



# Broadsheet

## Branch Development

**By Captain Chris Usborne**

In the last Broadsheet, the Second Sea Lord described the initial study work on the Navy Board Personnel Change Programme, which follows on naturally from TOPMAST (TOmorrow's Personnel MAnagement SysTem). The changes are designed to:

Provide sustainable manpower structures for the Future Navy, or Versatile Maritime Force, which will mean new ways of operating. These include Network Enabled Capability, yet further automation and new technologies associated with the Astute submarine, Type 45 Destroyer, Joint Combat Aircraft and the new Carriers,

Bolster the ratings branch structure, particularly in the ME and WE branches.

Improve job satisfaction by reducing multi-skilling and increasing specialist skills. The first may seem obvious but the last two need explanation. In the mid-nineties Warfare Branch Development merged Seaman Operators and Weapons Engineering Mechanics (WEMs) to meet the reducing demand for Able Seaman operators and Senior Rate WE Mechanics.

This was a common-sense response to the increasing automation and reliability of electronic systems. It is now recognised that it did not provide a perfect solution because Operator Mechanics feel excessively multi-tasked. This undermines their professional pride and ability to reach a satisfactory performance standard in either warfare, seamanship or maintenance. Likewise, WE Senior Ratings lost the continuous support they needed to complete routine maintenance.

Finally, recruiting surveys indicate that prospective sailors want their Branch to be identified with what they do, for example, Gunner, Electrical Technician, not Operator Mechanic.

### **Personnel Change Policy Projects:**

In May 04 the Navy Board endorsed three major personnel change projects:

Warfare Branch and Engineering Branch development. This included developing 3 core specialisations for the Warfare Branch; Warfare Specialist, CIS Specialist and Seaman Specialist, and the Engineering Branch will

effectively subsume the Artificer and Mechanic into an Engineering Technician Structure for both ME and WE ratings. This is already done for Air Engineers

A 2-stage career for Offices and Warrant Officers. In the first stage, an individual will be involved in platform based expertise such as warfare, engineering or logistics. The second stage will be competence-based and focussed on Operations, Human Resources, Information Systems, Acquisition, or Policy Plans & Programmes.

A Flexible Career Structure or tiered engagement system which might include 'made to measure' engagements directed at specific groups, greater flexibility between Regulars and Reserves, including Full Time Reserves, and career breaks for family or personal development.

### **Versatile Maritime Force - Branch Development:**

More will be revealed about 2 Stage Careers and Flexible Career Structures as work advances. But with the need to ensure correct manning skills now, during transition and in the future, both Warfare and Engineering Branch Development has progressed more quickly. Indeed, Air Engineering Branch Development (AEBD) is being introduced now and can be looked upon as the forerunner to some of these future concepts.

The new two-stream branch will see the transition of the Artificer, into 'technician' which is better understood in the civilian world, recognised by professional institutes and delivers Operational Capability primarily at the Petty Officer level. These Petty Officers are selected for their leadership and technical ability but with the academic capacity to attain foundation degree level qualifications. In old currency, an aircraft maintainer no longer joins as an Artificer - he or she comes in as an Air Engineering Technician (Mechanical or Avionics) and could even progress to become a Chartered Engineer.

### **Warfare Branch Development:**

The future Operations Room of the Future Carrier and Type 45 Destroyer will be manned by fewer people focused on weapon, sensor and information management. This will be in support of agile and rapid command decision making in a fully networked environment. Although the culmination of this vision is some ten years away there is a pressing need to begin the evolutionary process, tackle the shortage and skill problems which we face today and enable the growth of the necessary experience and expertise for the future. The future Warfare Branch will consist of:

A Seamanship and Bridge specialisation to be known as 'Seaman Specialists' to undertake all visual signalling and fleet manoeuvring tasks as well as providing a cadre

of experienced seamen.

An expanded Communications Branch, dealing with Communications & Information Systems, to be known as CIS Specialists.

A core warfare specialisation where EW (Electronic Warfare) and AWT (Radar) will form the core elements in the Operations Room (dealing with Action Information Management) and AWW (Gunner) and UW (Sonar) will be more involved in weapon delivery tasks external to the Operations Room. In submarines, sonar and tactical ratings are already closely aligned.

The above will enable the transfer of selected maintenance tasks from the Warfare Branch to the Engineering Branch to provide much improved support to Weapons Engineering Department Senior Ratings.

### **Engineering Branch Development:**

The rapid advance in ship system technology, the merging of ME and WE technologies and the need to resolve current Artificer sustainability problems has led to a fundamental review of the Engineering Branch. A branch structure for both Weapons and Marine Engineers has been developed to encompass the following:

A single career path through an all-technician structure with provision for accelerated and normal progression to Petty Officer.

Competence-based training, aligned to requirement so that the Petty Officer Engineering Technician (PO(ET)) is the main rate for delivery of Operational Capability.

The concept of a 'Platform Engineer Officer' is being studied but will take much longer than the introduction of the 'Technician'. There are compelling reasons to consider this as an option.

To stay ahead of changes in warfighting and technology, the Royal Navy needs new manpower structures and skills. The Personnel Change Programme is the unified vehicle to achieve these. There has already been much study and consultation and there will be a pilot implementation in a T23 next year. Together we are determined to provide the branch, career and engagement structures to deliver our future Operational Capability.

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