

MCPON TALKS ETHICS



Leadership, Ethics, and Integrity

A Message From MCPON

Shipmates,

Many of you are aware of recent allegations that involve cheating at the Nuclear Propulsion School in South Carolina. This incident, coupled with other events, involving misconduct brings leadership, ethics, and integrity to the forefront. I applaud the moral character of the vast majority of our Sailors, however, some of our shipmates are falling short of our Navy standards and expectations.

Last Friday, in light of recent allegations of misconduct in the military services the Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel announced that a senior officer will be appointed to promote and enforce a culture of ethical behavior and good moral character. Additionally, DoD released last week further details into SECDEF's ethics initiatives and orders to Navy and Air Force to conduct reviews of the nuclear enterprise.

In response to these incidents and initiatives, I think that it is important to share my thoughts:

My initial thoughts on the recent number of incidents:

There is a difference between making a mistake and doing something intentional with forethought. During my 30-plus years of being a Sailor, I can attest to my share of missteps, however, when a shipmate intentionally violates the law, ethical or core values, they've violated the trust that has been placed in them. It can have a domino effect, causing mistrust, bad behavior, and a breakdown in all that we stand for. Being a person of integrity requires extraordinary discipline and the desire to do that, which is morally and ethically right on a consistent basis.

It is the responsibility of every Sailor to remember their oath to uphold Honor, Courage, and Commitment every single day. I am confident that collectively, the moral courage and integrity are high, but we can't afford to let the transgressions of the few undermine the trust and credibility of our entire force.

What I've witnessed during fleet visits:

With the opportunity I have to spend time with Sailors throughout the world, it's been my observation that the overwhelming majority of our Sailors are performing superbly and are adhering to our core values. I also believe we cannot take integrity for granted, we must continue to talk about it and train on the importance of integrity and the vital role it plays in our ability to trust each other. We must not forget that one of the greatest leadership characteristics includes setting the example. Integrity is a quality of character demonstrated by the moral commitment and courage necessary to maintain consistency between what we believe, what we say, what we do, and what we are morally obliged to do.

A message to junior leaders:

Recruiters and recruit training commanders continually ensure our newest Sailors have the moral foundation necessary for success. That cannot be forgotten once you enter the fleet. Honoring our core values must be practiced and emphasized every single day. There will be times in your career that will test your character, but it's during those times that I encourage you to gain strength by drawing on memories when you've felt a deep sense of honor and commitment.

Whether it was repeating the oath of enlistment before going to boot camp, donning the beloved "Navy" ball cap after battle stations, achieving your first qualification, successfully finishing your first deployment, or the moment that you decide to re-enlist; you must find the courage to speak up when you know that things aren't right. Talk with your peers, your mentors, and your supervisors about what our values mean and how you apply them to your daily life.

A message to senior leaders...

I'm reflecting to my time in Suffolk, Va. just a couple weeks ago. I met with over 100 fleet, force, and command master chiefs who make up the MCPON Leadership Mess, for our annual Leadership Symposium. It was important for me to look at each of you in the eye, discuss programs and initiatives, and share thoughts because you are my direct link to over 33,000 Chief Petty Officers. We must have trust and confidence in each other in order to successfully carry out our missions and effectively support Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Jonathan Greenert's Sailing Directions and tenets of Warfighting First, Operate Forward and Be Ready.

As Chief Petty Officers, we embrace increased responsibility and authority while accepting the highest obligation to embody the confidence, employ the expertise of our Sailors and earn the trust from both our superiors and subordinates. As I've said in the past, we MUST ensure that we are providing the leadership our Sailors expected the day they joined the Navy. If we don't, how can we expect others to? We can't afford to foster or be part of an environment that fails to uphold the expected standards of integrity. Our fundamental standard is to work hard, stay out of trouble and be good and decent people.

The CNO has recently released a blog on this very topic. Please take the time to view it and have open, honest, and continuous conversations with your shipmates. In the coming weeks, CNO and I will be filming another episode of "Conversation with a Shipmate," and the focus will be on ethics and integrity.

Shipmates, thanks for all that you do. I'll see you in the fleet.

