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UNTIL RELEASED BY THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS

STATEMENT OF

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BEFORE THE

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS

ON LEARNING FROM AND PREVENTING FUTURE TRAINING MISHAPS

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Chairman Garamendi, Ranking Member Lamborn, and distinguished members of the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Readiness, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss Navy mishap trends, our lessons learned, and the proactive steps we are taking to better understand and control risk, improve safety outcomes, and increase the combat effectiveness of our force.

Our nation requires a Navy that is ready to deploy globally in defense of U.S. interests. 2020 provided a strong example of how the U.S. Navy is executing that imperative. While large portions of world activity were curtailed with the pandemic, the Navy's operational tempo continued at a high pace, highlighted by eight major Carrier Strike Group and Expeditionary Strike Group deployments. In 2020, Naval Aviation flew over 700,000 flight hours and Navy Afloat forces amassed over 23,000 total steaming days. In a number of instances, U.S. Naval Forces' deployments were extended to support high priority Secretary of Defense tasking. One such unit, the USS Nimitz (CVN 68) Carrier Strike Group, returned last month from the longest aircraft carrier deployment in modern history.

This performance strongly aligns with CNO Gilday's message to the force: *"Failing to maintain our advantage at sea will leave America vulnerable. Mission One for every Sailor—active or reserve, uniformed and civilian—is the operational readiness of today's Navy."* In alignment with this direction, the Navy is bringing a strong sense of urgency in addressing the critical topics of this hearing, working comprehensively to improve readiness generation outcomes and our safety culture.

Get Real – Get Better: Enabling a Culture of Excellence

The Navy has learned hard lessons over the past few years from major mishaps. Our improvement path is aligned to the “Get Real, Get Better” approach—proven in the Navy’s work to transform Strike Fighter readiness, improve private shipyard depot maintenance performance, and drive better outcomes in other key mission areas. The “Get Real” element demands rigorous self-assessment, strong characterization of current performance, and detailed root cause analysis to identify the conditions or behaviors that led to a mishap. This “Get Real” element illuminates performance and capabilities as they are, as actually measured, rather than what leaders aspire performance to be. The “Get Better” element applies these root cause insights to develop, implement, and track action plans that drive improvement in the organization’s operational and safety performance, using a strong cadence of measurement and accountability.

A recent example is the Navy’s response to the 2017 USS Fitzgerald and USS John S. McCain mishaps. Two major reviews – the Comprehensive Review (CR) and Strategic Readiness Review (SRR) – identified root causes of the mishaps and made 111 recommendations aimed at driving Navy readiness improvement and preventing such consequential mishaps in the future.

The Navy’s Readiness Reform & Oversight Council (RROC) executed action plans to address all 111 CR/SRR recommendations with a governance structure to monitor and measure progress. With the support of this committee, the Navy invested in and employed meaningful reforms in how we man our surface fleet, train our crews, schedule and execute workups and deployment, and how we equip and maintain our surface force.

Improvements have been made in (1) Surface Warfare Officer training; (2) Use of ship simulators to train shipboard teams in Navigation, Seamanship, and Ship Handling; and in

Combined Integrated Air and Missile Defense and Anti-Submarine Warfare training; (3) Readiness for Sea Assessments; (4) Force Generation Models; (5) Shipboard manpower requirements; and (6) Comprehensive Fatigue and Endurance Management Program.

This structured “Get Better” approach requires ongoing measurement of improvement self-talk against actual performance. Specific examples of measured outcomes include: (1) Establishment of Commander 7th Fleet (C7F) weekly Fleet Management Coordination Board, which more closely manages OPTEMPO; (2) Type Commander (TYCOM) semi-annual assessments of Basic & Advanced Phase performance versus entitlement, where for 2020 both Commander, Naval Air Force Pacific (CNAP) and Commander, Naval Surface Force Pacific (CNSP) completed 100% of Basic Phase training within entitlement (CNSP up from 38% in fiscal year 2019); (3) Readiness generation improvements where 100% of forces deployed with full readiness certifications; and (4) Forward Deployed forces achieving a 0% certification expiration rate, compared to 2015-2017 rates of 6-40% expiration.

USS Bonhomme Richard

In July 2020, USS Bonhomme Richard (BHR) suffered a catastrophic shipboard fire during a maintenance period in San Diego, CA. The BHR fire marked the 15th significant fire onboard a U.S. Navy vessel in the past 12 years, demonstrating that previous leadership interventions of the type the Fleet Commanders aggressively employed following the BHR fire have not in the past resolved root causes sufficiently to drive enduring change in the frequency of shipboard fire mishaps. Early this year, I directed the Fleet Commanders, working with the Naval Safety Center, Naval Reactors, Naval Sea Systems Command and Naval Installations Command, to conduct a detailed review of these shipboard fires. The goal is to illuminate

systemic issues regarding the standards, culture and environment driving daily discipline in shipboard stowage, cleanliness and readiness, and to recommend actions that establish the necessary culture and practices required to change Navy fire safety outcomes in an enduring way. This probe into systemic root causes of long-term shipboard fire safety performance completes in July and is designed to provide a foundation to broadly improve all Navy safety performance outcomes.

Class A Aviation Flight Mishaps

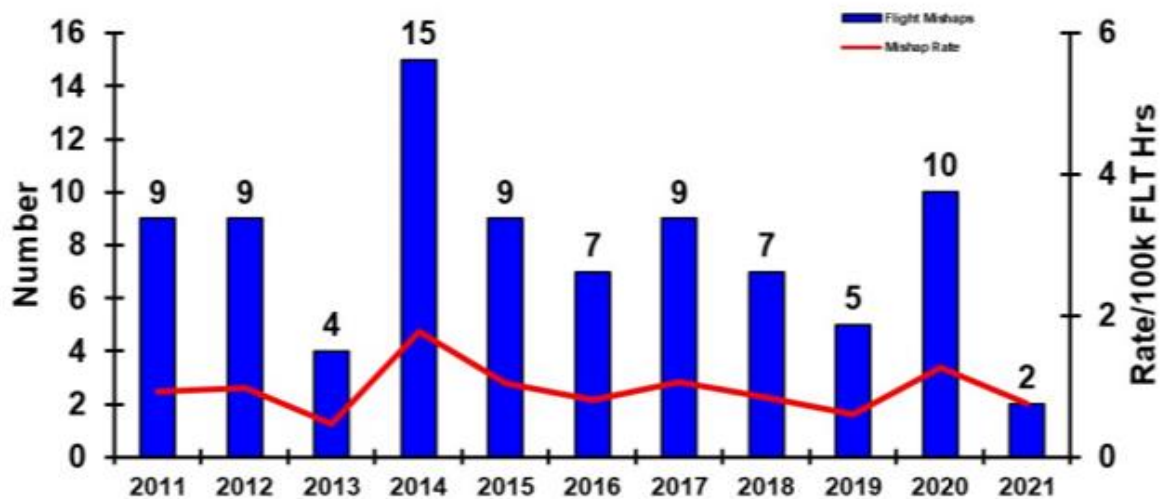


Figure 1: Naval Aviation Class A Mishaps (flight)

Naval Aviation Safety Update

Naval Aviation and the Naval Safety Center have fully reviewed the analysis and recommendations of the National Commission on Military Aviation Safety (NCMAS) that examined mishaps between fiscal year 2013-2018. The U.S. Navy is working closely with the Department of Defense to provide a department wide response to NCMAS. In the interim, Naval

Aviation continues the work to continually improve our safety culture. In 2019, Naval Aviation had its best year in the last decade for total mishaps (287 Class A-D mishaps/ 33.8 mishaps per 100,000 flight hours) and was the first time in 10 years where total mishaps did not increase. The 2020 A-D mishap totals dropped to 280 and there were zero Class A fatalities, while the overall mishap rate (36.4 per 1000,000 flight hours) was slightly higher than 2019. Class C Aviation Ground Mishaps (AGM) were the driver of the increased mishap rate in 2020.

Aviation Ground Mishaps: As part of Naval Aviation's Culture of Excellence Campaign, Naval Aviation began a campaign in 2020 to deep dive root causes of AGM, such as procedural compliance and human factors. Naval Aviation is leveraging data analytics, training and leadership intervention to bend the curve on AGMs. Specific initiatives include:

- (1) Fleet Readiness Analytics Group (FRAG): The FRAG is applying internal and external data analytics to identify trends, readiness impacts and drivers associated with mishaps. The FRAG is aligned with our maintenance, safety, and operations processes to identify catalysts that can enable positive change.
- (2) Safety Support Group (SSG) Pilot: Naval Aviation is executing this new program where TYCOM, Wing and Naval Safety Center subject matter experts conduct no-notice quality assurance visits to flight lines and commands.
- (3) Maintenance ASAP: Implemented as a daily feedback tool to provide squadron leadership with insight into maintenance practices, risks and improvement opportunities in their commands.

Physiological Event (PE): In 2017, the U.S Navy temporarily grounded our fleet of T-45 trainer aircraft after a series of unexplained Physiological Events (PE) where instructors and students reported hypoxia-like symptoms during flight. In response, the Navy stood up the

Physiological Episodes Action Team (PEAT) to study PE and implement improved safety equipment and training to avoid hypoxia events. This comprehensive work led to mechanical fixes, increased aircrew education, and PE specific policy changes. As of March 2021, T-45 PE rates are down 94% since July 2017, and F/A-18 and E/A-18G PE rates are down 77% since November 2017.

Class A USN/USNS Afloat Mishaps

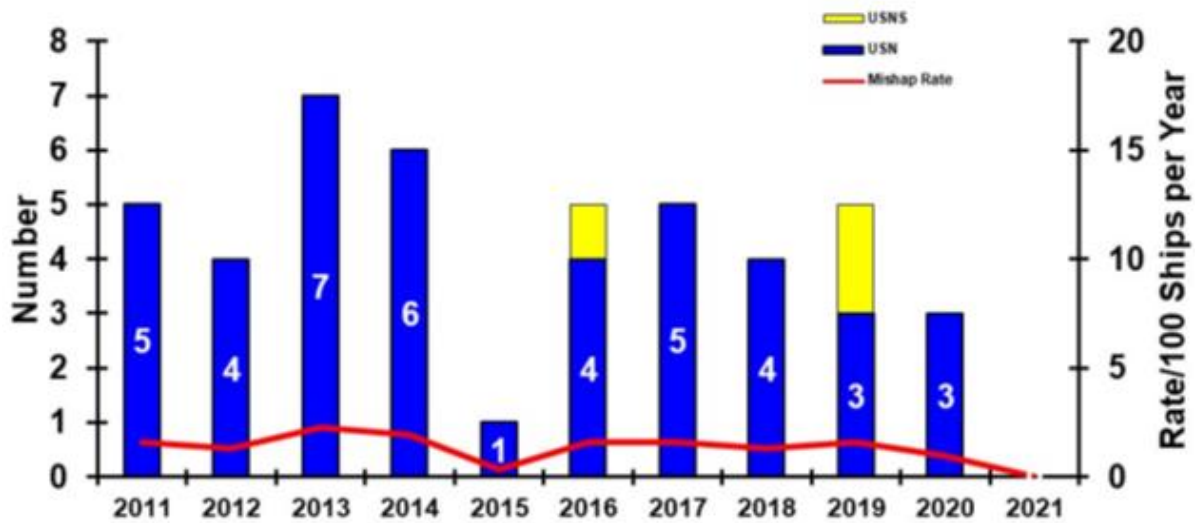


Figure 2. Navy Surface Force Class A Mishaps (Afloat)

Surface Force Safety Update

The Surface Force overall mishap rate is also trending down, benefitting from increased reporting of lower-level events and near misses to raise risk awareness. Between 2011 and today, surface force hazard reports (HAZREP) and lessons learned annual submissions have increased from 108 annually in 2011 to six times that number in 2020. This increase in risk

awareness is having a positive impact on the surface community's safety culture. Additionally, the surface fleet has developed and implemented key safety initiatives to address better crew coordination, improve decision-making and better manage crew fatigue to include:

Afloat Bridge Resource Management Workshop (ABRMW): ABRMWs are underway events where senior community leaders train ship leadership from theory to practice on operational safety fundamentals, and observe how Commanding Officers make day-to-day risk decisions. Since 2018, ships that completed ABRMW have had zero Class A or B mishaps.

Fire Safety Assessment (FSA): After the USS Bonhomme Richard fire, the Surface Fleet TYCOM developed and executed a no-notice/after-hours Fire Safety Assessment (FSA) program with Senior Department of the Navy civilians and post major command officers (O-6). The FSA program puts TYCOM experts on ships and provides a real-time picture of current shipboard fire-readiness across the waterfront. In an FSA, TYCOM Force Safety and Force Damage Control Assessment (DCA) leadership assesses ships in no-notice visits. Since program inception in September 2020, the Navy has identified and corrected deficiencies during 56 assessments.

Operational Safety Risk Indicator (OSRI): The mission of OSRI is to assess comprehensive safety and readiness (Man, Train, & Equip) indicators of surface ships to meet operational tasking. OSRI serves within existing command structures to facilitate effective use of resources, collaboration to achieve mission effectiveness, and streamline decision-making. The goal of OSRI is to provide: (1) Consistent cross-stakeholder information flow by working from the bottom-up and horizontally to avoid stove-piped information; (2) Improved process discipline; (3) Integrated, consistent, and hierarchical metrics; (4) Full transparency of data, information, and activities; (5) Data-informed recommendations for risk mitigation,

including re-apportionment of resources, recommended intervention points, and key actions; and (6) Integrated and effective governance of data collection/maintenance, data analysis, and data sharing to work across different commands, sustain operations, and develop new predictive models as new information and methods are introduced.

Submarine Force Safety Update

Mishap Rates - Improving: From 1980 to 2010 our submarine force averaged approximately three collisions, allisions (striking a stationary or non-moving object), and/or groundings per year. From 2011 to 2020, they averaged less than one per year, and in 2020, there were zero collisions and/or groundings.

Learning from “Near Miss” Events: The Submarine Force uses an innovative, near miss analysis approach to improve safety across the fleet that includes: (1) Leveraging a Windows-based “singular reporting” structure; (2) Analysis of near misses and near miss trends; (3) Providing near miss briefs to Flag leadership, staffs, and operational units; (4) Tracking briefing outcomes through a rigorous Force Improvement process. The trends are analyzed, briefed to leadership, and shared with all submarines and support staffs.

Conclusion

The intensified nature of the military competitive environment drives the Navy to aggressively improve status quo practices and behaviors in order to remain the most ready and lethal Navy in the world. We are working hard to identify and attack mishap drivers and root causes, to instill a strong culture of near miss reporting and learning, and to implement disciplined approaches to measure performance, identify precursor events, and correct off-track performance. I look forward to the continued partnership with this committee to continuously

improve readiness and keep our Sailors safe, and to ensure our Navy is properly and predictably resourced, manned, trained and equipped to answer the nation's call.