

The Dewey Story

I have reported elsewhere that the Dewey's problem was not personnel. In commissioning this first or prototype ship of a new class, I was given the cream of the crop.

All of us reporting to that ship had been trained in the Navy "can do school" and having grown up in the destroyer force where funds and technical support had traditionally been much harder to come by than in the submarine and aviation parts of the Navy, we were all dedicated to making the Dewey work without outside help.

Within a matter of a very few weeks my weapons officer, Lieutenant Thomas F. Mulane, a superb professional who has suffered somewhat in his naval career from being willing to tell it like it is, was telling me that the Dewey's missile system was a scandal and that we were headed for major problems. After two or three weeks of insisting that the Dewey was going to be a "can do" ^{ship} ~~spirit~~, faced with Tom Mulane's continuing concern, I dug into the system myself and rapidly became convinced that he was absolutely right.

The new combat system in Dewey consisted of early warning radars to

pick up incoming aircraft and equipment designed to make it possible to process the targets that were picked up and to assign them to the missile system. This equipment had been designed in a manner inadequate to meet even the existing air threat, much less the air threat of the decade ahead.

The radar assigned to provide guidance to Dewey's missiles could not perform basic missile guidance without extensive preparations, before the ship ever left port, to bring it into ^{an} alignment, which never lasted very long without requiring realignment. Further, the reliability, maintainability and availability of that radar were far below the needs ~~of a~~ ^{of a} ship ~~is aligned~~ ^{of the line}.

The missiles themselves were far from completed in development. Extensive changes to the missiles were required and they had to be tested after they were placed on board ship. This proved to be unwise because poorly designed and faulty test equipment quite often created missile failures rather than preventing them. In later years, the decision was made to load the missiles aboard and shoot without testing once they left the ammunition depots ashore. This proved to be wise. ^PThe documentation for this class of ships was better than in previous ship systems but even

so it was necessary to develop, at the ship, maintenance tests and alignment techniques necessary to keep things operable. Quite often these tests and maintenance procedures were developed by the very competent operational personnel by the "cut and try" method rather than by the technical personnel who could have avoided such cut and try procedures. The engineering support for the Dewey consisted of calling in equipment contractors on as-needed basis. Since they were needed almost every time a design discrepancy was revealed by the ship's force or by a total breakdown of a subsystem, they ended up remaining on board for the majority of the first year of the Dewey's operation.

Many months were spent in tedious testing, repair, and redesign of equipment that should never have been placed in service until it had been proven capable of meeting the necessary availability and of fulfilling the mission requirement of the ship.

It took a year and a half from the time the Dewey entered the fleet until the missile system achieved a 50-percent capability, and as a result of this year and a half we compiled a lengthy list of required fixes and improvements.

One of the great Chief Fire Controlmen of all time, later an engineer for Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Laboratory Mr. Hugh Wilson, has
said "The Dewey story was rather extraordinary. A crew of typical Navy
men became dedicated to being the first and the best. Their attitudes
and efforts carried over to their civilian supporters resulting in a
measure of success that in retrospect appears technically impossible."

Within a year after the Dewey joined the fleet, it became obvious
that Dewey and other recently commissioned missile ships were not effective
operating units because of the multitudinous problems that were beyond the
capability of the technical bureaus to resolve, because of manning, organi-
zation structure and funding.

At this point, my first Executive Officer of the Dewey, Lieutenant
Commander Michael D *Ricinak*, was detached to go to Washington for
duty. We agreed that one of his collateral responsibilities in his new
job in Washington would be to start trying to get the word around as to
the scandalous performance of the Navy's missile systems, in an effort to
get the priority of manning, funding and most importantly management
necessary to solve the problem. Soon after *Mike Ricinak* arrived
for duty in the Bureau of Naval Personnel, I was able to get him nominated
for duty in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Personnel,

and subsequently the Under Secretary of the Navy. In this capacity he was able to make contact with a very fine technical special assistant, Mr. Milton Shaw, who was the man who worried for the Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Research & Development, ^{about} the surface ship missile system. Mr. Shaw bored into this and despite major efforts on the part of the bureaucracy, ^{to impede} wrote in 1961 a famous "Shaw report" which really rocked the system. Although the report was never formally published and ^{was} left in draft form, the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research and Development, Dr. Wakeland, and the Secretary of the Navy, Fred Korth, ^{directed} ~~(was able to force)~~ Admiral Anderson, the Chief of Naval Operations, to create a system designed to correct the bugs in all surface ship guided missile systems, and to prevent a repetition of the poor technical performance which had led to such situations as that that existed in the Dewey. This special task force restructured ^{budgets} ~~funding~~ to ^{provide money} to make present equipment and systems work and to provide adequate missile ~~system~~ training to personnel. ^{prior to spending more money on sophistication} ~~There has been~~ ~~on capability~~ ^{to get} improvements. ~~They then began to move in on outfitting the old and improving the new.~~ The task force under Rear Admiral Eli Reich produced at the outset greatly improved performance.

Looking back at that era, remembering the trials and tribulations the Navy went through to get the missiles to work, and ~~no one had~~ ^{to know and how} confidence that they would work, ~~and then to ask~~ ^{myself} what was the problem? In a word, the problem was technocracy. By that, I mean that there was little evidence apparent to me when I first boarded Dewey in 1959 that the ^a carrier weapon system had been developed with any existing engineering discipline. Rather, each part of the system was a collection of equipment which had been procured by a materiel office, each with a different person in charge of particular pieces of equipment, and no overall engineering or integration involved by any agency. This was especially true of the interface between the missile and the radar where no real effort had been made to ~~make the~~ ^{have} one truly integrateable with the other. In lay terms, the situation was quite similar to what would have existed if each of several different factories designed parts for the same automobile engine without any planning for the ~~integration~~ ^{integrated} of specifications so that the parts would fit together and produce an efficiently running engine. The problem is, of course, infinitely more complex with regard to integrating an overall command and control system, as was the case of the Dewey.

As I got more familiar with the system and was able to observe Admiral Eli Reich's organization in operation, it became more clear to me that another large part of the problem had been the lack of continuity in the leadership and management field associated with the development of the missile systems. Each subset of the program had generically been in charge of a captain or a commander who had had his own ideas and methods of operation and you could count on two things: 1, the new program manager would not, in all probability, fulfill the commitments of his predecessor because he would have different insights and, 2, he could be counted on to leave in two years or less.

This problem might have been tolerated if agencies and their roles, responsibilities and authorities had been clearly defined and utilized by all program managers alike. However, they were not, and proliferation of individual systems not coordinated into a cohesive ^{whole, took place,} ~~held proceeded.~~