

CNO: U.S. Navy Brings to Bear 'Global Maneuverability'



The Chief of Naval Operations, Adm. Michael Gilday, second from right, visits Patrol Squadron Nine in Keflavik, Iceland, in June. *U.S. NAVY / Lt. Joseph Reed*

WASHINGTON – The chief of naval operations said the U.S. Navy's forward presence and ability to move its forces, including its headquarter staffs, rapidly to an area where it is needed demonstrates its value to the maritime security of the nation and the world.

"Do we have enough fleet headquarters to go around? One could argue that we don't," said CNO Adm. Michael Gilday, speaking on his Navigation Plan for the Navy Aug. 25 at The Heritage Foundation, responding to a question about the way the Navy's numbered fleets are distributed around the world to respond to the actions of China and the need for the Navy to increase its operations in the Arctic. "One of the great things the Navy brings to bear – our headquarters included – is global maneuverability."

Gilday said his top regional focus is on the Pacific and the Atlantic, with the Indian Ocean "being a close third."

The admiral said "in terms of opportunities of the future, we absolutely have to look at the Arctic. As the ice cap continues to recede, think about trade routes in the next 25 years between Europe and Asia: fundamentally changing."

He pointed out NATO member Iceland is typically thought of in a trans-Atlantic fashion.

"Think about it in a trans-polar fashion," he said. "We need to think about that area much more deeply, particularly with both Finland and Sweden joining the alliance. I see

opportunities in the high north that we need to continue to operate up there with allies and partners.”

Gilday pointed that Iceland has graciously allowed Navy P-8 maritime patrol aircraft operate rotationally from Iceland, which hosted a maritime patrol aircraft presence during the Cold War.

Regarding adding another numbered fleet, Gilday said he “would prefer to focus any monies I have on capabilities and more ships rather than more headquarters. What our Navy has done, as an example, with the newly formed U.S. 2nd Fleet out of Norfolk, is we’ve used them in an expeditionary manner. Their light, agile headquarters that has actually operated out of Iceland. They’ve travelled from Norfolk to operate on our command-and-control ship [the USS Mount Whitney] in the Mediterranean and in the high north up by Norway. They [also] have gone down to North Carolina and operated with the Marine Corps.”