Surface Team One

In Pursuit of Sustained Operational Availability

By Rear Adm. David J. Gale, ***Commander,*** *Navy Regional Maintenance Center*

While briefing Congress this March, Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Adm. Jonathan Greenert said the two factors that drive the Navy's ability to provide presence are the size of the fleet and the amount of time ships can remain deployed. While the former is contingent upon adequate funding for the acquisition and proper lifecycle maintenance of ships, the latter is reliant on the operational availability of the Fleet, which requires a reduction in ships' lost operational days.

To achieve a reduction in lost operational days, we need to ensure better adherence to our maintenance schedules within the surface ship community. As Commander, Navy Regional Maintenance Center (CNRMC), I oversee the day-to-day operations of our regional maintenance centers (RMCs). Early in my tenure as CNRMC, I recognized the importance of working across surface ship maintenance organizations and, in turn, engaged with other Navy leaders within the domain to establish Surface Team One (ST1).

The goal of ST1 is to affect that positive change by meeting ships expected service life (ESL) and addressing current readiness challenges.

As co-chairs of ST1, Commander, Naval Surface Warfare for Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA-SEA 21) Rear Adm. Jim Shannon and I lead our other partnered commands to tackle the primary drivers that will influence positive change.

The goal of ST1 is to affect that positive change by meeting ships expected service life (ESL) and addressing current readiness challenges. We are making forward strides toward those ends by implementing long-term, systematic improvements to quality, schedule, and cost performance.

From the lost operational days that concern fleet commanders, to the support, advocacy and oversight the RMCs need to effectively navigate ships' maintenance availabilities and perform at peak levels, I have found we collectively make the most progress when we work to understand one another's unique requirements and constraints, and develop agreed upon strategies for success. The essence of ST1 is partnership and progress.

ST1 leadership works in conjunction with our core team members to establish Surface Ship maintenance and modernization priorities. We accomplish this by coordinating multiple cross-organizational initiatives to maximize efficiencies and cost-benefits across the domain, while avoiding redundant efforts.

One way ST1 reduces redundancies and to achieve cross-organizational coordination of Surface Ship maintenance initiatives is through the advent of its knowledge sharing networks (KSNs). The KSNs, which are at the forefront of ST1's initiatives, are communities of organizations created to address specific issues and work together to identify processes, procedures and solutions for those issues. These groups work collaboratively to manage the evolution of those processes over time, and within ST1, our senior leaders define the goals and objectives of each KSN, and provide support required to overcome obstacles when required.

Each KSN is comprised of subject matter experts whose expertise directly supports the functional area of the specific group, though all groups directly support specific requirements of the broader Surface Ship maintenance community.

Eleven KSNs have been established to date and include modernization; assessments; planning; sustainment; corrosion control; advanced planning; engineering; quality assurance; command, control, communications, computers and intelligence (C5I); lessons learned, and metrics.

The KSNs brief the ST1 executive steering committee (ESC) on a quarterly basis to ensure alignment to other ongoing efforts and to receive guidance and direction, as necessary. They have also established a common set of priorities, approved by senior Navy leadership within the ST1 community, including U.S. Fleet Forces Command (USFFC); Commander, Pacific Fleet (CPF); both Type Commanders (TYCOMs); and Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA). Once these priorities are approved, they are then communicated throughout the ST1 enterprise through Navy memos, each of which highlighted the need to address specific areas in the Surface maintenance and modernization community.

With the stroke of a pen, Commander, Naval Sea Systems Command, Vice Adm. Kevin McCoy officially established the new Navy Regional Maintenance Center (NRMC).
(U.S. Navy Photo)

The focus of these priorities includes the execution of advanced planning; flag-level involvement; better control of growth and new work; more effective availability management to stay within budget and schedule controls; strategic modernization planning; the establishment of effective command and control; and the definition of positional authority.

In addition to the collaborative efforts of the KSNs, ST1 is also working to increase the level of rigor in work certification procedures, and place a heavier emphasis on total ship readiness assessments (TSRA).

TSRA is a common integrated process to plan, identify, assess, document, repair, validate ship's current ship's maintenance project (CSMP), validate ship's systems configuration and provide self-sufficiency maintenance training to ship's force with the expectation of ensuring operational availability goals are met through the execution of total ship systems operational assessments and functional verifications. These assessments are planned and executed by the RMCs on all Surface Ships, and are routinely communicated and supported by ST1 stakeholders.

Additionally, the TSRA program provides a framework and schedule to plan and execute a comprehensive assessment of ship's hull, mechanical, electrical (HM&E), combat systems (C/S), C5I systems, support equipment, and logistics condition. It also includes the review and integration of data and information contained in maintenance and trending databases such as an integrated condition assessment systems (ICAS), integrated performance assessment reports (IPARs), CSMP and corrosion control information management systems (CCIMS) as part of the planning process.

TSRA is a five-phased assessment process for ships that is scheduled by the TYCOMS and executed by the RMCs. These assessments cover a variety of shipboard systems and equipment, and are conducted to support work package development for major maintenance availabilities, prepare the ship for basic training and prepare the ship for deployed operations.

Phase one consists of a pre-availability/pre-deployment assessments of structural and other slow-to-degrade systems including most "life-cycle" material assessments; phase two consists of post-deployment/pre-availability assessments of propulsion, auxiliary and C5I systems in order to identify growth/new work candidates prior to CNO availabilities; phase three runs concurrently with a CNO availability and consists of tank/void assessments; other selected systems which are best conducted in an availability and to support sea trials readiness; phase four is a post-availability/pre-basic phase assessment which ensures ship material readiness to support basic phase training and operations; and phase five is a pre-deployment assessment, preparing a ship for advanced/integrated training and deployment operations.

To date, we have seen great engagement of the TSRA processes throughout the RMCs, and have promulgated awareness of the program throughout our community using ST1 as a conduit of our ship readiness and assessment requirements. I believe, within this enterprise, we all share the responsibility to improve fleet readiness. Our RMCs, which reside across all waterfronts, are responsible for implementing and executing progressive maintenance and modernization programs. In recent months, they have gained ground through the implementation of standardized procedures and innovations in ship maintenance practices. Furthermore, our RMCs', in conjunction with ST1 support, are actively applying the community's agreed upon principles in practical, executable ways.

Through TSRA execution and our KSNs, we have worked together to develop a common understanding of maintenance requirements across the waterfronts and are building build upon the adherence of those requirements to meet ST1's mission of achieving surface ship wholeness.

Collectively, we see ST1 as the conduit through which we can effect meaningful change and as the most reliable means by which we can fully realize our ideal state by returning ships that are fully capable to the fleet, on time. Through this collaborative work, ST1's efforts have already positively affected the end goal of surface ship readiness. SW