Navy, Marines need adaptable people, SECDEF says

By Jim Garamone,
American Forces Press Service

The types and numbers of Navy ships will change, but the quality of sailors and Marines aboard those ships and serving ashore must endure, the Secretary of Defense (SECDEF) said during the Navy League annual Sea-Air-Space Convention at the Gaylord Convention Center in National Harbor, Md., May 3.

SECDEF Robert M. Gates, speaker at the event, said sea service members will need to remain adaptable to their changing missions around the world.

"[They] must have moral, as well as physical courage; they must have integrity; they must think creatively and boldly," said Gates. "They must have the vision and insight to see that the world and technology are constantly changing and that the Navy and Marine Corps must therefore change with the times – ever flexible and ever adaptable. They must be willing to speak hard truths, including to superiors."

How the United States handles the increasingly complex security challenges of the future will depend less on the quality of its hardware than on the quality of the leaders, the secretary said, noting that he spoke about this at some length with midshipmen at the U.S. Naval Academy in April 2010.

As examples, he used Marine Corps Lt. Gen. Victor Krulak, the visionary behind the Higgins boat who later contributed greatly to U.S. understanding of counterinsurgency in Vietnam.

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— Secretary of Defense, Robert M. Gates

Gates also cited Fleet Adm. Chester Nimitz, who as a young officer helped to develop the circular formation for carrier escorts, used to great effect in World War II and for decades after.

The secretary also mentioned Adm. Hyman Rickover, whose genius and persistence overcame the conventional wisdom that nuclear reactors were too bulky and dangerous to put on submarines.

Finally, he spoke of Lt. Cmdr. Roy Boehm, who after World War II, designed and led a special new commando unit that became the Navy SEALs. Boehm's legacy is at work every night, he said, tracking down America's most lethal enemies in Afghanistan and elsewhere around the world.

"The reason I wanted to talk to midshipmen about these leaders ... is not that they were always right, nor that they should be emulated in every way – to put it mildly," Gates said. "What is compelling about each of these leaders is that they had the vision and insight to see that the world and technology were changing, they understood the implications of these shifts and then they pressed ahead in the face of often-fierce institutional resistance."

Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates lectures on the use of military power to a class of midshipmen at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md. April 7.
Photo by Cherie Cullen

These qualities would come to the forefront in any era, Gates said, but they are especially important today, given the pace of technological changes and the agile and adaptive nature of the most-likely and lethal U.S. adversaries. The enemy could run the gamut from modern militaries using asymmetric tactics to terrorist groups with advanced weapons.

"Our officers will lead an American military that must have the maximum flexibility to deal with the widest-possible range of scenarios and adversaries," Gates said.

The emphasis in the Navy and the Marine Corps has to be on their people, the secretary told the group.

"Over the past three-and-a-half years, in the fury of two wars, I have seen the future of the Navy and Marine Corps onboard ships, on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan, at Navy bases and Marine camps, and at the Academy," said Gates. "These young men and women fill me with confidence that the future of our sea services is incredibly bright and that our nation will be secure in their hands."

USS Cowpens Sailors reach out to community offer YMS students food, games, mentorship

By MC2 Byron C. Linder, Navy Public Affairs Support Element Detachment Japan

Sailors stationed aboard the Ticonderoga class with sixth graders from Yokosuka Middle School (YMS) June 4.

The Sailors and students played numerous games and enjoyed a barbecue during an afternoon at the Commander Fleet Activites Yokosuka seawall picnic gazebos.

The activities, explained Religious Programs Specialist 3rd Class Keeshaun Coffey, are part of an existing relationship between the middle school and various commands that "sponsor" entire grades of students.

"This gives our Sailors a chance to interact with the youth of Yokosuka and show them how Sailors work on the ship. We're giving back to the youth here," Coffey said. "Team *Cowpens* sponsors one-half of the sixth grade class, which involves a lot of mentorship. We come to the school once a week to eat lunch and they'll ask us a lot of questions. Most of the time, their families are active duty and this gives them a different perspective."

Interior Communications Electrician 2nd Class Dixon Rivera, a Greenwood, S.C., native who got into the spirit of the event by donning a cow costume, explained how the day of games and food offers another perspective on the day-to-day lives of a U.S. Navy Sailor.

"Mentorship is more than just sitting down talking to the kids at school about what we do professionally. We're here to have a good time," said Rivera. "This gives us another outlet to just kick back and relax and it helps show we're more than just uniforms; sharing that part of our life is just as important."

Tara Foust, a YMS sixth-grader who participated in the festivities was appreciative of the fun day and a year-long commitment fulfilled by her Sailor-mentors.

"It's great to get out of school and have some fun," Foust said. "These guys have been coming out here since the beginning of the school year and it's just a lot of fun."

CNO records Podcast on 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell'

By MC2 (SW) Kyle P. Malloy,
Chief of Naval Operations Public Affairs

Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Adm. Gary Roughead recorded a podcast June 2.

In the podcast, CNO talked about the 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' policy and expressed his encouragement to each Sailor to participate in the Department of Defense review.

"Recently there's been a lot of discussion here in Washington [D.C.] and in the media, about potential legislative changes to the don't ask don't tell policy," Roughhead said. "As the process continues our current policies and practices all remain in effect."

According to Roughhead, current legislation proposes repeal only after the review is complete, so input from service members and their family members is important in making sure all aspects of the issue are fully understood.

"I want to make sure that our Sailors in the fleet and their families understand that it is important as ever for me to hear from them," said Roughhead. "I encourage you to participate in the on going Department of Defense review on the subject.

"Every Sailor needs to speak for themselves, and military family members need to be heard too," said Roughead. "Be honest and speak your own personal beliefs and opinions. The review is only valuable with full participation."

Roughead encouraged Sailors who have not participated in the review, to voice their opinion anonymously via a CAC-enabled website at www.defense.gov/dadt. To listen to the podcast, visit http://www.navy.mil/navydata/cnoPlay.asp?id=3949

The Chief asks:

"Did you know the Benny Decker Theater was named after the best known Commander of Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY) and the one who served here the longest, Captain Benton W. "Benny" Decker? He was in command of CFAY from April 1946 until June 1950. When he assumed command, the base was fairly well-organized, and Decker and his staff were able to devote their time to helping the townspeople of Yokosuka economically, politically and socially. Buildings which had once housed war equipment were converted into schools, churches and hospitals for the people of Japan.

"If you didn't know, now you know."
- MCC(SW/AW) Eric Hannah,
CFAY P Public Affairs