



Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments

IN THE NEWS

The Surface Navy Needs to Fundamentally Reshape Itself to Defeat the Chinese Threat, Study Finds

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The U.S. Navy's surface fleet is completely misaligned to meet the threats the military says it must counter in the 21st century, and it's not correctly constructed to pursue its own strategy of "distributed maritime operations (<https://www.defensenews.com/naval/2017/07/21/us-navy-boss-network-everything/>)," according to new study from the Center of Strategic and Budgetary Assessments (<https://csbaonline.org/research/publications/taking-back-the-seas-transforming-the-u.s-surface-fleet-for-decision-centric-warfare>).

In the 118-page report, analysts Bryan Clark and Timothy Walton highlight fundamental shortfalls of the destroyer-heavy surface fleet and illustrate how assets that were once core strengths of the surface force — heavy-duty air defense radars and densely packed multimission warships (<https://www.defensenews.com/digital-show-dailies/surface-navy-association/2018/01/04/doubts-linger-as-us-navy-preps-to-order-10-more-flight-iii-destroyers/>) built around vertical launch systems once considered high capacity — have become vulnerabilities as adversaries have adapted to U.S. capabilities.

The service must dramatically increase its focus on bolstering the offensive punch of its surface combatants as well as fully embrace advances in electronic warfare and laser weapons to combat the anti-ship missile threat, according to the CSBA report. Furthermore, the fleet must find ways to take advantage of more passive sensors and reduce its reliance on giant radars that have been at the core of its air defense missions since the Cold War, the report noted.

The Navy's strategy to defeat China's anti-access, area-denial strategy also needs work. The service's stated plan to spread out forces over a broad theater rather than aggregate around an aircraft carrier won't prove effective unless the service makes big changes, the think tank's study found.