

Navy Workforce to Get Smaller but Capability to Grow, CNP Tells Senators

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From Chief of Naval Personnel Public Affairs

WASHINGTON (NNS) -- The Navy may be getting smaller in terms of manpower over the next several years, but its combat capability will actually grow as a result.

That was the message Chief of Naval Personnel Vice Adm. Gerry Hoewing delivered to Capitol Hill in testimony before the Personnel Subcommittee of the Senate Armed Services Committee March 2.

"Through force structure changes, technological advancements and improved manning practices we just don't have the same requirement for manpower that we did a few years ago," said Hoewing. "These changes present us with a unique opportunity to take a look at how we will man the Navy appropriately for the 21st century and to create a fleet that is far more capable than the one we have today."

The Navy plans to reduce the rolls by 7,900 active-duty personnel in fiscal year 2005, with a year-end goal of 365,900.

Navy end strength has always flexed to meet the nation's needs, noted Hoewing.

"What we are trying to do today is shape the Navy's manning for the kind of fighting we will do in this century for new types of threats. This is about our transformation for the future, about leveraging technology and tapping into the genius of our people."

The Navy will use existing force-shaping tools like Perform to Serve, Selective Reenlistment Bonuses, High Year Tenure and Time-in-Grade waivers to manage the personnel reductions and better balance the skill mix in the fleet.

But Hoewing told senators it was just as important to reduce the workload on people.

"We must get rid of the non-productive work before personnel numbers can be significantly reduced," he said. "We do not want to simply lay more work on the backs of fewer people."

The Navy is looking at the types of jobs done by Sailors and determining what can be done by civilians, contractors or eliminated all together.

To accompany the loss of 7,900 people next year, the Navy plans to eliminate a like number of billets through decommissioning older ships, military-to-civilian job conversions, optimal manning efficiencies, organizational alignment and elimination of duplicative jobs.

"Our approach to creating this smaller, smarter workforce is deliberate and careful," said Hoewing. "We are shaping the force with precision to ensure we get it right."

"The Navy will always continue to offer Sailors enormous opportunities and growth potential. And that's only going to get better when Sea Warrior comes online."

Sea Warrior is the "people" part of the CNO's Sea Power 21 vision -- a new human resource system that integrates the currently segregated functions of manpower, personnel and training.

Eventually, Sea Warrior will be able to manage the Navy's workforce to within a very narrow margin of true manpower requirements, so that force-shaping tools and end strength management become automatically linked.

Through careful force-shaping and Sea Warrior, Hoewing asserted, Sailors will have better job content and a much more flexible and dynamic workplace, one that will bring out the best in them and offer many different pathways to success.

"The end result will be a more capable Navy of fewer, but even more talented people."

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