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Talking With ... Capt. William Reuter: Cost-effective alternatives



Capt. William "Roto" Reuter, 49, is the newly appointed commander of the Naval Air Warfare Center Training Systems Division, the Navy's largest simulation-training development agency, based in east Orange County. (July 19, 2010)

By Richard Burnett, Orlando Sentinel

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Capt. William "Roto" Reuter, 49, is the newly appointed commander of the Naval Air Warfare Center Training Systems Division, the Navy's largest simulation-training development agency, based in east Orange County. He spoke with Sentinel staff writer Richard Burnett.

CFB: What is your top priority as you take the helm of this training division?

First, to focus on our people. We are going through a series of initiatives to elevate our mentorship program because, like many companies in the private sector, we are experiencing a big gap between our folks who are the experts and folks that are apprentices or interns. This initiative is in concert with the secretary of defense's initiative to grow the acquisition work force to make DoD a better and more effective acquirer of equipment for the warfighters.

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We're in the middle of changing our financial model to one that reflects more transparency and efficiency. That changes the way you look at yourself financially, which has mechanical and cultural implications. We're also looking at ways to improve our effectiveness. That means we are looking to acquire training both as cost-effectively and as rapidly as possible. That is crucial in technology, because if it takes too long for you to field it, the technology tends to be obsolete by the time it reaches the warfighter.

CFB: Your agency awards nearly \$1 billion a year in contracts. How big a role does it play in research and development?

People often think of us as mostly an acquisition center, but that really downplays the amount of collaborative research we do with the [University of Central Florida](#) and other entities in Orlando. That is a huge deal for us, and we intend to build on that partnership.

CFB: How does the pressure of the country's war-time efforts affect the agency as a workplace?

Our people are amazing. They appreciate the sense of urgency and gravity of what they do, and they recognize the role of training systems in saving lives. That's the end game for all our work: to prepare the warfighter in the best way possible for heading into

harm's way.

CFB: How has the agency been affected by the Pentagon's budget pressures?

We are all being asked to take a serious look at the way we do business, to make sure we are being the most effective stewards of the taxpayers' dollars. The [Defense Department](#) in general is working to leverage the most it can out of modeling and simulation training. So as far as the impact on our work force and the amount of money we'll put under contract, our future is very bright. We provide an alternative to the live-training exercises that typically cost a great deal of money.

CFB: You've been a naval pilot for more than 20 years. How has flight-training technology changed in that time?

I'd say the immersive effect [of flight simulators] is now so much more realistic. We're creating more of an immersive effect through better visuals and better graphics. The more realism there is to the training scenario, the more an aviator is able to suspend their disbelief, engage and garner proficiency out of it.

CFB: How much of the Navy's training is now done through simulation versus live-exercise training?

It really depends on the task. You can't just use simulation to land an airplane on a carrier and expect to have the proficiency to actually do it, under any conditions. But if you're a weapons-specialist, for example, trying to do air intercepts on a radar screen, you can garner a ton of proficiency on a simulator. So for some tasks, you can get 50 to 60 percent of the proficiency needed through simulation training; for other tasks, it may be less than 25 to 35 percent.