

Navy acquisition chief says service awarding contracts faster than planned

By Sarah Cammarata

04/15/2020 04:08 PM EDT

The Navy is maintaining readiness levels and hitting its marks in awarding contracts despite coronavirus-related concerns, the Navy's top acquisition official said today.

"We're actually in really good shape," James Geurts, assistant Navy secretary for research, development and acquisition, said during the Navy League's virtual Sea-Air-Space Exposition. "We're actually awarding contracts faster than we intended. We're operating in a massively distributed and telework nature."

"While we've had to learn the methods a little bit, we're actually seeing greatly improved performance," Geurts continued. "And again, we've got to make sure that defense industrial base, everyone from entrepreneurs to our big shipbuilding shipyards can make it through this crisis."

He added that real-time systems have allowed the service to track and better understand any issues or disruptions within the supply chain.

"We've leveraged that kind of real-time system to understand for all our major programs, the supply chain ... where we're seeing hot spots or company shutdowns," he said.

Geurts explained that when the service identifies those disruptions, the Navy can "move supplies, we can get some equipment out of there or material out of there, so that if there's a temporary shutdown, that we can manage that."

The Pentagon's [new Joint Acquisition Task Force](#) that serves as an entry point for requests coming in from various agencies, including FEMA and the departments of Health and Human Services and Homeland Security, has found success in boosting coordination, Geurts added. It helps to "understand priorities and then get action out to the folks that can service those requests."