

NAVIFOR Showcases Information Warfare Dominance at WEST 2026



Vice Adm. Mike Vernazza, Commander, Naval Information Forces, addresses a crowd industry leaders, service members and media personnel during the Armed Forces Communications & Electronics Association International. The premier naval conference and exposition on the West coast, West is now in its 36th year of bringing military and industry leaders together. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Ray McCann)
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San Diego – SAN DIEGO – Naval Information Forces (NAVIFOR) had a significant presence at the West 2026 conference this week at the San Diego Convention Center. As a leader in the Information Warfare (IW) community, NAVIFOR highlighted its

latest advancements and strategic initiatives aimed at ensuring the Navy's competitive edge in sustaining maritime dominance.

This year marked the 11th year for the Navy Information Warfare Pavilion, which featured displays, technology demonstrations, and direct engagement with IW subject matter experts and Sailors. The pavilion served as a central hub for collaboration between the military, industry, and academia.

Further showcasing NAVIFOR's leadership, Vice Adm. Mike Vernazza, commander of Naval Information Forces, the Navy's "IBoss" participated in two key panel discussions: "What is Required to Achieve 80 percent Surge Readiness?" and "From Learning to Lethality: Accelerating Technological Leadership Through Warfighter Education."

"Our participation in these panels was a tremendous opportunity to underscore a fundamental truth: readiness and lethality are forged by our Information Warfare Sailors," said Vernazza.

"Ultimately, our goal is to provide a worldclass professional IW force, trained, equipped and certified to conduct what our Nation may ask, manned with confident, resilient Sailors who are masters of their craft."

Vernazza, also spoke at the Navy's IW pavilion, and his remarks emphasized the critical evolution of information warfare. "IW is no longer just a supporting element; we are a primary warfighting function delivering decision advantage and lethality to the fleet, from seabed to space," stated the IBoss.

His addresses underscored the command's focus on its people, readiness, and the operationalization of IW. "It cannot

be understated that our people have always been and remain our greatest advantage,” Vernazza emphasized. He highlighted several key initiatives driving the community forward, including:

Initiated the stand-up of Information Warfare Squadrons (IWRONs) to place IW Commanders in command earlier, modeling the structure after Air Wings and Destroyer Squadrons. This includes the ongoing 48-month pilot program for IWRON Two on the East Coast and the upcoming IWRON on the West Coast.

Graduated the first Navy officers from the Space Force Weapons Instructor Course, integrating space knowledge directly into the Fleet and partnering with the Space Force.

Collaborated on an AI Master’s Degree program with the Naval Post Graduate School, with NAVIFOR sponsoring the first cohort.

Supported the United Kingdom’s 2025 deployment of the Prince of Wales with an embedded IW officer, enhancing combined capabilities.

Partnered with the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) to launch a practical, applied AI Master’s Degree program for both IW and URL officers. Also, invested IW talent in the NPS AI Task Force.

Instituted “Tech Times” for IW rates around the world to provide dedicated time for Sailors to deepen their technical expertise with senior mentorship.

Launched the second round of the “Big Ideas Challenge” to crowd-source innovation from Sailors.

Shifted IW’s role to a recognized Certifying Authority for the Basic Phase of training for ships, with a dramatic increase in rigor and quantifiable results. This was marked by the first-

ever IW Battle “E” awards.

Solidified the concept of the Maritime Operations Centers (MOCs) as a warfighting platform, standardizing systems, updating guidance and driving toward full certification of every Fleet MOC by 2027.

Launching a pilot program, in collaboration with the surface warfare community, to place more experienced O-4 level IW Department Heads directly onto Destroyers, pairing them with advanced IW equipment to increase capability and lethality.

Vernazza’s message was one of proactive innovation and an unrelenting commitment to maintaining dominance in a rapidly changing battlespace. “To get outcomes we have never had, we must do things we have never done. That is the journey we are on,” he asserted, pointing to a future where IW readiness is paramount.

NAVIFOR’s participation in West 2026 provided a key opportunity to demonstrate how the command is preparing for the future fight. As Vice Adm. Vernazza concluded, “The future of warfare will be won by those who can out-think, out-maneuver, and out-innovate the adversary. Naval Information Forces is ready for that challenge.”

NAVIFOR’s mission is to generate, directly and through our leadership of the IW Enterprise, agile and technically superior manned, trained, equipped, and certified combat-ready IW forces to ensure our Navy will decisively DETER, COMPETE, and WIN.

For more information on NAVIFOR, visit the command Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/NavalInformationForces/> or the public web page at <https://www.navifor.usff.navy.mil>.