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CANES Will Make Navy IT Affordable, RFP Expected This Month, Official Says

By Geoff Fein

Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command (SPAWAR) had hoped to issue the request for proposals (RFP) in January. However, officials decided to delay the release after reviewing industry comments to the draft RFP.

SPAWAR issued a draft RFP in December and industry responses were due Jan. 9 (Defense Daily, Jan. 13).

"Due to extensive industry and peer review comments to the draft RFP, additional time was added to the final CANES RFP development cycle to ensure that the needs of the government, as well as industry expectations, were clearly articulated," Vice Adm. Harry Harris, deputy Chief of Naval Operations communications networks and deputy chief of information, told Defense Daily Wednesday.

"This additional time taken for the RFP should reduce any potential ambiguity or delays for clarification post RFP delivery," he added. "The program office is confident that it will be released before the end of the month."

The additional time spent on the CANES RFP will have no impact on other forecasted milestones, Harris said.

"Source selection is still scheduled between March and December 2009 with industry down-selections scheduled from [approximately] May to June 2011," he added.

CANES will provide 75,000 seats on 192 ships and submarines and nine Maritime Operation Centers (MOC). Full fielding of CANES Increment 1 should be complete by 2016, Harris said.

Several afloat network programs will merge into CANES, including the Integrated Shipboard Network Systems (ISNS), the Combined Enterprise Regional Information Exchange System (CENTRIXS), the Sensitive Compartmented Information (SCI) Local Area Network, the Submarine Local Area Network (SUBLAN) and the Video Information Exchange System (VIXS).

The ISNS program provides a bridge to CANES, Harris added.

Additionally, multiple increments provide increased capabilities as technology becomes mature and affordable. And four-year hardware and two-year software refresh cycles will be employed in CANES, he added.

Hardware, such as racks on carriers, could be reduced by as much as 50 percent, Harris noted.

"Putting a number on the number of racks is more difficult since the number of applications/programs migrating to CANES is increasing and the final size of CANES is unknown," he said.

Official manpower estimates through the Navy Manpower Analysis Center (NAVMAC), SPAWAR institute and N1 (Navy Manpower, Personnel, Training and Education) are still being developed and validated. "All projections point to a reduction of network administrators, but the exact number is still being developed," Harris said.

Earlier this week, Harris told attendees at the annual AFCEA Naval IT Day that the Navy is building CANES because the service must provide sailors with command and control (C2) technologies and advanced networking capabilities that are both affordable and integrated into the Naval Network Environment (NNE) architecture.

"The Navy at times has been late to the IT game," Harris said.

But with CANES, the Navy expects to power a new technology that includes Service Oriented Architectures (SOA), enterprise solutions, innovative security approaches, and integrated software in a manner that is consistently applied across all Navy networks, he added.

"We will do this in a way that greatly improves our ability to affordably keep IT services current," Harris said.

The key driver for CANES, Harris added, is the high cost of sustaining stovepiped C2 systems.

"A typical aircraft carrier today has upwards of 60 different networks each with its own operating system and support personnel," he said.

Consolidating these networks into a manageable common computing environment isn't just a benefit for sailors, it's the only way the Navy is going to be able to pay for personnel to support this, while using the improved capabilities inherent in the new operating system, Harris said.

"We are building CANES to stay agile. Waiting for HM&E maintenance periods to upgrade IT systems is a bad strategy, but it has been our strategy," he said. "Our sailors expect us to do better and we will."

A number of defense companies are working on CANES efforts, including Boeing [BA], BAE Systems, Lockheed Martin [LMT], Northrop Grumman [NOC], and Raytheon [RTN].