

**Remarks as delivered ADM Mike Mullen
Change of Office Ceremony for
Surgeon General of the Navy; Chief, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery
National Naval Medical Center, Bethesda, Md.
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Well, good morning. Sometimes your speech book doesn't show up. It is nice to see so many healthy people here at the hospital.

And there indeed are some special people – Deputy Secretary of Defense Gordon England, a dear friend of all who serve and a great supporter of, thank you, Navy medicine. Chairman Bill Young and his wife Beverly who, if I understood him correctly – we had a promotion ceremony for Adam Robinson – but just arrived after 16 hours of driving to get here. And that says an awful lot about them. There isn't anybody here that doesn't know that about their support, but their continued, continued dedication to all our wounded warriors in particular will be appreciated for decades. And you set an example for all of us and we appreciate all you do and all you will do in the future. Chairman, and Bev, thanks.

Two other distinguished guests, Paul Reason is here, a mentor of mine; Bill Novice and I'll miss somebody in doing this as I look around, for sure. I'd also like to I never pass the opportunity to ask us to pay our respects to Barney Barnum who is a Medal of Honor winner – Barney, please stand up. Dr. Cassels who has recently – when I say recently, several months ago – came aboard and has thrown himself at making it better for our people full bore; and it's great to have you here, sir, and I appreciate what you're doing. Many other distinguished guests that I won't go through the list; they've already been introduced.

Let's see, where can I pick up here? I'd like to say thanks to Terri for that rendition of the national anthem. We hear it many times – it always brings chills – but that rendition was particularly moving. So Terri, thank you. And Rich, I appreciate the short introduction.

In fact, Adam was looking at the bio as Rich was going through this. He says, it gets shorter and shorter. And I'm delighted with that, quite frankly.

And since we're outside and this is August, and Bean is already looking at me from that no-sleep zone up in the front row, I'll try to keep my remarks short. And Don, I am very grateful that you asked me to be here today to celebrate your amazing career. If you've known Don, you know he would have shined anywhere he was.

And all of you here representing who you represent say an awful lot about his service to our country over the last 33 years.

Earlier this month, many of us shared the stage here at a change of command ceremony. And I'm glad the gang is all back this time to pipe Vice Admiral Don Arthur over the side one last time.

And it's special for Don as it is for all of us; and the change of command is always special; but also for his family.

Don and Bean have been as great a Navy family as any that we have. And both of them care greatly; not just about those that work around them, but the families who support them as well.

For Bean, Lindsay, Rose, her husband T.J. and Robin who just started college at Radford, for his sister Karen and brother-in-law Joe, Don's dear aunt Anna, and for so many other friends and colleagues who have joined us today – thank you.

Many of us are wondering how Don will keep busy after today. I know it will be tough. But maybe Bean and the daughters Don so adores can finally help him narrow down his ambitions.

Don is sort of a renaissance man. His resume says a lot. BA, MA, JD, PhD, and of course, MD – he's got more degrees than a thermometer.

And let's not forget that he's a vice admiral as well.

He's a flag surgeon, surface warfare qualified, and undersea medical officer. He has excelled in research and published works on topics ranging from cold weather medicine to computer assisted diagnostics to hyperbaric oxygen therapy. And that hyperbaric thing is an interesting one of what he has worked on.

Plus, he's slogged with Marines on the ground and he's jumped out of airplanes.

His life is the medical equivalent of X Games.

He's also nuts about motorcycles. It's interesting, chaplain, that in the last discussion I had with Don, which was after his last motorcycle accident, he assured me he would not be on bikes again. And he looked at me when you said ride off into the sunset.

Some folks are happy with a day ride in the Blue Ridge Mountains, but not Don, no. That's not intense enough. I don't know if anybody's ever heard of the Four Corners Run.

Well, Don has, and he's ridden it to the extreme. He jumped on his bike in Madawaska, Maine, drove down to Key West, headed into the sunset towards San Ysidro, California, hung a right on I-5 and rode until he hit Blaine, Washington.

Sounds a little bit ambitious, but this is the Don Arthur we know. He not only finished, but he beat the fastest time by over 12 hours. And that was after being knocked unconscious following a collision with a deer. That was before his most recent accident. Pretty amazing if you ask me.

But rumor has it he's a pretty good wrench as well.

If we tested him as a motorcycle mechanic, I can only imagine what would happen as he took his final exam – his style.

The test would require him to strip down a bike's engine and reassemble it without any parts left over. Since Don does everything with irrepressible zeal, the final results might sound something like this.

Congratulations, Don, your final grade is 150 percent. We all know Don's a math whiz, and he'd catch the error right away. He'd most certainly question his score. But his evaluator would say, no, that's right. Your work is really good. You earned 50 percent for stripping down the engine, 50 percent for reassembling it, and you got a 50 percent bonus for doing it all while riding the bike down the highway. That's pretty much Don Arthur.

Folks, I don't know much about motorcycles and even less about medicine, though I have learned a lot in the past four years about medicine.

But I do know a thing or two about leadership, and I'm here to tell you that Don is a passionate leader who cares.

And when you drill down into it, that's what this organization that he leads is all about – leadership and caring and passion, passion for our people, passion for our profession, passion for our service, passion for our country.

Don's fervor and his love for Navy medicine are what drive his commitment to organizational efficiency, to taking care of our warriors, and to medically supporting naval operations.

As our surgeon general, he focused Navy medical leadership and held them accountable for broad naval mission support and for making smarter enterprise decisions while we are at war.

He realized and generated better oversight, tighter unity of effort, and more and better business practices by bringing into line all medical activities under four flag-led regional medical commands. And he has been devoted, more than anything else, to taking care of our warriors, paying particular attention to issues dealing with their mental health. And we all know what happens when Don Arthur focuses on an issue, major positive changes take place.

To provide easy access to non-stigmatizing primary care and mental health services to sailors and Marines returning from the front lines, Don established 13 deployment health clinics at Navy and Marine Corps concentration areas. And recognizing a critical need for an active duty and veteran wounded warrior care center out west, he directed the reallocation of \$10 million to set up the comprehensive combat casualty care center at the Naval Medical Center in San Diego.

I saw the results of that massive investment firsthand when I, myself and Deborah, visited Balboa Hospital last month. I was amazed at how the quality of patient care was evolving there. And Admiral Chris Hunter has led that effort and it truly is extraordinary, and it isn't just about those who are in the Navy, because I saw wounded warriors from all services there, and their care was superb. We can all be justifiably proud of how Navy medicine helps our returning heroes not only face, but conquer, the challenges of their injuries. Those wounded warriors inspire us.

But there is a lot more to Navy medicine than just taking care of those who return from the battlefields. That's why you can find Navy medical personnel at sea and on the frontlines all over the world, out in the trenches, as they say. Since Don took the helm at BUMED over 4,000 Navy medical personnel have deployed alongside Marines and soldiers in support of the global war on terrorism. They surged to provide much needed disaster relief following the 2004 earthquake and tsunami in Southeast Asia. They responded right inside our borders in the destructive wake of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. They deployed on board the hospital ships Mercy and Comfort to provide proactive humanitarian assistance to our friends in the Western Pacific and South American regions as Comfort is doing today.

Navy medicine did all this while providing high quality care to nearly 2.6 million beneficiaries. Don has guided Navy medicine in support of multiple contingency, humanitarian, and joint military operations worldwide with the steady hand of a surgeon. His team of medical professionals has truly transformed Navy medicine.

Evidence of this transformation is no more apparent than what we see in the Middle East. Today, you can find Navy medical personnel fighting alongside our Marines and sailors, soldiers and airmen, Coast Guardsmen in Iraq. But you can also find them bringing healthcare to Iraqi citizens that would otherwise languish with injury, disease, and little hope for a future.

A visit to one of the provincial reconstruction teams in Afghanistan would also inspire you. There you can witness how Navy medical personnel, along with their joint and interagency colleagues, are changing the lives of people who not long ago lived under Taliban oppression, and today are fighting the resurgence of that tyrannical regime.

And a walk around this hospital that we are in front of today will reveal how effectively Navy medicine is helping servicemen and women of every stripe and their families stay healthy, stay ready, or patch their lives back together in the aftermath of tragedy. Today,

sailors, Marines, retirees, and their families put their health and their hopes, some even their very lives in the hands of Navy medicine, and I know the trust is well placed.

Such trust just doesn't happen. It's earned by dedicated, intelligent leaders like Don who have a knack for seeing things as they are and doing things as they ought to be done.

But Don is not just dedicated and intelligent, he is also very wise, as the chaplain says. He listens, especially to nurses. Years ago, he recognized the need to heed their council if he was ever to make it through his residency. And to this day, he still gets good advice from his favorite nurse.

I speak, of course, of his lovely bride, Bean. Now, I got specific direction from Bean to make this speech short. So I'm going to cut out all the kind comments about Bean that are here for the next three pages. All kidding aside, Bean, you have been absolutely spectacular. From your former service as a Navy nurse and for your leadership and activities here ranging from president of the DC Oakleaf Club to founding a gift shop that supports patients and families, to launching the Wounded Marine and Sailor Fund.

And Deborah and I were up in West Virginia on Saturday at the annual flag officer training symposium for new flag officers and their spouses. And you and Kip Route led that for the past two years, and I would assure you, your work is going exceptionally well, and you've really put the teeth into that program and made a huge difference in our new flags and their spouses in their lives. And that is exemplary of everything you've done in your support of Don and support of the Navy and our families. And we are grateful for that. Thank you.

Today, as we bid Don and Bean farewell, we welcome the newest vice admiral in the United States Navy, Adam Robinson and his charming wife, Yuko. Adam's mother is here and his brother and sister-in-law, George and Kathy, also here. And to Adam's mother, again, thanks for bringing up somebody who could make such a difference.

Adam, you are superbly qualified to take the deck, and you relieve the watch in very stormy seas.

You did great work at Bethesda, great work in previous commands, and I have absolutely no doubt you will do great work as our surgeon general. You will steer a true course.

And as you chart this course, Adam, my challenge to you is this – ensure that our healthcare personnel, the best trained in the world, remain ready to deploy anytime, anywhere, to support the full range of our nation's missions, and ready to spread hope and health around the world.

Keep Navy medicine focused on its role as a weapon in the fight against radical extremism, as well as on its function as the primary means for ensuring our sailors and Marines stay healthy, fit, and ready to deploy. Keep them at the tip of the spear.

Support their families, as I know you do.

I'm glad you and Yuko are here to lead Navy medicine into the future. And I wish you the best as you embark on this greatest leg of your Navy journey.

Don, looking at what you've accomplished these past three decades, your career and your life bring to mind the words of another great renaissance man, Benjamin Franklin, who once said, well done is better than well said.

He was obviously talking about you, Don, just a couple hundred years in advance.

You've done it all and you've done it well. You've excelled.

I tried to capture the excellence today of Don and Bean Arthur, but I suppose it can all be summarized by simply saying, well done.

Thank you for your dedicated service. I wish you both the best as you face the future. I have no doubt we will continue hearing from you as you ride – not into the sunset – but towards a new sunrise.

And Don, I understand, in addition to getting back on your motorcycle, you've found a new hobby in bicycling, which is so much healthier than motorcycling. Well, it would be no surprise if I tune into the Tour de France next year and saw you.

Lastly, I just ask all of you to keep in your thoughts and prayers the brave men and women who are in harm's way around the world right now defending our freedoms. They are the real heroes. Knowing full well that this is demanding, dangerous, and often deadly business, every day, they answer the call to serve. And they are supported by their wonderful families. Thank you again for your support. God bless all of you. God bless our Navy. And God bless our country.