



Photos by Greg Jasmin

AD1 Ramon Rivera, power-plants branch LPO at AIMD Mayport (right), talks with RAdm. Wally Massenburg and other “Boots on the Ground” officials about parts needed to improve the turnaround time on engine components.



BOOTS ON THE GROUND: Maintainers Help to Improve Aviation Non-Deployed Readiness

By Ltjg. Anne Cossitt and Eddie Riley

In a new effort to improve readiness, maintainers have been urged to be candid when talking to senior leadership. “We have 52 engines awaiting gas generators right now. I just got one in yesterday and I got one last week,” said AD1 Ramon Rivera, power-plants LPO at AIMD Mayport. He also said the turnaround time for a T-700 engine is about 33 days in the shop, but that could be reduced to five to seven days if parts were available.

To increase non-deployed readiness of aviation squadrons throughout the Inter-Deployment Training Cycle (IDTC), the Navy has implemented the Naval Aviation Readiness Integrated Improvement Program (NAVRIIP). Fleet maintainer involvement and honest feedback is a critical part of this program.

The recent success of Navy aircrews in Operation Enduring Freedom demonstrated the high level of readiness of deployed forces. To maintain that level, the Navy sacrificed the readiness of non-deployed units,

causing them to suffer from reduced availability and capability.

The Thomas Group, a consulting company with expertise in process management, is assisting the Navy in addressing the fundamental change needed in naval aviation business processes to improve non-deployed readiness.

“NAVRIIP is driving a fundamental change in the way we determine, manage, coordinate, and prioritize naval aviation resource requirements during the IDTC,” explains Cdr. Bob Gilbeau, CNAP supply-readiness officer. “It is the enabler that will allow us to do better with our existing resources.”

The program is led by flag officers from 17 commands—including CinCPacFlt, CinCLantFlt, AirPac, AirLant, NavAir, CNET, NavSup, NavICP, and DLA—and aims to achieve those readiness goals. “We are focusing on streamlining and improving the readiness process so non-deployed squadrons get the right parts, at the right time, and for the right sortie,” said Capt. Doug Henry, force aircraft material officer at AirPac.

A critical part of NAVRIIP is “Boots on the Ground (BOG).” BOG teams are comprised of maintainers and suppliers from the TyComs, NavAir, program offices, NavICP, DLA, and the Thomas Group. They visit air stations to meet with maintainers and support people. This effort identifies barriers to readiness improvement. BOG visits at NAS Whidbey Island, NAS Oceana, NS Mayport and NAS Jacksonville already have allowed fleet aviators and maintainers to talk with flag officers about readiness issues and already have resulted in improvements.

“When we did the BOG at NAS Oceana, we found some real low-hanging fruit...the easy fixes,” explains Capt. Clemente. “For example, we repair aircraft 24 hours a day, in three shifts. The pre-expended bin, which is where all the consumables like nuts and bolts are kept, was open for only two shifts. The third repair shift would have to wait until the bin opened the next day. There was an easy fix to that...keep the bin open during the third shift. That’s an example of an easy process fix. There will be more difficult ones.”

The last BOG events at Mayport and Jacksonville found 184 barriers to readiness. These items were shared with the BOG teams and fleet representatives. Everyone got the same message at the same time. The

RAdm. Massenburg makes a point to a group at NAS Oceana. Listening intently were Capt. Mark Clemente, Commander, Strike Fighter Wing Atlantic; RAdm. Jake Shuford, Assistant Commander, Navy Personnel Command for Distribution, Cdr. Jerry Zumbro, AIMD Officer; ADCS (AW) Paul Beni, F-18 engine repair center supervisor; LCdr. Dave Ferrera, AIMD powerplants division officer; and others attending the Oceana BOG event.



flag officers attending the BOG are part of the Naval Aviation Readiness Improvement Team (NAVRIT). Following a now-typical format, the NAVRIT toured various work areas, viewing the top three barriers to readiness—as identified by a team of fleet maintainers and contractors from the Thomas Group. This effort concluded an earlier five-week barrier-mapping and solutions process.

At Mayport, the wing commander, wing maintenance officer, and station supply officer—a group known as the “Naval Aviation Triad”—agreed that 56 of 97 barriers related to logistics, training and scheduling could be corrected locally, and 47 of the 97 are possible “quick kills.”

At NAS Jacksonville, a barrier was removed with H-60 AFCS. The team discovered that it took about 15 days for a repaired component to reach NAS Jacksonville from NS Mayport, just 35 miles away. “There wasn’t really a smoking gun in this case, but more of a revelation,” said Commodore Steve Luce, Commander, Sea Control Wing, U.S. Atlantic Fleet. “We found that for a part to move between Jax and Mayport, it touched people at 10 commands.” The Jax Triad believes eight of 18 remaining barriers will be removed within 90 days.

As the BOG visits bring problems to leadership’s attention, steps are taken to change the process, to work toward solving those problems consistently over time, and to eliminate barriers that make the process less efficient. This effort results in lasting solutions, not just temporary fixes (such as merely asking for more money).

An important part of the streamlining effort will be balancing and aligning work among different supporting commands, such as the fleet, NavICP, DLA, and maintenance depots. Three cross-functional teams within the NAVRIIP will address the more difficult challenges.

These cross-functional teams guide the process and are led by admirals. Team One defines acceptable levels of readiness throughout the IDTC and then

builds a training-and-readiness matrix tailored for each airframe. The team works with type wings to schedule squadron-training requirements and to conduct the right training at the right time. Team two is charged with maximizing readiness. Called “the providers,” they have a sub-team from BuPers, who is responsible for providing parts, people, aircraft, and support equipment to squadrons. Aviators then can continue to meet critical training milestones on time. Team Three owns a crucial piece of this effort; it makes sure that funding requirements are met.

“This program is very exciting, it’s something that I’ve never seen in all my time in naval aviation,” says Clemente. “It empowers the operational chain—the guys who care about flying—to dive into the issues and fix them.” 

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Cdr. Jack Papp (U.S. Navy Force PAO, CNAP) sent me this story and Gary Shrout (Naval Air Systems Command PAO) sent an update, and I knew I had to use it. I was the CVW-8 maintenance chief in my last active-duty tour and remember returning from deployment with the typical 85-to-90 percent readiness rate. Within 30 days of our return, I didn’t have one squadron with 40 percent readiness; many were in the low 30s. NAVRIIP is a crucial program, and I’m impressed at the level of firepower involved with it. The program clearly indicates how important non-deployed readiness is to people away from the flight line and shows me that aviator and maintainer voices are being heard. Current readiness and future readiness were two of the CNO’s top-five priorities. Manpower, quality of service and alignment are the others, and to meet those priorities, we need healthy people, parts and planes. For more information on NAVRIIP, visit the AirPac website at www.airpac.navy.mil—Ed.