

Interview with Vice Adm. Patricia Ann Tracey Director, Navy Staff

Director, Navy Staff Mission

To coordinate and synchronize the internal Navy Staff processes and actions of OPNAV Principal Officials in the execution of current Navy policies and priorities as established by the Chief of Naval Operations.

Vice Adm. Tracey graciously agreed to an interview with CHIPS on her last day of active service, Sept. 1, where she spoke candidly about her three years on the OPNAV staff. Vice Adm. Tracey retired Oct. 1, 2004.

CHIPS: What are some of the accomplishments that you are most proud of during your three years as DNS?

Vice Adm. Tracey: First, is that the Navy staff was back in business by midnight of Sept. 11. In addition to our casualties, we lost 89 percent of our spaces in the Pentagon. This is what I am most proud of because it indicates the character of the people, military and civilian, who choose to serve in the Department of the Navy.

Second, is the evolution of the headquarters business processes becoming less bureaucratic and more in line with the principles of business planning. In my previous tours at headquarters sometimes we would start to re-examine all our priorities again at the beginning of a budget year. With the CNO's leadership and the Sea Power 21 vision we were able to discern a future course. It made sense to pick a path aligned with that course that was most effective, most efficient and one that we use on a continuous growth basis.

Last, we are working to simplify and standardize business processes. We haven't made as much progress as I would have liked to make. We started winnowing legacy applications in connection with cutover to NMCI. But it became apparent that the number of applications was a secondary question.

The first question should have been what kind of business process reengineering would contribute to greater productivity. And the applications that would underpin those business processes should have been the leading factor.

CHIPS: Are you talking about results-based spending in line with the Clinger-Cohen Act?

Vice Adm. Tracey: I'm talking about the whole Navy budget and our focus on a transformational approach to what future Navy capabilities need to be. It is the execution of a headquarters' process that allows us to put together a budget that is on a consistent path reaching far into the future. We understand what kind of capabilities we are supposed to be producing, buying and sustaining for the joint warfighter.

CHIPS: So you are looking at the budget from a Joint Vision 2020 and mission-readiness perspective?



Vice Adm. Tracey: Yes, all those things and the CNO's Sea Power 21.

CHIPS: You mentioned the difficulty in reducing the number of legacy applications. Any other challenges?

Vice Adm. Tracey: Not here on the staff, but for NMCI implementation the Navy was not as quick to understand what was required to adapt to an enterprise approach to information management/information technology from an infrastructure, business process and application perspectives. But this has dramatically improved in the last six to nine months. We were so used to being independent as buyers and users of IT that we did not adapt to the kind of behaviors that are required for an enterprise network — NMCI. This has improved a fair amount, but it is a big change for us. And I don't think that any of us appreciated how big a change it would be.

CHIPS: In an interview with DON Deputy CIO, Rob Carey, he talked about an even greater centralized approach for Department IT.

Vice Adm. Tracey: I think one of the big challenges is knowing what to centralize so that you get the benefits of standardization when processes need to be standardized — at the same time not losing the agility to capture the benefits of information technology. You don't want to become so centralized and bureaucratic that you can't make progress. But it is clear that one of the big payoffs in information technology comes from standardizing processes so that information is reliable and ubiquitous for sharing.

Mr. Carey's right, we will do more centralizing than we have been used to. We would like to go to an approach that is heavily dependent on established standards at the same time giving people the freedom to do what they need to do to get their jobs done within those standards — a kind of federated process of IT management.

This is still a big change for us. In the past every command that could find the resources to purchase an application or set up its own network could do so, but that is inconsistent with where we are trying to go.

CHIPS: Mr. Carey mentioned that the Department is investigating new approaches for centralizing technology solutions for capturing cost savings and efficiencies, for example, Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) as part of an enterprise telephony strategy.

Vice Adm. Tracey: I think that is a way off, but it is a good example of the kinds of things that we believe will give us the opportunity

to make us more efficient and to leverage large-quantity buys for these services. We do that now, but in a fragmented way. We are looking not only at standardizing, but leveraging the buying power of the Navy.

CHIPS: Much has been done to reduce the number of legacy applications in the Navy, but we seemed to have slowed down in the last six months. As the head of the Functional Area Manager (FAM) process; do you think the Navy can reduce the number of applications further?

Vice Adm. Tracey: Oh, yes. Our first push was to reduce the number of applications that required NMCI certification to load on the network. The number of applications made a big difference in how long it would take and how much it would cost to cutover a site. So it was important to get the number of applications down quickly. As you probably know, our first round of data was dirty; we had application numbers ranging from 100,000 to 30,000.

The Functional Area Managers identified a portfolio of between 7,000 and 10,000 that we believe can support the Navy IM/IT functions. And we are trying to get that number reduced to about 3,000 applications that are recognized by our largest commands as the ones they need to conduct their business. There will still be duplication inside a portfolio of that size, so we expect to continually reduce the number of applications. We have done some benchmarking and most businesses operate with fewer than 1,000 applications. I don't know if we will get to that number, but we are well above it right now.

In addition to leading all the FAMs, I am the Administration FAM. In my area, many of the applications we use are COTS products that are not individually very expensive. Typically, commands bought a word processing application, did not update it and used it until it was no longer supported by the vendor. So we have to do a business case analysis to see whether forcing a command to migrate to a standardized word processing application before the expiration of the command's current application's useful life will be a good investment.

At this phase we are doing business case studies to make further reduction decisions so that's why it appears that we have slowed down, but we've been busy!

CHIPS: You have extensive experience in training and manpower. Do you foresee any major changes in the way personnel are assigned and rotated from ship to shore because of new technologies?

Vice Adm. Tracey: We are undergoing an intensive Department review of our human capital strategy. Included among the things that we are looking at are the policies, practices and mechanisms for developing and assigning people. We are very focused on developing expertise for warfighting in the future and making sure that people get the experience they need to meet the new demands.

One of the principle drivers for how we assign people right now is the sea-shore rotation policy. We would like to place people in repeated assignments that develop their technical skills. That will take some adjustment to how we organize maintenance and training ashore. So people will be more likely to stay within their specific technical skills.

Now our sea-shore rotation model takes personnel out of their skill areas for an extended period of time. For example, in order to provide shore duty assignments for some of the highly technical skills like Fire Control Technician, we currently assign Sailors in those specialties to Force Protection assignments ashore. We would like them to organize in a way that would enable them to continue to develop their expertise while ashore. Strategies that will distribute training to fleet concentration areas should help us to do that.

The deeper expertise that will come from being able to keep personnel within their skill areas will pay off in terms of the readiness we will need for the future. These are long-term (probably more than a few years) adjustments that require a realignment of training, maintenance and manning strategies.

We want to be ready for the much smaller crews on the ships we are buying now. One thing that will change is our ability to reach-back for some kinds of skills. I expect a number of maintenance functions will be guided by technicians who are not deployed with the ship. So there will be a shift in how the work is distributed from deployed to non-deployed personnel. That is one of the advantages of technology — the advantage the ship can have to stay connected with subject matter experts ashore.

CHIPS: One of the concerns I've heard from female Naval personnel is the limited number of opportunities for them at sea. Will the new ships provide more flexibility for assignments?

Vice Adm. Tracey: Future ships are being designed with an eye toward mixed-gender crews. The thing that has limited our ability to put women to sea has been the time and cost to modify the berthing compartments on existing ships. The ship has to be in a long enough maintenance period to allow the modifications to be made. We have made changes regarding the size of the berthing spaces in the last few years that have shortened the time it takes to make the modifications.

Obviously, it is harder to fill an 80-man compartment than it would two forty-man spaces — one with men, one with women. So there is more flexibility in designing smaller compartments.

I expect in the future there will be no bars to women rotating to sea just the way men do.

CHIPS: The next step after completion of the rollout of the remaining seats is populating the NMCI with the Navy Marine Corps Portal and other capabilities. What are you looking forward to seeing on the NMCI, and what do you think will be most helpful to users?

Vice Adm. Tracey: For an organization the size of the Navy being able to access data that is open to users on role-based authority is significant. Right now I task a subordinate activity to collect information for me, and if I don't ask all the right questions the first time I have to go back and ask for more information. As an example, data warehousing and role-based access to information for someone at headquarters will allow speed in analyzing data and the ability to forward a recommendation without having to exercise the chain of command to get that information. This will make a gigantic difference in the way people do their jobs.

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Another example in the supply system: We are getting to the point where a certain number of items in stock will trigger a reorder. This means people will be less involved in rote processes, and we can focus their talent on the more sophisticated decision making and execution end of the warfighting business. I think that is pretty exciting because it enables better decision making, and you won't have to wait for someone to give you information.

Freeing people from the more mundane elements of their jobs also gives them the opportunity to use their talents to do the exciting things that they joined the Navy to do.

CHIPS: What do you think are some of the significant achievements regarding realizing the CNO's Sea Power 21 vision during the last three years?

Vice Adm. Tracey: First, the whole Navy is aligned toward a vision of the future. And for an organization this large to have so many good, forward thinking people pursuing a common vision is important. Since decision making is decentralized to a great extent if we didn't have a common vision you could have people pulling in opposite directions.

Sea Power 21 has redefined the future for us. It has focused us on the capabilities that we need to fight jointly; the ability to base capabilities at sea for the entire joint force is the most compelling achievement. The second one is the notion of FORCENet as a way to connect the sensor to shooter and make distributed combat capability much more effective, much more precise.

As I said in response to the first question, because we have had this steady view of where we are going, the budget process has been a planning process rather than a re-examination of priorities, and Sea Power 21 has been our guide.

The other big thing is the CNO's view of Sea Warrior — the Sailor of the future — a highly motivated professional who stays motivated because he or she has useful, highly valued work to do with a career path that ensures professional development and provides lots of choices for career development. It will also provide opportunities for a change in direction for what personnel want to do in the Navy. That is probably the most exciting. As the CNO says, it is the genius of our people that makes us the kind of Service that we are and to have our leadership focused on this different approach to making our people even better is just incredible.

CHIPS: The establishment of the Information Professional (IP) Officer Community is a success story. Do you think the community will grow?

Vice Adm. Tracey: Yes, I do — and grow in impact not just in size. It was a long time coming, but recognizing that this is a fundamental skill for our Navy has been a real breakthrough for us.

Vice Adm. Patricia Ann Tracey

Vice Adm. Tracey is Director, Navy Staff (DNS). She serves the Chief and Vice Chief of Naval Operations and directs the Navy Headquarters Support functions for 1,200 personnel.

Admiral Tracey completed Women Officers School and was commissioned as an ensign in 1970, following graduation from the College of New Rochelle with a Bachelor of Arts degree in mathematics. She also holds a master's degree, with distinction, in operations research from the Naval Postgraduate School. Her initial assignment was to the Naval Space Surveillance System in Dahlgren, Va., where she qualified as a command center officer and orbital analyst.

Following a tour on the staff of the Commander in Chief of the Pacific Fleet, she served at the Bureau of Naval Personnel as the placement officer for graduate education and service college students.

From 1980 to 1982, Vice Adm. Tracey served as an extended planning analyst in the Systems Analysis Division on the Chief of Naval Operations' staff. She served as executive officer of the Naval Recruiting District in Buffalo, N.Y., until 1984, where she was assigned as a manpower and personnel analyst in the Program Appraisal Division of the Chief of Naval Operations' staff.

Vice Adm. Tracey commanded the Naval Technical Training Center at Treasure Island from 1986 to 1988. She then headed the Enlisted Plans and Community Management Branch on the Chief of Naval Personnel's staff for two years. She assumed command of Naval Station Long Beach, Calif., in 1990. Upon completion of her command tour, Vice Adm. Tracey reported as a Fellow with the Chief of Naval Operations' Strategic Studies Group at the Naval War College.

Vice Adm. Tracey was assigned as the Director for Manpower and Personnel, J-1, on the Joint Staff from July 1993 to June 1995. From June 1995 to June 1996 she served as Commander, Naval Training Center, Great Lakes. She was the Chief of Naval Education and Training, and Director of Naval Training for the Chief of Naval Operations from July 1996 to December 1998.

From December 1998 to August 2001, she served as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Military Manpower and Personnel Policy), Washington, D.C. She was responsible for the establishment of all policies concerning military personnel matters including accessions and retention programs; compensation and benefits; and policies governing classification, assignment and career development for 1.4 million service members of the Department of Defense.

The admiral's personal decorations include two Defense Distinguished Service Medals, two Navy Distinguished Service Medals, three Legion of Merit awards, three Meritorious Service Medals and the French Legion of d'Honneur.

Editor's Note: Navy Vice Adm. Albert T. Church III, is replacing Vice Adm. Tracey as Director, Navy Staff, DNS, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Pentagon, Washington, D.C. Church recently served as Inspector General, Department of the Navy, Washington, D.C. **CHIPS**