

Naval Air Systems Command: One Team

An Interview with RAdm. Craig E. Steidle, Vice Commander, NAVAIRSYSCOM

NANews: About seven years ago NAVAIR initiated significant changes in the way it does business. What is the vision which drove those changes and still guides NAVAIR?

RAdm. Steidle: The vision was to create one team. Today, NAVAIR is Patuxent River, Md.; Lakehurst, N.J.; Orlando, Fla.; Point Mugu and China Lake, Calif.; and the depots, helping the fleet do what it has to do. We provide program management, concept exploration, test and evaluation and in-service support from concept development to disposal. Above all, the team focuses on delivering to the fleet aviation solutions which enable dominance from the sea.

In October 1997 VAdm. Lockard, COMNAVAIRSYSCOM, spoke to NAVAIR managers about evolving NAVAIR into a world-class business that is responsive to the fleet. Where is NAVAIR on the time line working toward that goal?

We are making excellent progress. Base Realignment and Closure commission recommendations prompted our adaptation of the industry-based concept of a competency-aligned organization. VAdm. Lockard wanted to bring into consideration total life-cycle and ownership costs, and to review our internal

processes to make ourselves more efficient and drive costs down. We looked at our processes to define cost drivers in test and evaluation, acquisition management, in-service support and our own organizational support. We targeted where we could change processes to reap the biggest return on investment.

We then hired contractors to help us identify and fine tune the targets for reprocessing and engineering; right now, we have 14 teams underway revamping our processes. In February we begin the implementation process, which will take from 12 to 18 months. We should see significant benefits from reduced costs of doing business, thereby reducing the costs of our operation to the fleet.

Did the government/military austere budget make it more difficult to move toward that goal?

Actually, it helped. The biggest part of an organizational reengineering is communicating change to the people who have to implement the necessary changes. A decreasing budget and our own reorganization helped us emphasize the need for reengineering.

The commercial activities analysis completed in the late 1980s resulted in an initiative that directed government facilities to look at the

work they were doing and, where appropriate, compete and contract with outside sources. This provided an incentive for our people, because if we become more efficient, we don't have to rely totally on outsourcing.

Can you explain NAVAIR's approach to business as network-centric warfare becomes the focus of the Navy?

NAVAIR will be the air node in the development and testing of the network-centric warfare concept. We are working closely with the Naval Sea Systems Command, the Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command and other activities. NAVAIR has a lot of experience with the integration of systems. The aviation community did a tremendous job of integrating the F/A-18 Hornet, E-2C Hawkeye and Tomahawk missile. Now, we want to go one step further in the total integration of the air picture. The E-2C's cooperative engagement capabilities are critical to that effort. We have operational Hawkeyes that have been moved to the range facility at Point Mugu, which is linked to China Lake. Through China Lake's connection to Patuxent River, NAVAIR brings together a total perspective of network-centric warfare. That is the future and that is where

we are headed. All of our systems have to interplay. From destroyers to F/A-18s to space, we have to bring it all together to make up the air component.

What is the impact and benefit that fleet operators see as a result of improvements in the processes we have talked about?

First, the units are benefiting from a NAVAIR that is more responsive to fleet needs. An example is our propulsion management board. Anyone who has a problem with engines or the engine support infrastructure can reach this board on the phone or through the web. In the future we will have one point of contact for all training systems, which will further increase responsiveness.

We want to be totally responsive. Anybody in the fleet who needs help should be able to call NAVAIR and get a person—not a recording.

We are also decreasing our engineering investigation cycle from 192 days to 30 days, and are working to decrease the repair cycle.

NAVAIR is also looking into aviation maintenance supply readiness. The Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet noted the extensive amount of time required to turn an airplane around, so we are identifying the areas where investment is required to reduce aircraft groom time. And we are placing a new emphasis on aircraft modifications, where we identify the modifications that are the biggest return on our investment and backfit them as quickly as possible into operational platforms.

What changes has NAVAIR made to speed the integration of new technologies in the fleet?

About a year ago, we began a strategy-to-task-to-technology process. In fact, we have just completed its initial cycle. First, the warfighter defines what is needed. A NAVAIR requirements board links that need to technology programs and prioritizes the needs.



R A d m . C r a i g E . S t e i d l e

Photo by JO2 Joshua M. Hudson

Technologies not linked to warfighter needs are not a priority. This allows the elimination of redundancies between programs.

Putting LANTIRN [low-altitude navigation and targeting infrared for night] on the F-14 *Tomcat* is a good example of how this process can move technology to meet the fleet warfighter's needs. It represents a significant change and improvement in the speed with which we can take advantage of technology.

Is there anything else that NAVAIR is working on which significantly impacts how the fleet operates?

There is a very important focus on affordable readiness, identifying the cost drivers in each program—such as the E-2, F-14, H-60 *Seahawk* and standoff land attack missile—from a readiness perspective. Then, we invest

each program's limited resources in the specific areas that improve life-cycle costs. The result is a lower cost of ownership. The fleet is enabled to better accomplish its mission, and the savings can be invested in recapitalization and modernization.

With these and other initiatives by the members of the NAVAIR team, we will continue to deliver aviation solutions to the fleet and enable dominance from the sea.

NA News Editor Cdr. Jim Carlton spoke with RADM. Steidle at NAVAIRSYSCOM Headquarters, Patuxent River, Md.

