

VCNO Visits Newport News; Discusses Maintenance, Quality of Service



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WASHINGTON – Vice Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Jim Kilby visited HII's Newport News Shipbuilding, in Virginia, to discuss submarine and aircraft carrier maintenance and Quality of Service in the shipyard, March 5.

Kilby began his visit receiving updates from the shipyard's leadership on the shipyard's major programs, infrastructure investments and workforce developments.

NNS is the sole designer, builder and refueler of the Navy's aircraft carriers and one of two builders of nuclear-powered submarines.

"This is where the current and future of our Navy's air and undersea dominance starts," said Kilby. "It's an immense undertaking to build these nuclear-powered platforms, and we must continue to work closely together and continually improve processes and deliver these carriers and submarines time and on budget."

The shipyard is building the Navy's newest Ford-class aircraft carriers. The future USS John F. Kennedy (CVN 79) began its topside testing of the electromagnetic aircraft launch system last month. EMALS, first integrated into USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78), replaces the existing steam catapults currently in use on the Nimitz-class aircraft carriers.

Kilby also toured manufacturing facilities where NNS is building modules for the new Columbia-class submarines. The

Columbia-class will replace the Ohio-class as the Navy's contribution to the nuclear triad, which remains the most survivable leg of the U.S. strategic nuclear deterrent force.

"The partnership we have with this shipyard and its suppliers is critically important to our Navy, our nation and our national defense," said Kilby. "The future of our nation's sea-based deterrent starts here."

During the visit, Kilby focused on the Sailors' Quality of Service during the maintenance periods on the shipyard, with stops at Sailor housing, dining and medical facilities, and spoke with leadership from USS John C. Stennis (CVN 74), currently undergoing a refueling and complex overhaul.

Kilby also met with carrier and submarine leadership from other crews in the shipyard

"Every Sailor has volunteered to be in the Navy and we need to make sure we're supporting their quality of life and work," said Kilby. "This means access to quality food, housing, medical care and a command they can trust to take care of them."

The Navy has taken a critical eye on Sailors' Quality of Service, especially while in a maintenance period. Commander, Navy Installations Command, Vice Adm. Scott Gray joined Kilby on the trip. Gray leads the Navy's Quality of Service Cross Functional Team.

"I am incredibly thankful for the commitment NNS and the city of Newport News has made to improve our Sailors' Quality of Service," said Gray. "The Navy recognizes we need to do better and we can't do this without the support from industry, our Navy communities and Congress."

Specific focus on NNS includes off-site housing options for Sailors undergoing maintenance, improved access to medical care, expanded access to healthy food options and improving

WiFi connectivity. This includes free, high speed WiFi aboard Stennis' berthing barge.

The Navy launched a WiFi pilot program in January at 12 permanent party unaccompanied housing located onboard Naval Station Norfolk, Naval Medical Center Portsmouth, and Norfolk Naval Shipyard.

The Wi-Fi pilot is part of a new and larger program called the Virtual Single Sailor Program, which directly supports the Quality of Service of Sailors.