



National Institute for Deterrence Studies & Peter Huessy Seminar

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks Live at the Capitol Hill Club

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Webinar Transcript

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Abstract:

The National Institute for Deterrence Studies (NIDS) with Peter Huessy, hosted a seminar at the Capitol Hill Club featuring Rear Admiral Todd Weeks, a senior leader responsible for submarine sustainment and the industrial base supporting the U.S. Navy's undersea forces. The discussion underscored the enduring importance of strategic deterrence—particularly the sea-based leg of the nuclear triad—as a foundational element of U.S. national security, while addressing the growing challenges of modernization, sustainment, and industrial capacity.

Admiral Weeks outlined ongoing reforms to the Navy's acquisition system designed to improve speed, flexibility, and accountability in delivering critical capabilities. These structural changes aim to streamline decision-making and strengthen alignment with industry partners, enabling more rapid progress in both new construction and lifecycle sustainment of submarines.

A central focus of the seminar was the Columbia-class ballistic missile submarine program, which will replace the aging Ohio-class fleet. Admiral Weeks emphasized the scale, complexity, and strategic importance of the Columbia program, highlighting its advanced stealth, sensing capabilities, and digital architecture—designed to ensure operational relevance through the end of the 21st century. He also addressed the challenge of maintaining an effective deterrent during the transition period, as Ohio-class submarines are extended well beyond their original service lives while Columbia-class vessels are introduced.

The discussion further explored critical industrial base issues, including supply chain constraints, workforce development, and the need for sustained investment in shipbuilding and maintenance infrastructure. Admiral Weeks described efforts to modernize sustainment practices through digital transformation, additive manufacturing, and improved lifecycle management—initiatives intended to increase operational availability and reduce maintenance delays.

Finally, the seminar highlighted broader strategic considerations, including the integration of allied capabilities under frameworks such as AUKUS, the importance of securing microelectronics supply chains, and the imperative of maintaining a resilient and responsive defense industrial base.

Overall, the seminar reinforced the urgency of recapitalizing the U.S. nuclear deterrent while adapting institutional, industrial, and technological systems to meet evolving strategic demands.

Executive Summary:

The National Institute for Deterrence Studies (NIDS) convened a seminar featuring Rear Admiral Todd Weeks to examine the future of U.S. strategic deterrence, with a focus on the Navy's sea-based nuclear mission and the transition to the Columbia-class ballistic missile submarine. Admiral Weeks emphasized that strategic deterrence remains a critical yet underappreciated pillar of national security, requiring sustained public awareness and institutional commitment.

A key theme of the discussion was the modernization of the nuclear triad, particularly the replacement of the aging Ohio-class submarines with the Columbia-class fleet. Admiral Weeks highlighted the operational excellence of the current Ohio-class force—which continues to meet deterrence requirements daily despite exceeding its intended service life—while stressing the increasing risks and maintenance demands associated with aging platforms. Ensuring a seamless transition to Columbia without any decline in deterrence effectiveness was identified as the Navy's top priority.

The Columbia-class submarine program was presented as one of the most complex and consequential defense efforts underway. Designed for long-term strategic relevance, these submarines will incorporate advanced stealth, sensing, and digital capabilities to ensure survivability and effectiveness through the late 21st century. The Navy is targeting delivery of the lead ship in 2028, with sustained production required to maintain force levels as Ohio-class submarines retire.

Admiral Weeks also outlined major reforms to the Navy's acquisition and organizational structure intended to accelerate delivery timelines, improve coordination, and enhance accountability. These changes are already generating momentum, particularly in strengthening collaboration with industry partners and streamlining processes critical to submarine construction and sustainment.

Industrial base capacity emerged as a central challenge. The Navy must simultaneously expand production capability for new submarines while addressing sustainment needs for legacy systems—many of which rely on obsolete components and fragmented supply chains. Efforts to strengthen the industrial base include improving demand signaling, investing in workforce development, and leveraging advanced manufacturing techniques such as additive manufacturing to address supply bottlenecks.

Digital transformation is another cornerstone of future readiness. The Columbia program is designed as a fully digital platform, integrating real-time data, automated maintenance workflows, and paperless sustainment processes. Early adoption of these practices on the Ohio fleet is already improving efficiency and reducing maintenance timelines, helping to prepare the enterprise for the next generation of submarines.

Finally, Admiral Weeks underscored the importance of supporting infrastructure—including shipyards, maintenance facilities, training systems, and cybersecurity safeguards—to ensure long-term operational success. Broader strategic considerations, including allied cooperation through initiatives like AUKUS and securing critical supply chains (e.g., microelectronics), were also highlighted as essential to maintaining a resilient and credible deterrent.

In sum, the seminar reinforced that sustaining U.S. strategic deterrence will require synchronized progress across technology, industrial capacity, infrastructure, and policy—executed with urgency and precision to meet emerging security challenges.

Unabridged Transcript

(Note: A.I. assisted, there will invariably be some word errors in the following transcript.)

00:00:01:25 - 00:00:30:06

Peter Huessy

Good morning everybody. I'm Peter Hussey and on behalf of the National Institute for Deterrence Studies, thank you for coming to this seminar that we're having here at the Capitol Hill Club. For those of you unfamiliar with the program, we began this, believe it or not, in March of 1983, to coincide with the Scowcroft Commission, of which we invited each member of the commission to come and speak, culminating at the end of July with General Brant Scowcroft, who was chairman.

00:00:30:09 - 00:01:00:28

Peter Huessy

We're honored today to have Admiral Todd Weeks, who has, what one could easily consider the single most important part of our nuclear deterrent, and that is the new Columbia Class

Submarine, which we're going to build 12 and an editorial comment from me, I hope we build 16. So, on behalf of NIDS and our sponsors that are here today, Admiral Weeks, thank you for coming to join us today.

00;01;01;00 - 00;01;30;03

Peter Huessy

I believe your remarks are on the record. Yes. And so if you do ask questions afterwards, would you please identify yourself? Otherwise, remember, on July 24th, Uzi Rubin is coming from Israel, and he's going to talk to us about the missile war of drones, rockets and missiles in the Middle East and Ukraine. What does it mean for warfare, what has been the impact and particularly talking about air and missile defenses? And as you know, his presentations are always quite interesting. So, tell Kimberly you'd like to attend. It will be in person here at the Capitol Hill Club. So, with that, Admiral, thank you for coming to join us today. Would you give a warm welcome to Admiral Todd Weeks.

00;01;58;08 - 00;01;59;21

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

Good morning.

00;01;59;24 - 00;02;23;09

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

It is my distinct honor to be here today to talk a little bit about what is going on in the in the Navy and what, you know, from the strategic deterrence perspective and some sort of broader things that are happening. I really want to thank Peter and the team for putting this event together, and I want to thank all of you for being here.

00;02;23;12 - 00;02;47;27

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

You know, I personally believe that, you know, we aren't talking enough about these topics. You know, there's I think a general lack of within our society of not appreciating the value of strategic deterrence and all the things that go into it and how important and what a bedrock that is for our national security. So. So I appreciate all of you engaging in that discussion.

00;02;47;28 - 00;03;11;10

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

I appreciate all of you and your engagements day in and day out, you know, raising these issues up so that our, our, our, our American public, our taxpayers can have an appreciation, understanding of why we're spending as much money as we are on all on, you know, recapitalization of the triad and all the other things we do day in and day out to sustain the nuclear deterrent.

00;03;11;11 - 00;03;37;06

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

So thank you for that. Thank you for being here today. You know, my intent is to speak for a few minutes on some kind of broad topics. You know, I understand there's some interest in some of the things on the acquisition reform side of the House. I'll talk a little bit about that. We'll talk about, you know, kind of where I think we're going with respect to maintaining the strategic deterrent within the Navy.

00;03;37;08 - 00;03;58;11

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

I'll talk briefly about the Columbia. And then what I'd like to do is make sure we have plenty of time left for questions. And anything that you're interested in talking about. Happy to happy to do that. You know, within the bounds of what I, what I can talk about. So, so well that we'll start with the acquisition reform.

00;03;58;13 - 00;04;39;06

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

So, you know, as I stand here today, I am the I am the director of in-service and industrial base for the direct reporting portfolio manager submarines. It's quite a mouthful. So that is a role that I've had for for a little over three months, four months. So, I think many of you are probably aware that, you know, as part of the war time acquisition system, you know, you know, kind of reform that Secretary Hegseth initiated within the Navy and kind of and then within the submarine community realigned sort of how we how we operate and how we were organized.

00;04;39;06 - 00;05;04;02

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

So, I used to be the program executive officer for submarines, where I was responsible for Ohio and Columbia. And so, when Admiral Rob Goucher, who's the DRPM, was nominated and confirmed and came in, we chose to reorganize. And so, we put all the new construction programs together. So, Rear Admiral John Rucker is the Director of Design and Construction.

00;05;04;02 - 00;05;36;06

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

And so, he owns the Columbia program as well as the Virginia program and the SSN program. So, he's responsible for sort of all things building, designing submarines. And then I am responsible for all things in service. So, I'm responsible for all our SSNs, SSBNs that are in service, as well as all our industrial base activities that that support the broader submarine communities, whether it's building submarines or sustaining submarines or all the all the pieces and parts that go into them.

00;05;36;06 - 00;06;01;17

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

So those efforts also fall under me in this current instantiation of our organization. We have

there's a third director who owns AUKUS and the, the all the warfare systems that that feed our submarines, whether it's the combat system, the sonar system, the weapons systems, all that stuff is under Rear Admiral Doug Adams. He is also, you know, responsible for AUKUS.

00;06;01;17 - 00;06;30;24

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

So, and there's synergies there as we work with our partners, the UK and Australia, as we look to, you know, kind of get to a common, common baseline with them in terms of the systems on the submarines. Certainly today our weapons, our torpedoes are shared with the Australians, as is our combat systems. So, as we tend to evolve that the AUKUS construct and look for commonality with our allies.

00;06;30;27 - 00;06;57;18

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

So that is that is how we organize. Admiral Goucher is also dual hatted as the PAE undersea, portfolio acquisition executive undersea. So then that capacity reports to ASNRDA. And so that that is kind of that responsibility resides with sort of all the things that are not building a submarine or delivering a submarine out of a maintenance availability.

00;06;57;18 - 00;07;27;09

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

That all kind of falls under the Navy and rolls up under ASNRDA and his PAE hat. On the DRPM side, he reports to the DEFSEC of War. So Secretary Feinberg is who he reports to. So and that's been a really pretty powerful change for us because, you know, he now has a lot of authority under the, under the Department of War that, you know, they're like service-like authorities.

00;07;27;10 - 00;07;49;08

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

Right. So, contracting right. We kind of sidestep some of the Navy processes, hiring and some of those other kind of more seemingly mundane but really important. If you're trying to build out a workforce and build a team and really focus them on, on outcomes, it's important to have the ability to move quickly. And so Rear Admiral Goucher has that.

00;07;49;10 - 00;08;10;18

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

We've been using it, I think, to pretty good effect. You know, it's still early days for sure. But you know I would tell you that I think, you know the momentum is definitely changing. You know our challenges are large. So, it is not going to this is a big ship doesn't turn on a dime. So it's going to take us a little while to sort of start seeing some of the impacts of that.

00;08;10;18 - 00;08;37;08

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

But there's definitely a tone difference. You know, our industry partners as well as within our own organization. And I am very optimistic that all this will come together here soon. And we're going to start really seeing some big, big moves and some big momentum changes. So that's sort of how this acquisition reform has sort of impacted us.

00;08;37;10 - 00;08;57;11

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

You know, the Navy is still working through sort of broader things, right. There's a stand up for the PAEs. So some are now kind of fully operational. Others are still in the kind of building out stage. You know, there's other kind of changes that are going on in the Pentagon in terms of how the Navy staffs organize and things like that.

00;08;57;14 - 00;09;15;09

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

So, there's still some you know, we're speaking to the table. You know, we're still sort of I think we're past the peak churn. We're sort of on the on the downside of kind of getting to a steady state. But there's still, you know, there's still some things happening that still some uncertainty that will work through here in the next couple of months.

00;09;15;09 - 00;09;39;09

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

And I think we'll be, you know, by fall, I think it'll be pretty, pretty stable. And everybody kind of understand how this new, this new system is working, where authorities lie, where they where they don't lie and things like that. So, I'm very optimistic about where we're going. And again, I'm starting to see it in my sort of day-to-day portfolio, you know, kind of how that's affecting us.

00;09;39;09 - 00;10;11;11

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

And it's all been for the good. So that's what's going on within sort of broadly. So, for the part that I own. So again, in service and industrial base. So, you know I'm responsible for the lifecycle sustainment of all our submarines. So, you know the Los Angeles Class, the Virginia Class, the Seawolf Class as well as Ohio, I will tell you that I have a sort of special place in my heart for Ohio, having previously been the PEO for strategic submarines.

00;10;11;13 - 00;10;35;09

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

And so, you know, I probably, you know, if I'm being honest, probably put a little bit more energy there. And mostly it's because of how critical that mission is. Right. Kind of where we started. You know, those submarines are so important to our nation. So important. I mean, and so, you know, making sure we get that right and we're really trying to use.

00;10;35;10 - 00;10;58;16

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

And so my whole strategy is sort of aligned to like we're going to use them to show what right looks like using Ohio's to show what right it looks like, so that the broader kind of SSN fleet can benefit from those changes. And so, I'm going to talk a little bit about some of the things that we've been doing, which again, have really started to bear some pretty, pretty good fruit.

00;10;58;19 - 00;11;21;15

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

And so, and kind of the things were going, going forward. So, so in this portfolio what a couple of key pillars that I'm really trying to drive. So, one is get to a sort of proactive lifecycle maintenance or sustainment of our submarine. So, it's part of than just maintenance and sustainment of our submarines right. So, we tend to approach, in the Navy, sort of life cycle, you know, we define it when, you know, in the in the design phase of a class of ships, you know, what's the what's the lifecycle maintenance plan? What are all the things we're going to do this the same the ship and we tend to sort of encase it in glass and sort of, you know, now it's set and this is how we're going to operate this class of ship.

00;11;41;24 - 00;12;02;14

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

You know, it's great because you get you get predictability. It allows all the all the green eyes shade folks in the Pentagon to program and understand what the, what the costs of that are going to be. The problem is that it you know, it doesn't really take into account the dynamics of the world and all the how things change and different performances and industrial base and things like that.

00;12;02;15 - 00;12;26;24

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

And then when you get you talk about Ohio, you know, where we have a class of ship that was designed for 30 years and here we are. You know, of my 14 SSBNs, 12 of them are older than 30 years, and all of them will be much older than 30 years when they eventually inactivate. So, we're well into extra innings on Ohio.

00;12;26;24 - 00;12;58;14

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

And the ships, I would tell you, are performing magnificently, magnificently. We meet our day-to-day strategic requirements every single day, every single day. And we have consistently for as long as I can remember. Right. So, we don't talk about it. Certainly we don't talk about it. But I'm here to tell you that today, those submarines, the ones that are required to be out at sea and patrol on patrol, are out there, and they'll be there tomorrow, and they'll be there next week, and they'll be there next month, and they'll be there next year.

00;12;58;20 - 00;13;21;13

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

And that's really a testament to the men and women that operate those ships. It's a testament to the men and women that maintain and sustain those ships. It's a testament to the men and women that built those ships. And then ultimately the design, which was, if you think about it, was initiated in the in the 70s, very long time ago.

00;13;21;16 - 00;13;49;29

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

And so, the ships were all built in the 80s, and here we are in 2026. So, but we can do better and we need to do better, right? Because there's as those ships age, we're seeing increased risk. Okay. So, you know, things that were designed to last the life of the ship. Turns out when you get to 34, 35, 36 years for something that was designed for 30, some of those things start becoming problematic.

00;13;50;02 - 00;14;19;05

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

And so, we didn't have the sparing strategy set because we didn't think we would need it. You know, the maintenance burden that comes with doing things that have never been done before. Right. All those things are incorporating that into the into the lifecycle plan of the ships is really important, right. The submarine structure itself. So, the hull of the submarine, right, is that we put a lot of stress on those things as they, you know, go up and down and in and out of port and all that stuff.

00;14;19;06 - 00;14;39;07

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

Right. And so, we're seeing more maintenance demand associated with those aging hulls that requires more time in drydock, more work by our folks. And so, if we just continue to do it the way we've always done it we're going to fall behind. We're not going to be able to maintain the ships the way we need to, because I need them to last a lot longer.

00;14;39;08 - 00;15;05;00

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

Right. So, we will be there will be a decade. And so, two important Kings Bay and Bangor, right. One of the East coast, one West coast. So, when Columbia arrives in Kings Bay, we will have ten years in Kings Bay, at least ten years of having a mixed fleet. So, Columbia's and Ohio. So, we have to maintain together.

00;15;05;06 - 00;15;30;09

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

And then in Bangor, when we introduce Columbia to Bangor, which will happen after Kings Bay, and we'll similarly have a ten, you know, a decade of having a mixed fleet of this very new

capable submarine, this older, just as capable submarine and, and, but very different systems on these two ships. Right. So, it's going to be a pretty significant load on the maintenance organization.

00;15;30;12 - 00;16;03;02

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

And so, we are trying to make sure we get well ahead of that, build the structure, build the infrastructure, train the workforce, grow the workforce to be able to meet that challenge and not miss a beat. Right. Because we cannot afford... we cannot afford to miss a beat. So, we are incorporating the lessons learned from the introduction of Virginia, which happened 20, 20 years ago now, to make sure we don't make the same mistakes we made when we introduced Virginia into the SSN fleet.

00;16;03;05 - 00;16;27;10

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

We do with Columbia, right? And so, I've been very encouraged by what I'm seeing and the challenges monumental in front of us. But, you know, I tell you today things are going pretty good. So we got but, you know, so high gives us the chance to sort of start adopting some of the Columbia practices early. It gives us a chance to bring in new technology.

00;16;27;12 - 00;16;50;11

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

It brings us, gives us a chance to do things and operate differently. Right. And that gives us capacity today to maintain Ohio. And then it'll set us up for success as we bring Columbia into the fold and, you know, get the organization running on Columbia. So, it's a de-risk for Columbia. And it's and it helps me with, with Ohio.

00;16;50;11 - 00;17;15;17

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

And as I learn those things then we're taking those same lessons learned and we're sharing with the SSN fleet so that we can benefit across the board between SSN and SSP. So that that is one of my big focuses as the director of in-service and industrial base. So, we've got a lot of things going on in Bangor right now with our Pacific fleet SSBNs to really kind of fast start that system.

00;17;15;19 - 00;17;21;08

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

Additionally, I am focused on.

00;17;21;10 - 00;17;51;17

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

Pivoting our industrial based efforts a little bit. So, to this point, those efforts have really been focused on the new construction side of the house. Right. So, and there's a huge need there,

don't get me wrong. Right. So, making sure that the two shipbuilders, Electric Boat and Newport News Shipbuilding, you know, helping their supply chains, helping them, bringing new infrastructure, new capacity and capability and the industrial base to be able to enable the ability to build 1 plus 2 to 1 Columbia and to Virginia is every single year.

00;17;51;22 - 00;18;09;25

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

Right. And that's been a monumental lift. We've been really focused on it for about ten years. And again, that's starting to bear some fruit as well. But we also need to take those same lessons and that same approach and sort of pivot a little bit to our in-service side of the house. Right. And there's a lot of there are a lot of overlap.

00;18;09;27 - 00;18;27;25

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

Right. So, this is not just not two different systems here. Right. There's sort of one industrial base. It feeds the new construction yards, but it also feeds our in-service yards as well. The challenge is a little bit different right. So by and large on the new construction side especially at this point. Right. We've been building Columbia now for a while.

00;18;27;26 - 00;18;53;26

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

We've certainly been vigilant for a long time. So, most of the people that build the things are sort of in kind of continuous production, right? They're not delivering things fast enough. They maybe don't have sufficient capacity to meet the demand. And so that's where we've been investing. When you look at Ohio, Los Angeles and even Seawolf, to a certain extent, what you see is a lot of the things that that the parts and pieces on those ships we're not making anymore.

00;18;53;28 - 00;19;15;27

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

Right. They're obsolete. Right. You know, we've moved on. You know, technology, we moved on with kind of, you know, the things that the systems on the ships. So, the challenge is a little bit different here, because now I got to sort of restart something that has been shut down. I have to get vendors to start. Okay. I got to make this other stuff that I haven't made in a long time.

00;19;15;29 - 00;19;35;10

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

And so, there's a fair bit of, you know, things like reverse engineering and stuff like that that we have to do. So, it's a little bit different skills, same vendors by and large. And so again we're trying to pivot a little bit to bring some of that to bear to make sure that again, as we're in this extra innings on Ohio, that the industrial base is primed.

00;19;35;18 - 00;20;00;12

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

So we need the thing that I haven't needed in 40 years. I have somebody then go make it so. So, we're doing that now and that that's going well I think for us, you know, that also allows us and if there's any, you know, industry folks in here, I think you can appreciate this. You know, we have not always been the best partner with the industrial base.

00;20;00;13 - 00;20;26;11

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

Right? We don't really we're not really great at sending sort of steady demand signal. And frankly, our demand signal sort of been bifurcated. So, you sort of like the new construction folks. Okay. This is what we need to build one plus two on the sustainment side, sort of hit and miss kind of what we say. And, you know, and there's a lot of hands in the sustainment side between the, you know, the Naval Supply Systems Command, DLA, things like that.

00;20;26;14 - 00;20;54;20

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

But by bringing it together, that allows us to get a better kind of holistic picture of the entire need and be able to communicate that with industry so that it's very clear, you know, this is what we need from you both to build the new ships and to sustain the old ships. So that's another big, big initiative that we have going on to be able to help kind of, you know, bring up our, our, our maintenance side of the house as well.

00;20;54;22 - 00;21;15;08

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

Right? We're doing a lot sort of trying to bring new technology into the space as well. So again, that's something my industrial base team is really focused on. So you know, you know, you've probably heard the Navy. There was a good article in one of the trade presses earlier this week about kind of the Navy's big push for additive manufacturing.

00;21;15;11 - 00;21;32;04

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

And we really are pushing really, really hard on that. Right, because it does address some of our most significant bottlenecks in the supply chain. So, it helps us a lot on the new construction side. But honestly, you know, when you get back to this obsolete, I haven't made this thing in a long time. Additive really is a game.

00;21;32;05 - 00;21;53;08

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

Much more of a game changer there. Right. So and so again, we've been very focused on our additive side on the new construction. So now when we start looking at them in service lens, what we see is like, oh I can actually make a big difference today right where I've got, you know,

ship and availability out in the PAC northwest and you know, these ten parts.

00;21;53;08 - 00;22;08;05

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

And the maintenance is kind of hinged on getting these ten parts. Well, you know, I got to go get the vendors got a response. And they've got all these things that they've got to do to get ready to make this thing. Or I can kind of use these advanced technology, additive manufacturing, and I can go make it much faster.

00;22;08;05 - 00;22;34;19

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

And I don't need to make hundreds of them. Right. I need to make one so or two. So when you start talking about kind of that equation, what you see is that it really becomes a much more palatable and much quicker and better answer. Right. If I'm going to make these things for forever to support the new construction program, then then, you know the more traditional ways of manufacturing, again, the tradeoff starts becoming a little bit more balanced.

00;22;34;19 - 00;22;56;26

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

It's very clear when you're just making 2 or 3. So we're starting to do that. I'm really excited about where we're at. We're on the cusp, like, you know, maybe a week away from issuing some guidance out to the Navy. That's going to kind of be the next big prompt jump in additive manufacturing. So, things like, you know, interchangeability of parts.

00;22;56;28 - 00;23;16;09

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

So today we don't have that. So, if I make something additively and I make it traditionally, we treat them as sort of two different things in our system. Right. And so, it makes the kind of management much more complicated. And so, we're getting to the point where in some cases we're going to be able to say, no, no, it doesn't matter how it's made, I don't care.

00;23;16;12 - 00;23;38;28

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

Right? It meets these requirements. It fills this purpose. How it's made is sort of irrelevant to the and it really is irrelevant to the sailors on the ships, relevant to the maintainers. They just want the thing. So we're in the cusp of getting ready to do that, issue some guidance on how we can better do that. And that'll start fast, starting our ability to incorporate additive manufacturing into our sort of standard processes.

00;23;39;00 - 00;23;58;07

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

Right. Right now we should have sort of one-off special case, right. You can't really scale that.

But once we treat it like it's everything else, that's when scaling really happens. So, I'm really excited about that. And that'll start to kind of snowball effect. It's really going to get us ahead of some stuff. So, you know as a manufacturing really important.

00;23;58;10 - 00;24;22;25

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

You know we are. So, Columbia is designed from the get-go to be a fully digital ship. Okay. So, the first submarine I used to say first ship and then I got corrected because the Ford class is also released in the propulsion plant is designed this way. But so, you know, the idea is that we don't generate any paper at any time in the sustainment of that ship.

00;24;22;28 - 00;24;51;23

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

Right. So, there's systems on the ship to monitor the health of the equipment. That data then gets transferred. The crew can review it. The crew can determine what repairs are needed and when. That work package, that set of jobs that need to be done, that go keep the ship maintained, is digitally transferred to the shore. That those jobs and all the other stuff that comes in from the maintenance and the sustainment plan of the ship again is all digital.

00;24;51;25 - 00;25;16;17

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

Then it gets transferred to the Trident Refit Facility, which is our two dedicated maintenance facilities, one in each port that are just focused on the SSBNs. They ingest it, all the planning activities, the of the parts you need to do. The maintenance all happens digitally. Right. And the application of, you know, advance workflows and processes.

00;25;16;17 - 00;25;31;19

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

I'm trying hard not to say artificial intelligence, but you get the point, right? I can automate a lot of these steps that today it takes somebody, you know, thing. And they got it right down. And they get open the book and they got to look at the numbers and automate. All of that makes it much, much faster. Right.

00;25;31;22 - 00;25;50;15

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

And then when the work through the trades, the craftsmen go down to do the maintenance, you know, they do it with a tablet, the digital device that they bring on the ship and all the references are there, the drawing and all the things, the procedures there. And if I have a question on this, I can click on it and it opens up the thing that I can read.

00;25;50;15 - 00;26;17;07

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

Okay. That's okay. We know that either today it's like a folder full of paper like this and they get open up and oh, I don't have the reference. And I got to get it and I got to leave the ship. Right. So, so digitizing all that. So, we're starting to do that on Ohio. Right. Kind of back to this, this, this theme that I'm going to go trial it, I'm going to go do it on Ohio and then get to get the system running and everybody comfortable with it.

00;26;17;07 - 00;26;34;15

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

And then when a Columbia comes, it's just how we do it. So, we're doing that today with our structural inspections. So, we have a tablet. When the when the folks go to do the inspection they carry a tablet down on the ship. They fill out the inspection on the tablet drop downs and stuff. They come out of the ship uploads automatically.

00;26;34;16 - 00;26;57;09

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

It goes into the it goes to the engineering folks. Right. They can review that report. They can determine that needs to get fixed, that needs to get fixed. That's good, that's good, that's good. Right then gets transmitted over to the planning folks. And today we still have to kind of manually do that. But the next step of that is now I'm going to have kind of automated workflows that because it turns out that most of the time is kind of the same stuff over and over again.

00;26;57;10 - 00;27;16;29

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

Right. So why do I have to redo it every single time? So, bring some of that in at the end of the maintenance. Right. When I go to certify that the maintenance was done all properly, I do electronically. And then that report, which we keep on file so that we can reference it back and kind of maintain the history of the ship that now gets digitally transmitted.

00;27;17;00 - 00;27;38;21

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

Right. You used to be literally there'd be a package of paper, a letter somebody had to sign, and then we would fax it. No kidding. Fax it to Portsmouth, New Hampshire, which is where our kind of repository is. We had fax machines. I mean, how many of you have fax machines in your offices? Yeah. How many know what a fax machine is?

00;27;38;23 - 00;28;07;15

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

I won't do that. I won't do that. So, we're now we're doing that digitally and it turns out... ooops I unplugged it. Oh well. We're doing it digitally. And so now the review process that happens at our repository is done electronically. So, I don't need to have some engineer flipping through pages. Right. So, we're doing that today. And so that that is cut the amount of time from like

you know a little steps on that.

00;28;07;16 - 00;28;28;25

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

I mean, hundreds of days, hundreds of man days have been reduced out of that, that workflow by just doing that. Right. So, we're doing that today. And so that's allowing me to get ahead of the maintenance on Ohio for that particular kind of maintenance, which is one of our stressing cases of structural hole inspections. Make sure that hole is being maintained properly.

00;28;28;27 - 00;28;54;28

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

And so, we're now so we're doing it in Bangor. We've started doing it in Kings Bay. And then we we've I've sort of directed that by the end of this year, all our public shipyards will also be operating that way. So it will be across the fleet. And then eventually we're going to make the ships... So, the crews of the ships, they're also going to have to use that same process for some of the inspections that they do that we also can keep track of.

00;28;55;00 - 00;29;16;17

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

And so again, that's just a taste of the kind of thing that we're trying to do. But that's how we're trying to get after this sustainment challenge again, to keep these, these exquisite but elderly ships around as long as the nation needs them, so that when, when Columbia comes, you know, again, we're maintaining that strategic turn.

00;29;16;18 - 00;29;22;04

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

Right. So again, that's job one for all of us.

00;29;22;06 - 00;29;45;25

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

All right. So, I'll talk briefly about Columbia. So again, not in my portfolio anymore. But I can certainly give you a little bit of what's going on there. I'm you know, it's not really my place to talk a whole lot of detail about Columbia anymore. I'm I will tell you, I'm keeping close tabs on it. And Admiral Goucher also designated me the lead for the introduction of Columbia.

00;29;45;25 - 00;30;01;11

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

So, you know, John Rutgers responsible for building the ship and all that. And my job is to make sure that we introduce it properly to the fleet. And we'll talk a little bit about that. Those are the kind of efforts outside just the ship itself. But some of the other things that we're trying to make sure are in place, the support the ship when it comes.

00;30;01;12 - 00;30;41;05

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

Right. So lead ship, you know, we're committed to delivering District of Columbia in 2028. I would tell you that that is sort of Admiral Goucher his you know, we talk about that more than anything else within the him. He is. He has been proactive. And that's probably a true understatement in engaging with shipbuilders. And, you know, we've had a lot of really good discussions with them about what do we need to do, what do we need to do to make sure that we can deliver that ship in 2028 so that it can do its first patrol in 2030, which is what we need.

00;30;41;08 - 00;31;05;07

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

So, you know, it's hard. I mean, this is this is hard stuff. You know, Columbia is a lead ship, right? And lead ships are really hard. We've never done them. And it is a big ship. It is the biggest submarine that this nation has ever built. And it's a complicated submarine. It is also the most complicated submarine this ship this nation has ever built.

00;31;05;09 - 00;31;27;23

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

Right? It is. You know, it takes all the things that are on our Virginia class are kind of latest cutting edge SSNs, and we sort of supersized it and put it on Columbia. Right. Because we are building a ship that has to stay relevant into the 2080s and the 2090s. Okay. Yeah, 50 years. So, think about that for a second.

00;31;27;25 - 00;31;54;05

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

Like, I mean, you think back 50 years ago, you know, what? What did the world look like? And think about it. You got to make sure you build something and design something that is going to be relevant in this world when you don't really, really have any idea what this world looks like. Right? So, we are packing in capability upon capability and then margin to, to evolve the ship with the changing world.

00;31;54;07 - 00;32;12;28

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

So it's a very complicated it's a very capable ship. This is going to be a fantastic... it'll be you know, and I've said this before and I get a little pushback sometimes from some submarine folks, but it will be the most capable submarine that we've ever built. Okay. Its mission is very specific, right? You know, an SSN is a multi-mission ship.

00;32;12;28 - 00;32;38;17

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

It can do lots of things. Well, Columbia doesn't need to do lots of things. Well, it just needs to do one thing really, really well. And it will do that one thing really, really well. Okay. That ship will

be virtually undetectable. Undetectable! It will be I mean, stealth to the Nth degree. Okay. And it will have a sensing capability that is bar none.

00;32;38;22 - 00;33;04;17

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

Right. Because part of that stealth capability that in essence needs to have is it needs to be able to detect everything else out there well before it can ever be detected, so that it can make sure it doesn't. It stays away. Right. Because our deterrent when it comes to the sea-based deterrent is grounded in the ability to have those ships operate anywhere and everywhere, and nobody knows where they're at.

00;33;04;20 - 00;33;28;24

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

Right? Nobody knows where they're at. We don't know where they're at. Right. We don't track them. The US Navy does not track our own SSBN. Right. When an SSBN goes on patrol, the CEO is given this large, huge, you know, body of water, the Pacific Ocean, right. It gets a little or very large thousands of miles. Right. And that's your area.

00;33;28;26 - 00;33;49;23

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

And where you go in that area is 100% up to you, right? We don't want to know. And your orders are to remain undetected by all forces. Period. Blue, red, orange. It doesn't matter. Right. And so only the that ship knows where it's at. It's pretty incredible. Right. But to be able to do that today and well into the future.

00;33;49;24 - 00;34;18;02

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

Right. You've got to be able to be stealthy and you got to know a sensing capability that allows you to know what everybody else is, so you can make sure that you are staying away from where they are, where they could possibly detect you. So, Columbia is a really impressive ship. You know, I haven't been up there in a while, but when you go into the construction hall at the Electric Boat where the ship is being put together, it's the final assembly and test yard, and you go and you step into this building and this sort of the ship, and it's pieces which most of the pieces are put together now.

00;34;18;02 - 00;34;34;11

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

So, there's only two pieces that are two big pieces of still need to come together. It is just incredible to see this thing. It is just I mean, it blows my mind. I've seen it hundreds of times and it just like it just or inspiring even for me, you know, as jaded as I am in all the years I've been doing this.

00;34;34;13 - 00;34;57;01

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

And so, if you ever get the opportunity, it's just it's really, really incredible. It is. It makes us so proud to be an American, to see this, this massive thing and recognize that it was built in this country by, you know, men and women, Americans. Right? All over the country. Right. So, our supply chain spans every single state, a couple of our foreign partners.

00;34;57;02 - 00;35;22;21

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

And so just to see kind of all that effort and just exquisite technology and just really impressive craftsmanship all come together, just really all inspiring. So, we're tracking to that. Just as important, frankly, is getting the production system up so that we can consistently deliver Columbia's every single year. You know, I will tell you that the second ship is on plan and doing really well.

00;35;22;22 - 00;35;42;26

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

I'm really excited about where Wisconsin is. Groton is sort of the third ship. Lights came back on, and it is also progressing well. And so the next ship after that mean so. So, we are ramping up that serial production because, you know, we're the most stressing case isn't the first ship. It's when you get into the middle.

00;35;42;29 - 00;36;02;06

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

Right. We're really at scale bringing Columbia online and Ohio sort of starting to age out. Right. That's sort of the most stressing case. Right. So really it's getting a ship three 4 or 5 six delivered. That's what we really got to stay focused on. Right. And we are. And so, Admiral Gallagher again, his energy's been really helpful.

00;36;02;13 - 00;36;26;18

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

He's definitely driving the industrial base hard to deliver it I think there's clear alignment. I mean, our shipbuilders clearly understand how important this is. There's sort of no ambiguity in that. And so that's all going well. Probably not. I'm not an expert on bombers or ICBMs, but I would imagine there's a lot of similarities.

00;36;26;26 - 00;36;47;26

Speaker 4

You know, Columbia SSBNs are not just a ship. Right. And the way we talk about it in the Navy is it's a capability. Okay. And so you can't sort of forget that the ability to maintain the high operational availability and the tempo that we need for our SSBNs is all built on a structure that that has to work. Right.

00:36:47;27 - 00:37:07;10

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

And so that's our Trident Refit Facility. So, our two maintenance facilities in Bangor and Kings Bay that maintain those ships, that's all they do. Right. So today they only do Ohio. Right. And they're a little. I mean, they're not mini shipyards. They're sizable shipyards and of their own. Right. They have dry docks and shops and all the same things you have at a big public shipyard.

00:37:07;10 - 00:37:31;04

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

But their single product line focused on Ohio, soon to be Ohio and Columbia. And so, you also have the Trident training facility, right? So, the training facility, the shore-based training infrastructure that is there to train the crews. Right. So SSBNs have two crews that allows us to keep the ships at sea much, much more often than we do with a single crewed ship.

00:37:31;05 - 00:37:52;04

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

Right. So, I'm not limited by the tempo of the crew. Right. I can get the ship in, change out the crew, reload stores, do a bit of maintenance, get it right back out again. Right. So, you need a robust training infrastructure on the shore to train the crews. I was a CEO of and said I could train my crew on my ship, right.

00:37:52;05 - 00:38:13;26

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

So, we spent a lot of time in port training and doing all this thing. Right? Yes. The SSN CO doesn't have it. The ship's gone, right? Somebody else got it. So, they, you know, we have these shore the shore infrastructure there that has, you know, like, you know, high fidelity. I mean, like, I mean high fidelity trainers that when you go in them, you don't you can't really tell that you're not on the ship.

00:38:13;29 - 00:38:34;19

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

And they do all the things that the crew needs to be able to do. We have trainers that teach them those things. Right. So that's really important, right? Just make sure that's there. And then sort of the whole digital and I'm bringing this up specifically because it's an area that we we're concerned about is the whole sort of digital infrastructure of the base itself.

00:38:34;20 - 00:38:57;10

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

Right. So, as I talk about this transition to Columbia, this digital ship, right. We actually need the all the infrastructure on the base to support that. Right. So, these bases are two SSN bases were purpose built for SSBNs in the 80s, 70s and 80s. Right. That infrastructure is aging and it was not

ever designed for kind of the world we live in today.

00;38;57;12 - 00;39;18;11

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

Right. So, upgrading that infrastructure to match the upgrades that we're doing on the facilities, really important. So, we have we have projects underway right now in Kings Bay. We're expanding the training facility. Right. So, Columbia brings unique capabilities that Ohio doesn't have. So, we need the trainers that can support those unique capabilities. Right. So that that is those are in progress.

00;39;18;11 - 00;39;38;22

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

And that that project should wrap up this year. And then we should be will commission those new facilities into next year. And they'll be up for ready for training next year for the for the crews, future crews right on the on the refit facility. So, in the maintenance facility that project was started later. We started it two years ago.

00;39;38;25 - 00;40;00;12

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

And that's building out all the shops and all the capabilities the maintenance facility needs for all the new things that Columbia has that Ohio doesn't have. And there's a lot. Right. So, I was I was down in Kings Bay two weeks ago to tour those facilities, check on kind of progress with our, you know, our facilities folks.

00;40;00;14 - 00;40;22;22

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

And so both of them are going well, I mean, the really exquisite facilities, you know, the training facility, you know, it's a little bit behind plan, but we have a path to get it back on plan. The reef facility, which is a much bigger project, is actually ahead of schedule. So really, really a testament to the to the great team down there in Kings Bay that's doing that.

00;40;22;25 - 00;40;42;17

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

It also, frankly, is a testament to the folks over there... We had to get an anomaly, you know, a you know, we had a CR a couple of years ago, and so we had to get a million anomaly to be able to start that project. So if you're if you're, you know, savvy on those things, you'll know that MILCON anomalies like never happen like never.

00;40;42;17 - 00;40;59;21

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

I don't think maybe one in the history of the world there's been a MILCON. So, we were able to get a MILCON anomaly. And so, you know, we were able to, you know, make the case for why

that was so critical to the nation. We got it. And that project ahead. We would not be ahead of schedule if we hadn't got that anomaly right.

00;40;59;22 - 00;41;19;02

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

And so that really gave us a lot of momentum. We got that, you know, we got the anomaly. The bill passed. We awarded the contract like the next week because we were ready to go. And then the contractor was like digging, digging holes the next day and carrying down and get down a bunch of buildings and stuff like that.

00;41;19;02 - 00;41;41;18

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

And so, it's really I was really I was really impressed when I walked down there and saw what they were building out. I was really going to give our maintainers kind of world class facilities, which is what they need, frankly, to be able to sustain this world-class ship. So those are going well, you know, every once in a while, Kings Bay, we get a hurricane, right?

00;41;41;18 - 00;42;05;21

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

So, we had a couple of those. We're still trying to fix some of that stuff. Yeah. So these there's like there's like a ship, you know the base is required kind of constant maintenance. Maintain them. We're making sure we're doing that right. And we had great support from everybody on that side of the house. The first the lead ship has a crew. They're manned as they should be at this stage of construction.

00;42;05;23 - 00;42;30;10

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

I have pretty regular conversations with the commanding officer of the ship. And so, he's excited. He's got his sailors doing all the things they need to be doing. You know, we don't because we don't have the training facility set up yet. But the way we kind of bridge that gap and we knew this this was all kind of per plan is the sailors will go to kind of the where the stuff's being made and sort of learn from the people making the stuff.

00;42;30;13 - 00;42;51;17

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

And we also have some other kind of testing facilities that they can use as training facilities. So for instance, down at Cape Canaveral, where we do a lot of our ballistic missile testing, we have a facility there that is a mockup of part of an SSBN that we use for testing different things and stuff like that. You can also use it for training.

00;42;51;17 - 00;43;11;05

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

So they go down there a lot that will that capability replicated in home ports eventually once we finish the training center mods. So, they won't have to go there anymore. But we can use it today. We are. And then we have stuff that Electric Boat, the shipbuilder has a bunch of different facilities we can use, you know, the ship control trainer, so that, you know, the thing that drives like a ship, kind of like a full motion trainer.

00;43;11;05 - 00;43;30;23

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

They have one at Electric Boat to the crew uses that. We'll also have them at the two home ports as well. So. So that's all going well. I'm optimistic about that as well. So, I'm going to wrap it up here and just say that, you know, the Navy's focused on ensuring that we meet our commitment to the strategic returns.

00;43;30;25 - 00;43;47;20

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

I've had the opportunity to talk to the CNO a couple of times about it. You know, he is he is 100% laser focused on it. He's a submarine officer. He served on SSBN, so he understands the mission well. And so, you know, Navy leadership from the secretary on down, you know, understand there really committed to it.

00;43;47;21 - 00;44;07;22

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

You know, the secretary was at Electric Boat last week touring, touring the ship. So, he's focused on it. And so, you know, again, challenges are out there for sure. Right. But we're meeting them head on. You know, the all these changes and you know, reforms that have occurred are really going to help us get after those better.

00;44;07;22 - 00;44;30;13

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

And so, you know, we're still kind of working through all that. But I'm optimistic that it's all going to come together. And we're going to deliver Columbia District of Columbia in 2028. We're going to keep the Ohio's around as long as we need them, and they're going to continue to meet the need that the nation needs. So, with that, I am happy to take any questions or any other things.

00;44;30;14 - 00;44;32;14

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

All right. Yes, sir.

00;44;32;17 - 00;44;55;14

Joel Spangenberg

Joel Spangenberg, Severn Readiness. And it's great to hear what you had to say today. I'm

former naval reactors as well. Okay. So just a couple of things. You mentioned the new... and the DARPA construct. I'm just curious, how is how, if at all, has it changed the relationship with NR and has it affected how things are synchronized?

00:44:55;14 - 00:45:13;17

Joel Spangenberg

Because there are a lot of dependencies on the propulsion all the way through the INL on the back end for spent fuel? That's thing one and thing to just thinking outside the box. You mentioned the four class. I'm imagining there was a set of lessons learned that you might be interested in. Could you talk a little bit about that?

00:45:13;18 - 00:45:17;02

Joel Spangenberg

I know it's a different platform, but how were you thinking about that going forward?

00:45:17;03 - 00:45:39;11

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

Yeah, those are great questions. So our relationship with Naval Reactors is a critical partner in this. So naval reactors if you're not familiar with them you know they're a joint Department of Energy, Department of Navy organization. They're led by a four-star admiral, Admiral Bill Houston. The program is initiated by gentleman named Rickover. You may have heard of him.

00:45:39;13 - 00:46:05;17

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

And so, you know, really I mean, it's exquisite organization. And really, naval reactors was sort of the model, frankly, for the PAE construct. Right. Because within Naval reactors, you sort of have all the authorities aligned underneath the director. Right. And then his ability to sort of use both the Department of Energy and the Department of Navy to kind of make sure that the right things are happening really is sort of the model that we built the PAs on.

00:46:05;17 - 00:46:27;01

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

So, I would tell you that our relationship with the reactors has never been stronger. It is really unchanged. And they've helped us a lot as we've sort of guided us, help guide us through this PAE transition. You know, the other critical partner for us in the SSBN, inside of the house is the three systems program. Right. So, the system programs are responsible for the weapon system.

00:46:27;02 - 00:46:46;16

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

Right. So, the missile and the weapon system. Again, the critical partner and building on SSBN and sustaining and SSBN in and another organization again modeled similar to enable reactors where you have sort of, you know one individual authority sort of flow through that. You know,

up until that week and a half ago, that was Admiral Johnny Wolf.

00;46;46;18 - 00;47;17;24

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

He just retired. And so now it's Vice Admiral Doug Williams is the new director of SSP. So, good relationship with naval reactors. I mean, as you probably know, Naval Reactors being the savvy folks that they are, you know, on the they align the new the new ship programs together. So, the person, you know, the leader that reports to Admiral Houston for Columbia is also owns Ford turns out.

00;47;17;25 - 00;47;35;17

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

Right. So that brings that together so that, you know, it's like you said on the propulsion plant side, all the things we learned on Ford were absolutely applying to Columbia. Although the propulsion plants are very different aircraft carriers, very different than a submarine, so very different kinds of things. But there's still a lot of things that we can learn and we're definitely doing that.

00;47;35;17 - 00;48;01;12

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

So that's all been going well on the non-propulsion plant side of the house Newport News Shipbuilders Shipbuilding who builds Ford and builds our aircraft carriers also is a partner in the Columbia program. So, they build about 20% of the Columbia. And so, they're partners in this right. So we have the opportunity to work with them day in and day out.

00;48;01;15 - 00;48;26;06

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

You know, as we learn from, you know, the kind of the challenges they've had on Ford and on Kennedy, you know, the next one to be delivered. So, we definitely are doing trying to do that the best of our ability. So, and I think there's, you know, there's some couple of things that we have definitely learned that we're applying, you know, for things like some of the logistics support and things like that, you know, getting ahead of that versus wait until the end, that kind of stuff.

00;48;26;06 - 00;48;42;14

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

So, but, you know, there's still more to learn for sure. We're not we're not done yet. You know, we're getting ready to get kind of heavy into the testing program on District of Columbia to bring the ship together. So, bringing systems online, and we're definitely talking a lot at the Newport News about some of the challenges they face with Ford.

00;48;42;21 - 00;48;47;22

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

So hopefully that answered your question. Thank you.

00;48;47;24 - 00;49;18;23

Ian Merritt

Ian Merritt with Congressman Chuck Fleishman.... He's the appropriate appropriations, both Navy, Navy absolutely looking the Navy was proposing in this current budget to do a study for another public shipyard. Obviously, in an ideal world, we be both expanding the current shipyards where there's still access space. You know, potentially recapitalize some drydocks, but also add a new shipyard.

00;49;18;23 - 00;49;33;06

Ian Merritt

But from your perspective, you know what? In the looking at both the short term and the longer term, what would be a better place at the moment to be investing more, expanding the current shipyards? Or should we kind of get a head start on creating a new one?

00;49;33;13 - 00;49;54;22

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

Yeah. Yeah. No, that's... it's a great question. It's something that frankly, I spent a lot of time today thinking about and working. You know, my team works closely with our shipyard folks that also is transforming. So today it's the shipyards are run by...industrial operations.

00;49;54;24 - 00;50;28;28

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

You know, as we look at our shore infrastructure and this is really kind of similar to the short story I told...that. Right. You know, there's a lot of constraints on, on our public facilities. Okay. So they're aging, right? All of our shipyards are old, all our drydocks are old. We're in a process of capitalizing that with the SY-OP programs are building, you know, modernizing drydocks, building some new drydocks, expanding some drydocks to account for bigger ships like the Virginia with the Virginia payload module.

00;50;29;00 - 00;50;51;17

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

It is clear to me that we need to get more out of the facilities we have today, right? You know, I would tell you that the Navy's been focused on this for maybe 3 or 4 years now. We're starting to see improvements. You know, you know, you know, maintenance availabilities are.

00;50;51;19 - 00;51;16;24

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

More often than not finishing on time. And when they are delayed, the delays are not nearly as long as they were even a couple of years ago. But we need to do better, right? So, we, you know,

if we can get the production system where it needs to be. So, one plus two and we're going to get it there, we're going to get it there, then we're going to have more submarines right than we have today.

00:51:16;24 - 00:51:37;05

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

So, we got to make sure that infrastructure is in place so that we can we can meet the need of the fleet to have the, you know, the operational availability of the submarine. So the CNO is set, you know, firmly set that the goal for all warships was a 80% operational availability. The ship should be available 80% of the time.

00:51:37;08 - 00:52:00;13

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

Said differently, 80% of the fleet should be available, meaning I can it can be at sea or ready to go to sea. Today, 80% of the Navy, right? So, the submarine force on the SSN side, we're not quite at 80, so we're getting closer to it. We got to have the infrastructure that that force grows. We got to have the infrastructure bill to maintain that.

00:52:00;13 - 00:52:22;27

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

Right. And so we actually just delivered an SSN out of Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard a month early. Really, really happy, really did a nice job there. But again, we got it has to be routine to do that. So, we are focused today, you know, where's the where's the biggest lever today. The biggest lever today is in the existing facilities with the existing workforce.

00:52:22;29 - 00:52:43;02

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

Right. I you know, we probably need to grow the workforce. There's caps on that, right. I mean, these are government employees. Right. And so we got to make sure we don't grow the government workforce beyond what it should be. So you know, there's pressure downward pressure on the on that. So how do you make, you know, the individual people more productive.

00:52:43;03 - 00:53:02;09

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

How do you better use their skills. How do you remove all the waste in the system. You know, the example I used with the inspections is exactly the kind of thing we're doing, and we're doing that everywhere we're looking at where are those opportunities? Let's go get after them. Increase the capacity of our workforce. Today we start running into facility challenges, drydocks and things like that.

00:53:02;11 - 00:53:31;05

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

You know, again, we've got projects working to increase that. You're right. The Navy and actually the Department of War has spent a lot of effort looking at is the existing shore footprint adequate to the need. And there's been a lot of work. I'm not going to get ahead of any of that. It's out there. But we certainly have been very focused on it, you know, and I think, you know, the reality is it's probably a combination of lots of things.

00:53:31:09 - 00:53:52:28

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

We absolutely need to get more productive in our in our in our shipyards. We absolutely need to to to get the most out of our facilities. We need to modernize those facilities. Our shipyards are really, really antiquated. They're built, you know, in some cases like 150, 200 years ago. Right? I mean, you know, the reflection of that time, wooden ships like Portsmouth in particular.

00:53:52:29 - 00:54:14:02

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

Right. It was built to maintain, you know, wooden ships with sails. Right. They don't maintain wooden ships with sails anymore, although they do keep the oak for the Constitution there. Just just as a matter the pond, the story of the oak and the bottom of the pond. Because it turns out that, you know, oak in the water, the bottom of a deep pond is actually the best place to store it.

00:54:14:03 - 00:54:40:09

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

Anyway. Little, little tidbit for you. The. So we got to do that, right. Do we need more? You know, where I'm focused right now is on kind of back to my kind of industrial base team is how do I how do I bring in industry to augment my existing government workforce? Right. So, we are looking at all the things our shipyards do.

00:54:40:11 - 00:54:59:21

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

Right? What makes sense to outsource? What makes sense to say? You know what, I really want to keep the government team focused on the things that only uniquely they can do, and then maybe use industry to come in and do those other things. So, for instance, you know, a lot, a lot of what we got to do in a big submarine maintenance availability is, you know, there's got the clean tanks, right.

00:54:59:22 - 00:55:16:13

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

So ballast tanks, internal tanks, you got to clean them so you can inspect them. Right. Because when they're all, you know, got barnacles and stuff like that, you got to get all that off so you can look at it. Right. So you know, that to me seems like a pretty, pretty good thing to sort of have outsourced. Right.

00;55;16;14 - 00;55;32;04

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

It's not super highly skilled. There's some skill to it for sure. Right. You can't just take somebody off the street. And today we kind of have a combination of government folks doing it and some industry folks doing it. So we're looking at maybe that should all be industry, right. We want to be a little careful because we don't want to lose.

00;55;32;06 - 00;55;49;00

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

You know, it's like, you know, you want to have some organic things, right? You want to have some, you know, you got to find that that right balance. And we're trying to figure that out. So things like that we're looking at can we can we outsource that use private industry. Then I can kind of use the government folks to try to do things that only they can do, like I said.

00;55;49;01 - 00;56;10;06

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

So we're examining all of that to kind of get more out of our public facilities today, you know, down the road. You know, would you know, another shipyard? Would that be helpful? You know, you know, I don't know. Those are all things kind of being examined. I think they're taking a really hard look at it. And, you know, I've been involved a little bit with some of those efforts.

00;56;10;06 - 00;56;31;24

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

And I would tell you that they're definitely being very, very thorough. Cape has really been leading that for us, really thorough kind of understanding all the kind of things that play it. You know, there's a lot of, you know, turns out land on the shore kind of, you know, there's not a lot of it undeveloped anymore in this country, things like that.

00;56;32;00 - 00;56;38;12

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

You have to work through it a little bit. So that's a good question. Hopefully. Yeah. Yes, ma'am.

00;56;38;15 - 00;57;07;15

Simone Williams

All right. Thank you, sir, for your remarks today. Simone Williams...My question for you. You've spoken a lot about your role in supporting and getting to, like, re-energize the industrial base. What, if any, role do you have in advocating for or ensuring microelectronics? You said Columbia is going to be fully digital, and I imagine electronics that we're putting in there is a critical, critical piece to that.

00;57;07;16 - 00;57;18;03

Simone Williams

And so I'm curious if you have any role in conversations with industry as it pertains to like, like on shoring or microelectronics?

00;57;18;06 - 00;57;41;24

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

Yeah, I don't directly. So, a lot of that those systems are actually managed by our systems group. That's under Doug Adams is the director of that. So but there are there are ship systems that are under my cognizance that are digital. Right. And so, you know, we're actually talking a little earlier over breakfast about, you know, kind of cybersecurity and cyber risk.

00;57;41;25 - 00;58;02;00

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

And you know, obviously as you, as you go to a more digital, you know, the systems on the ship are much more, you know, digitally, you know, kind of computer operated, computer based versus systems that I grew up on, which are valves and switches and very kind of, you know, not know digital electronics involved in any of that stuff.

00;58;02;03 - 00;58;17;05

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

You know, it opens up a set of under buildings that you've got to be eyes wide open about. Right. And part of that vulnerability is in the supply chain. Right. Like, I got to make sure that I'm not getting counterfeit parts. I got to make sure that there's not malicious code or anything like that put on those components.

00;58;17;06 - 00;58;47;28

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

Right. And so that's I mean, we understand that risk. And we're very focused on making sure that doesn't happen. Right. So the way you best protect yourself there is to make sure that all the things that go into that ship built here. Right. And companies that are US companies with US citizens doing that work. Right. And so but, you know, if you're, you know, a car manufacturer or you know, the other things, right, then they're looking to, you know, be as cost effective as they can.

00;58;47;29 - 00;59;05;15

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

That's their main driver. Right. And so they offshore a lot of stuff because it's cheaper. So, we're absolutely focused on that. The department is focused on it because it's not just a submarine issue. It's a kind of defense issue cuts across every single defense system we have in the Department of War. So, the department's 100% focus on that, right?

00;59;05;15 - 00;59;25;13

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

It even gets into things like rare earth minerals, all kinds of stuff like that. Right. So, we're particularly interested in that on the Columbia. Columbia is an electric drive right. Motor. So... So, things like that. We are definitely working with the department following, you know kind of providing our input into it.

00;59;25;14 - 00;59;45;20

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

We also, you know, make sure that we have a pretty robust supply chain certification processes. You need it for a nuclear-powered warship. It's really important that you know exactly what you're putting on the ship. And that is just as true for the steel and the valves as it is for the, you know, you know, the circuit cards and the microelectronics that are on the ship as well.

00;59;45;20 - 01;00;01;08

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

And so, so we're absolutely making sure that that is all done well and properly. And everything we have is certified appropriately and, you know, has all the things there's still risk there still vulnerabilities. Right. And so, we've got to make sure we're also looking at all that as well.

01;00;01;10 - 01;00;08;09

Peter Huessy

Sir, I want to thank you on behalf of NIDS and our folks here and our sponsors or an extraordinary job. Would you give a warm welcome?

01;00;15;12 - 01;00;21;20

Rear Admiral Todd Weeks

Thank you very much.

01;00;21;22 - 01;00;26;23

Peter Huessy

Thank you all for coming. Thank you.