

Kitchener Says Surface Force is Sharpening its Competitive Edge



Vice Adm. Roy Kitchener, commander, Naval Surface Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet, delivers the keynote address at the Surface Navy Association's annual waterfront symposium at Naval Base San Diego, Aug. 26. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Alex Millar*

Navy Vice Adm. Roy Kitchener, commander, Naval Surface Force, said readiness, training, manpower and new technology, such as simulators, are sharpening the surface fleet's competitive edge.

The "SWO Boss" spoke Aug. 26 on the closing day of the Surface Navy Association's annual Waterfront Symposium at Naval Station San Diego, a hybrid live and virtual event with in-person speakers and attendees as well as virtual participants.

Kitchener cited progress in training and certifying ship crews and individual watchstanders and the value of virtual training capabilities and simulators.

"We continue our integration of the live, virtual and constructive capability, which is integral to the future of training as it emulates threats at the scale we will encounter and injects them into our training scenarios," he said.

"Junior officers are becoming highly proficient at shiphandling and navigation thanks to an array of new trainers and simulators," Kitchener said. "It's amazing technology, being led by Surface Warfare and bringing increased training capacity and warfare capability to our fleet, worldwide."

The weapons tactics instructors (WTIs) being developed by the Surface and Mine Warfare Development Center are now joining

commands around the fleet in significant numbers, and they're paying dividends, he said.

"We will always need talented people developing and introducing warfighting tactics on the waterfront – to do that, we need to certify more WTIs. We will continue to invest in SMWDC and strengthen it as the centerpiece of Surface Force warfighting."

According to Kitchener, getting WTIs into the fleet seven years ago shifted the conversation back to warfighting.

"Now we need to take it even further. We are validating the required number of WTIs to meet our goals over the next few years, but we know that with the growing size and complexity of our SWATT [surface warfare advanced tactical training] program and our goal to put a WTI on every ship, we need a better path to get these officers certified and out to the fleet."

The myriad of readiness, training, manpower and technology initiatives together will retain the surface force's "competitive edge," he said. "Competitive edge is leading the world in warfighting technology. Competitive edge is denying our adversaries battle space and freedom of maneuver every day in peacetime. Competitive edge is not only knowing we can defeat the enemy, but the enemy knowing it too. It's about combat readiness, but more importantly, it's about combat action, and winning that action."

Retired Vice Adm. Rick Hunt, president of SNA, thanked the speakers representing operations, personnel, training and support leadership, as well as the in-person and virtual audience for attending. He expressed his gratitude to the active duty and reserve attendees, as well as industry partners, for their contributions to the surface force and national defense.

"Where but the Navy, and the surface Navy in particular, do

you have the opportunity to learn every day; to continue to grow; address new and challenging opportunities every day; to make a difference, not only to yourself, but to your shipmates every day; and to be able to deliver directly to our national defense?" he said. "What higher purpose can there be than to do be able to do this kind of very personally and professionally satisfying work – and to do it in a most powerful way?"