Chief of Naval Research Rear Adm. Lorin Selby today declared “the state of our Naval unmanned capabilities is truly unmatched,” and he vowed continued support for the nation’s ongoing transition to a hybrid manned-unmanned force in the future.

Speaking during a visit to San Diego for the U.S. Pacific Fleet-led Unmanned Integrated Battle Problem 21 (IBP21), Selby said the exercise, which puts into operation different unmanned vehicles “Above the sea, On the sea and Under the sea,” demonstrates that America’s growing focus on autonomous capabilities is showing impressive results.

“We are not yet where we want to be,” said Selby, “but we are getting closer. As our potential adversaries go all-in on unmanned platforms, we must and will maintain a dominant force that can meet and defeat any challenge.”

During the exercise, a large number of multi-domain unmanned platforms—including unmanned aerial, surface and underwater vehicles (UAVs, USVs and UUVs, respectively)—are being put into real-world “blue-water” environments, working in sync with manned platforms in actual combat drills designed to support Pacific Fleet objectives in the Indo-Pacific region.

Many of the platforms in IBP21 are supported by the Naval Research Enterprise (NRE), which Selby commands. Comprising the Office of Naval Research (ONR), the Naval Research Laboratory; and the Office of Naval Research Global (ONR Global), the NRE is tasked with providing the capabilities and long-term vision ensuring U.S. naval dominance today and into the future.

While many platforms in IBP21 are classified, officials are highlighting the Medium Displacement Unmanned Surface Vehicles (MDUSVs) Sea Hunter and its new sister craft, Sea Hawk, as well as a long-endurance USVs—all of which can be used for surveillance, anti-submarine warfare and other missions. Sea Hunter is already a proven player in the Navy’s unmanned portfolio. In 2019, the vessel completed an autonomous trip from San Diego to Pearl Harbor, a distance of over 2,000 nautical miles, and returned, demonstrating credible and relevant naval capability.

Both MDUSVs can host multiple payloads and perform multiple missions to support Sailer and Marine objectives—and both are seen as game-changers. Indeed, the performance of many new unmanned technologies are leading the Navy and Marine Corps to rethink concepts of operations, as noted in the widely publicized naval document “Unmanned Campaign Framework,” which was recently released by the Department of the Navy.

The Unmanned Campaign Framework notes autonomy will complement, not replace, manned assets, and will provide warfighters far more options in combat. Dr. Marcus Tepakse, who leads ONR Global’s Experimentation and Analysis program and is coordinating many platforms in use during IBP21, confirmed naval unmanned capabilities are accelerating. He said these kinds of large-scale exercises are essential to ensure what works in theory will work in the fleet.

“The best test you can put a technology through is one where the warfighters get to work with it,” Tepakse said. “Real-world applications are messier, dirtier, wetter and absolutely more beneficial than anything we can test in a lab.”

“Getting the warfighters’ feedback on using these unmanned systems will be one real measure of success for IBP21.” Coordinating multi-domain manned and unmanned teaming efforts with so many different systems is in itself a daunting challenge. That job is being led by Pacific Fleet crews aboard USS Michael Monsoor (DDG-1001), one of three Zumwalt-class guided missile destroyers with unique advanced capabilities for command and control. Ultimately, experts say, autonomous systems are here to stay.

Dr. Jason Stack, ONR’s technical director and autonomy lead, is encouraged by the forward thinking and real-world forward movement represented by IBP21. Intelligent autonomous systems, he said, will be an essential part of the Navy and Marine Corps in the near-term.

“When you read the Unmanned Campaign Framework, the serious challenge we face from well-funded, highly-motivated, competitive naval forces around the world—all accelerating their autonomous capabilities—is clear,” he said. Stack noted that the U.S. and allied partners have a more robust commitment to the ethical use of unmanned systems and artificial intelligence when compared to some other nations.

“Our goal is to operationally integrate and continuously improve the types of intelligent and autonomous technologies that Pacific Fleet is testing right now,” he said. “We will do this ethically and responsibly by always ensuring our Sailors and Marines can exercise the appropriate levels of human judgment over our machines. This will be our enduring competitive advantage.”

The IBP21 exercise is the initial step in the Navy’s commitment to operational experimentation with autonomous systems in the fleet. Following its completion, the Navy and Marine Corps will assess what worked, what didn’t, and how to accelerate unmanned capabilities for the fleet and force.

ALL HANDS MAGAZINE
MAGAZINE OF THE U.S. NAVY

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Mary Seabees Command (TAH 19) is currently conducting dynamic interface testing operations off the coast of Southern California. These operations are to test compatibility usage of variants of the V-22 Osprey and MH-60 Seahawk with the ship’s new flight deck, and the first time a V-22 has landed on an MSC hospital ship.

The testing takes place following a seven-month maintenance period where the ship’s flight deck was expanded and reinforced to accommodate the size, weight and heat of larger aircraft, allowing the ship to receive patients and supplies through a variety of aviation platforms. Over the course of several days, the ship will exercise with the V-22, practicing take-offs and landings from Mercy’s flight deck, followed by operations with the MH-60s. Increased flight operations will allow critical patients a quicker route to the ship for treatment, vice a slower boat ride from one of the ships tender boats.

Because this testing is the first time the V-22s have conducted flight operations onboard Mercy, Navy personnel from San Diego, Washington, D.C., and experts for their command. After successfully completing the training, they became certified cold weather survival technicians. The team of Seabees from NMCB 1 received first-hand construction experience and lessons learned to better develop and conduct camp maintenance.

NAVAL MOBILE CONSTRUCTION BATTALION 1 TRAIN IN ARCTIC CONDITIONS DURING ICEX 2021

A small detail of 11 Seabees from Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (NMCB) 1 received first-hand construction experience operating in below freezing conditions during Ice Exercise (ICEX) 2021 at Thule Air Base (AB), Greenland. This exercise evaluated how the Naval Construction Force Table of Allowance (TOA) handles in extreme cold-weather conditions while supporting Underwater Construction Team (UCT) 1’s diver training exercise. Temperatures averaged -15 degrees Fahrenheit with an extreme low of -55 degrees Fahrenheit. “The team of Seabees from NMCB 1 did an outstanding job at ICEX,” said Lt. j.g. Morgan Jung, the detail officer-in-charge. “They had a great opportunity to practice in-rate skills while testing the limits of our equipment in the extreme cold weather. I’m honored to be a part of such a unique experience.”

Upon arrival to Thule AB, Seabees from NMCB 1 began their mission by conducting engineering surveys for the divers, ice camp, and completing the tent camp set-up. They also participated in a field portion consisting of rucking to different tent sites in a simulated tactical environment and learning cold weather survival techniques. After successfully completing the training, they became certified cold weather subject matter experts for their command. These Seabees contributed to the development of a more proficient Seabee Arctic capabilities.

“Working extended periods of time in frigid temperatures provided a constant challenge, however, we all had the perseverance to achieve a common goal and it outweighed any adversities we had.”

In the extreme cold weather, the crew practiced in-rate tasks by fabricating a welding table, placing concrete blocks, performing civil engineering support equipment maintenance, and conducting camp maintenance. “It was an awesome opportunity to establish great bonds between everyone here, while experiencing the extreme cold weather,” said Construction Electrician 3rd Class Wyatt Palmer. “It’s cool seeing how UCT 1 operates in these conditions. Overall I’m glad to be one of the few Seabees to experience these conditions.”

Missed Seabees attended the Basic Cold Weather Leaders Course at Mountain Warfare Training Center in Bridgeport, California. One of the most unique evolutions was the hypothermia lab, where the Seabees were submerged in a frozen pond for 10 minutes to experience the effects of hypothermia. They also participated in a field portion consisting of rucking to different tent sites in a simulated tactical environment and learning cold weather survival techniques. After successfully completing the training, they became certified cold weather subject matter experts for their command.

“Improving the capability of the ship to support newer aircraft platforms such as the MV-22B, allows greater flexibility and enhances the embarked Medical Treatment teams ability to continue providing the outstanding care they are known for. This investment in new capability is a great example of MSC’s continued support to the fleet and plays an important role in keeping the U.S. Navy competitive well into the future.”

The dynamic interface operations are one of several training, testing and inspection periods the Mercy will undergo in preparation for future missions, including the Pacific Partnership humanitarian mission.
LIFE OF A DETAILER
By Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class George Bell

Enlisted Detailers are responsible for distributing Sailors to commands in a fair and equitable manner based on billets authorized and the Navy Manning Plan (NMP) through MyNavy Assignment (MNA).

Chief Mineman Devin Smith, an enlisted detailer at Navy Personnel Command in Millington, Tennessee, deals with this task on a daily basis and it is not always the easiest job.

"On a typical day, I’m on the phone, most of the day, with Sailors who have a problem with orders they have been issued or need an ORDMOD (order modification) because of life situations," said Smith.

The following factors should be taken into account when choosing orders: the Navy’s needs, the individual’s career needs, and the individual’s wishes.

Needs of the Navy are the most important elements in any Sailor’s assignment, and they take precedence over everything else. These requirements are met by assigning the best Sailor available to a valid billet requirement.

"A lot goes into my decision to select a Sailor for a billet, but ultimately what the Navy needs must come first," said Smith.

The Manning Control Authority (MCA) fills the billets advertised on MNA based on the Navy’s requirements. MCA is split between two factions. One is in charge of operational/deployable billets, while the other is in charge of shore/training billets.

"Detailers have some constraints. They don’t pick the billets that are advertised," said rate evaluator Interior Communications Electrician 1st Class Gordon Grove. "[Billets] are really driven from the fleet back to us saying, ‘Hey we really need to fill these jobs.”

Detailers are aware of MNA selections to ensure that each applicant’s work experience is taken into account. Re-using NECs, weighing various styles to duty stations, developing a broad-based Sailor, and selecting the right Sailor based on assessment recommendations are some of the different decision points. Using this criteria to select Sailors aids in the development of Sailors who are capable of operating in both operational and non-operational environments.

While every detailer aims to pick Sailors for their top choices in MNA, the Navy’s needs and the Sailor’s preferences do not always coincide.

"Know that you are going where you are desperately needed,” Grove said.

Individual preferences, despite being ranked third, are extremely significant. The morale of the Sailor and, in many cases, the family is affected in this environment.

"As a detailer, my mission is to help Sailors succeed by setting them up for success, assisting them in getting promoted and screened for the next career milestone, and providing them with the career advice they need to advance," said Smith. "While that doesn’t always end in the billet a Sailor wants, we work with every Sailor to benefit them and the Navy."
THE CHARACTER OF A MAN:  
THE WOMAN WHO SHOWED ME LOVE FOR COUNTRY  
CELEBRATING MY FAMILY’S HISTORY DURING ASIAN PACIFIC ISLANDER HERITAGE MONTH  
By Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Jenn Lebron

My grandmother was the well-loved mayor of Vung Tau, a small beach town in southern Vietnam. What I know about her is summed up in two letters my uncle translated for us when she died.

The first letter was from her fifth grade teacher to her parents. He laid out a case for why they needed to send her away to become more educated. He’d taught her everything he could, and she needed to keep going because she “had the character of a man,” and she would be the leader her country needs one day.

She continued her education on her own terms, hiring a teacher to educate her through the ninth grade. She then passed on it and taught her friends, eventually opening an elementary school in Vung Tau.

She met my grandfather in Saigon. They were both part of the resistance movement against the French occupation of Vietnam. The second letter was one she wrote to her best friend about what she’d learned after fifty years of marriage.

She wrote about the journey it took for her family to be where they are today. She said that the most important thing to cherish your family and the history that built that family.

My family’s history is intertwined with the idea of revolution, the fight for independence.

When the French left, Americans came. And when the Americans left, my family, like many others chose to leave the country they loved, the country they fought for, and headed into uncharted waters.

HE’D TAUGHT HER EVERYTHING HE COULD, AND SHE NEEDED TO KEEP GOING BECAUSE SHE “HAD THE CHARACTER OF A MAN,” AND SHE WOULD BE THE LEADER HER COUNTRY NEEDS ONE DAY.

In the Spring of 1979, my family escaped from Vietnam in a small banana boat. Without the convenience of today’s GPS systems, my uncle guessed at the direction they were headed, which wasn’t even anywhere specific – they had two options: Malaysia or the Philippines, but not further than that, because the van engine my uncle converted for the boat, would not make it in the open ocean.

The escape, orchestrated by my grandfather, only accounted for 40 people. Seventy nine people showed up. The boat was so full, one of my uncles told us he sat on the bow of the boat and his feet touched the water.

They crashed on a beach at their unknown destination after six days with limited food and water.

It wasn’t until the authorities showed up that they knew where they were, Miri, Malaysia. The policemen took the 79 to the International Red Cross and Red Crescent station where they were taken care of for a week, while the Malaysian navy fixed the boat they came on and sent them away.

No one wanted to leave. They were being carried down the pier and onto the boat. The fear of the uncertainty of the sea and the fear of capture overcame them as the Malaysian navy tug boat pulled them away from shore.

My grandmother jumped off the boat and swam to the pier. She pleaded with the authorities and stood her ground on the pier.

The governor of Sarawak, Malaysia happened to be driving by during the incident and stopped his motorcade to see what was happening. He decided to let them stay – they’d all be transferred to the refugee camp in Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia.

My family spent a year at the refugee camp waiting to be accepted by any government. April 30, 1980, they came to the U.S. through San Francisco.

As my family celebrates 41 years here in America, I feel a renewed sense of honor to wear this uniform and a renewed sense of pride to be an American. I feel a sisterhood with my grandmother that crosses generations, countries and causes.

I am proud to be a service member, a wife, a mother, a daughter, a granddaughter, a niece, Vietnamese, and a first-generation American. All these titles were given to me by the journey taken first by my grandmother all those years ago.

By example, she taught us to be informed, to lead with compassion, and to serve those around us. I am grateful to do the same today.

The Department of Defense joins the nation in paying tribute to the Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, and Native Hawaiians who demonstrated selfless service and sacrifice in the U.S. Army, Army Air Forces, Marine Corps, Navy, Coast Guard, and National Guard since World War II.

The service of Asians, Pacific Islanders and Native Hawaiians before and during World War II, paved the way for future generations of men and women to join what would become in 1948, a desegregated U.S. military.
SEMPER FIDELIS:

MIGUEL KEITH

The story behind the namesake

By Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Sonja Wickard

This month, the Navy will place USNS Miguel Keith (ESB 5) in commission during a ceremony in San Diego, California. The ship commissioning ceremony has been observed by many navies around the world for more than three centuries and in our own fleet since 1775, when the first ship of the Continental Navy, the Alfred, was commissioned.

Once commissioned, a ship becomes a Navy command and joins the other active ships in the fleet.

The ship’s namesake is Marine Corps Vietnam War veteran and Medal of Honor recipient Lance Cpl. Miguel Keith. Born 2 June 1951, in San Antonio, Texas, Keith enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps in January of 1969 after graduating from North High School in Omaha, Nebraska, the previous year.

After completing training in September of 1969, Keith was assigned a rifleman with the 1st Combined Action Group, III Marine Amphibious Force, operating in the Republic of Vietnam at the time. Keith was fatally wounded in May of 1970 when his platoon came under a heavy ground-attack by enemy forces in Quang Ngai Province, Vietnam.

Despite being critically wounded, Keith made his way to vital defensive positions and proceeded to open fire as he advanced on five approaching enemies, eliminating three and driving off the other two.

Keith was further wounded when a grenade exploded near his position, though he again concentrated his fire on an estimated 25 enemy soldiers preparing to attack, this time eliminating four and again causing the remainder to disperse. It was during these efforts that Keith was fatally wounded by an enemy soldier.

Keith’s actions in the face of overwhelming odds greatly contributed to the success of his platoon in routing a numerically superior enemy force, and upheld the finest traditions of the Marine Corps and of the U.S. Naval Service.

His medals and decorations include: the Medal of Honor, the Purple Heart, the Combat Action Ribbon, the National Defense Service Medal, the Vietnam Service Medal with one bronze star, and the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal.

Miguel Keith is an Expeditionary Sea Base (ESB). ESBs are flexible, modular platforms and can be used across a broad range of military operations supporting multiple operational phases, much like the Expeditionary Transfer Dock (ESD) class.

The ship’s capabilities include a four-spot flight deck, a hanger bay able to store and operate two MH-53E Sea Dragon type helicopters, command and control assets, and equipment staging support, storage for mine sled and rigid hull inflatable boats, as well as accommodations and work spaces for the crew.

After commissioning, Miguel Keith will mainly be deployed in support of aviation mine countermeasures and special forces operations as well as humanitarian and traditional military missions.
During the summer and fall of 2020, the Navy conducted a review of NAVPERS 15665I, U.S. Navy Uniform Regulations. A series of focus groups, working groups and interviews with Sailors were conducted to determine whether or not there was perceived or unperceived racism in the Navy’s grooming policies.

Due to Sailor feedback and recommendations, the Navy updated the following terms, phrases and definitions in Navy grooming and appearance policies:

The Navy deleted the terms: faddish, good taste, eccentric/ecentricities, complement the individual, complement the skin tone, smartness, conspicuous/inconspicuous, and outrageous.

New and revised terms were also included in the regulations: professional appearance, complementary appearance, professional military appearance, and uniform distraction.

These changes follow the Navy’s efforts to update grooming standards for the 21st century Sailor. Previous changes to NAVPERS 15665I allowed room for Sailors with varied hair textures to stay within regulations.

For women, Sailors are now authorized to wear rolls, locks, and ponytail styles. This change is particularly beneficial to the African American/Black community within the Navy. Sailors are now allowed to wear styles that make their hair more manageable while performing their duties.

Senior Chief Information Systems Technician Kadesha Perry, a Sailor aboard USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN 69), recollects how difficult it was to maintain the regulations in her earlier years in the military.

Before Perry had dreadlocks, she said she wore her natural hair. “It was really hard to keep it in regulations when I was in boot camp because it got so puffy,” she says.

Perry says early in her career, she struggled with keeping her hair in regulations. To keep her hair more manageable, she dreadlocked her hair.

After having “illegal locks” for the first half of her career, Perry came to a turning point on her second day at a new command.

“I thought people saw good work,” Perry said. “I thought they saw thoroughness. I thought they saw a young sailor who was about her business. I never thought anyone was distracted by my hair. I thought it should not matter.”

This was the first time she considered how her appearance could affect the way she was perceived in the work center.

“I want them to see a woman who is about her work,” Perry said. “I want them to see a person who is here to walk in God’s grace and do the best I can for these Sailors.”

Perry said she had to remind herself that what she is trying to accomplish in the Navy is more important than her hair and decided to cut it short before the new regulations came out.

Sailors, Perry said, have begun to create their own interpretation of the hair regulations rather than following the guidelines they are given. “I believe you can wear your crown in glory in many different ways when you are off duty,” she says.

“I do think, though, that because you signed up to conform in a certain aspect and leave a little bit of your individualism behind, I believe it is your duty to respect your crown and get it in regulation as it is written.”

Ensign Kenya McCarty, a Sailor of the Fighting Swordsmen (VFA...
32), compared the current regulations to when she joined the Navy in 2004.

“When we entered into boot camp, they cut everyone's hair. They gave you this lopsided bob and they also didn't allow you to relax [straighten] it so it looked very rough and we just looked terrible for those couple of months until the end.”

McCarty said that natural hairstyles often look faddish to some people because they are not used to seeing them.

“We, as a Navy, have come a long way from the time you enter boot camp and they just cut your hair without asking, to allow braided hair, ponytails, natural hairstyles, and even dreadlocks,” McCarty said.

“THERE ARE SO MANY PEOPLE WHO ARE HAPPIER BECAUSE THEIR PARTICULAR STYLE THAT THEY LIKE TO WEAR IS MORE ACCEPTABLE NOW. THEY DON'T HAVE TO COVER UP WHO THEY ARE OR HOW THEY FEEL, BASED ON THE WAY THEIR HAIR IS DONE.”

ENSIGN KENYA MCCARTY

“There are so many people who are happier because their particular style that they like to wear is more acceptable now. They don't have to cover up who they are or how they feel, based on the way their hair is done.”

Legalman 2nd Class Dionesha Simmons has maintained her natural hair in the Navy for eight years.

“Being in the Navy as a naturalist is harder because there are certain styles that can only be worn in civilian status,” said Simmons.

However, Simmons said that the Navy is moving in the right direction with the regulation change. She said the old regulations, that once restricted female Sailors’ relationships with their hair, have changed to help many females embrace their natural hair.

“It's important, as a Black woman, to maintain my hair in regulations while being able to wear some of my natural hairstyles, because I still want to look professional and be taken seriously, regardless the status of my hair,” she says.

Simmons asserts that she prides herself in being a professional and takes comfort in the fact that her natural hair can be accepted as professional in its natural state.

“When I wear my hair in an afro that's in regulations, you know I'm professional,” she said. “I just want all females, not just Black women, to embrace their hair. Still be professional, but take care of your crown.”

For more information about updates to NAVPERS 15665I, go to MyNavyHR.com.

You can also scan the QR code to check out the current Navy Uniform and Regulations, NAVPERS 15665I.
you are not alone. you can never ask "hey, how are you?" too many times.

talk to your shipmates.

Mental Health Awareness Month