

Gilday: Large Scale Exercise 2021 Will Provide 'Path to the Future' for U.S. Navy



Gilday, second from left, appeared on the Tri-Service Maritime Leadership panel that kicked off Sea-Air-Space 2021. *NAVY LEAGUE / Lisa Nipp*

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. – The Navy's massive Large Scale Exercise 2021 kicks off this week and the sea service's top officer said Monday the exercise represents a "path to the future" for the service.

It's the "biggest exercise we've done in a generation," and the Navy will benefit from its lessons for years to come, Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Michael Gilday said while speaking at the Navy League's Sea-Air-Space Expo in National Harbor, Maryland.

The exercise will involve 25,000 sailors and Marines and will span 17 time zones in the Pacific Ocean, Atlantic Ocean, and Mediterranean Sea. The exercise begins Aug. 3 and will finish on Aug. 16.

While the Navy plans to test warfighting concepts like it would with any exercise, one of the main purposes of the event is to put Sailors and Marines in a two-week live virtual constructive exercise, Gilday said.

"At an individual level, it allows sailors and combatant commanders" to experiment with warfighting concepts and generate lessons learned, he said.

"That's the key to this," he said. "It's to take this warfighting concept, which is quite frankly going to be foundational to everything that we buy, everything we invest

in, and it's going to inform how we're going to fight."

The exercise provides a rare opportunity where service members can train together regardless of their role.

"We think this constructive training is really a path to the future for us," Gilday said. "You can imagine that sailors and lieutenant commanders and their COs can conduct integrated training – air wing and submarines and surface ships and cyber units. Any time they want thousands of repetitions, we can learn from that, and bring back those lessons to how we fight."