

# The next war will be won by industrial base strategy, not policy, executed by the workforce

*Defense experts gather at Naval Postgraduate School to discuss research and efforts to mobilize industrial base and workers who contract for warfighting tools.*

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA, USA, May 17, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The military and the private sector face many of the same workforce challenges — new technologies that require skilled expertise while also changing the very nature of work, manufacturing jobs that seem unappealing to 21st century workers, and tight budgets that limit options.

Much has been said about recent failures to meet recruitment and retention goals for members of the armed services. But another group of defense workers play an equally vital role to ensuring the United States has the tools needed to win the next war: those who build, buy, and maintain the goods and services used by warfighters.

“

Relevance always moves ahead of capability. How do you anticipate that, plan for that, acquire that, and not make a mistake?”

*VADM (ret) Ann Rondeau,  
President, Naval Postgraduate  
School*

A recent gathering of the country’s experts in defense acquisition highlighted the challenges facing this workforce, including shipbuilders, factory workers, contracting officers, logisticians, maintainers, and of course the commercial companies who produce the weapons, munitions, and tools required to keep the country safe.

At the 20th Annual [Acquisition Research Symposium](#) hosted by the [Acquisition Research Program at Naval](#)

[Postgraduate School](#) on May 10 and 11, leaders from the military, academia, and industry



Marianne Lyons, Navy Director of Acquisition Talent Management, describes Navy strategy for acquisition workforce who collaborates with industry on warfighting needs during a panel at the 20th Annual Acquisition Research Symposium.

convened to discuss ongoing and future efforts to move forward strategically and collaboratively.

Keynote speaker Bill LaPlante, Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment, shared updates on many of the initiatives coming out of his office. He noted, for instance, that his team is putting together a new industrial base strategy that accounts for lessons learned over the past few years, including those from the joint production acceleration cell, or JPAC.

“We’re filling it with industrial base experts on production, including staffing it from the services, that are literally going through system by system, and understanding the what ifs,” LaPlante said. If the secretary of defense wants to know what it would take to double the production for one of those systems in a month, “they’re going to come back and give us the answers and the cost for it. And then we’re going to go back and work it with Congress.”

LaPlante also noted this is not industrial base policy, but execution of an industrial strategy.

“Those are related, but they’re not the same thing, and that’s why we had to take this JPAC. Because it’s not only just for policy, it’s actually executing and doing the acceleration what ifs.”

LaPlante has plans to extend this strategic approach to U.S. partners and allies. “My goal is to get something like that started also for NATO, so that we together, with all our subject matter experts, can build the industrial base for NATO,” he said. Since early 2022, LaPlante has been regularly connecting with leaders from the 40+ countries providing support to Ukraine in his role as Chair of the National Armaments Directors.

Other speakers at the symposium talked about ongoing industrial base efforts to support surge capacity, both domestically and internationally.

Matthew Zimmerman is acting deputy of the Joint Program Executive Office Armaments and Ammunition, the Department of Defense’s single manager for conventional ammunition. To meet increased needs for artillery, his office has taken a three-pronged approach: expand the organic industrial base, expand commercial capacity, and leverage foreign supply base with NATO members and other partners.



A contractor employee at Iowa Army Ammunition Plant performs a load, assemble and pack operation on a 155mm artillery round. (U.S. Army Photo, Iowa Army Ammunition Plant)

Army munition plants producing 155mm artillery rounds are part of the organic industrial base owned by the government. Recent supplemental funding from Congress is helping to increase capacity of these plants from 14,000 to over 85,000 projectiles a month, but these efforts have long lead times from factors including metal manufacturing processes.

Workforce is another limiting factor for surge capacity, which requires adding second and third shifts in factories that are often in less populated areas of the country. "Maintaining the skill sets for one shift is what we strive to do, what we plan out with our requirements," said Zimmerman. "And then surge would be adding that second shift and that third shift."

Surge capacity depends on skilled workers not just in production but also in the acquisition processes that get required capabilities on contract to be produced and delivered.

Marianne Lyons, the Navy's Director for Acquisition Talent Management, shared that the Navy's strategic plan for the acquisition workforce includes several efforts such as industry exchanges to help acquisition professionals better understand the industry partners they contract with.

"This training that we provide both the civilian and the military, they will go to understand, looking at from the perspective of industry, what is important to them?" Lyons said. "Looking at their financial statements: Do they care about cash flow? Do they care about operating margin? So when you do engage with your industry partners, you can have that conversation, focusing on preparing for negotiations or curating your incentives."

Lyons spoke as part of a plenary panel that featured all the directors of acquisition talent management across the DOD, chaired by James Woolsey, President of Defense Acquisition University. These leaders discussed other recent initiatives like the Back-to-Basics approach to providing training to acquisition professionals on a just-in-time model, making it more likely these workers will understand and use acquisition tools suitable for unique kinds of purchases, such as software development or rapidly needed capabilities.

As a result of the Back-to-Basics initiative, and in an effort to synchronize graduate education and training, NPS President retired Vice Admiral Ann Rondeau and DAU President Woolsey signed a Memorandum of Agreement last year that integrates DAU training courses into NPS graduate-level education courses and curricula. NPS students can now add [short DAU training sessions](#) to complement their degree coursework and larger research projects.

Rondeau gave attendees her perspective on the valuable work done by acquisition practitioners and researchers at the symposium and at NPS. "In my view, relevance always moves ahead of capability," she said. "How do you anticipate that, plan for that, acquire that, and not make a mistake?"

She closed with a charge: "I ask you to ask questions and engage, and be sure that when we leave here, there is an answer to delivering warfighting capability at the speed of relevance."

Michelle Johnson

Acquisition Research Program at Naval Postgraduate School

michelle.johnson.ctr@nps.edu

Visit us on social media:

[LinkedIn](#)

[Twitter](#)

[Other](#)

[YouTube](#)

---

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/634094975>

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

© 1995-2023 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.