Admiral John Richardson, CNO  
MCPON Steven S. Giordano  
All Hands Call - 5th Fleet  
29 December 2017

Admiral Richardson:  Thank you very much, team, and thank you for that very polite applause, because I know you were saving yourself to really let it go for the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy, Steve Giordano.  So let’s give it up for the MCPON.  [Applause.]

Admiral Aquilino hit it exactly right on the mark.  It is a privilege to be out here with you, and MCPON and I have been kind of traveling around.  But seeing the fleet at holiday time, one, just to be with you during the holidays, which is inspirational.  If you’re looking to get your battery recharged and gather some inspiration from this holiday period, no matter what your tradition is, I can think of no better way to do that than just to be in your company.  To come out here.

And I really only have a very small message to open up our conversation, and then I’ll take some time at the end to close it out.  But what I’m really looking forward to doing, and I can see a couple of mikes here in the middle of the crowd, is to just engage with you.  I want to hear what’s on your mind.  MCPON and I have been doing this long enough that we can usually through the questions, we can kind of let you know what’s on our mind.  But it’s a lot better and more interesting if we do it in a dialogue, rather than just a lecture.

Plus, we also have been doing this long enough to know that it takes about, the United States sailor can fall asleep in 90 seconds.  [Laughter].  Nine-zero seconds.  And if we don’t have you by then it’s over, it’s lights out.  So we’re going to try to get underneath that threshold.

Just very quickly, I just want to convey that by every metric that we have to measure performance, this is the most talented Navy.  You are the most talented Navy that we have on record.  In the 242 years of our history, this is the best, most talented Navy we’ve got.  Now what does that mean?

That means that you had a tremendous amount of choices when you got out of school or when you came to the end of your enlistment, right?  You could have written your check and gone anywhere in the world you wanted.  There’s a lot of competition
for talent like you, and you all made a commitment to raise your right hand, take an oath to support and defend the constitution, and that commitment brought you out here, to Bahrain and the 5th Fleet. Some of you are away from your families, some of you have brought your families with you, but it’s a commitment. Right? This is different than what a lot of your civilian counterparts are doing. Outside of the Navy. There are some Navy civilians in here, too. But that commitment, I just want to convey my respect for that commitment.

The MCPON and I spend a lot of time making decisions and we begin every one of those decisions with you in mind, and at the end of the day we kind of wrap back around and we try and make sure that we end with you in mind as well. All right? We just want to clear obstacles out of your way. We want to remove any kind of walls that stand between you and you reaching your full potential to becoming, remaining, the most powerful Navy in the world each and every day. As individuals, as teams, as commands, you name it. All right?

So that’s my opening statement. It’s a statement of respect and commitment to you and the oath that you’ve taken to be part of something bigger than yourselves and serve our country out here far away from home. All right?

MCPON, have you got anything you want to --

MCPON Giordano: No, sir. You know how we are. Now is the best part of this, is to get into the conversation.

Admiral Richardson: So that’s it. That’s our opening statement. It’s 89.5 seconds. And what’s on your mind? Let’s go to the mikes.

Audience: Good afternoon, CNO. I’m Master Chief Mack from COMUSNAVCENT, 5th Fleet. Welcome, and we’re glad to have you out here.

My question concerns the changes that we’ve recently seen with all of the NAV Admin for our junior sailors, extending their high year tenure dates. We have a group of sailors that enlisted roughly five to six years ago, and starting with the NAV Admin in March of 2012 really affected them that they probably weren’t aware of when the recruiter brought them in, got them in programs and set their rate. And since then, there’s been no less than four NAV Admins, plus the identifying of certain rates being up to 200 percent overmanned, offering
them cross-rate training at the end of their EAOS, but unfortunately, they would be at the end of their time in rate for their contract, so they couldn’t cross-rate over. They were at five or six years.

We were able to get a lot of these people to transition to the Reserves. They’re fully qualified, they come forward, they fight, they maintain, they’re go-getters. In the Reserves we have the opportunity for the FC to AC program, which maybe one or two people, can apply for the select billets every month.

Is there any luck with now the change of increasing the E4, E5 billets to increasing the number of RC to AC slots now?

Admiral Richardson: I’m going to kind of provide a thematic overview answer to your question which is the easy part of the answer. Then for the hard part, I’m going to turn to the MCPON. He can answer the hard part of your question.

You’ve probably noticed, there’s been a series of adjustments to the rules that govern our manning, right? Whether it’s higher tenure, there’s been a number of other ones. And the theme, if you will, that connects all of those message is that we are a growing Navy right now. We are growing. We’re getting more ships. Those ships need crews, the Navy is growing right now, and the exact numbers, it’s in the thousands. This is real growth. And where we are especially growing and we want to prioritize filling gaps, is at sea. So that is, those are the two thematic elements to all of the messages that have come out.

One, we’re growing. We’re not looking to get rid of people. We’re looking to keep people.

And two, the highest priority billets that we want to fill are at sea. So we are, there’s been the Chief Petty Officer of the Sea. There’s been this high year tenure. There’s been a lot of adjustments made, particularly when it pertains to staying at sea. At sea-going billets. Okay? That’s the thematic underpinning for all of these changes.

I recognize that it’s complicated business. And sometimes the timing and the synchronization just may not be exactly right, and we’ll just come back and adjust it.

I don’t see us making any RC to AC adjustments for those reasons that you state because I think there may be better ways to crack that nut than to do the RC to AC conversion. Okay?
MCPON, I’ll turn to you if you want to answer the high year tenure piece.

**MCPON Giordano:** Did you have a question about high year tenure and kind of where we’re at with that? Or?

**Audience:** No, it was mainly the fact that we have sailors that had to get out of the active Navy because of the high year tenure in the last year to 18 months due to all the changes that took place starting in March of 2012.

**MCPON Giordano:** And they wanted to continue to serve --

**Audience:** Yes.

**MCPON Giordano:** -- call for our nation, so made conversation from Active Component to Reserve Component, and now there’s this opportunity to maybe open that quota on the reverse side of that, to go from RC to AC, right?

This is a larger effort that we’re looking at, because we tend to talk about rating, modernization and ready relevant learning, and Sailor 2025 without having a full understanding of the pillars that encompass all of what we talk about with Sailor 2025. And inside one of those pillars as we’re talking about modernizing those career paths and stuff, one of those is can we look at those opportunities to make that conversion a little bit easier. Because we did, we gave a significant amount of investment into those sailors. Doing great things, still want to serve, so can we look at that? And that team is, that’s one of those efforts we’re looking at is can we look at maybe a process that allows for reaching back into the Reserve community to come back to the Active Component to maybe help with some of those Manning pieces that we have.

**Audience:** Thank you.

**Admiral Richardson:** It’s a bit crazy, if we’re saying here’s a sailor who wants to continue to serve on active duty and the best way for that to happen is to go into the Reserves so I can get back on active duty, right? I’d rather just take out that middle part and see if we can’t solve this in one stroke.

**Audience:** Good afternoon, sir. I’m Matudo Santos, NSF Bahrain.
My question is, will the Guard 2000 program make a return, and/or will a similar incentive be introduced as an alternative or as an addition to SRBs?

Admiral Richardson: Okay, here’s the rules. If you’re reading your question, that’s the MCPON. All right? [Laughter].

MCPON Giordano: You ask this question because you saw the recent NAV Admin, maybe adjustments to SRBs.

Audience: It’s a question I also had before. I was wondering why the Guard 2000 also went away.

MCPON Giordano: We always kind of make adjustments to programs that we have. Incentives that we have for force shaping mechanisms.

I think the SRB model that we have is a pretty good working model. We can adjust that pretty fluidly and still meet the demand signal in retaining the right sailors with the right skill sets and incentivizing them to remain performing in those jobs.

I haven’t really been tracking the Guard 2000 conversation at all. This is the first time hearing about it, so I’ll have to take that back and kind of look into it a little bit more.

Admiral Richardson: Can I ask you to do something? Right over there is a Marine Corps Major. He’ll take your email address and we will get back to you with that answer, okay?

Audience: Thank you, sir.

Audience: Good afternoon, Admiral. Good afternoon, MCPON. [Inaudible] Leatherby, Task Force 515 on IEA from COMSOPAC, Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

My question is, the Navy IT, most of our training is OJT. But personally, I believe sailors should receive the same if not better quality training and equivalent certifications as civilians. What initiatives are currently underway to increase the quality of training sailors [inaudible]?

Admiral Richardson: I’ll back up and we’ll talk about training. There’s a lot of exciting things going on in the way that we train our Navy.
Any gamers in here? Anybody ever play those computer games? There’s two people in this whole audience? [Laughter]. Now you made me do it. I want everybody in this room to raise your right hand. Everybody. They all work. Left hand? All right, all of those work too. So how many people are gamers? That’s a little bitter. The rest of you guys with hands down are, I can’t say because the Archbishop’s here, but you’re lying. Okay? [Laughter].

We’re using a lot of the technology to get at training. And it’s particularly relevant to the question you asked because we can encapsulate a lot of that and ship it somewhere. I don’t have to stand up an entire schoolhouse to do that type of training. And it’s not just sort of a game. So you know how these games go. A lot of times you’re working your way through some problem and you either get killed in the game or whatever, and you have to start all back over and you get a little bit further the next time. And it’s all kind of learning on your own, right?

So what we’ve done is we’ve taken all of that technology, which can give you a pretty realistic experience, right? But we put also something in there that measures your steps every step of the way. So instead of just starting fresh and trying again, it will actually tell you, hey, you know what? You were supposed to finish that stuff in five minutes, you took eight, and this is why. This is where you took too much time, this is how you can cut time the next time. This is wrong what you did, so don’t do that again. And you can improve very very fast. It’s a combination of very high simulation technology, very high fidelity simulators with feedback that is tailored to you. All right?

So that in and of itself can get you a lot further, a lot better trained using just a computer than we ever could before.

How many people were around for the first revolution in training we did in the early 2000’s, right? How many of you were around at that time? And it didn’t go so well, did it? Right? We kind of leapt off the computer cliff, leap of faith, and oh by the way, about the best we could do was pause or something like that with the machine. So it fell flat on its face.

We’re measuring as we go now, and these ones can, they’re really showing some benefit.
Now it can’t take you all the way, can it? And for particularly complicated things, you’ve got to actually get hands on and dive in and get some training. But I’ll tell you, we can get a lot further than we used to. We can also break it up a lot more, so your training is delivered a lot closer to when you need that knowledge to do your job.

So another question for just a hand exercise. How many people went into a school, whether it’s an A school or a C School, and you got a ton of training, some of which you didn’t use for years on down the line. Right? And you’d forgotten it by then, right? You kind of had to go back and do it all over again.

So we’re going to try and break it up into chunks that we deliver that training very close to when you need it so that it’s relevant right away. Right? So this is this ready relevant learning. That’s the ready and the relevant part of doing that, and that will apply to just about every rate. We’re stepping through that. And it will be key, also, to this rating modernization program that MCPON talked about.

You’re in IT, you said?

**Audience:** Yes, sir.

**Admiral Richardson:** Okay. And as you’re doing your IT business, as you look across and your left and right, if you see that there might be some ETs that are doing work that’s interesting to you, boy, you probably have, by virtue of being an IT, 85 percent of what it takes to be an ET. Right? First of all, you’ve been through boot camp, so we’ve brought you in and we’ve done that genetic engineering to make you a sailor. And then you’ve got a lot of electronic skills, a lot of those basics that kind of apply to both.

So I can also take a module and say you know what? Here’s an option for you to become an ET. Right? You take this module, you get certified, you take an exam, and now you can compete for advancement s both IT and ET. You can get orders as an IT or an ET. It’s a lot better for you, a lot more flexibility for you. A lot more flexibility for MCPON and me, because we can use you in a lot more places.

So that’s kind of the direction that we’re going. MCPON, I don’t know if you want to add --
**MCPON Giordano:** The only thing I would add on is you kind of mentioned the certification piece in there, and that’s another piece that we’re very vested in.

I don’t know if everybody’s familiar, but we actually have a credentialing management office. And you can apply for credentials. You can go on and say hey, I want to earn this credential. And we have yet to disapprove a request for a credential. And since the standup, we’ve actually credentialled about 160,000 certifications.

But what we’re doing is, as the CNO talked about, this kind of block modular piece training. We’re also embedding that certification piece into it as well too, so you’re kind of earning them along that path.

**Audience:** Good afternoon, Admiral. I’m [Inaudible] Airman Van Larkham from Naval Operation Support Center Schenectady, and I come in representing the Reservist side.

I am one of those sailors that has very much been interested in the Reserve to Active duty conversion program, but I was wondering why myself and many other Reservists have to jump through so many hoops in our past to attempt to go to full conversion. Because by the end of A school, quite a few sailors had come to realize that while we were getting all of this intensive training, especially in my rate. I was there for 6 months at Keesler Air Force Base, and I realized just how invaluable this was and how much of a great opportunity and great career this can give us.

So why, when we return to our [NOSCS] and we begin to go through these programs to do our [METOC] training manuals, and truly a circus, it is truly a circus of hoops that we have to jump through in order for us to even go to C school and do follow-up training, which is what I need to get my forecaster’s qualification, and even by then, conversion to active duty is not sure.

**Admiral Richardson:** So you’re a [METOC] guy.

**Audience:** Yes, Admiral.

**Admiral Richardson:** All right. Come on up here. Let’s give Van Larkham a round of applause here. [Applause].
I don’t want to stand in your way to let you serve in any way possible. Right? But there is sort of, you’ve got to appreciate life from my perspective and MCPON’s perspective. As much as we want to let you do everything that you want to do, we’ve got to kind of manage the Navy, right? So all of these opportunities, the Master Chief asked about it, this RC to AC, that’s just one way that we’re bringing people into the Navy. And we’ll fine tune that. If we need more of your rate, if we need more [METOC] specialists, then I’ll tell you what, we’re going to go to the RC first and say okay, let’s dial that up. That’s just one way that we can get more people on active duty. If we don’t, then frankly, we’re going to have to just figure out a way to let you continue to serve in the Reserves and get educated that way.

It’s all about creating that balance across the whole Navy. Does that make sense?

Audience: Yes, sir.

MCPON Giordano: I appreciate -- what’s your time in service?

Audience: It has not even been a year.

MCPON Giordano: Not even been a year, and here you are in front of a group of very senior folks, your peers are here standing before the Chief of Naval Operations, and you had the courage within you to stand up and kind of voice kind of something that’s on your mind and what you’ve been dealing with and some frustrations, and we have a responsibility to try to articulate to you, kind of help you work through that. But for you to have the courage to stand up and kind of have that conversation in this forum, I applaud that, shipman. [Applause].

Audience: Thank you, sir.

Audience: Good afternoon, MCPON and CNO. Welcome back, MCPON.

MCPON Giordano: It’s nice to be back.

Admiral Richardson: I was here before too. [Laughter].

Audience: Sorry. Welcome back, CNO.

Admiral Richardson: Thank you.

Audience: ME2 Balfour coming to you from NSF, Alpha Section.
The question I have for you today is actually on OC spray. Yesterday I was actually working with a colleague and he told me that there are some admin [inaudible], that if you get OC sprayed in your face one time, one and you’re done. Is that true?

**Admiral Richardson:** Yes.

**Audience:** Okay.

**Admiral Richardson:** Is that clear to everybody? Anybody else have any questions about that? Let me just say a little bit more about that.

We did this little piece for the Armed Forces Network before we came in as kind of a warm-up for us, and one thing I really love doing as part of these sessions is being able to instantly fix something on the spot that is driving you crazy. So if there’s something that’s that easy, I’ll give you two examples.

One was for female sailors, the fact that you can wear your hat, you can put your bun through that hole in the back of your hat. I had no idea we had forbidden that, but that was an easy fix.

This pepper spray thing was another one. It was somebody who just came in. To be honest, I wasn’t aware that we were making that a repeating requirement, and it sounds like once you get that in your face once, you got it, right? No need to sort of revalidate that. So that was another easy fix. I think it’s important that you get it once so that the first time you feel that it’s not in conflict, but once you kind of get that sensation, I think that that was sufficient.

I’ll give a coin to anybody who can give me one of these quick [ills] and we’ll just fix it right here today. So start thinking about it. It’s got to be fairly self-contained and easy, but we will exercise all of our authority and knock it out right here, okay? So that’s my challenge to you.

**Audience:** Good afternoon, sir, MCPON. I’m PF1 Harris from [NASDENT] N1 Department.

My question for you is, is it a possibility to increase the number of aircraft and/or frequency of AMC flights within this AOR? Increasing the frequency by just one would alleviate many
of the hardships our service members endure attempting to PCS or travel to and from Bahrain. There is a constant flow of AMC flight delays in the 5th Fleet OR which in turn causes the bottleneck. Hardships of those in PCS status, especially family members and pets, many service members endure financial stress and/or hardship by purchasing commercial airline tickets rather than be delayed an additional week while here in PCS status.

The ACM system here cannot support timely departures is more norm than an exception sir. [Applause].

Admiral Richardson: Are you sure this is real? [Laughter].

I’ll commit to analyzing it, okay? I can’t, without some data I can’t give you an answer, but we’ll find the data and we’ll check on the reliability of the flights, how full each flight is, frequency of the flights, and we’ll just do the business case analysis there to make sure that we’re bringing the best business, the best situation to you. Okay?

Audience: Yes, sir. Thank you.

Admiral Richardson: Get your email over to the Major and we’ll get right back to you personally.


My question today is with all the new changes to the PFA instruction, what is the Navy going to do to minimize potential negative impacts to physical fitness and readiness, as well as with all these pro-retention plans that have been brought about lately. How will that affect advancement for many rates like corpsmen, master at arms, that will be very closed out, hard to advance?

Admiral Richardson: Those are two questions, right? One has kind of a PFA centric thing, and then the other one is for the MCPON. Okay.

Overall, we are trying to, this is an important question. We can make some good points here.

The rule’s justifying kind of the minimum, right? And it’s important in the PFA context. We don’t as a Navy, I don’t think we want a Navy that’s hovering around pass/fail, do we? We have tried to inspire a lifetime approach to fitness, to health and
fitness. So we’ve been trying to incentivize having a healthy lifestyle. Staying fit, eating right, getting sleep, all those things. And so that’s this culture of fitness. Let’s get fit, and let’s not hover around the pass/fail mark.

So that’s the overall approach we want to take. We don’t want to have a rules-based approach to fitness. We want to achieve a standard where we’re shooting for high standards of fitness. I’ll come back to that when I close out, this idea of an approach that achieves a high standard, a standard of excellence versus a rules-based thing that hovers around pass/fail.

The best navies in the world are achieving, they’re shooting for that high standard, aren’t they? They’re not going to be defining themselves by bare minimum rules. So overall, we’re trying to achieve a culture of fitness that is standards driven. We’ve had a lot of stuff come out. We made some incentives to the PFA instruction that if you achieve a pretty healthy score we’re not going to trouble you with another exam. We’ll make sure your body weight’s okay, and we sort of leave it over to you. You’ve obviously adopted a healthy lifestyle, so I don’t need to examine you, right? Take a look and we’ll examine you half the time, right?

Now your question about the most recent thing was, neither are we going to allow that PFA thing to let you terminate your service before the end of your enlistment contract, which is essentially the change that was made. We’ll put you on a program that will help you get healthy, fit, and all those sorts of things. We’re going to ask you to get back in standards, above the pass/fail line before we advance you and transfer you and all those things, but we’re probably going to keep you until the end of your contract. That’s really the essential change that was made recently.

But the bigger message is let’s all stay healthy and get fit, because that’s where -- the demands are going to come, right? And we want to be leaping over those hurdles, so to speak, with ease, not just barely creeping over them. Okay?

What was the second part of your question?

**Audience:** With all the other pro-retention policies that have come out, how will that affect advancement for already low advancing rates.
Admiral Richardson: You know how that works, don’t you? If it gets, if we have all, you’re a corpsman?

Audience: Yes, sir.

Admiral Richardson: So if we have all of the corpsmen in the next senior grade than you that we need, it’s going to be very hard to advance more, right? We’re limited by what we need. This is just the way we manage the Navy. So this is why this rating modernization is important.

If you can find something that’s close, that excites you, hey, we’ll train you in that, and we’ll allow you to advance in that rate. And it’s never going to be zero either, is it? Because people do get out.

How many people do you think go through boot camp in our Navy every year? How many think it’s 5,000? How many think it’s 10,000?

Audience: Forty-nine thousand.

Admiral Richardson: This person knows what they’re doing. It’s about 40,000 people that we bring into the Navy every year. Which means that 40,000 people leave the Navy every year, because the Navy stays about the same size, which means there’s going to be some of those who are corpsmen that leave, which means it’s going to open up some opportunity. So lots of options for you. You can stick around, hang tough, and achieve that standard of excellence. If you do that, you’re much more likely to advance.

You can train and get another rating and choose to advance in that rating. Lots of options for you.

So let’s not think about bare minimums when we think about fitness, or when we think about anything that we do. Let’s think about achieving excellence. Okay?

Audience: Good afternoon, CNO, MCPON. My name is ME1 Rocker, attached to NSF.

My question is, I have a two-part question. We extended the HYT for two years, but so far it’s commissioning programs between 8 and 14 years. Do we see ourselves extending that to support at least time in service? That we are having sailors stay an extra
two years, so can we see about lengthening the time in service for our commissioning programs?

**Admiral Richardson:** Probably not. Again, it’s just what the Navy needs. That’s just not an adjustment we need to make right now. If we do, we will.

**Audience:** And my second part of the question, sir --

**Admiral Richardson:** Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. That’s it. No multiple -- that’s the last multiple part question I’m going to take. Thanks very much.

**Audience:** Good afternoon, sir, MCPON.

Following the 7th Fleet incidents and numerous near misses, the operations review commissioned by yourself and Admiral Davison published that 59 recommendations were made. Fourteen are about to come past due. And then the rest of them come due the end of March. Is there a mechanism that we in the surface community can watch and see what’s going on with some of these recommendations other than just being shot into the ether, sir?

**Admiral Richardson:** I think you’ve raised an important point. Admiral Aquilino mentioned I’ve been on travel. A lot of that travel has been in Asia. A lot of it was in Sasebo and Yokosuka. We got to walk the John S. McCain, see that team there. They’re ready to get after it and get their ship fixed and get back out to sea. Remarkable, the way that team came together.

The answer to that is yes. I’ve asked the Vice Chief of Naval Operations to lead an oversight board that’s going to track all of the accomplishments of all of those things. Not only for the comprehensive review, but also for the Secretary of the Navy’s strategic review. Also for all the GAO reports, right? The Government Accounting Office reports. All of those recommendations, which are solid recommendations. You know, when someone makes a recommendation to me I owe them to evaluate that recommendation every single time. Then I either say look, I’ve evaluated it and I’m not going to do it and here’s the reasons why, or I am going to do it and here’s the schedule to get it done.

So he’s got the lead for tracking all these things. It’s a big effort, so it’s going to take the entire Navy to get after this.
Not just the surface community. Everybody’s going to learn here and we’re going to track these things to completion.

But you raise an important point. We’ve got to feed this back to the Navy, don’t we, to let them -- all of us together follow this thing along so that we can all pitch in. That’s a very important part of the communications plan, and we’ll get that rolling sort of right after the new year. Okay?

**Audience:** Good afternoon, Admiral, MCPON. Chief Quartermaster Peter Hill, USS Gladiator, MCM11.

I was wondering, sir, since Type 3s are now in full effect, and I heard in boot camp they’re now issuing white T-shirts again. With utilities and coveralls, those white T-shirts, same with dungarees. With Type 1s it’s blue T-shirts with coveralls, and blue T-shirts. May we be allowed to wear brown T-shirts with Type 3 and coveralls, sir?

**Admiral Richardson:** It’s really for coveralls, right? Because Type 2’s already wear them, right?

**Audience:** Yes, sir.

**Admiral Richardson:** I was just wondering if it was a trick question there.

You know what? This whole conversion to Type 3 has raised a huge underwear issue that I was unaware of. [Laughter]. This is not the first question I’ve got about T-shirts, so we’ve got to do some research on the T-shirt business, and figure out how we can make it make sense. Overall, I want our sea bag to make sense. Right? You don’t have to do super hard math to figure out what to wear to work every day. The last piece that I need to get to you is kind of a working coverall to wear at sea or to wear at home. So for operational units like the Gladiator. Let’s give it up for the mine countermeasure team here. [Applause]. They’re working extremely hard with some pretty old boats to make that thing run, and they’re wooden. They’re made out of wood. It’s a tough job.

So anyway, I owe you an answer on that.

Let me ask you a quick question. One of the biggest remaining questions that MCPON and I have for this working uniform, we want it to be sharp looking. You can wear it to work, you can wear it home. You don’t have to change in your work space.
It’s ready to work, so it’s FOD proof and all those things that you need to work in machinery, et cetera. It’s going to be a real working uniform.

My question to you is, this is a hand-raising question, so just loosen up. One piece or two piece. Who’s in the one-piece camp, like a full coverall? Okay. Who’s in the two-piece camp? Oh, man. All right. That’s decisive. Okay.

**Audience:** Good afternoon, Admiral. My name’s Captain Allen. I’m a platoon commander with [FASCENT].

The question is in regards to combat arms being opened up to females. With female infantry [inaudible] making their way into infantry battalions, is there any discussion with female corpsmen also making their way to infantry battalions?

**Admiral Richardson:** For the U.S. Navy, all of our jobs are open to females.

**Audience:** In regards to actually, I’ve never seen any female corpsmen with an infantry platoon. Is there any discussion or screening process introducing female corpsmen to infantry platoons and infantry companies?

**Admiral Richardson:** Let me get to the specifics of the screening and all that, but you know, the headline is all jobs are open to women. Okay? Thanks. Get your email to the Major. We’ll get back to you on that.

**Audience:** Good afternoon, sir. Good afternoon, MCPON. I’m CTT2 Jones from Navy Information Operations Command, Bahrain.

My question is regarding mental health in the Navy. I know a lot of our sailors are afraid to come out with their mental health problems and get help because they’re afraid that they might get kicked out because of it. Are there any future programs to try to expand mental health for our sailors, especially when they’re out deploying?

**Admiral Richardson:** That’s another very important question. One of the ways that we’re starting to get past this is just to make it almost, not almost. We’ll just mandate that you go see a mental health professional or a counselor at some point, right? That way we just get past the whole stigma thing and the internal decision. Hey, if you’re new to a unit, within a couple of weeks of reporting aboard, just go talk to the doc,
right? Get a checkup from the neck up. Whatever you want to call it. And then at about the six-month point, go see him again. Right? We’ll probably have a cadre of people that you can see because this will increase the demand, as you can imagine. But that will get past the whole, you know, everybody goes because yo’ure told to go. It’s good for all of us. And there’s a couple of communities that are doing this already. Some of our most stressed, most capable communities are doing this, and they’re finding tremendous benefit and just going up and -- even some of our more skeptical people, they go up because they’re told and they find it to be a very meaningful encounter. So that’s kind of how we’re getting after that.

MCPON, do you want to add anything to that?

MCPON Giordano: The other piece to that is, you know, that’s getting there, but in the current state, back to our young sailor who had the courage to kind of talk to the CNO in this forum, I mean taking it just kind of down to the unit level. Any sailor that has a challenge, has a concern. Something’s just bothering them. They don’t even know how to, can’t even understand sometimes kind of where they’re at with mental health. They don’t even know if it is mental health cases sometimes. Never fear going to go have a conversation with your leadership. Never fear that. Go have the conversation with leadership. Leadership might not have the ability to kind of talk you through all that, but you brought it to their attention and they’ll make sure that they’ll get you to the folks that you think you may need to talk to. Don’t ever hesitate doing that. Have no reservations.

Admiral Richardson: Let me take that one step further. I’ll tell you a story. It’s a holiday story. The holidays, it’s a wondrous time but it also can be a very stressful time or a very lonely time for someone who’s separated from their family, so we’ve got to be watching out for one another in these times, right?

There’s an instance where two young servicemen, one was a Navy sailor, and one was actually an airman from the Air Force. They went off to do a function together. I think it was a holiday-related function. And then they went back to their barracks rooms, sort of like okay, see you tomorrow. And they both went to their rooms. But something in that sailor’s mind said you know, I’ve known this guy for a while, and it just didn’t, there’s something not right about it. He was that aware of his shipmate.
So he went, and he just took the effort to go down the hallway and knock on his door to make sure he was okay, right? Just wanted to satisfy his curiosity, and he ended up opening the door and the guy was in the middle of trying to hang himself. Saved that airman’s life.

So in addition to if you’re feeling troubled, certainly you want to come and talk to somebody. But let’s all also be aware of one another. So many of our problems can be solved if all of us are just aware and respecting one another. Certainly the leadership has to be all in, and by and large, they are. But it’s the LPOs and the Chiefs and our peers. We have to be aware of one another so that we’re paying each other that respect.

I think the combination of all these things will hopefully have a better approach, not only to mental health, but a lot of other things that kind of reside and are tolerated in that cadre. Okay?

**Audience:** Admiral, Master Chief, Lieutenant Commander [Kosakin] from NAVCENT Theater Security Cooperation. I’m hoping I have that softball question for you, but it involves money.

**Admiral Richardson:** There’s no such thing as softball questions that involve money.

**Audience:** I know. Over the past couple of years there’s been a lot of discussion and a lot of changes with regard to uniforms, particularly in recent years for female naval officers. As a naval officer, female, I am now being required to change the cover that I wear, and I’m also being required to buy a new set of [choker] uniforms. That is a financial burden that as a female officer my male counterparts do not also bear. There’s no commensurate burden that male officers are having placed on them. Has there been any discussion or consideration at the top levels of a one-time uniform allowance for female officers to offset the cost of the new cover and a new uniform that we already have in existence, just in a different form?

**Admiral Richardson:** No. I just have to be honest with you, there’s not anything like that being considered.

**Audience:** Can that discussion happen?

**Admiral Richardson:** Yes.
**Audience:** Thank you, sir. I appreciate that.

**Admiral Richardson:** Thanks. I’m just being honest with you. But the changes are done.

**Audience:** Yes, sir, and they’re implemented to take place. So, for example, very lucky that I commissioned out of a source where I already have a set of [choker] uniforms.

**Admiral Richardson:** So you’re speaking on behalf of all of your __

**Audience:** By the end of the year I have to buy a new set of [choker] uniforms and if I’m lucky, in a couple of years hopefully I’ll pin onto O5, so within two years, I’ll buy two new covers. And while it’s not a huge financial burden, it is a burden that as a female serving in the Navy I have __

**Admiral Richardson:** I know. We made the case and, okay?

**Audience:** Good afternoon CNO, MCPON. MA3 Klore here with NSF security here.

My question that I’m bringing forth today is the CFO program. A lot of us have to get recertified after three years, which can be a burden sometimes, trying to get involved in classes and what not. I was wondering if there was a way that we didn’t have to worry about going through that program and having to worry about getting recertified.

**MCPON Giordano:** Are you throwing that out there as kind of like one of those things that you’re like hey, can we just stop doing this? Is that what you’re throwing out there?

**Audience:** No.

**MCPON Giordano:** Are you advocating for continuing the recurring certification?

**Audience:** I was wondering if we could do away with the three years, like every three years --

**MCPON Giordano:** Oh, so you are.

**Audience:** Okay.
MCPON Giordano: The thing is, with those programs, it’s kind of ever-evolving sometimes, right? The techniques that we use, the things we learn about nutrition, all that kind of stuff, it’s kind of always changing. So we’ve got to keep the people who are leading those programs relevant in that, in the fitness program. And that, you know, the training that you receive every couple of years affords us the opportunity to provide that to you. But I’d be happy to hear, maybe there’s another way that we can get that to you without having to send you back to another week-long course.

Audience: Well, MCPON, the only reason why I brought it up was because a lot of us who are already certified as CFLs, we already are up to date with, we have to keep up to date with the new policies that get placed before us and have to maintain physical standards and --

MCPON Giordano: How many times have you had to kind of complete the training?

Audience: I’ve done the training once, MCPON.

MCPON Giordano: Anybody done it twice as a CFL? Anybody been through it twice? Can you stand up for me there, shipmate? Did you learn anything new the second time you went through the course?

Audience: It was mostly administrative changes, but it was taught by civilians so they didn’t really cover the administrative changes. I mean it’s always an ever-learning process, new exercises, learning stuff like that. But if you’re in the program for a while you don’t necessarily miss out.

Admiral Richardson: You kind of get that as on-the-job type training?

Audience: Yes, sir.

Admiral Richardson: The new exercises and all that, right? The actual fitness-related stuff.

Audience: Yes, sir.

Admiral Richardson: Okay.

There’s a couple of things, you touched a nerve. One is this idea of collateral duties. That’s a pretty heavy collateral
duty. So we’re thinking a lot about collateral duties. We’ve eliminated some and we’re going to eliminate more here shortly. MCPON is leading this task force.

If you think of a collateral duty that we probably shouldn’t be doing because we don’t need to do it, let us know and we’ll turn it off, we’ll kill it.

There are some things out there like this fitness leader. It’s something that needs to be done. Whether that needs to be done as a collateral duty or whether that can be done by fitness professionals at a fitness center, that’s a question that I’ve got. Right? So I think there’s enough to this fitness business, doing it right, so that we don’t hurt somebody, et cetera, that we need to have trained people doing it. But I’m not entirely sure that it needs to be one of us. So if you go to the gym, a lot of our gyms, there’s trained people there that are on the payroll and maybe we let them do that. So there’s a lot of options. We’re thinking hard about that this year so that we’ve got a program.

Then of course, the admin and everything else can go to them too so that we can unburden operational commands from just doing any of that stuff. It’s important work, but it doesn’t necessarily have to be done by us. In the operational commands. It will be done by another part of us who’s hired to do the fitness piece. Thanks so much.

**Audience:** Good afternoon, CNO, MCPON. My name is Lieutenant Weigel. I’m from [Deserand] 50. I’m the N4.

My question has to do with readiness, tech reps, and sort of, I think you touched a little bit of it earlier, about training. So based on, I’ve been here about a year and a half. There have been a lot of ships who deploy here without the necessary training to repair equipment breakages. As just an example, we had, I’ve seen a ship that has deployed here with only a third class as their most senior AC&R tech, and as you know, it gets really hot here. Just fresh out of A school.

So a suggestion that I’ve heard from the maintenance community has been open up three weeks or two weeks before the POM period, before a ship deploys out here, by reducing the amount of redundancy in the MOB E, MOB A cycles. There’s a lot of inspections that cover a lot of the same topics, and a lot of, basically opening up the chain locker five or six different times to inspect the same equipment. Is there any talk or any
way that the redundancy could be reduced in those particular assessments to open up a few weeks for the techs that we sent out to the ships to repair the equipment, to actually go onto the ships, train the technicians on-board the ships to actually repair their own equipment?

**Admiral Richardson:** Big question. I’ll answer some of it, the easy part, then I’m going to ask the MCPON to answer the hard part.

One is this comprehensive review that was done got after this idea of inspections not, well, it touched on redundancy, but it just touched on the amount of the inspections, right? So in a typical three-year period you can expect if they’re on a typical surface ship, a DDG, to get almost 300 inspections of one type or another. And you’ve got to just question fundamentally the usefulness of those types of, that many, right? And oh, by the way, who’s the target audience? Almost none of them really spoke to the leadership on that ship to be able to do something meaningful with them. So we’re taking a hard look at the inspection regime that we impose on the force, on the fleet.

That will open up some time for sure, right, because we’ll stop doing a bunch of them. What we do with that time is going to be another important question. There’s a lot of competition from that time. You’ve sort of brought up the idea. Have we outsourced too much maintenance? Have we just sort of given that up to the tech reps? My sense is the pendulum has swung far too far in that direction and we need to bring it on back, need to create some maintenance billets ashore for sailors like we used to have, and train ourselves to fix our gear so that we can be that self-sustaining Navy underway without having to phone home and have a tech rep walk us, talk us, or actually come out and visit us to fix our gear. So that’s kind of an adjustment we’re making. We’re going to create some billets to do that. We’ve already started moving in that direction, then we’ve got to have the training and the time to do that as well. Okay?

Another one that’s relevant to all the FD&F forces is that if you’re assigned out here and you need a critical NEC, we’re going to give you that school on the way out. Right? En-route. So that you arrive with that training, can fulfill that task, instead of coming all the way out here and saying well, you didn’t get that school, so I’m going to send you all the way back, and that burden falls on the XO and the Command. We’re going to do that en-route. Great question.
This will be the last question.

**Audience:** I’ll try to make this quick, sir. This is AM3 Williams from Isa Air Base, Air Ops Department. I’m actually from Naval Operation Support Center, Schenectady where we did 500 funerals last year.

**Admiral Richardson:** Schenectady team is strong.

**Audience:** My quick question is actually a funding question as well. I personally did over 200 funerals myself in a fiscal year when I was the Funeral Honors Coordinator at the NOSC. I had plenty of retirees and prior service asking me if there was a way that they could actually do funerals for us. As of right now, I don’t believe there is funding for, or there is no program for retirees to do the funerals as well. I was just wondering if there was any way that we could start that program or start up a way to where these veterans that have, would love to do funerals for us, would just love to put the uniform on and still feel like they’re serving, to continue to assist us in funerals.

**Admiral Richardson:** Interesting question. First time I’ve ever heard that. But before I answer that I want to say how grateful I am and the families are and the nation is that you have attended that many funerals in uniform to pay our final respects to our shipmates who have fallen for one reason or another, passed away.

**Audience:** Thank you, sir.

**Admiral Richardson:** Anyone else done that? Funeral duty. Round of applause for these folks who do that. [Applause].

That’s very important work, and I get a lot of letters that really are talking about what great work you do, and all of you who do that service to help honor a shipmate’s service while they were on active duty.

Having said all that, we probably want to keep that in the Active and Reserve community. It’s hard to see how structurally we would expand that out to the retired community.

**Audience:** Also, sir, we also have active duty that would also want to do funerals for us, assist us --
Admiral Richardson: And we do that. There are a lot of times where active duty helps. Maybe not up in Schenectady because there’s not a lot of active duty up there, but in other places where there are fleet concentration areas, it’s a different team.

Thanks.

Listen, I want to wrap up with just some closing remarks, and then MCPON and I will mingle up here. If you want to come on up and just say hi or get a picture or whatever, we’ll hang out up here until the last possible moment.

WE touched on this idea of rules versus standards. Right? And as we move into the year 2018, we are unquestionably the best Navy in the world. I don’t say that just to make you feel good. I say that because the United States Navy, the United States needs the best Navy in the world to fulfill our responsibilities to the nation. And I ant to tell you that in 2017 the competition picked up dramatically for that title. That is not a title that we can take for granted any longer. There are other navies out there that are vying for the title of best Navy in the world. They want that title. They want to take it away from you, from us. All right? So 2018 is a year where we have to commit ourselves, each and every one of us, to keeping that title.

The nation needs the best Navy in the world. What does that mean? Well, as individuals we’ve got to come to work every day, every watch we stand, every duty we undertake with the idea of achieving a standard of excellence. In fact, I would ask you to see if you can do it as best as it’s ever been done. The theoretical limit of performance. That’s what these years are going to demand from us if you’re an individual. Know your job. Know your job during routine operations. Know your job during abnormal casualty operations. Know your job during combat operations. Okay? Know it.

And if you learn all that, then learn your shipmate’s job because in combat he’ll go down, or she’ll go down, and you’ll need to do that job too. Learn your boss’ job, because they can go down and you may be the boss. Okay?

That’s what it takes as individuals to remain the best Navy in the world.
If you are a leader, that means you’ve got a team that you are leading. Bring that team together and make that team the best team in the world. Put them through the sets and the reps, the practice, the planning, and the execution to remain the best team and the best Navy in the world. Whether that’s your bridge team, whether that’s your engineering team, your fire control team, your gun team, whatever team you’re in charge of, take charge, lead that team to excellence. Not their minimums, excellence. Okay?

And if you’re in command, you’ve got a special responsibility to ensure that when you take your team into the fight they’re going to come out winners. Right? And there’s no amount of paperwork or rule that’s going to give you that same sense. Only you know what it will take to go into combat and come out alive and winning. All right?

That is our quest in 2018. So that when we’re back here in December of 2018, a year from now, we can look back and say that in this year we made it so that there is no safer place than to be on our Navy team. It is the safest place to be. And there is no more dangerous place than to be in the cross-hairs of the United States Navy. Are we good with that?

Audience: Yes, sir.

Admiral Richardson: All right. So let’s go out in 2018 and take it to them, all right?

Thanks very much, team.

One final thing before we go. We’re privileged to have here Archbishop Brolio of the Archdiocese of the Military Services. Archbishop, would you just stand up? Archbishop Brolio is the busiest bishop in the world because he’s got a worldwide diocese, all of the military around the world, all services, and he’s chosen to, I can’t even understand it. He’s chosen to spend an hour listening to us yack on. But Archbishop, thanks very much for being here in 5th Fleet. And if you’re Catholic, you’re saying a mass tomorrow, right? Nine o’clock. So it’s a special privilege for us. Thank you very much for being here on the holiday season. Thanks.

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