

What's Important for Naval Aviation

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I recently had the honor of relieving Vice Admiral Denny McGinn as Director, Air Warfare on the OPNAV staff and I'm pleased to be serving Naval Aviation as we move into what promises to be very exciting times. Like many of you, I've been an "operator" in the fleet for almost my entire career and will endeavor to ensure the fleet perspective is clearly a part of every decision we make here in Washington. Since this is my first "Flightline" article, I'd like to lay out some areas that I feel are important for what we do in Naval Aviation.

Lethality and

Precision: From my perspective the future for Naval Aviation is a bright one. We are currently in a challenging period of modernization and recapitalization for a large portion of Naval Aviation. Our F-14 *Tomcats* have now become precision weapons capable, and the F/A-18E/F *Super Hornet* program is on track and will enter the fleet in about two years. Our helicopter force is transitioning to a state-of-the-art all combat capable force with the SH-60R and CH-60 (see article, p. 10). Overland capable synthetic aperture radars are being incorporated into our P-3 *Orions* and we plan on demonstrating a targeting radar in an S-3B *Viking* this year as well. The EA-6B *Prowler* ICAP III contract has been awarded and we are excited about improving our nation's electronic warfare platform capabilities to stay ahead of new generation threats.

New weapons such as the Joint Standoff Weapon are now deploying in the fleet and are giving us a revolutionary strike capability, and the Joint Direct Attack Munition will achieve operational capability soon. The Hellfire missile is being integrated into our helos, giving them a never before capability to conduct maritime

tributor to each of the primary naval missions of sea control, power projection, presence and deterrence. Make no mistake—naval expeditionary forces are the force of choice by the National Command Authority. We have an obligation to our country to ensure that we keep our forces combat ready and able to prevail whenever and wherever needed.

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superiority missions in the littorals. Bottom line: Naval Aviation is becoming more lethal and more precise every day.

Coherence and Capability: At this moment in history, naval forces—and most notably Naval Aviation—have never been more important in demonstrating American resolve throughout the world. Having just arrived from a tour as Commander of the Nimitz Battle Group, I can testify to the unequalled fighting power that Naval Aviation brings as the only fully coherent force that trains, deploys and fights as a team. As the only sustainable, high-rate-of-fire system in the Navy arsenal, aviation is a major con-

People: Without highly talented and motivated people Naval Aviation doesn't work. It's no big secret that retaining our best and brightest aviators and maintainers is becoming more of a challenge every day. As you well know, my predecessor dedicated much of his attention to this all-important issue and I pledge to continue working the readiness issues you face in your everyday work. Last year we

tackled many of our personnel and readiness issues by reprogramming money that should start now to make a difference. Bottom line: We here in Washington know that the operators in the fleet need to have the tools available to do their jobs.

Naval Aviation has never been more in demand or more capable. Flying and maintaining naval aircraft remains the key to our Navy protecting the country and her interests around the world. For those stakeholders in our calling, both active duty and retired, I pledge my unswerving efforts to further the capability of Naval Aviation.