

Navy Intel Chief: Information Dominance Must Balance Firepower

By American Forces Press Service, Office of the Secretary of Defense Public Affairs

"Information as warfare" requires operational commanders to employ intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance to dominate the information realm even as they direct combat actions, the Navy's senior intelligence officer said, Jan. 5.

Vice Adm. David J. "Jack" Dorsett, the director of naval intelligence and deputy chief of naval operations for information dominance, spoke to defense writers about what he called a shift from an Industrial Age military force to an Information Age force.

"We're great at strike warfare -- dropping bombs. It's now time for the Navy, and frankly the U.S. joint forces, to step up and start dealing with information in a much more sophisticated manner than they have in the past," Dorsett said.

Adm. Gary Roughead, chief of naval operations, announced in October 2009 the Navy was combining its intelligence directorate, communications networks and related information technology capabilities into the information dominance organization.

Dorsett said as leader of that organization he serves as the Navy's "banker" for information capabilities.

"I do resources, I do requirements, I do policies," he said. "Tenth Fleet is the operational commander for our cyber forces and our network forces, and our Navy's information operational capabilities.

"Tenth Fleet is a three-star operational commander," he continued. "The [chief of naval operations] this past year also created Navy Cyber Command, a two-star commander, and he's responsible for manning, training and equipping the fleet."

In just over a year since the Navy reorganized its intelligence and technology communities, Dorsett said, the service has made great progress in organizing its work force and developing sensors and networks, but hasn't accomplished as much in analyzing collected intelligence.

"Managing data, making sense of the information, is one of our largest challenges," Dorsett said. "Part of the job dealing with information dominance is looking at information from one end to the other: from sensors to networks to transport to exploitation dissemination.

"One area this past year we haven't made as much progress on was on processing, exploitation and dissemination," he continued. "It's high on our list for this upcoming year."

Within the Defense Department, the Navy is primarily partnering with the Air Force in "tackling imagery exploitation first, as something ... easier to get our hands around," Dorsett said.

"But we're also partnering with agencies like the National Security Agency on their cloud computing initiatives, their cyber pilot initiatives, and ... how you manage information, how do you get it to flow from one point to another," he added.

Effectively processing intelligence imagery -- managing data -- requires combining automated tools with skilled human analysis, Dorsett said.

"An awful lot can be automated," he said. "You don't need to look at every single piece of electro-optical imagery that comes in, necessarily. You need tools to alert you to the key issues that you can then apply an analyst to."

But if those analysts aren't well-trained and experienced in looking at data from signals intelligence to imagery to open-source data, Dorsett said, some of the available information will be lost.

"We look at things holistically," he said. "If you just look at the data and technology and tools and you forget to apply energy to training your people, you won't get to the right solution set."

A major emphasis over the past year, he said, has been to increase the number of sensors gathering imagery in the "battle space."

"But I think more needs to be applied to this issue of processing, exploitation and dissemination, especially as all of the services bring more sensors to bear in our future capabilities," Dorsett said. "That's part of our game plan."

In replacing legacy weapons systems with new capabilities, he said, a one-for-one substitution isn't the most effective approach.

The Navy is taking a "family of systems" approach to balance information and firepower requirements, he said, noting the approach includes incorporating signals intelligence capability on surface ships.

"One of the principles for information dominance is, every platform needs to be a sensor and every sensor needs to be networked," Dorsett said.

While increasing the intelligence-gathering capability of weapons systems is critical, he said, the military also needs to maintain its other combat capabilities.

The Navy's P-8 Poseidon aircraft is an example, he said. The aircraft, now in development as an anti-submarine and shipping interdiction platform, is "a primary warfighting tool for the Navy," Dorsett said.

"We don't want to optimize it for [signals intelligence] at the expense of [asymmetric warfare]," he said. "We'll deal with spiral approaches to a variety of our systems and platforms and plug-and-play in the years ahead, so I wouldn't preclude the P-8 from having a [signals intelligence] or [multi intelligence] payload, but at this point we're going to focus on primarily on [asymmetric warfare]."

Historically, the U.S. military has emphasized combat power over intelligence activities, Dorsett said.

"I think you see, with the Department of Defense and the creation of [U.S.] Cyber Command, the recognition by the secretary of defense and the seniors within the department that the nonkinetic, the cyber, the information side of the house is really critical," he said. "You need a combatant commander that is dealing in that arena as his primary mission area."

Commanders in Iraq and Afghanistan have seen the value of integrating intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities with operations over the last five years, he said.

"Ops-intel integration was the 2000-2010 era improvement we made in joint war-fighting," Dorsett said. "2010-2020, it needs to be this elevation of non-kinetic information capabilities."

The Navy has integrated intelligence and surveillance capabilities, electronic warfare, cyber, networks, oceanography and meteorology -- knowledge of the environment -- to break down barriers in warfighting, Dorsett said.

"Out of balance? We have been," he said. "I think ... DOD is taking a variety of steps to make improvements in this non-kinetic, information side of the house."

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