

2023 AOC Convention Keynote: Honorable Carlos Del Toro on the Navy Investing in Innovation

Secretary of the US Navy, the Honorable Carlos Del Toro, provided the first of Tuesday's Keynote Speeches at AOC 2023, providing an excellent overview of the Navy's EMSO initiatives and achievements.

Del Toro's speech covered a lot of ground, including ongoing deployments in the Mediterranean Sea, as well as the Red Sea, where three US Navy destroyers have recently downed 40 drones launched by Houthi forces in Yemen. He then moved on to the Navy's significant EW investments in programs such as Next Generation Jammer, Surface EW Improvement Program (SEWIP) and the Distributed Aperture Infrared Countermeasures (DAIRCM) system for rotary-wing platforms. He added, "While these are just a few of the many acquisition programs that we have focused on EW and EMS operations, we recognize that these projects take time to develop, to test, to adopt, and to field. As part of our department's aim to innovate at the speed of relevancy, several recently established organizations include the Naval Innovation Center in Monterey, the Marine Innovation Unit in Troy, NY, the Navy Disruptive Capabilities Office, the Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratories, Rapid Capabilities Office and Naval X – all of which complement our already established naval innovation ecosystem. They're engaging with industry to find commercial solutions to our fleet, and our forces critical capability gaps, including those in the electromagnetic spectrum."

One of the main messages in Del Toro's speech is the Navy's commitment to investing in industry to deliver new

capabilities. "We have invested an enormous amount of time and resources over the last two and a half years in innovation," he said, "because we recognize that since probably the 1980s innovation really has taken over in the private sector more so than in government itself. And it's our responsibility in government to embrace that innovation and bring that innovation as quickly as possible to the warfighter so that they can fulfill their mission."

One particular industry tier Del Toro has focused on is small businesses. He said that over the past year, the Navy has invested \$2 billion into small businesses. This has helped to add more than 1,000 small business suppliers into the Navy's industrial base, many of which are new to the Navy market.