

SECNAV: Navy–Industry Partnership Essential for Maintaining a Strong Fleet



Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro is welcomed by Rear Adm. Douglas Perry, the Navy's director for undersea warfare, during a commissioning commemoration for the USS Vermont (SSN 792) onboard Naval Submarine Base New London in Groton, Conn., Aug. 28. *U.S. NAVY / Chief Petty Officer Joshua Karsten*

ARLINGTON, Va. – A strong partnership between the Navy and the defense industry, including small and medium businesses, is essential to building and maintaining a strong fleet to counter potential adversaries such as China and Russia, the Navy's new civilian leader said.

"I know what it takes to build a warship and the teamwork that's involved with both large companies and small companies, the government, the supervisor of shipbuilding," said Navy Secretary Carlos Del Toro, speaking Aug. 30 in a webinar of Southeast New England Defense Industry Alliance (SENEDIA). I was really impressed with the work that was going on at Electric Boat [in Groton, Connecticut] ... and Quonset Point [Rhode Island]."

On Aug. 28, Del Toro was in Groton to attend the administrative commissioning of the Virginia-class attack submarine USS Vermont.

"I spent three years of my own life in a shipyard building the [Arleigh Burke-class destroyer] USS Bulkeley," Del Toro said. "About a year and a half was actual construction and a year and a half was sailing the ship on sea trials. I have tremendous respect for our shipyard workers and the work they do and all of the small businesses that come together to build a surface ship or a submarine."

"It's an example of how America's best can come together to build these tremendous platforms and protect not just our national security, quite frankly but our economic security in every possible way," he said.

Del Toro praised SENEDIA for "doing a great job training the next generation of submarine workers through your OTA [Other Transaction Authority] partnership with the many apprenticeship programs."

The SECNAV said that the defense industry was critical to keeping pace with the threat of China's expansion and Russia's growing and increasingly capable submarine force.

"China is my No. 1 priority as a more pacing threat to the United States," he said. "We must do everything we can to prevent China from continuing its malevolent behavior toward the United States, toward other nations, to prevent them from what they potentially want to do [such as take over Taiwan] in some form or fashion."

Del Toro pointed out that China "has threatened our shipping lanes, she has demonstrated far greater regional aggression, [with] her expanding her presence, not just in the Pacific but around the entire world.

"Russia also shows continued aggression in the Arctic and the Mediterranean and right up to our Atlantic shores as well," he said. "She continues to build first-class submarines. That's why organizations like SENEDIA working together with the United States Navy are so critically important to us to continue to stay ahead of technology in every possible way ... and build the best possible platforms than we can."

The SECNAV said the world's "rules-based order remains under siege in every possible way. We must be present, we must be persistent, and we must be postured for anything that comes our way."