ADM Richardson: Thank you, everybody, and what a delight it is to be here in Chicago and get a chance to talk with you over lunch. My goal is to talk maybe a little longer than 60 seconds but not too much longer, because it is about a conversation. I’m very eager to hear what’s on your mind and to answer your questions and engage in that conversation.

Before I really begin, though, I want to say that the first thing we did this morning was we started our day up at our Recruit Training Center, our boot camp up at Great Lakes. Has anybody been up there for one of the graduation ceremonies? If you really want to get your day started off right, go to the graduation ceremony for the boot camp. This morning we graduated 479 brand new sailors going off to the fleet. They’re from every place in the country—some overseas—and just spend some time with them.

We are now marking over ten years in a row, 121 months of meeting our recruiting goals. In this environment, the fiscal climate and just the whole deal, for us to do that is a remarkable feat.

The metrics we have, by every measure that we’ve got, it’s the most talented Navy that the United States has ever had. The smartest Navy, the brightest, the most energetic. By all of the metrics, we’re really lucky to have them join our ranks.

You have to sometimes wonder why. Why, when these young men and women graduate from school, both officer and enlisted, and they have so many choices, literally could almost write their own checks, why do they choose to raise their right hand and take this oath? It’s not the pay. I can’t compete in salary. And oh, by the way, not only am I going to probably pay them less than they could make other places, but I’m going to ask them to go to sea for seven months at a time, away from their families, float on an island of steel with all the inherent stresses and dangers associated with that. I’ve got to think that it’s a value proposition that we make. That’s what attracts them.

This youth of America is really energized to be part of something bigger than themselves, to identify and adhere themselves to a noble cause. I had the chance to talk to these
young men and women last night on kind of their final pizza night before they graduated this morning. And then again this morning. And you ask them, why did they join the Navy? And these are young, high school graduates. These are 17, 18, 19-year-old men and women, and they say that the reason they join the Navy is because of all of you. They take their mission extremely seriously, to protect the freedom that we all enjoy.

So every chance I get to mention how blessed we are to have these types of people who in time of war and combat are willing to join our ranks to protect our way of life, to protect our prosperity, protect us from our security. We’re privileged to be among those types of people.

Less than one percent right now serve in our military, and a very small percent are even eligible to join. It’s a very competitive space. The rest of my remarks will talk about competition and a lot of times when you stand up in a military uniform and you talk about competition, you’re talking about competition against some other folks. But this competition for talent is another one that I’ve got to keep my eye on every day.

So I just wanted to bring that message from Great Lakes to you to set the tone of our discussion, that you are well served, and I’m very optimistic about the future of our Navy and the future of our Navy, our nation, because we’ve got these types of people, these amazingly talented people who are willing to be so selfless and make these sacrifices for all of us.

Again, and they have a terrific relationship here with Chicago which has always been, in my mind, a Navy town. So it’s a privilege to be here.

The Warrior Games was mentioned. This is the first time that we’ve been able to do the Warrior Games outside of a military institution. Usually we’ll do it on a base or something. And when we sort of opened that idea it was no surprise at all that it was the city of Chicago that raised their right hand and said hey, we want to be that city that hosts this important event for those wounded warriors. So again, thank you very much for doing that.

As I said, I’m excited to get to your questions, but I do want to maybe set the table a little bit with some thoughts and stimulate our discussion.
I’ve been spending a lot of time lately talking about a core attribute of toughness. That was ringing very vividly in my mind as we talked about the eight weeks we took to instill toughness in those recruits, now sailors; the ability to sort of take a hit and not only survive that hit but to come back from that hit and prevail and win. Resilience is the ability to sustain a shock and survive; toughness is the ability to recover and go back and still win.

And this is a time that requires us all to be tough, I think. I have no doubt, as I demonstrate with a quick around the world tour, we’re going to be tested. We’re going to be tested in the near future. We’ve already been tested, to be honest, and a lot of those tests are going to come at sea, and so our teams have got to be ready.

These tests are really a symptom of a return to competition in ways that we have not been competing for decades, particularly in maritime. And if we just sort of think about that competition, we have not really had to do competition, combat types of thinking at sea I would say for 25 years, really since the end of the Cold War. And in the intervening 25 years, not only have the competitors changed, but the very character of the game has changed, and I would say that one important way that it confronts us is this idea of pace or tempo. And as I talk around with my peers in the defense industry and just about everybody, the word that continues to be used over and over to describe this pace of change is exponential. And certainly if you’re in information technology, exponential’s been around for a while now as we’ve been riding Moore’s Law in IT in a number of different ways.

But I will tell you, even in traditional ways, this exponential pace of change is manifesting itself. I will tell you, even in our business, just going to sea. The number of ships at sea. I always worry when I talk to an audience that’s this intelligent, but I think I’m on safe ground when I say that mankind has been going to sea 10,000 years. Ten thousand year is when maybe we first put to sea. That’s safe. And yet in the last 25 years the amount of shipping traffic has increased by a factor of four. So if you think about the shape of that curve, for 10,000 years it builds up to a level, and then in the last quarter century that level is 400 percent higher. It shows you how busy things are getting in the maritime domain.

And there’s so much else going on besides just shipping traffic. This information world, information technology and the whole
world of information has changed the way we all do business. If you’re in business at all, this information technology and information itself, very exponential. The amount of information in the world doubles about every two years. And that’s fueled by technology that changes as quickly as possible.

So what does that mean for us? Well, certainly, every way we do business is tied up into that. The last time we were competing there was no such word as cyber security. We just didn’t have it. So this whole new dimension of operating, and by extension warfighting, is different since the last time we were competing.

That information traffic, right, your internet traffic, particularly in international internet traffic. Ninety-nine percent of that rides on cables on the ocean floor. Ninety-nine percent. And if that traffic is disrupted, the satellite constellation can recover on the order of three percent. So very dependent on the maritime domain and the infrastructure that rides on the ocean floor, not only for the internet but also for resources, natural gas, oil, a number of different things.

Technology is giving us access to parts of the ocean floor that just were completely inaccessible before. So another dimension of change, exponential in its nature.

So we talk about this cloud. When you think about a cloud, you look up, but all that information rides in a lake, so we should be looking down under the sea. [Laughter]. I said it here, maybe we’ll see how far it goes.

Megacities. There’s this increasing trend towards urbanization. There’s 31 megacities today. By 2030, expected to rise to 41. What difference does that make? The vast majority of those megacities are on shore lines. So again, these nodes of massive amounts of maritime traffic, interfaced with the ocean, changing very rapidly.

Aquaculture, getting food from the ocean. Changing very rapidly. Not only protein, but also carbohydrate. Increasing by a factor of 13. Thirteen-fold over the same period of time as these megacities are going.

So in so many ways our lives are turning towards the sea, and for someone who wants to protect our interests in the maritime, it has incredible implications for us.
What I’d like to do is shift to not only discussing the nature of the competition, but also what exactly is happening out there with some of our competitors. I’ll just kind of take a tour around the world quickly, bring us back here to Chicago, and then open it up for questions. Okay?

So we’ll head east. We’ll start here, right here with our boot camp. Everything we do begins and ends with people, and our boot camp being here, a very important part of the Navy’s map is here in Chicago in our boot camp.

But if you east, we’ll stop first in Europe. I served as the Deputy Fleet Commander out there in Europe for a while, in Naples, Italy. This is not even ten years ago. I’ll tell you, that theater has changed in the last five years dramatically. In fact we recently did an assessment of how much naval power is needed to protect America’s interests and secure the nation. We felt we needed to do that.

The last time we did it was about five years ago. When we did that, Russia was not even in the calculation as a competitor. And so how much has changed since then? A lot of that is in the maritime. The Russians have always had a very vigorous investment in operations in the submarine force, so that has continued throughout. But now in the Mediterranean, which was largely a low intensity sort of engagement type of body of water, Russian carriers deploying there. The Kuznetsov. They have done strikes into Syria from that carrier. They’ve done land attack, cruise missile strikes into Syria from their frigates and submarines. They’ve done strikes from the Mediterranean, certainly, and they’ve done strikes from the Caspian Sea, which is a fleet we’ve kind of monitored, but has come on the map so much more vividly since doing those strikes.

I was recently in Rota, Spain, and I’ll tell you that operating in the Eastern Med has become a challenging theater. There’s been a tremendous infusion of high end technology into the Eastern Med in terms of coastal defense cruise missiles, anti-ship ballistic missiles, and then these ships that are going to sea. So I wanted to see the team there in Rota, those four destroyers forward deployed there. They cover down on a lot of our missions there.

I walked the USS Ross, and I wanted to see their defensive systems, make sure that the crew was ready for their patrol. And so the captain did a great job. He walked me through the ship. Mostly he just walked me around and he let his sailors do
all the talking. So they did a number of different demonstrations on defensive missile systems, the bridge, et cetera. And we got, finally the last person on the tour was Gunner’s Mate 2nd Class Smith. And he was out there, and we were there at the vertical launch cells which launch Tomahawk missiles amongst others. He was telling me about his station and how they were ready to go. Very good discussion.

And he said, but CNO, I’ve got something I need to ask you. Can I ask you a question? I said sure. He said, you know, I’ve been taking care of these missiles for so long. They’re ready, I’m ready, the team’s ready. Are we ever going to get a chance to shoot these missiles?

At the time I said look, Petty Officer Smith, who knows? I can’t guarantee that. But here’s what I can guarantee. I guarantee that when the order comes you’re going to get no warning. It’s going to come like a thief in the night, unexpected. And when that order comes it’s going to be, we’re going to turn that mission around in very short notice. It’s going to be for immediate tasking. So not only are we not going to give you any warning, not only are we not going to give you much time, but we’re also going to expect it to be done perfectly when it’s executed. Okay? That I can guarantee you. He seemed satisfied with that, I guess.

We went our separate ways. The very next day they got underway for their patrol, and within 24 hours they got exactly that. The mission to steam as fast as they could to get into position, and within a week they had launched 36 missiles into Syria. Okay?

I was back in my office at that point and I saw the news come over and I said, you know what? I’m pretty awesome. [Laughter]. I got over that pretty quick. And in fact, what was waiting for me when I go back to the office was, the captain of the Ross had sent me an email. I don’t know if you saw them in the paper, but there were some terrific photographs of the strike. The launches went at night, so the boosters of the missiles lit up the night and there were a number of shots with the American flag in them with the ship in the background. They were just great photos.

I got one and I blew it up to about the size of, not this screen, but one of the screens on the side, and put it outside my office there in the Pentagon. I thought it’s a great Navy day. Then I took my picture next to their picture, and I sent
all that back to Petty Officer Smith and I said, hey, Smith, be careful what you ask for next time. [Laughter]. That was a fun thing to do.

But anyway, a sporty theater now. You’ve really got to be on your toes when you’re operating in the Mediterranean. And if you go north in Europe, it’s the same thing. You get into the Baltics and you get, particularly east in the Baltics, within 100 miles of Kaliningrad or so, and you’re going to be met, and you’re going to be met by jets, and some of those jets fly extremely close to our ships. The risk of miscalculation on a scenario like that, you don’t even have to have hostile intent. You just have to make a human error. The margins for error are so small when they do those provocative types of flights that something could happen just by virtue of human error.

Okay, so there’s our European theater.

You kind of go through now, continuing to transit east on our thought voyage, and you go through the Suez Canal, and we’ve always been on our best behavior and most alert status going through that canal. Then you come out in the Red Sea. And to be honest, the Red Sea, until recently, was just a pretty straight-forward transit.

No longer. The Red Sea is one of our most contested areas now, particularly down in the Bab-al-Mandeb Strait off the coast of Yemen. And it seems like it’s becoming a testing ground for different technologies, different tactics. We’re seeing, again, anti-ship cruise missiles fired from the coast, fired from ships. We’re seeing unmanned boats with explosive projectiles on the front, sort of afloat cruise missiles, if you will. We’re seeing unmanned UAV’s, something you can basically get off of Amazon. Delivered to your door next day. Then you arm that and you’ve got a weapon system. So it’s this mix of things that really poses a tremendous challenge to our commanders and our forces and our allies and partners as well, in that area.

And the geography constrains things very quickly. So if I back up to the Straits of Gibraltar, that’s why we have a Navy. That’s why the Navy was born, is to defend our interests against the Barbary Pilots in the Straits of Gibraltar, and it’s, we’re still there and we’re defending our interests in other choke points and straits, the Bab-al-Mandeb being one of the very important ones right now.
I should mention too, because we’ve got the Special Operations Command Public Affairs Officer in the house, that across so much of Africa, Special Forces are doing the counter-terrorism fight, and a lot of that’s being done by Navy SEALS. So a tremendous effort by our SEALs in the counter-ISIS and fight in Somalia against al-Shabaab.

In fact you’ve ready about the shoot-down of the Syrian jet just recently, their [fitter]. That was done by two, well, one guy did the shooting. The other guy was his wingman. F-18s off the George H.W. Bush Strike Group on patrol in the Med.

Now you come out the Bab-al-Mandeb Strait and you hang a left. You go up along the Horn of Africa and you’re headed towards the Arabian Gulf through the Straits of Hormuz. This is where it is 100 percent guaranteed at this point you’re going encounter the Chinese Navy. So that Navy used to, let’s say ten years ago, be largely a Navy confined, what we say is inside the first island chain. And I know that in this group you know what I mean when I say that. But roughly, a coastal Navy. Now routinely, operating in the Indian Ocean around the Arabian Gulf, the Bab-al-Mandeb, all around that area, including submarine deployments. So the People’s Liberation Army/Navy has expanded their sphere of operation and has reconstituted their entire Navy.

So if I did a ten-year comparison of numbers of ships between ten years ago and now, that number didn’t change dramatically, but we’ve changed out all of our used jalopies for brand-new sports cars. So they’ve rebuilt that. We were talking a little bit about Chinese shipbuilding, just the economic power, the number of ships that they’re building is tremendous.

So you continue across the Indian Ocean now. A very multinational approach to business out there. Multinational coalitions. Everybody finding their spot. So our work with allies and partners very important across all the theaters. The Mediterranean, here, and in fact we just got a cruiser underway from Sri Lanka, the USS Lake Erie down there, lending humanitarian support to Sri Lanka after the monsoon rains and floods and mud slides and everything.

So this is what’s cool about being in the Navy. That certainly we’ve got to be consummate warfighters, and there’s no doubt about that.
But there’s also this diplomatic element to what we do. Every warship a piece of sovereign U.S. territory. So it’s routine that when we pull into ports overseas there’s always a diplomatic element to that visit. And we host foreign delegations down on board. The Ambassador’s always there. So there’s this diplomatic part.

There’s this humanitarian part to being a sailor. So here we were in Sri Lanka lending assistance to a partner who’s got great need and helping them dig their wells back out and get fresh water and all those things that are so critical, particularly in the immediate aftermath of a crisis.

And then there’s this idea of a rescuer, rescuing people in distress at sea. And so a lot of the business of being in the Navy, particularly in the Mediterranean, if I can go back there, is just helping migrants who are trying to move across that body of water to their destination.

If you keep on going east now, you’ve gone so far east you’re now west and you are in the South China Sea going through the Straits of Malacca. What we’re seeing there is sort of a rising terrorism level, activity. Very concerned amongst Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines, Singapore, as a lot of those fighters that went to Syria and Iraq now leave Syria and Iraq, as that fight becomes less and less hopeful for them. They bring a lot of that radicalized ideology back home. So there’s a terrific rising of intensity and violence there, something we’ve got to keep an eye on. Again, in a multinational way.

South China Sea, about 30 percent of the world’s trade flows through that body of water. Very important. We’ve been there for 70 years and we’re going to stay there. But you’ve read about the reclamation of land there, the building of these islands, the maritime claims—really outrageous maritime claims that go with those reclaimed bodies of land.

We’re going to be there. We’re going to contest those claims as we always do, as we do around the world. And that gets a tremendous amount of attention.

Then as you go north through an emerging set of allies and partners, as the dynamic out there changes, you’re now off the coast of North Korea, or Korea, the Korean Peninsula, and doing what we can to manage that tremendously challenging and short-term challenge.
Keep on going west just a little bit, you are back in Hawaii. Life’s good. Liberty call. Then you come back here.

So around the world. I hope you get a sense for just the increase in activity, the increase in competition, increase in intensity around the world.

I think with that I’ve talked long enough, given you maybe something to stimulate your questions, and I look forward to engaging in a dialogue with you. So thanks very much.

**Moderator:** Thank you Admiral, for a really great thought journey so far. So we can dive down deeper into the topics you want to address. I also have questions coming in on-line.

I’ll start in the room, though.

**Audience:** Andre King, counsel of Barbados Caribbean.

The question is the Chinese have made a major inroad, particularly in Venezuela, Trinidad, and the Panama Canal. They have over 40, 45 percent of the Venezuelan resources under wraps. You were going around the world, but you never got to the Panama Canal and the Caribbean. What is the U.S. Navy doing about that situation so close to the United States?

**ADM Richardson:** I think that effort, and if we wanted to -- it was just in the interest of time, but if you wanted to take an analysis of this One Belt/One Road Initiative which is, you can just Google that and read a tremendous amount about it. But there is this string of investments that have been made by China to bring that to reality. It’s a very focused, multi-dimensional approach. It seems to be very strategic in its execution. So across the Indian Ocean, up in Pakistan, Djibouti, across through Africa, and then in South America, around the Panama Canal as well.

It’s something that we follow very closely. It’s why we need to continue to reinvigorate our partnerships with the nations in that area. And there’s also an investment part of this that we watch as well, to make sure that we kind of protect our industrial partners as well.

**Audience:** Thank you very much, that was superb. I have a comment and a question.
My comment is that the media in America has put down the youth as America as less than they were before. I enlisted in the Navy when I was 17. I thought I was pretty good. But I think the youth of America is getting better and better.

I was so impressed when I went on the USS Chicago as part of the 721 Club, and realized that it was run by 18 to 26-year-olds, the whole sub. It was very impressive.

I wish that the Navy, and I’m sitting next to public affairs now, would do more in the media to show the American public how great the youth is in the United States and what they are really doing. You said it right, but I think the general public has no idea of who these people are and what they’re doing, and I wish there was some way of getting that message across.

ADM Richardson: Obviously I completely agree with you. That’s why I led off with that. We were talking, [Darren] and I were talking last night. We had the pleasure of having dinner together. And there’s a number of ways -- I’m very interested in figuring out what we can do to continue to invest in the youth of America -- secondary education. College is great, but I almost feel like that’s too late. In fact right here in Chicago there’s an outstanding example of what I’m talking about is the Rickover Academy. If you’re all familiar with that -- are you familiar with the Rickover Academy? A stunning example of what we can do together in terms of educating our youth at the high school level.

I’ve been privileged enough working with Jeff, who if you want to talk about a one-person public affairs dynamo, it’s Jeff Gray. So -- [Applause]. Jeff and I have been working together for a long time. One of the first things we did together was do a graduation out there at this high school. Amazing. First of all, a lot of the student body, they ride 90 minutes, two hours each way on the El to get there to go to that school. So many of them will be the first person in their family to graduate high school. Some of them go home and are the only wage earners in their family. So they get done with their school work, they take the two-hour ride home, and then they go to work, and then they come back the next day to school.

So don’t talk to me about the dedication and talent of our youth. It’s there. We need to find it, stimulate it, invest in it, and I’m looking for more creative ways to do that.
With respect to getting that word out, I don’t miss an opportunity, but I think the nature of the dialogue in the country right now, those types of stories don’t get much coverage.

Audience: Your predecessor, one of your predecessors mentioned an area you didn’t mention. It was the Arctic Circle, where Russia and China are making big progress. And the big issue of three or four years ago when we talked to him was the lack of equipment that fits into this area. What’s happening in this area, and how important is this whole geographic area?

ADM Richardson: It’s a tremendously important area as Admiral Greenert said, and it remains so. The Arctic Ice Cap is the smallest it’s been in my 35 years of naval service. It’s the smallest it’s been since we started measuring its size, which we do from space. So what does that mean from a geostrategic perspective?

Well, again, it’s often one of those dynamic elements that I mentioned in the maritime. It means that there are now transit routes that are open that were not previously open. And you can cut a heck of a lot of time off moving goods around the world if you can take that northern route.

It means that continental shelves that were covered with ice and inaccessible before, are not accessible with their attendant resources, with their sovereignty claims and everything else that comes with that. And so a tremendously strategic opening happening by virtue of the changes in the Arctic.

What CNO Greenert said is still the case. We kind of run out of Navy before we can get to that priority. We’re watching it very closely. Parts of our Navy have been up there consistently for decades. So one thing that we’ll do coming up that we do every other year is we go up and we do a big ice camp, a research project with submarines. We surface them through the ice. Sometimes we’ll bring an international partner and surface their submarines through the ice. We’ll do a bunch of research and development which has led to tremendous insight into the Arctic and then we’ll of course do some exercising and weapon shooting and everything else to see how that goes. It keeps us familiar with the environment.

We’re moving back up there. My partner, Commandant Neller, Commandant of the Marine Corps. He’s getting his troops back up into northern climes and doing cold weather exercises. Our
aircraft are operating up there because satellite coverage and communication, navigation and those sorts of things, the Arctic brings a very special challenge in all those areas.

When we did this reanalysis of how much naval power we need, that was in the hopper this time, and that’s one of the things that as we move to more Navy for the nation we’ll be able to address those priorities much more vigorously.

**Moderator:** We’ll do one digital question, then we’ll come back to the room.

Our on-line audience sent in a cyber-related question. Not a surprise. How has the Navy and yourself evolved to deal with the cyber landscape that’s quickly taking shape as a major defense challenge? I read that to say the Navy and then also yourself, how are you staying kind of up to date with the --

**ADM Richardson:** Cyber hygienic?

**Moderator:** Exactly.

**ADM Richardson:** I’ll tell you, another area as we said during my remarks, moving very fast. The first thing we had to do was get properly organized to deal with this. We now have Cyber Command and the naval component for that. Fleet Cyber Command is our 10th Fleet, which was named after the fleet that they stood up to fight the ASW problem, the Battle of the Atlantic. And so they’ve always been into sort of the analytical part of our naval business. So we thought it would be appropriate to get our cyber fleet named after the 10th Fleet.

So that’s a very talented officer, a three-star Admiral Gilday runs that team. He’s been recruiting, training and deploying what we call cyber mission teams. Because ironically, it may not be obvious right off the bat, but location matters. Physical location matters a great deal, depending upon what you want to do.

These teams have both offensive and defensive missions and training. So that’s part of it.

Then there’s the idea of how do we design our systems, both information systems and control systems, for operating in this environment. We’re kind of backing cyber protection into a lot of our legacy systems because they just weren’t designed and
conceived at this. They pre-dated this. So we’re doing everything we can to keep those systems up to date.

And certainly going forward, we’re designing an awful lot into those systems to make them sort of cyber hardened from the beginning.

Then just a matter, because this is so much like fingers in the dike. It doesn’t take much to offer access to get somebody inside the wire. There’s a tremendous amount of training, and we’re looking to reinvigorate that training just for the general Navy. Not only our sailors, but also our Navy civilians, our families. So that we understand the vulnerabilities of even social media, those sorts of things. So it’s a pretty comprehensive effort, as you would expect, for something that has just such tremendous implications for the way we do business.

**Audience:** Thank you, Admiral. Could you comment on the status or the state of civil/military relations today? And how the appointment of General Mattis as Secretary has affected that?

**ADM Richardson:** I’m going to answer that maybe in a little bit different way than you might expect.

**Audience:** It’s not supposed to be a political question.

**ADM Richardson:** I understand.

I think that one of the most important things if not the most important thing that we have to do as a Navy, as a Defense Department, is to, and it’s particularly important in an all-volunteer force, is to strengthen the bonds of trust and confidence that make us work. You’ve got to have trust and confidence in us or it all falls apart. It’s an all-volunteer force. You’ll stop sending your sons and daughters to us if you lose that bond of trust and confidence.

Similarly, inside the Navy we’ve got to maintain those bonds within the chain of command. Our subordinates have to have trust and confidence in their superiors that these are people worth following. Worthy of following. Worthy of being followed.

So we’ve done a tremendous amount of investment in our leader development program. I just issued not too long ago a leader development framework which one, first and foremost, addresses
this element of competition. So we have got to be building leaders and teams that can go out and compete and win. Everybody does not get a trophy in the real world. And in our business, the winners sail away and the losers sink. [Laughter]. We want to be the ones sailing away. So we’ve got on build leaders who are experts at what they do and can win. And that team has got to win today’s contest and tomorrow’s and the next day’s, so we’ve got to build teams that sustain and get stronger throughout.

The road to that goal, if you want to say, that’s the objective. The road to get there in my view, and this is the way we talk about it in this framework, has really two lanes. One is competence. We’ve got to have leaders that know what they’re doing. All the sincerity in the world is not going to get you there. You won’t know right from wrong if you see it.

But the other lane is this idea of character. We’ve got to be developing leaders of character as well. Leaders that we would be proud to put in front of your sons and daughters, and leaders that you would be proud to have in front of your sons and daughters.

We just split out our leader development program, standing up in Newport, Rhode Island, not only a college of operational leadership. That’s to address making everybody a naval expert. But also the college of ethics to talk about ethical development of our leadership.

Within my span of control, I think that that’s the most important thing I can do. If the two sides of the civil/military relationship can look at one another and say this is a person that I have deep trust in, that I know is a person of character, that will give me the straight scoop, that I can trust the youth of America to go and follow, everything after that I think gets a lot easier. That’s sort of how I’m addressing that.

With respect to your specific question, do you know General Mattis?

Audience: I do.

ADM Richardson: So you know that he’s a very deep, deep strategic thinker. I have no concerns -- I would advise you all to not have any concerns in that regard. We are very well served by having Secretary Mattis in place. [Applause.]
Audience: Sir, thank you.

After World War II a group came together and created the Naval War College. Having been there, one of the goals of it was to, for leaders like you to have relationships, and you’ve obviously ascended to a pretty high level. I wonder if there are any relationships you have with people you were with at the Naval War College that help you now as you have this global perspective on peace in our time.

ADM Richardson: I’ll tell you, the War Colleges are terrific. They’re strategic institutions. We have I would say three of those strategic institutions in the Navy. One is the Naval War College up in Newport that you mentioned. The other one is the Naval Post-Graduate School out at Monterey, California. And we have the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland.

Now why do I call those strategic? Well, I’ll tell you that one, all of them have to some degree sort of a joint student body. Not only are you going to get a bunch of talented Navy guys there, but you’re going to get Army students, Air Force students, Marine Corps. You get the whole joint force present. And you serve together there.

It goes back to trust and confidence. I don’t mean to kind of come back to that too often and make it sound overly simple, but when you graduate and you’re forward and you have to do business in a joint environment over the skies of Syria, the fact that I can call up the Chief of Staff of the Air Force and I know Fingers Goldfein from having served together for so long, maybe taken a course or two together, that boy, I’ll tell you, it’s great to start that conversation on a first-name basis rather than let’s get to know each other. Because we’re going to make demands on one another that are going to require one, moving at the speed of conflict. It’s not like I’ve got a lot of time to study these things. And two, we’re going to have to have a lot of trust in each other to meet those demands.

So these types of relationships are absolutely foundational to conducting joint and coalition warfare. I bring in coalition because there’s also an international dimension to the student bodies in all of those places. So not only can I call across the joint force and other U.S. service members, leaders, but our foreign partners, they send their real rock stars to these institutions. So I do a lot of business with my fellow Chiefs of Navy around the world. I would say that 25-30 percent of
those people did their master’s degree at the War College. So these types of things, again, they build these strategic relationships that allow us to manage these very dynamic situations going on.

I hope I got to your question, but I really do consider them strategic places.

**Audience:** Thank you very much.

A number of years ago I had the honor of attending the Current Strategy Forum up at the War College. It was a marvelous experience. And I found myself briefly chatting with Vern Clark, the CNO. I asked him from an operational standpoint, what the single biggest issue he thought was going on at that point in time. His answer was the interconnectivity of the military services. They were having problems with that at the time. I hope they’ve solved that by now.

A few years later I was, again, in a small conversation, this time with Gary Roughead, when he was CNO. He said the biggest operational issue he was dealing with at the time was development of the underwater drone program.

So now we come a few years further, and you are the CNO. Can I ask you, what is the operational issue that keeps you up at night?

**ADM Richardson:** I will tell you that of all the things that I’ve got to maintain and balance, the operational part of our Navy is the thing that keeps me up least. The fleet is doing superb work. They are dynamic, they take the resources, the systems, the people, the procedures, and they go off and they do absolutely stunning work. Very dynamic. To change to this rapidly evolving security situation in the maritimes. Some of the things that I just talked about.

The thing that keeps me up is the inability, not operationally at sea. We’ve got a chain of command that can move very quickly out there. Leaders empowered, accountable. They have the authority. They do it. They can move.

In terms of a budget—in terms of coming to some kind of an agreement on what we need to fund and resource that Navy, it’s not an environment of compromise right now. It’s very difficult to get things done. The dialogue seems to be getting less compromising by the day and it’s difficult. Those teams out
there, they watch this very closely. It’s remarkable how you can go halfway around the world, talk on the hangar deck of an aircraft carrier at sea in the South China Sea, and talk to a group of sailors and take questions just like I’m taking questions here and they’ll say, do they know what we’re doing out here? Do they know the challenges that we face? And if that’s the case, why are we going into eight years of Continuing Resolutions? What does it mean? This is from a very junior sailor. This goes back to the astute team that we have.

So that’s not lost on our folks that we have got to come through this period and govern, and that includes getting to a budget on time with appropriate resources, predictable, stable, adequate funding that can get that Navy out there doing the business it needs to do.

**Audience:** As you look at technology increasing exponentially, and as you look at the fleet, are you thinking more of the fleet needs to be the size that it is and perchance grow? Or a smaller fleet with substantially greater technological advances as you watch that increase exponentially?

And the second question, how are your other naval NATO counterparts doing in keeping that same level of technology so that you can communicate with them also in the midst of a theater?

**ADM Richardson:** That’s an easy question. I’ll just knock this one out in a couple of seconds. There’s a trick question, it’s sort of a quiz. There’s the Chief of Naval Operations up here at the podium, do you want a bigger or smaller Navy. [Laughter]. I go with A, bigger.

But I’ll tell you, I just issued a paper that describes this actually, it’s called Future Navy. And we did a lot of work over the last year to, we did some in the Navy but we also asked a number of other entities -- think tanks, thinkers, naval strategists, et cetera -- to also work on this. It was sort of a bit of a solarium project, if you’re familiar with that effort from the Eisenhower administration, where we put a bunch of teams and gave them a question and let them go off and come back with an answer.

While the shape of the Navy that they came back with was different from group to group, every group unanimously said we need more. The Navy we have right now is just from a capacity standpoint, is inadequate to the task of doing our mission.
How much more? We’re a Navy of about 280 let’s say for round numbers right now, ships in the battle fleet. The numbers are pointing towards 350, 355, something in the mid 300’s.

So from a capacity standpoint, that matters. You’ve got to be there to provide credible options to leadership. If you’re not there, you’re not an option.

And there’s the capacity to sort of meet the growing navies around the world as well.

But capacity alone is not going to get us to the Navy that maintains superiority that we need. So there is this technology element as well. And what we count as a unit in the battle fleet, if we just build more of what we have today and get it up to 355, that’s not the Navy that’s going to win. So we’re taking some technologies very seriously, whether it’s unmanned, and can we take full credit for an unmanned ship? My sense is probably yes. There’s tremendous leaps forward in autonomy, artificial intelligence and autonomy. You link that with unmanned and you’ve got something you really need to seriously contend with.

I think directed energy, whether that’s lasers, high power microwaves, those sorts of things. Very promising right now.

Additive manufacturing could transform our logistics if we can build those things in a 3D printer at sea rather than having to bring them on board from another ship or pull into port.

So there’s a number of technologies that we’re pursuing that get us even more naval power. So I’ve started to think in naval power. Some of that naval power comes from more platforms; some of that naval power comes from making each one of those platforms more capable through technologies; and then we’ve talked a little bit about it, you network all of that together and you start to get to exponential rates of change. So that’s my general approach.

**Moderator:** One more on-line then we’ll see where we get. We have about five more minutes.

**ADM Richardson:** You can’t end on an on-line question.

**Moderator:** You actually just answered one of them as well on that one, so we’re doing well.
But this one is, multiple people have asked it and we’ve had a lot of votes on it. Could you discuss North Korea more?

ADM Richardson: I will tell you, a very urgent problem in need of all of our attention. And when I say all of ours, I think the entire nation with our partners. We may need to bring in new partners to address this. But I will tell you this as the Navy guy in the room, the last solution we want is the military solution to the North Korean problem. Again, it’s very -- geography matters. Cite your strategists. McKinder, Kaplan, you name it. Geography matters. And the geography on that peninsula, if that turns into a military solution, casualties like we haven’t seen since World War II. We’re just not, we are not used to talking in terms of that level of destruction. So believe me, a military solution is the last one we want to take. We must exhaust every diplomatic, economic approach because you don’t want to fight that fight.

Audience: Admiral, getting back to the issue of funding, is this Congress trying to provide you with weapons that you’re really not asking for? And to what extent does that eat into the budget for what you do believe you want?

ADM Richardson: I will tell you, when you talk about partners and relationships, I’ve been really enriched and it’s been a great source of professional gratification to build relationships with folks, Senators, Congressmen, and also their professional staffs. And I’ll tell you that they’re elected to represent their local constituents. That’s how our government works. That’s the legislative branch of our government. It’s by design.

But I’ll tell you, I’ve also been very encouraged by, they have national security as their interest as well.

We’re all I think pulling for the same things, particularly the committees that sort of run our business, the Armed Services Committees and the Appropriations Committees for Defense subcommittee. I just had a terrific dinner with Chairwoman Kay Granger of the House Appropriations Committee for Defense, and I talk regularly to Chairman Thornberry and others. It’s a terrific conversation with the nation’s interest in mind. So there’s not a whole lot of that going on. But it’s the ability to kind of get that to a bill that can pass on time. We’ve got to lift the Budget Control Act. That’s one of the most important things that we can do. So we can balance this out and
have predictable funding. Particularly a capital-intensive thing like a Navy. Shipbuilding thrives on stable funding. You go in fits and starts and all you do is it costs you more time and that costs you a lot more money.

**Moderator:** Admiral, thank you for your decades of service, and for your remarks today.

**ADM Richardson:** Thank you.

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