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IN THE NEWS

CNO considers modernizing Oliver Hazard Perry-class frigates

June 16, 2017 | *Inside Defense*

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Related Expert: Bryan Clark

One solution to close the small surface combatant gap is to use Expeditionary Fast Transports or Lewis and Clark-class dry cargo ships for lower-end missions like humanitarian aid and security cooperation, Bryan Clark, a senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments told ITN June 13. "Because right now, the Navy has only got about half the number of surface combatants that it says it needs," he said. These include Littoral Combat Ships, minesweepers and patrol craft. The shortage has forced the Navy to use guided-missile destroyers and cruisers to pick up the slack, which burns up service life, Clark said. "I think part of what they're looking at is trying to ease the pressure on the cruisers and destroyers by bringing back some of these frigates to go back and do these really low-end missions," Clark said. There are about seven or eight Oliver Hazard Perry-class frigates that have not been transferred to other countries and are in decent shape, he said. The challenges the Navy will face revolve around manning, maintenance and paying for steaming days. Clark also said the surface warfare community is undermanned and the service would need about 1,000 sailors to outfit the retired frigates. Also, the hull, mechanical and electrical work needed to take the ships out of the boneyard will cost "tens of millions of dollars per ship," he said. "It's an expensive proposition to do that," Clark said.