

**NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL  
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HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE (MILCON)**

**STATEMENT OF  
MASTER CHIEF PETTY OFFICER OF THE NAVY  
(SURFACE WARFARE/FLEET MARINE FORCE)  
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BEFORE THE  
HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY CONSTRUCTION  
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## ***Introduction***

The American Sailor is a powerful image. In combat, humanitarian operations, and on liberty, our Sailors serve as ambassadors around the world. Today's Navy is not confined to blue water as we provide non-traditional ground support to our sister services and bring aid and support to people around the globe.

On behalf of the Sailors of the United States Navy, I wish to express the gratitude of our men and women in uniform for the hard work and support of Congress in providing for the needs of our Sailors. With your continued leadership we will provide the mission capable, diverse and professional all-volunteer force the citizens of the United States have come to appreciate.

The Navy is home to 289,142 enlisted Sailors representing every state in our Union. Men and women of the United States Navy are manning and maintaining our Fleet of 276 surface ships, submarines, 4,000 plus aircraft, support activities, bases, and other facilities around the world. They have the watch.

As we progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, just as the requirements of the Navy change, the needs of a Sailor's family are as important as ever. Trouble on the home front will pre-occupy a Sailor and limit his/her effectiveness in meeting our many missions. Navy leadership is committed to a deliberate effort in improving quality of life for our Sailors and their families.

The men and women of our Navy are simply outstanding. They comprise the most educated, best trained and most effective Navy the world has ever seen. Our combat ready Naval Forces not only fulfill our traditional maritime mission, they are

involved in humanitarian efforts that bring aid to those in need and forge new paths of assistance around the globe.

Beginning right here at home with Hurricane Katrina victims, our Sailors were an indispensable source of aid and comfort to those in need in the wake of the largest natural disaster in U.S. history. Overseas, the USNS MERCY brought medical care to almost 200,000 in Southeast Asia in a proactive display of humanitarian assistance that resonated throughout the Pacific Rim, and a devastating earthquake at the onset of winter just over a year ago brought American Sailors to the remote mountainous regions of Pakistan. They represent hope and freedom one act of humanity at a time and are forging new friendships that will benefit our nation for years to come.

Our Sailors go when and where their country needs them, often on short notice and for months at a time. This is not easy on their families and most spouses will tell you they have the toughest job in the Navy. Through our network of support programs and Navy communities, Sailors and their spouses manage to raise families and still meet the demands placed on them in readying for deployment on a moment's notice. With the commitment and support of all involved and our Sailors' dedication to duty, we are, and will continue, meeting the call.

I am consistently amazed at the quality of men and women serving in our Navy and constantly asking myself where we find these motivated, dedicated individuals. That is the job of our recruiters. Navy Recruiting Command finished FY 06 at 100.1% of its active duty goal, and achieved 87% of the reserve accession goal for the year. 46,401 men and women became Sailors last year, and they represent every facet of life in our great nation. In an increasingly diverse market, Navy recruiting continues to pursue and

succeed in its attainment of qualified recruits reflecting the changing landscape of American society.

In spite of this success, recruiters face significant challenges: A strong national economy, low unemployment rates and declining numbers of parents, teachers and community leaders recommending military service. The youth market is shrinking. Seventy-two percent of our target population is ineligible for military service due to moral, academic (low AFQT scores), medical and legal issues.

Navy recruiters are meeting these challenges head on; listening, learning, and leading, enabling them to recruit effectively, achieve their goals and deliver the right Sailors to the Fleet at the right time.

More than ever, various dynamics are coming together to shape our force, and we must make sure our Sailors are ready for what awaits them both in combat and at home. Families are not so different from those of years past. However, demands on our people require us to be ever mindful of the effects on the family since the pace of our deployments is far more demanding than at any time in recent history. Our Sailors are taking the fight to the enemy in new and non-traditional ways.

### ***Sailors in Action***

As of November 30, the Navy had contributed more than 50,000 Individual Augmentees to ground based operations in Iraq and Afghanistan and the Horn of Africa. We are altering assignment and career management processes and in unprecedented fashion, we are augmenting Army units based on skill sets vice component service affiliations. These changes are not without obstacles, but we are committed to ensuring

new and necessary roles are recognized as beneficial to career progression and upward mobility for all Sailors.

Although only a small portion of our total force is on the ground in direct support of combat missions in the Central Command area of operations, we are re-evaluating and modifying how we train, equip, and prepare our Sailors for these missions. Because the Navy has traditionally sent units and forces forward, we have a system in place to prepare them for deployment. Our goal is to ensure their families remain resilient and well connected to support services during long periods of separation.

The Individual Augmentee program has brought about significant change for the Navy. Our Fleet and Family Service Centers now have a greater role in establishing and maintaining connections with families outside of Fleet concentration areas. We are working to accomplish this by strengthening our Navy Ombudsman program, and through the expanded use of family readiness groups, partnering with our sister services to establish an increasing network of support.

Assuming responsibility for the administration, training and support of the Individual Augmentees is the Expeditionary Combat Readiness Center, (ECRC) a component of the Navy Expeditionary Combat Command (NECC) established in January 2006.

The NECC assumes responsibility for training and equipping the Navy's Expeditionary Forces. It is an integrated expeditionary force of almost 40,000 Sailors made up of long-standing, well known Navy units like Seabees, Explosive Ordnance Disposal, Diving and Salvage, Navy Expeditionary Logistics, Naval Coastal Warfare and Combat Camera. Combined with other capabilities unique to the maritime expeditionary

environment such as Riverine and Maritime Civil Affairs, we anticipate this newly established warfare community being in high demand around the globe.

They perform a variety of missions, examples being mobile security detachments providing security in the North Arabian Gulf on oil platforms, EOD technicians conducting counter IED operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, and cargo battalions moving tons of equipment throughout the region.

A significant component of NECC, the Seabees, continue to provide combat capability and nation building support in Iraq and Afghanistan and provide humanitarian assistance in the Horn of Africa. NECC was developed in response to a need to expand our core maritime capabilities into coastal and inland environments, filling war-fighting gaps in the maritime domain.

The first riverine squadron will deploy early this year and assume responsibilities previously held by the Marine Corps. We are also developing maritime civil affairs teams to work directly with local authorities and civilian populations and expeditionary training teams who will provide customized training to partner nations.

### ***Housing and Family Support Programs***

Family housing is a key issue constantly in need of examination. At the beginning of this fiscal year, 58,914 homes in our inventory were owned, leased or privatized and we had a predicted family housing budget of \$555 million. Due to the success of such programs as Public Private Venture (PPV), the projected amount of spending in FY 08 is down to \$430 million. That is a tremendous savings to the Navy and an advantage to the Sailor in improving their quality of life. We lowered the cost of

housing by \$125 million and the Navy is currently on track to eliminate what it has deemed inadequate housing by the end of this fiscal year.

In regards to PPV, at the end of the 2006 fiscal year, 32,497 homes had been privatized. At the end of FY 07, the Navy is projecting that nearly 80% of its housing worldwide will be handed over to civilian contractors providing better service to our Sailors and their families, aiding in retention as their quality of life continues to improve.

When it comes to the living conditions we afford our people, recent surveys indicate a high level of satisfaction. With the continued support and implementation of programs such as PPV we are confident family satisfaction will improve steadily over time and we will continue to make improvements where necessary.

Another segment of our population I have yet to address is the single Sailor. Our Homeport Ashore program continues providing adequate off ship quarters to junior Sailors who would normally live aboard ships. We are partnering with PPV in Hampton Roads, Virginia, and San Diego, California to provide apartment style quarters for our Sailors. This effort marks the most dramatic quality of life improvement for our single Sailors that I have seen over the course of my career.

We are dedicated to improving the quality of housing and quarters provided our Sailors and are thankful for the support provided by Congress.

Housing is a benefit our Navy families have come to depend on. Available high quality child care is of equal priority and three things contribute to the demand for it:

- The rise in two income families
- Dual military families
- Single parents in uniform

In FY 2006, the most recent year for which data is available, 45,442 children ages 4 weeks to 12 years were cared for daily in our Child Care Centers (CCC). Nearly 70,000 children between the ages of 12 and 18 were provided services through child development homes, and CCCs. Waiting lists for child care are common and in some Fleet concentration areas like San Diego, can last up to a year.

The Navy's 124 child care centers, 103 youth centers and 3,115 child development homes, meet 69% of the Navy demand for child care services. Military construction projects underway in fleet concentration areas will help us achieve 74% of the potential need.

### ***Payday Lending***

Last year, the committee received the results of a report that discussed in great detail predatory lending practices and their effects on our Sailors. We appreciate Congress recognizing the importance of this issue and the negative impact it was having on our Sailors. The legislation contained in the National Defense Authorization Act FY 2007 will cap interest rates of predatory loans at 36% for members of the military and require these lending institutions to register with the Department of Defense. Additionally, by providing personal financial management education to our Sailors and increasing awareness both at this level and throughout the Fleet we hope to continue attacking this issue. Continued support of these activities is vital to our success.

### ***Safe Harbor and Health Care***

As the Navy's role in the Global War on Terror increases, so will the numbers of severely wounded Sailors. Our health care programs are state-of-the-art. Safe Harbor is

a program designed to provide personalized support and assistance to severely injured Sailors and their families. Its objectives are as follows:

- Operate a proactive outreach/visitation service
- Address needs by identifying and providing access to existing support capabilities and resources
- Partner with Marine for Life (Injured Support) for Sailors assigned to Marine Units
- Establish and maintain liaison with Sailor's command
- Encourage active duty retention
- Continuing support for Sailors with 30% or more disability rating, transitioning to civilian life

Since the Navy's Safe Harbor program was inaugurated in August 2005, we've enrolled 41 severely-injured Sailors from Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom. Major injuries such as loss-of-limb, blindness, or a loss of hearing, traumatic brain injuries and other severely disabling afflictions contribute to a need for this program.

I cannot stress enough the importance of the Navy's health care system. It is a major factor in the quality of life of our people. Healthcare is a huge part of the total benefits package provided by the Navy for active duty members, their family members and retirees. Access to quality, affordable health care for those who are serving now, and those who have done our nation's work in the past is vital. This component of our infrastructure should be spared no effort in keeping our Sailors and their families in good health now and throughout their lives.

The quality of life initiatives provided through Morale, Welfare and Recreation programs such as base fitness centers, intramural athletics, and other activities provide our Sailors with healthy activities underscoring the Navy's commitment to the highest level of physical readiness. Involving families in these activities not only promotes unit cohesiveness, but also encourages engagement in lifestyle activities that will prevent long range health problems.

From FY 08 to FY 13, the Navy's health care costs are expected to increase by 16% or \$4 billion. Combining such QOL initiatives as mentioned above with programs that promote alcohol awareness and smoking cessation will increase our chances to curb future health care spending by promoting healthy living habits.

### ***Education***

Our Sailors value education. Incoming recruits repeatedly tell us education is a major contributor in their decision to join the Navy. We view education as an investment in our future, and in emphasizing a capacity for critical thinking, problem solving, leading and responding in unprecedented and unpredictable future circumstances, the Navy has begun the process of appropriately educating and molding the leaders of tomorrow. Tuition assistance pays up to \$250 per credit hour, and is capped at \$4,500 a year for higher education. We are capitalizing on this investment and cultivating the trained, educated, and experienced deck plate leader who will serve as a role model and mentor to Sailors of tomorrow.

The Navy is constantly adapting its forces and capabilities to respond to a full range of strategic challenges. We are tackling new mission sets needed to confront and influence the highly dynamic security environment of the 21<sup>st</sup> century while maintaining

traditional naval capabilities. A combination of changing mission sets, the changing nature of work done by enlisted Sailors, the pace of change itself, and the attraction of better educated individuals into the enlisted force requires flexibility in the development of enlisted Sailors. Our Navy College Program, provides access and opportunity for enlisted Sailors to enroll in academic institutions enabling the Navy to afford more opportunities than ever to advance and improve our people.

As we continue to develop a culture of mentorship and lifelong learning we will ensure they are passing on those opportunities to our youngest Sailors. We must reaffirm our dedication to achieving the highest states of mental and technological readiness.

### ***Conclusion***

As I travel about the Fleet, whether visiting Sailors in their traditional roles at sea, or on the ground in Iraq, Afghanistan, the Horn of Africa and many other forward operating areas, I am inspired by their patriotism. Their morale is high because they know their work is important, and the American people support them.

Our Fleet is ready, our Sailors are on call, meeting the needs of their country when asked to do so, repeatedly leaving their families for extended periods. It is impossible to put a price on the hours, dedication, and commitment of our Sailors, or truly compensate them for their countless sacrifices. They bring comfort and hope to those in need all over the world.

Great strides have been made in recent years to close the gap between our civilian and military compensation levels. If we are to attract and retain America's best and brightest talent, our compensation must remain competitive with our civilian counterparts in the marketplace.

In closing, our Navy is transforming. Our Sailor will continue to evolve into the fighting force of the future that we need them to be; able to defend against any foe, at any time, in any environment. The programs we have in place now enable our people to excel in a dynamic environment, and provide a means for the development of the leadership skills necessary for success in the future. These Sailors will effectively lead our Navy only if we provide a reasonable quality of life and opportunity to succeed.