



## **Secretary of the Navy envisions a greener fleet**

By Scott Hadley

SANTA BARBARA — More than a hundred years after President Teddy Roosevelt launched the “Great White Fleet” that ushered in a century of American dominance of the seas, Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus said Thursday that the United States is on the cusp of christening a new “Green Fleet.”

During a talk in front of the Navy League of Santa Barbara, Mabus listed a set of three priorities that included having the force draw half its energy from renewable sources by 2020.

“A decade from now we will get half our energy from nonfossil fuels, both at sea and on shore,” Mabus told about 50 Navy League members at the Dreier Collection building in Santa Barbara.

It’s not just a matter of preserving the environment, but an important tactical and strategic decision. Much of the Earth’s supply of oil comes from areas hostile to the United States and it’s expensive fueling the world’s mightiest Navy.

Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake already produces 20 times the amount of power it uses, sending energy back to the electricity grid that is produced by geothermal power. The Navy, including units at Naval Base Ventura County, is developing new biofuels, some made by algae. Recently, the Navy launched the latest version of the F/A-18 Hornet

jetfighter, called the Green Hornet because of its biofuel-powered engine, which did “just fine,” Mabus said.

#### Efforts save energy, money

The Navy recently commissioned its first hybrid ship, the USS Makin Island. On its maiden voyage from Mississippi to San Diego, Navy officials estimate it saved almost \$2 million in fuel costs. Over the life of the ship, the Navy will save about a quarter of a billion dollars, Mabus said.

Beyond that, the cost of supplying front-line troops with fuel is high in both human lives and dollars, he said.

When taking into account the cost of transportation, the cost of a gallon of gas for some front-line Marine forces in Afghanistan is more than \$400, Mabus said.

His stop in Santa Barbara was the last of several this week in Southern California. Mabus also dropped by Navy installations in San Diego and Camp Pendleton, as well as a Navy hospital where he met with wounded service members.

Before arriving in Santa Barbara, Mabus was at UCLA Medical Center, where a team of doctors provide free facial reconstruction surgery for severely injured service members.

Mabus concluded his speech by emphasizing the importance of the Navy League’s role — supporting service members. He noted that much is demanded of those Navy men and women.

“On a flight deck of an aircraft carrier, the crews are moving multimillion aircraft around, loading high explosives at the same time they’re putting high test aviation fuel in those aircraft,” Mabus said.

“They do that every day on the flight decks and the average age of those crews is 19.”

Navy League honored

Mabus' visit provided a glimpse of the clout of the 1,100-member Navy League, which has several members from Ventura County.

It was the first talk Mabus has given to the group since his appointment by President Barack Obama in July, said J. Doug Crawford, president of the national Navy League and vice president of the Santa Barbara Navy League.

"Of all the Navy Leagues around the world, he chose us, I think that says something," Crawford said.

Karen Crawford, his wife, heads the Santa Barbara Navy League, which was instrumental in getting the commissioning of the USS Stockdale at Naval Base Ventura County.

The Santa Barbara Navy League has "adopted" a dozen units in all branches of the military, including the Seabees at Naval Base Ventura County. Typically, the league sends items to service members while they are deployed and tries to help their families. The group also has been instrumental in getting Navy ships, such as the USS Ronald Reagan, to visit Santa Barbara.

Thursday's event drew several people from Ventura County who are active in the nonprofit group, including the commander of Naval Base Ventura County, Capt. Jim McHugh.

While Mabus' address did not touch on issues related to the Ventura County base, some of what he said bodes well for its future.

Asked afterward about the Base Realignment And Closure process, which once loomed large for Naval Base Ventura County, Mabus said, "I don't know of any BRAC initiatives in the future. There's certainly none planned right now."