



# Navy Warfare Development Center NEWSLETTER

FROM INNOVATION, A STRONGER FLEET

Spring 2026

## Forging the Future of Maritime Dominance: Insights from the 2026 Warfighting Development Center Leadership Huddle & Advanced Warfighting Summit



Leaders gather for a group photo at the the 21<sup>ST</sup> Bi-Annual Warfighting Development Center Leadership Huddle and Advanced Warfighting Summit (March 24-25, 2026) at Navy Warfare Development Center in Norfolk, Virginia to drive innovation, enhance collaboration, and advance integrated warfighting readiness. (U.S. Navy photo by Communication Specialists Ian Delossantos)

In March 2026, military leaders and defense experts gathered in Norfolk, Virginia, for the Warfighting Development Center Leadership Huddle and Advanced Warfighting Summit. Amid a rapidly changing maritime landscape, they explored how emerging technologies like AI, autonomous systems, and multi-domain operations are reshaping naval warfare.

The summit revealed the Navy's next strategic moves fusing cutting-edge innovation with bold leadership to stay ahead of evolving global threats. Discussions ranged from enhancing leadership to aligning new technologies with the Chief of Naval Operations' Campaign Plan. The message was clear: while technology drives change, it's the adaptability and vision of leaders that will secure maritime dominance. *more on page 2...*

### N5

Navy Warfare Development Center to Host 9th Annual Doctrine and Lessons Learned Workshops, Focusing on AI Integration and Cross-Domain Collaboration. *more on page 3...*

### N7

Strengthening Operational Capability: N7 Wargaming Division Completes Critical Wargames. MAKO Challenge 2026: U.S. Navy Reserve Sailors Sharpen Combat Skills and Strengthen Active-Duty Integration. *more on page 4...*

### N8

FLEX Program Update: Enhancing Fleet Capabilities in FY25 and FY26. *more on page 5...*

### EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

We congratulate awards, promotions, extend a warm welcome to new team members, and honor contributions of our retirees and those embarking on exciting new opportunities. *more on page 6...*

### **Forging the Future of Naval Warfare: Key Insights from the 2026 Summit**

The maritime domain is evolving at an unprecedented pace, requiring innovative strategies and adaptable leadership to maintain global dominance. The 2026 Warfighting Development Center (WDC) Leadership Huddle and Advanced Warfighting Summit, held at the Navy Warfare Development Center (NWDC) in Norfolk, Virginia, was a pivotal event for shaping the future of naval warfare.

Gathering top military leaders and defense experts from around the world, the summit provided a platform to discuss critical operational challenges, technological advancements, and strategic direction in an increasingly complex geopolitical landscape. The event underscored the importance of collaboration, leveraging cutting-edge technology, and refining leadership practices to enhance the Navy's warfighting capabilities.

#### **WDC Leadership Huddle: Fostering Stronger Leadership and Warfare Innovation**

The Leadership Huddle served as a forum for senior leaders from diverse warfare communities to collaborate on warfighting development. Discussions ranged from current training advancements to emerging tactics and technologies, with a focus on strengthening leadership across every domain.

Key topics included overcoming challenges, sharing lessons learned, and identifying future training and development needs. The Leadership Huddle reaffirmed the importance of cultivating agile, forward-thinking leaders who are prepared to confront and adapt to evolving threats.

#### **Advanced Warfighting Summit: Embracing the Technologies of Tomorrow**

At the core of the Advanced Warfighting Summit, conversations delved into the integration of multi-domain operations (MDO), artificial intelligence (AI), cybersecurity, and autonomous systems. The event highlighted how these cutting-edge technologies are revolutionizing naval operations, enabling faster decision-making, improved operational efficiency, and a decisive advantage over adversaries.

From AI-driven systems to autonomous vessels, the Navy is embracing innovation to increase response times and enhance information dominance. The discussions illuminated how these technologies, combined with human leadership, will define the next generation of naval operations.

#### **Aligning with the CNO's Campaign Plan**

A significant focus of the summit was the advancement of the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Campaign Plan, which guides the Navy's strategic priorities in areas such as readiness, modernization, and warfighting culture. Military leaders discussed how emerging technologies must align with the broader goals of the Campaign Plan to ensure the Navy remains ready and capable in an ever-evolving security environment.

#### **The Road Ahead: Technology and Leadership in Tandem**

The overarching message from both the Leadership Huddle and the Advanced Warfighting Summit was clear: while technology is vital, it is the leadership, adaptability, and warfighting culture that will ultimately drive success. In an era of constant change, the Navy must remain agile, with leaders who can adapt to emerging challenges and leverage the full potential of advanced technologies.

As the Navy continues to evolve, its success will depend on the ability to integrate innovative technologies with strong leadership and a unified, adaptive force. The future of maritime dominance will be defined by leaders who empower their teams, embrace new tools, and remain ready to respond to any challenge.

## **N5: LESSONS LEARNED & ANALYSIS / DOCTRINE**

### **Navy Warfare Development Center Hosted 9th Annual Doctrine and Lessons Learned Workshops, Focusing on AI Integration and Cross-Domain Collaboration**



*Navy Warfare Development Center (NWDC) hosted the 9th Annual Navy Lessons Learned Program (NLLP) and Doctrine Workshop, held from 21–23 April 2026 in Norfolk, Virginia. (U.S. Navy Photo by Communications Specialist Ian Delossantos)*

The 9th Annual Doctrine Workshop and Annual Navy Lessons Learned Program (NLLP) Workshop, hosted by NWDC, was held from 21–23 April 2026 in Norfolk, Virginia. These workshops provided an essential collaborative platform for advancing Navy doctrine and improving the NLLP, contributing to the continuous enhancement of operational readiness and innovation within the U.S. Navy.

The Doctrine Workshop, held 21-22 April, aimed at fostering collaboration to develop and refine Navy doctrine. This event served as a critical venue where Navy personnel and stakeholders gather to discuss and advance the policies, strategies, and operational guidelines that govern Navy operations. It's designed to ensure doctrine evolves in response to emerging challenges, new technologies, and evolving warfare tactics.



*Navy Warfare Development Center (NWDC) Navy Lessons Learned department paused for a photo during the 9th Annual Navy Lessons Learned and Doctrine Workshop, held from 21–23 April 2026 in Norfolk, Virginia. (U.S. Navy Photo by Communications Specialist Ian Delossantos)*

The Lessons Learned Workshop, held 22-23 April, focused on reviewing the current state of the NLLP, with an emphasis on identifying areas for improvement and enhancing the sharing of lessons across the Navy. This session was to ensure lessons from past operations, exercises, and experiences are effectively integrated into Navy practices, improving overall operational efficiency, and fostering a culture of continuous learning.

April 22 featured a joint session where both workshops converged for a special focus on Artificial Intelligence (AI). This session explored how AI can be implemented within Navy operations, bridging doctrinal processes, lessons learned analysis, and real-world operational realities. The discussion centered on the challenges and opportunities AI presents, both for advancing Navy doctrine and enhancing lessons learned mechanisms.

The overarching theme of this year's workshops was to emphasize cross-community collaboration, fostering stronger relationships and cooperation between different program stakeholders to address shared challenges in doctrine development and lessons learned implementation. With a specific focus on cross-domain initiatives, the sessions aimed to foster Navy-wide discussions on emerging doctrine and lessons learned topics, ensuring that the Navy remains adaptable and prepared for future operational challenges.

In summary, the workshops strengthen the Navy's ability to refine its doctrine, improve lessons learned processes, and integrate cutting-edge technologies like AI into its strategic frameworks. This event presented a key opportunity for stakeholders across various Navy programs to collaborate, share insights, and shape the future of naval operations.

## **N7: TRAINING, EXERCISES, AND WARGAMING**

### **Wargaming Division Strengthens Fleet Readiness Through Strategic Wargames**

In the past few months, the N7 Wargaming Division has played a pivotal role in enhancing Fleet staff readiness through a series of complex wargames. These exercises, designed to address both current and future operational challenges, have been essential in preparing our forces for high-stakes deployments and missions in an increasingly dynamic global environment.

The most recent of these efforts include the Expeditionary Strike Group-2 (ESG-2) 360, Carrier Strike Group-1 (CSG-1) 360, and Commander, Second Fleet 360 war games. Each of these exercises focused on different aspects of naval operations, ensuring personnel at every level are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and strategies needed to thrive in future scenarios.

#### **EXPEDITIONARY STRIKE GROUP-2 360 War Game: Enhancing Maritime Operations**

Kicking off on 17 November 2025, the ESG-2 360 war game was designed to challenge staff through a Great Power competition scenario. This high-level exercise focused on key maritime challenges, such as adversary capabilities, mission priorities, and risk to force. Over the course of the game, ESG-2 participants worked to identify operational constraints and lessons learned, refining their understanding of complex maritime environments. These insights are crucial for ESG-2 as they prepare for their Maritime Command Element certification, which will help shape future operational readiness.



#### **CARRIER STRIKE GROUP-1 360 War Game: Preparing for Complex Deployments**

In February 2026, the CSG-1 360 war game was conducted as part of the Strike Group's ongoing Optimized Fleet Response Plan (OFRP). This exercise, set against a near-peer adversary, was aimed at refining the CSG-1 staff's implementation of the Navy Planning Process (NPP). The focus was on tackling complex problem sets that would prepare both CSG-1 and Warfare Commander staffs for their upcoming deployments. The insights gained will ensure these teams are better equipped to manage the challenges of modern warfare and adapt swiftly to dynamic, high-pressure situations.

#### **COMMANDER, SECOND FLEET 360 War Game: Refining Staff Coordination**

Launched on 27 February 2026, the Commander, Second Fleet 360 war game specifically focused on preparing for the Vigilant Shield 26 exercise and refining the Maritime Operations Center (MOC) certification process. The main objective of this war game was to enhance coordination among Second Fleet staff and ensure that operational processes are standardized and efficient. This exercise played a critical role in shaping the readiness of staff, processes, and systems, further strengthening Second Fleet's operational capabilities in future missions.

#### **Looking to the Future**

These recent war games are just a few examples of the continuous commitment to improving Fleet readiness. The lessons learned and strategies developed during these exercises will directly influence the planning and execution of future operations. As adversary capabilities evolve and operational complexities increase, the ability to adapt and refine processes remains crucial to maintaining operational superiority.

The N7 Wargaming Division continues to be at the forefront of this effort, driving the integration of cutting-edge training into operational readiness. The division's role in orchestrating these exercises is essential in preparing our forces to meet the challenges of modern warfare head-on, ensuring that the Fleet is always ready, adaptable, and equipped to execute any mission.

## **N8: FLEET EXPERIMENTATION**

### **Enhancing Fleet Capabilities**

Last year, the Fleet Experimentation (FLEX) program made significant strides in enhancing Fleet capabilities, executing 11 initiatives across 11 global venues. These experiments were designed to directly inform and refine Fleet operations. Findings and recommendations were shared with key stakeholders, including Commanders, U.S. Fleet Forces Command, U.S. Pacific Fleet, U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa, and the Experimentation Community of Interest (OPNAV N944), ensuring actionable insights reached the decision-makers who shape Fleet priorities.

As a result of these initiatives, the Navy has issued new and updated doctrine and training materials directly to the Fleet, which are already making a measurable impact.

### **FY26 FLEX Campaign**

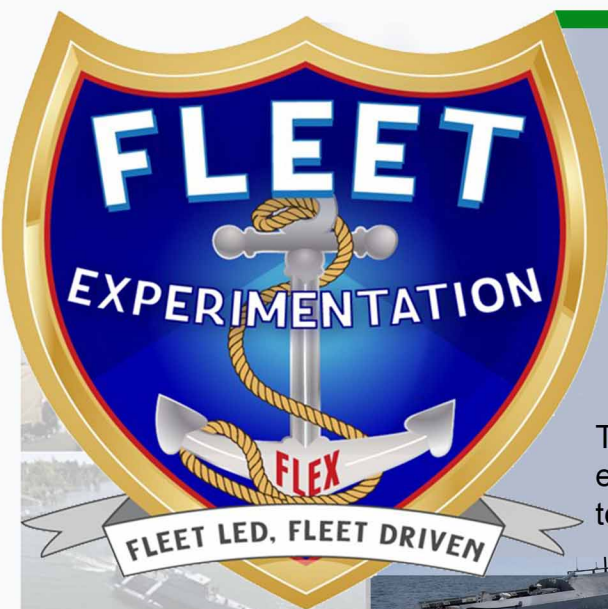
Building on last year's success, the FLEX program is poised for even greater growth in FY26, with 16 initiatives across 13 venues—ranging from at-sea experiments to tabletop exercises. This year's focus is on enhancing Fleet operator employment of emerging capabilities, directly supporting critical decisions related to development, transition, and delivery of these capabilities. The outcomes of these efforts will address the Fleet's most urgent warfighting gaps and inform the development of new tactics, ensuring the Navy stays ahead in its warfighting advantage.

### **New Experimentation Planning Guide: Streamlining Success**

In November 2025, NWDC released an updated Experiment Planning Guide (EPG), a vital tool for refining FLEX's impact. This revised guide provides standardized procedures to drive meaningful outcomes through every phase of the FLEX Campaign, including:

- **Design Multiyear Campaign:** Procedures for initiative intake and campaign design.
- **Conduct Fleet Experiments:** Best practices for experiment execution and data collection.
- **Share Results:** Methods for thorough analysis and reporting.
- **Drive Actions:** Strategies for ensuring that experiment findings lead to actionable recommendations.

The EPG is central to institutionalizing the FLEX Process, ensuring each experiment's impact is maximized and clearly communicated to all stakeholders.



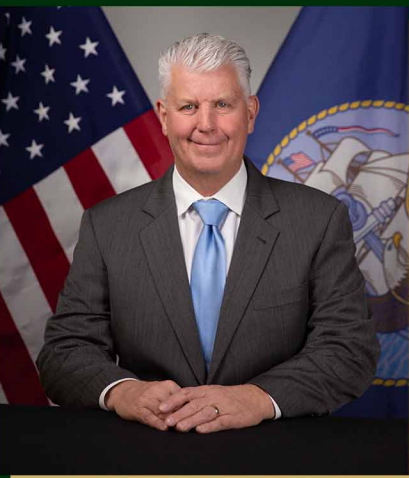
### **Looking Beyond: FY27+ Planning**

As NWDC N8 finalizes planning for the remaining FY26 experiments, the team is also working diligently on preparing for future fiscal years. Coordination with FLEX program owners and external stakeholders is already underway to identify initiatives for FY27 and beyond, ensuring the continued success of the FLEX Campaign and its contributions to Fleet readiness.

# FY25 Civilian of the Year Awards

## From Experiments to Impact: NWDC's FY2025 Senior Civilian of the Year

NWDC proudly names Mr. Larry McElvain (Mac), Experiment Manager, as the Senior Civilian of the Year for FY2025. Mac earned this recognition for his exceptional leadership in advancing the Navy's Fleet Experimentation efforts. He managed several high-priority projects, coordinating three major initiatives that garnered praise from top Navy leaders. Mac's coordination skills were pivotal in leading a team of 32 across 17 locations, driving innovations and guiding 13 emerging technologies. Notably, his efforts contributed to the operational deployment of a new command and control capability—an extraordinary milestone in Navy experimentation. "I'm honored to receive this recognition," Mac said. "It's been a privilege to work alongside a talented team, advancing critical capabilities for the Navy." Mac's technical expertise and dedication continue to enhance naval readiness and future warfighting capabilities.



Mr. Larry McElvain

## Recognizing Excellence in Mission Support

NWDC proudly announces Mrs. Agnieszka Dant, Financial Management Analyst, as FY2025 Junior Civilian of the Year. Agnieszka's exceptional performance from October 2024 to September 2025 was critical to supporting NWDC's mission and operations. Agnieszka's expertise in financial management, particularly in resolving complex travel issues, ensured the smooth processing of over 100 financial reports and 130 travel documents. Her proactive efforts were key to maintaining financial integrity and operational efficiency across the center. "I am honored by this recognition," said Agnieszka. "The success of our team reflects the support we all provide each day." We extend our sincere thanks to Agnieszka for her dedication and contributions, which continue to impact NWDC's success



Mrs. Agnieszka Dant

# Civilian of the Quarter Awards

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Mr. Larry McElvain



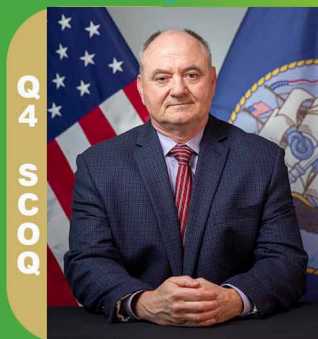
Mr. Rafael Soriano

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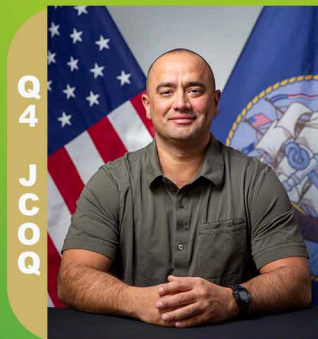


Mr. Steven Waltner

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Mr. Joel McElhannon



Mr. Sean Marvin

2  
6



Ms. Andrea Decanini

# Promotions



**Ms. Andrea Decanini**  
(N01C) – Apr 2025



**Mr. Charles Kelley**  
(N6) – Jun 2025



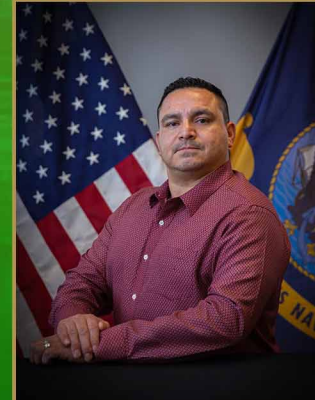
**Ms. Agnes Dant**  
(N10C) – Jul 2025



**Mr. Michael Willis**  
(N8) – Aug 2025



**Ms. Jessica Ruelas**  
(N1A) – Dec 2025



**Mr. Rafael Soriano**  
(N2) – Mar 2026

# On-the-Spot Awards

## FY 25



**Mr. Eric Arnold (N4)**



**Ms. Brittany Armand (N5D)**  
**Ms. Tiffany Morse (N5D)**



**Mr. Walter Mangum (N1S)**



**Mr. Christopher Riley (N5D)**



**Mr. Floyd Armstrong (N5A)**

## FY 26



**Mr. Bobby Roberts (N8)**



**Mr. George Anders (N8)**



**Ms. Raven Roberts (N6)**  
**Mr. Matthew Tucker (N6)**  
**Mr. Charles Kelley (N6)**



**Mr. Joscelyn Smith (N5A)**

# Hails



YN1 Brandon Cabell  
(N1A)



LT Leslie Koxvold  
(N5D)



LtCdr Oliver Tymn  
(N8-UK PEP)



CDR Flourney Phelps  
(Chaps)



CAPT Eric Wyatt  
(N2/3)



LtCol David Foti  
(N5C)



CDR Eric Dridge  
(N5D)



LT Robert Claude  
(N5D)



CDR Brendan  
McGunigle (C3F)



LCDR Anthony Fryer  
(N5H)



LCDR Niesha Townsend  
(N5H)



LCDR Casey Bolena  
(N5A)



Ms. Beth Frye  
(N7)



LS2 Raheem Jones  
(N4)



LCDR Heather Resue  
(C6F)



LT John Johnson  
(N8)



LT Christopher Lee  
(N7)



YN1 Lynnette Evans  
(N2/3)