

John Douglass, Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development, & Acquisition Speaks to *Program Manager*

Meet DSMC's First Graduate to Become a Service Acquisition Executive

John Douglass is a big man, an imposing figure, with an equally imposing resumé. He radiates a style of “make yourself at home,” easygoing affability that makes him easy to talk to and interview. However, those who would seek to exploit his good nature and extremely caring personality would soon learn this man possesses a keen mind, a wealth of experience at all levels of government, integrity, honesty, and an unswerving commitment to his workforce, particularly those warfighters upon whose lives his decisions may depend.

The Key is Trust

Douglass is a strong-minded man – one who has definite ideas on how he will manage the Navy’s acquisition program well into the next century. Throughout the interview, he constantly returned to the theme of trust – trust between his office, the Congress, and Senate; trust between him and his subordinates; trust between him and the Navy Comptroller; and trust between him and the professional acquisition workforce that he will do the right thing – not only for them [the warfighters and professional acquisition workforce], but also for the welfare of our nation.

Douglass, although a retired career Air Force officer, has a breadth of experience that reaches across all Services.

LeBoeuf, Holder of the Navy Chair, DSMC Executive Institute, conducted the interview with Secretary Douglass on behalf of the DSMC Visual Arts and Press.



He is a man who recognizes that he did not rise to the top alone, and credits many individuals throughout the interview for their key roles in his career progression. He attributes the bulk of his success to the senior leaders he was exposed to throughout his career and the people who trust his leadership: "I get a lot of positive feedback from working-level people that they trust me because they know that I've done their kinds of jobs. I draw strength from that trust."

FROM LEFT: JOHN DOUGLASS, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE NAVY FOR RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT, AND ACQUISITION IS INTERVIEWED IN HIS PENTAGON OFFICE ON JUNE 4 BY *PROGRAM MANAGER'S* REPRESENTATIVE, GIBSON LEBOEUF, HOLDER OF THE NAVY CHAIR, DSMC EXECUTIVE INSTITUTE.



Program Manager is indeed privileged to present our readers with this candid, reflective, at times personal, and undeniably knowledgeable interview with the Navy's Senior Acquisition Executive, John Douglass.

Program Manager: *Could you tell our readers about your background and the types of jobs and experience that led to your appointment as the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development, and Acquisition?*

Douglass: My career in the military basically covered two areas: First, the bulk of my early career was in pure acquisition jobs. I had a variety of acquisition jobs, starting out as a contracting officer. Along the way, I also became involved in test and evaluation, was a procurement staff officer, and basically, did lots of the jobs in a program office. For example, I was a Chief of Program Control; I was a Data Management Officer (remember the old Data Management Officer); and I've also been involved in logistics. I have an engineering degree so I've been in engineering jobs early on in my career. I've pretty much done most of the functions that are done in systems acquisition. Also, I've been a Base Procurement Officer; I've been in foreign procurement; I've spent a considerable amount of my career in the so called "black world" and "codeword" acquisition.

The second and latter part of my career involved some very, very high-level policy assignments as a senior colonel and as a general that dealt with foreign policy and with acquisition. It's very, very interesting how national security policy and foreign policy overlap with acquisition because it gets you into foreign procurement issues and why we really need the weapon systems that we acquire in the acquisition process. In my 28 years in the Air Force, I had a rich opportunity to learn the skills that are needed to be an acquisition leader.

After I retired from the Air Force, I went to the Senate and had the wonderful opportunity to work with Sena-

tor Sam Nunn, and work that side of the acquisition process. I was the lead staffer on the Science and Technology Subcommittee of the Senate Armed Services Committee and managed all the "black" programs for the Committee. And I was also Senator Nunn's foreign policy advisor for a large part of that time. If you go back and look at my military career – 19 years of the 28 years I was in the Air Force were in Joint programs, a large part of that time with the Navy – when you add it all up, it gave me some very unique qualifications to do this job. One of which, I might mention – to the best of my knowledge, I'm the first graduate of the Defense Systems Management College ever to become a Service Acquisition Executive (SAE). I think I'm the first one and the only one who has made it from the bottom of the acquisition system to the top.

Program Manager: *Yes, one could truly say that you are the only SAE that sort of "walked the talk" per se in the Navy. You really have held all the right jobs. That brings us to the next question, which you have already expanded on somewhat. Your background is predominantly Air Force as a career military man and then in several key Air Force positions of leadership in the Executive Branch. Would you care to say more about your past concentration of Air Force experience – how has that served you in formulating acquisition policy and strategy for the Navy?*

Douglass: I was fortunate enough in my Air Force career to be in acquisition policy billets on a number of occasions. I was the Director of Acquisition Policy for the Air Force during one tour of duty. From a macro level, acquisition policy was one of the items in my portfolio when I was on the National Security Council staff at the White House.

I know you're aware, Gib, that myself and another staffer by the name of Mike Donnelly, were the two people who came up with the idea of establishing the Packard Commission. Mike was working Goldwater-Nichols issues

JOHN W. DOUGLASS

Assistant Secretary of the Navy
(Research, Development, and Acquisition)

John W. Douglass was sworn in as the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development, and Acquisition on November 1, 1995. As the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development, and Acquisition, and Department of the Navy Service Acquisition Executive, he is responsible for all research, development, and procurement of defense systems satisfying the requirements of the Navy and Marine Corps. He is also responsible for all acquisition policy and procedures within the Department.



Douglass has extensive acquisition experience within the Congress, Department of Defense, and Executive Branch. His most recent assignment was with the Senate Armed Services Committee where he was Foreign Policy Advisor and Science and Technology Advisor to Senator Sam Nunn. He also served as the lead minority staff member, Subcommittee on Defense Acquisition and Technology, responsible for over \$15 billion in Technology Based Programs. He was the Committee's Minority coordinator for all codeword programs, and Minority staff member for Defense Conversion and Technology Reinvestment Programs.

At the Department of Defense, Douglass served as the Deputy, U.S. Military Representative to NATO; the Director of Plans and Policy and the Director of Science and Technology, Office of the Secretary of the Air Force.

Douglass also served as the Special Assistant to the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition. He managed all codeword acquisition programs and the codeword budget process for the Secretary. He was also the Secretary's personal speechwriter and managed the Secretary's liaison with Congress.

Within the Executive Branch, Douglass served as the Director of National Security Programs for the White House. As Director, he was responsible for formulating National Security Policy on the broad range of national security issues, and was former President Reagan's personal representative to the Packard Commission on Acquisition Reform.

Douglass completed 28 years of Air Force service as a brigadier general. He is a nationally recognized expert in systems acquisition with extensive experience as a contracting officer, engineering officer, test and evaluation officer, program control officer, and research director.

Douglass was born May 2, 1941, in Miami, Florida. He received his undergraduate degree from the University of Florida, and advanced degrees from Texas Tech University and Fairleigh Dickenson University, respectively. He has also done post-graduate work at the Cornell University Center for International Studies, where he was an Air Force Research Fellow with the Peace Studies Program.

Douglass has three children: William Mayer, Laura Noel, and Alexander Augustine. He and his wife reside in Alexandria, Virginia.

CHIEF PETTY OFFICER EDGAR DOUGLASS GAVE HIS SON, A FUTURE AIR FORCE GENERAL AND NAVY SENIOR ACQUISITION EXECUTIVE, THIS SAGE ADVICE: "SON, DON'T EVER FORGET THAT THE NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICERS RUN THE MILITARY...DON'T EVER SIGN FOR ANY GOVERNMENT PROPERTY UNLESS YOU DO AN INVENTORY."

for President Reagan, and I was working acquisition reform issues for President Reagan. Between Mike and me, we came up with this idea, based on some suggestions from industry, I might add; certainly credit needs to be given where credit is due. Mike and I put together some recommendations to President Reagan that he form a special commission to look at acquisition reform. To his credit, President Reagan accepted our recommendations. That background of policy at the top and actual acquisition experience at the bottom and the middle of the bureaucracy is what I think has been the foundation of my preparation for this job.

Program Manager: How would you describe your leadership style?

Douglass: First of all, I start from the basic premise that my years of negotiating contracts, writing Justifications and Findings, and making budgets are over. It's my job to lead, and that's what I try to concentrate on – actually being a leader. I am very, very keenly aware – I hope more aware than some people used to be when I was a young officer coming up – of the unique treasure of each individual in our system. Each person that's in the acquisition system brings unique things and has unique skills and qualities, and I think it's my job to motivate those people to be all that they can be for the United States Navy. I'm not an acquisition official that's going to try to be heavy-handed with people or embarrass people or make them ashamed of what they have done. I want to concentrate more on the positive.

I have to tell you that in the seven months that I have been in this job, I have found the Navy's acquisition team to be an excellent team. These young program managers that are coming up through our system are really top notch. They're much better than the skill levels that existed when I was a young officer. I think if they know they're going to get fair treatment from me and an honest hearing



of their problems, they will be the same way with their people. I think leaders set the tone for organizations, even big organizations. I try to be ever mindful of that – that I am the leader. I try to set the right tones; to motivate our people in a positive way; and keep their enthusiasm up. I also try to make sure that they know they're going to be treated fairly, no matter how tough the problem they bring to me. I'm not going to shoot the messenger; I'm going to try to concentrate on solving the problems.

We have a document that's given out in the Navy (I believe it's also given out in the Department of Defense); it's called the Program Managers Bill of Rights. I believe very strongly in that. I think if you could characterize my leadership style, it's the style of a person who has been there and done most of these acquisition jobs. I think I have a little more insight than maybe some other people do of what the frustrations and difficulties of life in the middle and the bottom of the bureaucracy are. I try to make sure my people know that I'm aware of those things, and that I'm here to help them solve the problems that they need to solve to make our Navy the best it could be.

Program Manager: *We couldn't agree with you more. We've got some really superb program managers in the acquisition system right now. What do you think are the key characteristics that make for a successful program manager?*

Douglass: I think program managers have to be leaders; I think they have to be innovators, especially now. This is a unique period of our history where we're basically at peace with the world. It's very difficult to see where future military requirements are going to take us, so innovation has to be one of the foremost qualities. Certainly they have to be able to work with people. Being a program manager involves bringing together a lot of different types of folks into a common goal. They have to not only lead as I said



" I want to be No. 1; I want the Congress to perceive us as No. 1; I want the people of the United States to perceive us as No. 1. That's my objective."

before, but they have to be able to get along and understand the views of men and women from all walks of life, and all races, religions, and creeds.

I think they also have to be educated people. The days are past in which you can just come in from the operational forces and be a program manager with no training. I don't allow that to happen in the Navy – at the top or the bottom. There have been instances where senior officers have been recom-

mended to me that had no acquisition experience, and I turned them down because of that lack of acquisition experience. I believe in promoting the top levels of acquisition management from among those who are qualified. I think our program managers have to set the tone there – they have to be the best at their level.

Program Manager: *We noted you've been the Navy SAE for about seven months now. What is the biggest difference you notice between working on Capitol Hill with the Senate Armed Services Committee and your duties as the Navy SAE? Was there anything that surprised you?*

Douglass: First, let me say that my experience on the Hill was colored by the fact that I worked for probably the finest Senator in the United States Senate, and that's Senator Sam Nunn. His leadership of the Armed Services Committee is so large, and so important over the last 24 years (as I recall that he's been over there), that working for him is not an average experience; it is absolutely working for the best of the best when it comes to Defense. I came from a staff that was a well-managed, elite staff where there was a lot of camaraderie, a lot of working together, a lot of teamwork. I was not the leader there; I was just a member of the team.

Here I am the leader. So there is a big difference from being a team member to being a leader. I can tell you that leadership is a lonely thing. I find this job enormously challenging; it is much broader than my job in the Senate. In the Senate, I had a certain portfolio – it was a very interesting and diverse portfolio because it included science and technology, acquisition, the "black" programs, and foreign policy – but it was not as diverse as the job of being the acquisition official of the U.S. Navy. Here we have airplane programs, surface ship programs, submarine programs, space programs, communications programs, and all of those programs associated with the Marine Corps.

If you look at the responsibility of the Navy acquisition official, it is a microcosm of the Department of Defense. I don't think there is anything that the Department of Defense does that we don't do somehow on a smaller scale within the Department of the Navy. That means that the breadth of this job is huge, and frankly it takes a lot of time; the hours are long. So I guess the major difference is going from being a member of the team to being the leader – and as I said, that's a lonely job at times.

Program Manager: *What are your goals and vision for Navy acquisition?*

Douglass: My goals are to make Navy acquisition the best that it can be. When people think of acquisition excellence in the government, I want them to think of the U.S. Navy. That's fairly simple. I want to be No. 1; I want the Congress to perceive us as No. 1; I want the people of the United States to perceive us as No. 1. That's my objective.

I believe for that to happen, I believe that policy of striving to be excellent, striving to be the best within the rules and regulations that all government people have to follow, and striving to be as open, honest, and straightforward with the American people and with the Congress are my goals. I have sub-goals in certain areas that are unique to the Navy, but in the macro sense, that's my objective.

Program Manager: *What do you see as the biggest challenge facing the Navy in acquisition?*

Douglass: I think the biggest challenge facing the Navy in acquisition is maintaining the Navy's maritime industrial base. I don't think people understand how much pressure the maritime industrial base is under. For a long, long time there hasn't been, frankly, much attention paid to it. Some of my predecessors in this job and others who advised me – you know, the ones who graciously come around and tell you how to run your job – they told me not

to worry about things like the commercial shipbuilding in the United States, for example. I don't agree with that advice – although I respect it – I don't agree with it.

I firmly believe that for the U.S. Navy to have a long-term future, we have to pay attention to the industrial base. We have to make sure that our maritime industrial base – our ability to build and repair capital ships – is maintained. There's a lot of catching up to do in this area. As you probably know, I spend a considerable amount of my time working with other agencies in the government and with the Congress to raise people's awareness that if we don't start pulling together as a nation to invigorate our maritime industrial base, we're going to have some very serious problems downstream.

Program Manager: *Let's turn to acquisition reform if we may. Let us ask you for your impressions of acquisition reform in the Navy. Do you believe it will succeed, or is it already succeeding? How tolerant do you think the system will be of failure?*

Douglass: I think it is succeeding, and I think a large dose of credit goes to my predecessor, Nora Slatkin, who is over in the Central Intelligence Agency now. Nora laid a wonderful foundation for me to follow on. As you know, Gib, because of my previous experience in the Air Force and because of my experience on the Packard Commission, I've been one of the leaders within the National Security Community in pressing for acquisition reform. I pressed for it when I was in the Senate; I pressed for it when I was in the White House. I am very proud to say that when I arrived in this position, the Navy was committed to acquisition reform in a way that very, very pleasantly surprised me. The credit for that goes to Nora Slatkin who, as I said, laid a wonderful foundation for me to build on. I am building on that. I'm doing everything I can to keep up the momentum on acquisition reform.

As you know, we just had Acquisition Reform Standdown Day. I made six

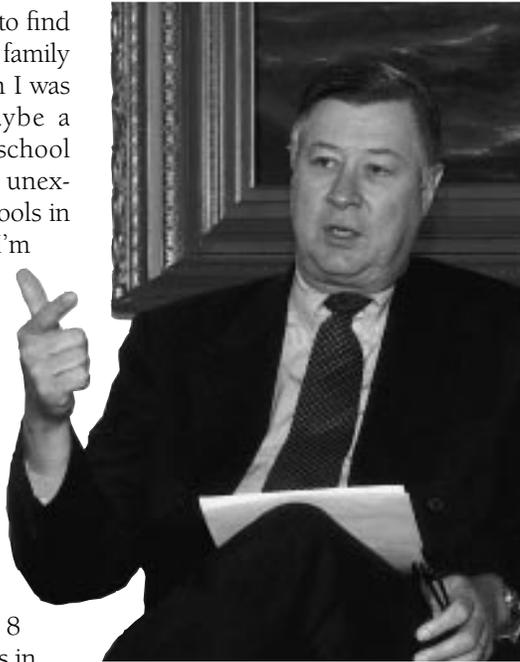
speeches that day, plus sent a videotape out to some 50 to 60 thousand Navy people all over the world who were doing the standdown that day. I am committed to acquisition reform. But, I think it is only fair and just that I give a lot of the credit for progress in the recent years to Nora who had this job before me.

Program Manager: *How would you categorize the health of the acquisition workforce itself?*

Douglass: Navy acquisition is going through some traumatic times. Probably the most fundamental thing that's happening that would fall into the "health of the workforce" category is that for the first time in 200 plus years, Navy acquisition is being moved out of the Washington area. Naval Air Systems Command (NAVAIR) is going down to Patuxent River Naval Air Station; Naval Supply Systems Command (NAVSUP) has already moved up to Pennsylvania; Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command (SPAWAR) is going out to San Diego; and Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA) is going over to the Navy Yard. This is a lot of disruption. A lot of people are having to move, and we are going to lose a lot of people because of that move. It is the nature of our civilian workforce to put down roots in the community. And when it comes time to moving all the way across the country like our SPAWAR team is going to have to do, this presents a lot of very difficult problems to a lot of people. And we're going to lose a lot because of that. So I think we will emerge from the next three to four years in which we go through this move as a leaner, younger force. And probably one that needs to be trained, because a lot of the people that we're going to lose are our best, our older, more experienced, more qualified people. We're going to have to pay attention to that problem.

It's really important, Gib, for your readers to understand that I do not in any way begrudge people who feel they can't make these moves. We're

going to do everything possible to find a way to keep them in the Navy family in some way or the other. When I was a lieutenant colonel, or maybe a colonel, my son was in high school and I received orders to move unexpectedly. He had been in 18 schools in 10 years, and he said, "Dad, I'm not going." As a result, he had to board his last two years in high school. I was a single father at the time, and that put a lot of pressure on me. I had to really hustle. I can remember many weekends when I would leave Washington about 4 o'clock in the afternoon and drive all the way to Ithaca, New York, at 80 miles an hour so I could see an 8 o'clock football game that he was in.



Those kind of pressures are difficult for families, and some of them will just say, "We can't do that." And I understand that. I'm dedicated to seeing that as long as the Navy acquisition team is under my stewardship, that we make it through these moves and protect the best interests of all of our people to the best of our ability. But it's going to stress us, and we're going to have to manage our way through this.

Program Manager: *Difficult times indeed. Let us turn to Goldwater-Nichols as you mentioned earlier, and ask you for your impression of the Program Executive Officer system or the PEO System and how it's working. Do you think it's a good system that was set up?*

Douglass: When you ask me that, that's like asking a guy how his kids are growing! I remember the day that Bill Perry, Paul Kaminski, and I sat over there in Lafayette Square with Dave Packard, and we cooked up the idea of the PEO system. There's an admiral who used to be the Chief of the Cruise Missile Project named Walt Locke, who was also instrumental in helping us come up with this. I feel a lot of ownership in the PEO system, and I think it's working fine in the Navy. It is a new kind of system that has required all of the Services to

"To the best of my knowledge, I'm the first graduate of the Defense Systems Management College ever to become a Service Acquisition Executive. I think I'm the first one and the only one who has made it from the bottom of the acquisition system to the top."

adjust to different ways of management, but I have found it working well in the Navy.

The PEOs we have in the Navy, both the military and civilian PEOs, are very responsive to my direction. They work well with their Systems Command colleagues. They report directly to me, but they draw a lot of support from the Systems Commands. I have three wonderful Systems Command Commanders right now who understand this PEO system and make it work. It boils down to people's attitudes and the senior leadership in the organization, and I'm happy to tell you that we have the right kind of leadership in the Navy. Our leadership is buttressed by very, very supportive leadership from our Secretary and our Under Secretary of the Navy, who make my job a lot easier. So below me I've got great people, and above me I've got great bosses. With that kind of support, I think I can report to everyone that the PEO system is working in the Navy.

Program Manager: *Based on your comments on the PEO system and the Navy acquisition system, we almost think we know the answer to our next question, but we're going to ask it anyway. The Roles and Missions Commission Report and others have recommended that the creation of a central acquisition organization could result in better program management. What are your thoughts or your feelings about going that route?*

Douglass: I'll give you an unambiguous answer. I don't agree with it. I've never agreed with it. I didn't agree with it when I was in OSD; I didn't agree with it when I worked for Senator Nunn in the Congress; and I don't agree with it now. So you can't accuse me of not agreeing with it just because I'm in a Service Acquisition Executive's job. Everybody knows (I think over the years everybody has come to this conclusion) that acquisition works best when it is decentralized to the lowest level where intelligent decisions can be made and when it's closest to the warfighters.

When you take it away from the Military Departments and give it to some centralized bureaucracy, in my opinion, you are separating it from the warfighters; you're building ever bigger and wider gaps between the warfighters and the acquisition community; and what are you gaining? It's very difficult to see what you gain from this centralization because, certainly you can't say you're for diffusion of responsibility at the lowest levels when you go to such extreme centralization. So I'm not an advocate for that, I never have been an advocate, and I don't mind publicly stating that.

Program Manager: *You're right. No one could accuse you of giving us an ambiguous answer to that question. Let's change the subject to research and development. What are some major ongoing research and development projects that the Navy is involved with?*

Douglass: We have a large R&D Program, and they're all important projects to the future of the Navy, but there are some which I think are uniquely interesting right now. For example, our late CNO, Admiral Mike Boorda and I got a project started called the Arsenal Ship program, which I think is a very, very innovative program. It's a joint program between the Navy and the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), and we're going to do some enormously innovative things.

We're using a lot of the new tools that have been provided under Dr. Kaminski's leadership like Cost As An Independent Variable (CAIV), focusing on life cycle costs. We've set a unit price for the ship, for example, and we've told industry what the unit price is going to be. We've said "design the ship around that." We're focusing on life cycle costs by saying, "you can only have a crew of 50 or less. If you can't design it to operate with 50 or less, don't send your bid in." We're going to use other instruments' authority that DARPA has in the law to make the award. And so we might have a very, very unique and sort of

out-of-the-ordinary contract structure if that's what makes sense for us. So that's one interesting project.

Another program that is taking full advantage of state-of-the-art technology is the New Attack Submarine. As you know, there has been considerable debate about whether the New Attack Submarine is incorporating the latest in technology. I am very confident that it does. There are two things in particular that make this program very exciting. First is the flexibility designed into the submarine both in terms of mission adaptability and future technology insertion. The second is the endorsements received from some of the most prestigious Americans in the science and technology community on the design concept. These two things give me a lot of confidence in the New Attack Submarine program.

To address any concerns about the design, we've set up a Submarine Technology Oversight Committee co-chaired by Dr. Kaminski and me, which includes other senior leaders from within the Navy, the Department of Defense, and industry. This will ensure that no important technology is overlooked. So, I'm very comfortable with the direction we are going on the New Attack Submarine.

We're just starting on our research and development for the SC 21 and our new carrier, the CVX – those are going to be enormously interesting. On the aviation side, the F/A-18 E/F is doing very well, and we're a partner with the Air Force on the Joint Strike Fighter. These are all important projects. Our Marine Corps team has some wonderful new projects – the AAV, for example. I don't know if you've ever seen it, but that's an amphibious landing vehicle that goes so fast you could water-ski behind it. That's going to be an incredible addition to the Marine Corps' amphibious assault capability. The V-22 is, of course, very important to the Corps. Then there's a host of things that involve new ways to bring information to our fleet.

One of the most innovative programs we have is our Global Broadcast Service. By now everybody knows about these pizza-sized antennas where you can receive 200 channels of TV. Well, we're going to have those on our ships. We'll be able to increase the bandwidth to our ships, I believe, by a thousand percent. So you can imagine a ship commander out there, instead of having a very slow data rate, he or she is going to have this wonderful video receive capability to get intelligence, overall theater awareness, and all kinds of things across what would be the equivalent of two or three hundred channels of TV.

Again, there are a lot of innovative things going on in the Navy today. Probably the most innovative right now is the Arsenal Ship. I like to bring that one up because it makes me think of all the positive things that Mike Boorda stood for.

Program Manager: *What do you see for the future of Joint programs, and in your view is the Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC) an effective tool for managing Joint programs?*

Douglass: Wow! That's a big one. I think Joint programs are the wave of the future. The smaller the defense budget gets, the more it forces us into the natural economies that come from Joint programs. But they are very, very difficult to manage. They're on an order of magnitude more difficult than a single-Service program because you're working in a multi-dimensional management issue.

Incidentally, I think Joint programs with our allies are the wave of the future. One of the tremendous things that Dr. Perry and Dr. Kaminski don't get a lot of credit for is all the work they do in helping us set up Joint programs with our allies. As we speak, Paul is over in Europe right now working on this, and he does a terrific job in helping lay the foundation for Joint programs with our allies that make sense for the Services. I give him great credit for that. I know that he is oper-

ating under the guidance and leadership of Dr. Perry who believes in this. I stayed in touch with Dr. Perry while he was not in government, and he and I corresponded on that subject. I know that he is a tremendous supporter of working together with our allies. As I stated, I definitely think Joint programs are the wave of the future.

As to how the JROC is working, I think it's, in general, working quite well. We have a new Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joe Ralston. As you probably know, Joe, Paul Kaminski, and I were all colonels together. Joe's a terrific guy, and I have enormous confidence in him. I think his leadership in the JROC will ensure its continued success. But they have their work cut out for them too because it's not easy sometimes to harmonize the needs of the three Services. One of the great positive things that has happened in Joint programs during the seven months I've been here is the Tactical UAV program, which we in the Navy manage, but it's a Joint program between the Army and the Navy. And let me tell you, getting the requirements for that thing together was a formidable task. We had to get the Army, the Navy, and the Marine Corps altogether on the same wave length, and that took a long time to do. To his credit, the former Vice Chairman, Bill Owens, was instrumental in making that happen. We have just recently made the award, we have an Advanced Concept Technology Demonstration (ACTD) on that, and it's going to be a dynamite program. But never easy...

Program Manager: *Here's a subject that's near and dear to every senior leader's heart – the budget. We know that it's an issue you are tackling in the Navy. Do you feel that you are adequately funded to do the job for which you are charged as the ASN(RD&A)?*

Douglass: In general, yes. The budget, however, is a complex issue, and there are ways in the Navy we can improve our administration in the acquisition budget. I'm committed to working



“ I am very, very keenly aware...of the unique treasure of each individual in our system. Each person that's in the acquisition system brings unique things and has unique skills and qualities, and I think it's my job to motivate those people to be all that they can be for the United States Navy.”

with our Navy Comptroller, Debbie Christie, to make those things happen. I've said it before and I will say it again publicly: I am not in favor of the Comptroller having the unilateral authority to pull money out of our acquisition programs. I think that is a decision that should be made after consultation with me. If you go back and read the Packard Commission report, you will find they wrote a whole chapter on program stability. Of all the things the Packard Commission told the Department of Defense to do, the one piece that didn't get implemented was program stability, and I'm dedicated to doing that.

I want to also emphasize a couple of points about the budget that I think are important. One of them is that I've been very, very pleasantly surprised – not surprised, but then again maybe surprise is the right word – at the positive role and interaction that Debbie Christie, the Navy Comptroller, has played in working with me on this issue. Early on I went to Debbie and explained to her that I thought program stability had not been implemented by the Department, and that I wanted to make some changes in this area. She has worked with me. We have a Process Action Team that's joint between her and me to try and figure out how to make the acquisition budget process go smoother.

You may know that in the past, the Navy had a process in which the Navy Comptroller held what they called quote “hearings,” and the acquisition people came over. The posture that they tried to put up was that they were like senators and congressmen, and my acquisition people were somehow some “underlings” who had to come crawling on their knees begging for money. We are not going to do that as long as I'm the Navy Acquisition Executive. We will meet and discuss the budget as equals, and my people are not going to be called to any quote “hearings.” So I'm very, very upbeat about the fact that on both sides, in the Comptroller community and in the acquisition community, we're

working together to get at this issue of stability in our acquisition budget.

Now I have to tell you that one of the things we're trying to do, and I mentioned this as a part of my leadership style, is build leadership and build team work based on trust. There's an enormous amount of distrust when it comes to the budget. Every time I give a speech to my acquisition community, a young officer or a young woman or a young man will stand up and ask me, "what are you doing to stop this unilateral taking of money away from our programs?" When I explain to them that I'm fighting for their money and fighting for an equal say at the table when it comes to making financial decisions, I get a standing ovation. That tells you how much people in the acquisition community care about this, and it gives you some idea of the legacy of distrust that is there.

And I might add, too (this may come as no surprise to your readers), that people in this building [Pentagon] have been trained to be distrustful of the Congress, and I think that is a legacy that we absolutely have to stop. We are a democracy; we are a people's Navy; and we are fully open to scrutiny from anybody. So I am trying to make a fundamental change of attitude to bring openness and trust into the acquisition system. I believe the budget is one of the areas where we need to do this. I'm happy to report that the senior leadership of the Navy across the board has been supportive of me. Our operators are very supportive of this. Vice Adm. T. J. Lopez, our Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Resources, Warfare Requirements, and Assessments, has been a champion at my side on this issue of program stability. So there's a good news story developing here, but it's going to take a lot of work.

Program Manager: *We think it's really commendable on your part that you're tackling this issue because it's an issue that really wasn't a part of the acquisition reform agenda, yet is a major issue and really needs focus and attention.*

We're going to switch over to a more sensitive topic now, and we're going to ask you what may turn out to be a personal question. It has to do with the fact, as you well know, that the Navy has experienced considerable upheaval in the past few years ranging from the Tailhook investigation, various scandals at the Naval Academy, to the recent suicide of the CNO. From your vantage point, how would you categorize overall the morale of the Department of the Navy?

Douglass: I think morale is good. There are some things that people need to take into consideration when they look at this from a macro point of view. One of them is that the Navy/Marine Corps team has become America's "911" force since the end of the Cold War. We are steaming more hours today than we steamed during the Cold War. We have a higher percentage of our ships at sea than we had during the Cold War. Our people are stressed more and stretched farther than they were during the Cold War. We're carrying this heavier burden now at a time when everything is changing. All of us know how difficult it is to manage in an era of change.

I think this period of change brings to the senior managers of all of the Departments, not just the Navy but all of the Departments, an extra burden of leadership because in the Cold War, things were very structured. We knew who we were, and we knew who the enemy was. Now we're in this very ambiguous period called the "post-Cold War" period. The Press doesn't even have a name for this period that we're in; they call it the "post-Cold War" period. This brings a unique set of pressures on the top leadership of any big organization.

I know our CNO felt those pressures strongly. He was widely loved by the men and women in the Navy, me included. I thought the guy was wonderful, and still do think he's wonderful. But his loss to the Navy, I think, reminds us all of what a heavy burden leadership carries; it reminds us of the loneliness of command. It is very diffi-

cult to sit here at the top of a big organization, in this very room where we're talking, day in and day out, making half a dozen decisions involving millions of dollars. While you have a lot of people who will help you and advise you, the cold sober fact that you are the decision authority creates a kind of loneliness that you can only understand if you've been in such a position. I think when you back up and look at the tremendous change that's taking place in the Navy/Marine Corps team today, and the tremendous stresses that our team is under because we are America's "911" force right now, our morale is good in light of that.

The acquisition community has its own stresses. We spoke about these impending moves across the country; these have an effect on morale. My sense is that our people trust our leadership. I get a lot of positive feedback from working-level people that they trust me because they know that I've done their kinds of jobs. I draw strength from that trust. I don't mind saying that to your readers. Young people come up to me every day and say things like, "Mr. Douglass, it's great to see a former contracting officer up there," or "it's great to see a guy that's been in a program office occupying your position." That is the psychic feedback that buoys me up and allows me to work the long hours and make the tough decisions. I feel that we've got some very serious challenges, but I think our morale is fundamentally good. It's good because we have great people who don't mind making the sacrifices they're asked to make.

And we have good leadership. We have a tremendous Commandant of the Marine Corps right now. I used to give a lot of speeches about what a dynamic duo Admiral Boorda, former Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), and General Krulak, Commandant, U.S. Marine Corps were, and I know that our new CNO will pick up that mantle and do a wonderful job as well. But I want to make sure I mention the lead-

ership of our Commandant because it's easy to not think of the Marines when you've had a tragedy like what happened to Admiral Boorda.

Program Manager: *What would you consider to be the best advice you ever received, be it from a parent, colleague, or even a mentor?*

Douglass: My dad was a chief petty officer. When I came on active duty he told me a couple of things. One thing he said was, "Son, don't ever forget: the noncommissioned officers run the military." That's good advice. I've never forgotten that. He also told me, "Son, don't ever sign for any government property unless you do an inventory." And when you think about that for a minute, the principle there is indicative of what makes chiefs great. It has served me in good stead. I think along the way, my career has been influenced by a lot of wonderful people. I've had an opportunity to learn from senior leadership. I've worked for the Chief of Staff of the Air Force; I've worked for the Under Secretary for Research and Engineering; I've also worked over at the White House under President Reagan's leadership. So I've had an opportunity to work with a lot of great Americans. It's somewhat hard to single out one piece of advice or one thing that has influenced me the most, but I think you can look back over my career and say it has been influenced by the outstanding dedication to our country of a lot of senior American leaders. I was fortunate enough to get exposed to that at a fairly young age. Hopefully, some of it rubbed off.

Program Manager: *Obviously it has. Is there one final parting word that you have for the men and women who are working in our program offices?*

Douglass: Yes, I think the one thing that I'd like to leave in their minds is be innovators, be leaders, but remember that leadership involves the human element. You have to treat all your people as human beings. I don't believe in



"...We have to be absolutely open in what we do — completely open. I am fundamentally dedicated to the principle that the U.S. Navy is a people's Navy. There is nothing — no letter that I ever signed, no document I have generated under my leadership (other than classified information) — that I would not want to share with the American public or with the Congress."

the old theory "X" style management. I'm a theory "Y" guy, and I guess I got it from DSMC. You'll probably love this so I can tell you. In fact, that's one of the great things that I remember. There's a letter outside my office (I don't know if you've heard the famous story of the letter) in which some Air Force general tried to get me into a lot of trouble when I was a major. I was doing the right thing; I was trying to share money between two Services. This was a very short-sighted, heavy-handed letter that could have ruined my career, but it didn't ruin my career because there were other senior members of the Air Force who recognized that we shouldn't treat our people that way. That left an indelible mark on me. Let's don't shoot the messenger, and let's don't take people who are really trying to do the right thing for America and treat them poorly. And so I keep that letter on my wall just so that my young officers can read it and know that when I was a young officer, I wasn't always treated the way I think people ought to be treated today.

Program Manager: *We kind of define that today as "risk management or risk-taking"*

Douglass: We have to be able to let our people take risks. And we can't kill them every time they fail. And we can't kill them when they give us bad news. We ask them to give us the news, and we can't shoot them when they do. We certainly shouldn't punish our people for being fair in joint-Service environments. Basically, that letter was written to me because I was an Air Force officer working for a Navy admiral, and the perception of this Air Force general was that I should have been unfair to the Navy and biased toward the Air Force because that was my home Service. And that's just not right. We take an oath as officers to support and defend the Constitution of the United States and those officers appointed above us by the President. And I don't think, the last time I saw the oath, that it mentions the color of the uniform.