and retaining the talent necessary to develop a fully operational Space Force is a significant challenge, said Brig. Gen. Lorna Mahlock, the Marine Corps' chief information officer.

“It's exciting to think about space ... but we have to make sure we develop the skill [to maintain a Space Force] and do it right,” Mahlock said.

However, she emphasized that, no matter the obstacles, the Marine Corps “embraces building the Space Force” and will offer its full support.

Service Chiefs Tout Agility, but MARAD in Need of Funding to Flex Muscle



The sea services chiefs (from left) – U.S. Navy CNO Adm. John M. Richardson, Marine Corps Commandant Gen. Robert B. Neller, Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Karl Schultz and Rear Adm. Mark Buzby of the U.S. Maritime Administration – during their panel discussion May 6 at Sea-Air-Space 2019. Lisa Nipp

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. – The sudden order to send the Abraham Lincoln carrier strike group to the U.S. Central Command theater in response to threats from Iran is a great example of the value of the Navy’s dynamic deployment concept, Chief of Naval Operations Adm. John M. Richardson said at the Navy League’s Sea-Air-Space 2019 exposition.

Although the Lincoln’s deployment into the Mediterranean had been planned, “this is a great demonstration of what we’ve been working on, dynamic deployment,” Richardson said May 6. Naval maneuver forces are “dynamic by design,” but Richardson said he found it encouraging that if the national command authority needed the Lincoln strike group to go to the Middle East it can do so immediately.

At the opening session of the Navy League’s annual Sea-Air-Space exposition, Richardson responded to a question about National Security Advisor John

Bolton's

announcement that the administration had ordered the Lincoln and its escorts to cut short its planned Mediterranean exercise and sail to the Persian Gulf region after warnings that Iran may be planning attacks on U.S. forces. Bolton said an Air Force bomber unit also was being sent to the region.



The sea services chiefs at their panel discussion at SAS. Lisa Nipp Asked how the Navy would respond to President Donald Trump's decision to reverse the 2020 budget proposal to skip the mid-life refueling of the aircraft carrier Harry S. Truman, Richardson noted that he had told Congress, which has opposed the decision, that the Truman's early retirement was reversible. "Now we will have to find the resources going forward," to invest in the new technologies, such as unmanned systems, that were to be funded with money saved from retiring Truman.

Appearing on the same panel, Marine Corps Commandant Gen. Robert B. Neller agreed with Richardson that the challenge of effective leaders was to anticipate the need to change their organizations and policies, rather than waiting to respond to a disaster. Neller cited the changes the Marines are making to respond to the growing threats of cyber and electronic warfare attacks from

peer competitors
as an example. The first shot of a major conflict would be
against the networks
and the U.S. forces must prepare to operate without the
assured communications
they have become accustomed to, Neller said.

*"This is a great demonstration of what we've been working on,
dynamic deployment."*

Chief of Naval Operations Adm. John M. Richardson

Also on the
panel, Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Karl Schultz said his
service was engaging
in more national security operations, such as the recent
freedom of navigation
transit of the Taiwan Straits, in addition to its heavy load
of maritime
security and safety missions. Schultz said the Coast Guard was
looking forward
to getting its first new Arctic icebreaker and hoped to get
initial funding for
a second one in the fiscal 2021 budget.

Retired Rear Adm.
Mark Busby, administrator of the Maritime Administration, said
the materiel
readiness of his 46 sealift vessels, which have an average age
of 44 years, had
gotten a bit worse since his warnings last year. Busby was
hopeful Congress
would fund the three-part program MARAD and the Navy have
urged to modernize
his fleet by updating some ships, buying some newer commercial
ships and
building a small number of vessels. Asked about the threat to

global
shipbuilding industry from China's rapidly growing ship
production
capabilities, Busby said U.S. shipbuilding survived only due
to Navy production
and commercial ships for the Jones Act, which required U.S.
built ships for
commerce between U.S. ports.

ATAC Selected as Provider of Training for Navy's TACT Program

WASHINGTON – Textron Airborne
Solutions, a business unit of Textron Inc., announced on May 1
that its
Airborne Tactical Advantage Company subsidiary (ATAC) has been
selected as a
provider of contracted air services under the U.S. Navy's
Terminal Attack
Controller Trainer (TACT) program.

Training provided under the IDIQ contract
will be led by ATAC and includes a team made up of Textron
Aviation Defense and
the Valkyrie Defense family of companies. They will deliver
contracted live-air
training to forward air controllers, joint terminal attack
controllers (JTACs)
and forward air controllers (Airborne) on ATAC's L-39
Albatros, Textron

Aviation Defense's Beechcraft AT-6 Wolverine light attack and armed reconnaissance aircraft and Valkyrie's A-27 Tucanos.

"TACT is a marked increase in both the quality and quantity of JTAC training services demanded by the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps. ATAC's world-class team is pleased to provide the most mission-representative JTAC training solutions available," said Russ Bartlett, CEO of Textron Airborne Solutions.

"Textron Aviation Defense is proud to be on this air services contract to equip the TACT community with the Beechcraft AT-6 Wolverine's cost-effective, high-performance close air support capability," said Brett Pierson, vice president of Light Attack Aircraft and Scorpion. "The Navy and Marine Corps flew the AT-6 during the U.S. Air Force Light Attack experiments and are well-acquainted with its unparalleled mission capability and optimized battlespace networking capability."

"Everyone at Valkyrie Defense's family of companies is excited to be working with ATAC in providing the best contracted close air support and JTAC training available. We look forward to fulfilling the needs of the U.S. warfighter for years to come with our fleet of aircraft," said Charlie Keebaugh, CEO of Valkyrie Aero.

ATAC has a fleet of more than 90 aircraft, having pioneered much of what are now contracted air services industry

standards with 20 years of operating experience and 57,000 flight hours. For the past 15 years, ATAC has provided a wide range of contracted close air support capabilities to U.S. Department of Defense JTAC communities across Europe, continental U.S., Hawaii and the western Pacific region. The only contractor that has operated supersonic fighter aircraft for the DoD, ATAC has helped train crews from the Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps and regularly operates out of as many as 25 different bases per year.

Textron Airborne Solutions focuses on live military air-to-air, air-to-ship and air-to-ground training and support services. Within Textron Airborne Solutions is Airborne Tactical Advantage Company (ATAC), a business that provides tactical flight training and adversary aggressor services for Navy, Marine and Air Force pilots.

Lockheed Develops Rack to Make F-35A/C a Six-Shooter



Marines prepare F-35B Lightning II aircraft on the flight deck of the amphibious assault ship USS Wasp. The F-35B can't accommodate the new Sidekick weapons rack, as its weapons bay is too small, but the F-35C, the Navy's variant of the joint strike fighter, can. Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class

Benjamin F. Davella III

ARLINGTON,

Va. – The builder of the F-35 Lightning II joint strike fighter has designed a new weapons rack to enable the aircraft to carry two more missiles internally.

The new rack, called Sidekick, enables each of the two weapons bays of the Air Force F-35A and Navy carrier-capable F-35C to carry three AIM-120 Advanced Medium-Range Air-to-Air Missile (AMRAAM) instead of the current two, for a total of six internally carried AMRAAMs.

Speaking May

1 to reporters at a Lockheed Martin media briefing, a company F-35 test pilot, Tony 'Brick' Wilson, said the rack was developed entirely with company internal research and development funds.

"The extra missiles add a little weight but are not adding extra drag."

Tony 'Brick' Wilson, F-35 TEST PILOT

The rack is not compatible with the vertical lift Marine Corps F-35B version, which has smaller weapons bay.

The F-35 can carry more AMRAAMs on external pylons, but Wilson pointed out that carrying two more internally preserves the stealth characteristics of the

F-35.

“The extra missiles add a little weight but are not adding extra drag,” Wilson said.

Wilson also said the F-35 has the external structural capacity for hypersonic weapons should that be required in the future.

He also said the company, working with the Air Force Research Lab, has developed and installed on the F-35A – six years ahead of schedule – the Auto Ground Collision Avoidance System (AGCAS).

The AGCAS has “saved eight pilots’ lives,” Wilson said.

He said the AGCAS will be installed later on the F-35B and on the F-35C in 2021.

Black to Become 19th Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps



Sgt. Maj. Troy E. Black has been selected to be the 19th Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps, the Corps announced in a release.

Black is the current Sergeant Major of Manpower and Reserve Affairs and will replace the current Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps, Sgt. Maj. Ronald L. Green, during a post and

relief ceremony later this year.

Following the ceremony, Green will retire after 35 years of service.

Since his enlistment in 1988, Black has, among other billets, served as Sergeant Major of Officer Candidates School, the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit, and 1st Marine Logistics Group. He has deployed extensively, including in support of Operation Desert Storm/Desert Shield, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Operation Enduring Freedom as well as numerous MEU and Fleet Anti-Terrorism Security Team Company deployments.

His personal awards include the Legion of Merit with Gold Star, Bronze Star with Combat Distinguishing Device, Meritorious Service Medal with two Gold Stars, Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal with Combat Distinguishing Device and three Gold Stars, Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal with Gold Star and the Combat Action Ribbon with two Gold Stars.

The post of Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps was established in 1957 as the senior enlisted adviser to the commandant of the Marine Corps, the first such post in any of the branches of U.S. military. The Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps is selected by the commandant and typically serves a four-year term.

Lack of Well Deck Seen as a Wash for LHA USS America



PACIFIC OCEAN (Feb. 1, 2018) An MV-22 Osprey helicopter assigned to Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron (VMM) 161

(Reinforced) aboard the amphibious assault ship USS America (LHA 6) lands on the flight deck.

ARLINGTON, Va.— The transfer of the new amphibious assault ship USS America to the Forward-Deployed Naval Force (FDNF) next fiscal year will bring a change in capabilities to the 7th Fleet's amphibious ready group, but the Marines that will go on patrol on America will be able to adjust to the changes and maintain a similar level of combat capability.

America (LHA 6) is scheduled to replace USS Wasp (LHD 1) as the "bog-deck" amphib deployed to Sasebo, Japan. The major difference in the two ships is that America lacks a well deck, a feature on all earlier LHAs and LHDs that can float landing craft and amphibious assault vehicles.

The America and its soon-to-be commissioned sister ship Tripoli were designed to be more aviation-centric. The trend was reversed with the third ship of the class, the future Bougainville, which will have a well deck.

The Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), the 31st MEU, which deploys on the ships of the Sasebo-based amphibious ships, differs from other MEUs in that it does not include M1A1 tanks in its load-out.

"I do not possess tanks, because we don't have tanks on Okinawa," said Col. Robert Brodie, commander of the 31st MEU, speaking April 23 to the Potomac Institute in Arlington of the 31st MEU's patrol in the Western Pacific in early 2019.

With somewhat of a lighter load, the 31st MEU will have less of a problem handling the unit's equipment of the America-centric amphibious ready group (ARG).

Brodie said his staff already is looking at the optimum way to configure the MEU's equipment load-out to best operate from the America. The ship's lack of a well deck means that three fewer landing craft – LCACs or LCUs – would be carried by the ships of the ARG.

Brodie is optimistic that the increased aviation capacity of the America could make up for the loss of a well deck. The America would more easily accommodate 12 MV-22B Osprey tiltrotor aircraft rather than the 10 that the Wasp typically carried. The two additional Ospreys would add to the overall airlift capability that could make up for some of the loss of lift by landing craft, especially without the requirement to accommodate tanks.

The America's increased aviation capacity also would enable the America to deploy with perhaps as many as eight F-35C Lightning II strike fighters instead of six as on the Wasp. The additional MV-22Bs also would make the eventual installation of an aerial refueling hose on one or more of the MV-22Bs a plus for the range and endurance of the F-35.

The air combat element of the 31st MEU also normally deploys with four CH-53E Super Stallion heavy-lift helicopters on board the Wasp, in addition to the three Navy MH-60S armed helicopters. The four AH-1Z Viper attack helicopters and three UH-1Y Venom utility helicopters are normally staged on the amphibious platform dock ship and dock landing ship of the ARG.

Marines to Rebuild WWII B-29 Airfield on Tinian for Training Use

ARLINGTON, Virginia – The airfield that launched the B-29 bombers that dropped the atomic bombs on Japan in World War II is being partially refurbished for use as a divert field and refueling point for Marine Corps aircraft in training events.

The United States has “opened up a long-term contract to be able to utilize the north [air]field” on Tinian, agreed to with a 40-year deal with the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands to use the north airfield on Tinian, said Col. Robert Brodie, commander of 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), speaking April 23 to the Potomac Institute in Arlington of the MEU’s recent patrol in the western Pacific in early 2019.

One of the coral runways of the airfield will be improved, Brodie said. That runway currently is in condition to receive KC-130 aerial refueling/transport aircraft, but “it isn’t user-friendly for a lot of jet airplanes,” said Brodie, an F/A-18 Hornet pilot.

The runway refurbishment is expected to cost \$20 million.

The Mariana Islands and Guam are becoming increasingly important to the upcoming move of thousands of Marines and Sailors from Okinawa to Guam, forces who will need combat training sites for maintaining readiness.

Brodie took the opportunity to look at potential beach landing sites and live-fire training sites. He noted that two new hangars for aircraft have been built at Andersen Air Force Base on Guam for Marine Corps aircraft.

The 31st MEU was heavily involved in relief efforts in Tinian after Typhoon Mangkhut swept through the Marianas in mid-September 2018, when the roofs of most buildings on Tinian were destroyed. The MEU’s Marines and the Sailors spent a month on Tinian rebuilding and relieving the suffering of the island’s 2,500 residents.

Brodie said the Marines and Sailors were gratified by the opportunity to help fellow American citizens, telling the islanders, “We’re here to support America!”

He said Tinian’s mayor has asked for a Marine Corps recruiter

to come to the island to “focus their high school kids” on considering service in the Corps.

“I can’t tell you what a good feeling it is to have a great relationship with the leadership of the Northern Marianas,” Brodie said. “What I think that is going to directly contribute to the Marine Corps in our path forward as we start to move forces down there.”

Marine Corps Plans to Replace LAV with New, ‘Transformational’ ARV



Light Armored Reconnaissance Vehicles with Weapons Co., Battalion Landing Team 2nd Battalion, 4th Marines, 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, finish a 379 mile movement into the Australian outback here, Aug. 31.

MARINE CORPS BASE QUANTICO, Virginia –The Marine Corps plans to begin replacing its legacy Light Armored Vehicle with a modern Armored Reconnaissance Vehicle late in the next decade, Marine Corps Systems Command (MCSC) said in a release.

The ARV will be highly mobile, networked, transportable, protected and lethal. The capability will provide, sensors, communication systems and lethality options to overmatch threats that have historically been addressed with more heavily armored systems.

“The ARV will be an advanced combat vehicle system, capable of fighting for information that balances competing capability demands to sense, shoot, move, communicate and remain

transportable as part of the naval expeditionary force,” said John “Steve” Myers, program manager for MCSC’s LAV portfolio.

Since the 1980s, the LAV has supported Marine Air-Ground Task Force missions on the battlefield. While the LAV remains operationally effective, the life cycle of this system is set to expire in the mid-2030s. The Corps aims to replace the vehicle before then.

Marine Corps Systems Command has been tasked with replacing the vehicle with a next-generation, more capable ground combat vehicle system. In June 2016, the Corps established an LAV Way-Ahead, which included the option to initiate an LAV Replacement Program to field a next-generation capability in the 2030s.

Preliminary planning, successful resourcing in the program objectives memorandum and the creation of an Office of Naval Research science and technology program have set the conditions to begin replacing the legacy LAV with the ARV in the late-2020s.

“The Marine Corps is examining different threats,” said Kimberly Bowen, deputy program manager of Light Armored Vehicles. “The ARV helps the Corps maintain an overmatched peer-to-peer capability.”

The Office of Naval Research (ONR) has begun researching advanced technologies to inform requirements, technology readiness assessments and competitive prototyping efforts for the next-generation ARV.

The office is amid a science and technology phase that allows them to conduct advanced technology research and development, modeling and simulation, whole system trade studies and a full-scale technology demonstrator fabrication and evaluation.

These efforts will inform the requirements development process, jump-start industry and reduce risk in the

acquisition program.

The office is also supporting the Ground Combat Element Division of the Capabilities Development Directorate by performing a trade study through the U.S. Army Ground Vehicle Systems Center in Michigan. This work will help to ensure ARV requirements are feasible and to highlight the capability trade space.

ONR has partnered with industry to build two technology demonstrator vehicles for evaluation. The first is a base platform that will be made up of current and state-of-the-art technologies and standard weapons systems designed around a notional price point. The second is an "at-the-edge" vehicle that demonstrates advanced capabilities.

"The purpose of those vehicles is to understand the technology and the trades," Myers said.

In support of acquisition activities, PM LAV anticipates the release of an acquisition program Request for Information in May 2019 and an Industry Day later in the year to support a competitive prototyping effort. The Corps expects a Material Development Decision before fiscal year 2020.

"We will take what we've learned in competitive prototyping," Myers said. "Prior to a Milestone B decision, we'll be working to inform trade space, inform requirements and reduce risk."

The Corps believes the ARV will support the capability demands of the next generation of armored reconnaissance.

"This vehicle will equip the Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion within the Marine Divisions to perform combined arms, all-weather, sustained reconnaissance and security missions in support of the ground combat element," Myers said. "It's expected to be a transformational capability for the Marine Corps."

C2, Air Defenses Against UAS Attack Among Corps' Top Acquisition Priorities, Berger Says

Some of the top acquisition priorities for the Marine Corps to prevail against the emerging security threats are maintaining the ability to command and control a naval expeditionary force in a degraded electronic environment and acquiring air defense capabilities against unmanned aerial systems, senior officials said April 4.

Meeting the requirement for assured command and control (C2) is complicated by the continuing dependence on legacy systems that are so far out of date they can't be upgraded, Lt. Gen. David H. Berger, the commanding general of the Marine Corps Combat Development Command, told the House Armed Service Tactical Air and Land Forces Subcommittee.

Although a lot of C2 systems will be fielded in the next few years, "the challenge for us, as a naval force, is how to do that in a degraded electro-magnetic spectrum environment. That's not easy work," Berger said.

There is the challenge of integrating the sensor and communications systems of fourth- and fifth-generation aircraft, he said, referring to the Marines' mix of legacy F/A-18 Hornets and new F-35B joint strike fighters.

Then there is the basic requirement of processing and distributing that information so the Marines can get it. That's hard enough to do if it wasn't in a contested

environment,” Berger said. “But we absolutely expect the threat to go after our C2 systems first ... because they believe that’s our Achilles’ heel.”

“For us, the Navy and Marine Corps, it’s No. 1,” because they cannot operate successfully “if we can’t have the network that we need,” he said. “A fair portion of [budget] requests this year addresses that.”

Jimmy Smith, deputy assistant secretary of the Navy for research, development, and acquisition, echoed that point, telling the panel that “competing with a peer threat is the theme of our 2020 request.” The budget prioritizes modernization, in C2, long-range precision fires, enhanced maneuver and logistics.

Asked how they would deal with legacy equipment, Berger said they have started writing the need for retrofitting into requirements. “It wasn’t so necessary before, but now it absolutely is,” he said, citing a commonly used radio system, the Humvee vehicles and the M1A1 main battle tank, which he noted has analog, not digital electronics.

“Some of the legacy systems, there’s a point that we reach, like the M1A1, that we can’t go any farther, and the LAV [light armored vehicle],” he added.

For the new Amphibious Combat Vehicle that will begin fielding this summer, modern technology is built into it, he said.

Berger noted that the 2020 budget includes “cancellation of some legacy systems in order to upgrade others.”

To deal with the rapidly growing threat of armed unmanned aerial systems (UAS), Berger emphasized the new Ground/Air Tactical Oriented Radar, as “a huge advance for us in identifying and tracking targets. ... Plus, it’s expeditionary.”

He also cited the Light Marine Air Defense Integrated System,

being fielded in “very limited quantities.” It is “an integrated, modular package” that can be mounted on two small vehicles and includes sensors, controls and an electronic attack system to disable small UASs.

“For longer range, we’ll need a medium range interceptor” missile, he added.

Lt. Gen. Steven Rudder, Marine Corps deputy commandant for aviation, also mentioned offensive UASs to counter enemy drones and some small guided munitions that can loiter and be guided into enemy UASs. Defensive drones could be particularly useful against swarms of aerial drones, Rudder said.

Asked about the need for long-range fires, Smith said the Marines “are closely tied in with the Army,” which has a much larger force, and a larger budget and already is working on those things. “The Marine Corps benefits greatly from leveraging their work, working together.”

In response to a question from subcommittee chairman David Norcross, Berger joined other witnesses in warning that a return to sequestration, which would cut defense spending far below the budget request, would force the Marines to sacrifice modernization to ensure that “the next units deploying, or one already deployed, have what they need.”

Marine Corps May Extend AV-8B Harrier Service to 2028



WASHINGTON – The Marine Corps’ fleet of AV-8B Harrier II attack aircraft may serve until 2028, the Corps’ aviation

chief told Congress, a two-year extension of the previous plan.

“We will continue to be a fourth-gen/fifth-gen [tactical aircraft] fleet out until about 2030, with Harriers probably going to 2028 and F/A-18s going to 2030-2031,” said Lt. Gen. Steven R. Rudder, the Marine Corps’ deputy commandant for aviation. He testified April 4 during a hearing of the Tactical Air and Ground Forces subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee.

The Corps earlier had extended the Harrier’s planned service out to 2026 in view of the delays in the F-35B Lightning II joint strike fighter. Rudder’s comment indicates that the Harrier may serve until 2028, three years longer than planned.

The F-35B has deployed on two amphibious assault ships, USS Wasp and USS Essex, flying the aircraft’s first combat missions in September from the deck of the Essex.

According to one source, a planned F-35B deployment on a third ship this year was assumed instead by a detachment of AV-8Bs.

Rudder said the Corps plans to achieve a 100% fifth-generation tactical fighter force by 2030. He said the mixture percentage of fourth-gen to fifth-gen fighters in the Marine Corps today is 80-20.

The Marine Corps operates three operational F-35B squadrons and its first F-35C squadron, VMFA-314, is in transition.