Admiral Richardson: Thank you all. Thank you very much.

If I could, I’ll probably just walk around, but let me just start off by saying how great it is to be here again to get a chance to talk to all of you and really reinforce how important the families are to our Navy team.

As I think about our Navy team as I’ve defined it, it’s our sailors, our active and reserve sailors; and then our Navy civilians; and our families. All right? So that’s the circle I draw around. Everybody inside that circle is the Navy team, and it’s those folks.

Thinking about over 60 years of the Washington, DC Naval Officer Spouse Club and all the good that you’ve done and everything that you’ve contributed to strengthening that Navy team, it’s always a privilege to come here and to get a chance to talk to you.

In support of that, we’re on the verge this fall of signing out a Family Framework. So if you go to one of the sort of keystone documents that we have published as a Navy there’s this design for maintaining maritime superiority, and in that there’s a number of lines of effort, one of which is a family, a people line of effort. And we’ve issued a number of frameworks to try and get at particularly the people part of our business. So we’ve got a Navy Leadership Framework; Navy Civilian Work Force Framework; and some other ones. And now we’re going to issue a Navy Family Framework that will highlight how we can all mutually support one another. How the Navy can strengthen Navy families; and then how Navy families can strengthen the active duty component of the Navy. It’s due kind of any minute now. I wanted to try and time it with the Ombudsman Appreciation time frame which is sort of mid-September, and so that’s coming out any time now.

Then again, Kate, I just want to thank you again for putting on the event. It’s always a first class show. And for everything that you do throughout the year. So thanks so much.
What I thought I’d do is just, you know, when I talk to a lot of groups like this we sort of take a thought deployment and we scoot around the world and we just highlight what the Navy is doing around the world to strengthen our security.

So if we were going to take our deployment and leave out of Norfolk and we’ll just head east. You don’t have to get very far to see your Navy in action. In fact you just sort of head south. You’ve got six, going on seven ships providing relief for Hurricane Harvey and now Hurricane Irma. Those ships, a lot of big deck amphibs, a lot of amphibious capability. The Marine Corps providing the 2/6th Marine Expeditionary Unit. A lot of capability. A lot of helicopters, to be honest. Dozens of helicopters who have done hundreds of missions rescuing hundreds of people out of the devastation wrought by Hurricane Harvey and now down in the Virgin Islands, helping people recover from Hurricane Irma that ripped through there.

The Navy did a tremendous amount of preparation in Florida, particularly, as you can imagine, down in the Florida Keys, but all the way up the peninsula of Florida, getting ready for that.

We weathered it pretty well, over all. I think we got a little bit of luck by virtue of the track of the storm, and it hit places like Jacksonville and Mayport and other places, moving along, and now pretty much into the recovery. A lot of water, particularly on the East Coast, as we’ve got the storm surge and everything that came in. There was just a tremendous amount of flooding and water damage. So we’ll be restoring those bases to full capability.

And then, of course, moving out into the communities, we want to make sure the housing is all taken care of and all of that.

So before you even get too far off the Atlantic Coast, the Navy is engaged with the Marine Corps and the other services providing relief from the hurricanes.

If you go across the Atlantic now, you again meet up off the United Kingdom, the George H. W. Bush Strike Group which just recently got home, participated in a very high end, multinational exercise, teaching our allies how to do high end warfare. So this is partnerships with NATO allies in particular. Teaching the United Kingdom how to do carrier operations. So as they get ready to bring their carrier, the HMS Queen Elizabeth on-line and some of our other allies doing sort of the high end Navy business off the coast there.
If you go into the Baltic, sort of Northern Europe area, something you wouldn’t have seen until just very recently. You start to see our competition. And they are also advancing. So you would see, in fact for the first time this year, the Russian Navy exercising up there which is not too uncommon, but now you would see the Chinese Navy exercising with the Russians in the Baltic. Something that’s a first. The Chinese Navy operates more and more further and further abroad from the Pacific, manifesting themselves up there in Northern Europe.

You come back through, well, the only way to go further East now is to go down through the Suez. You come down through the Straits of Gibraltar, and now you’re into the Mediterranean. Again, the Bush Strike Group, stopping there in the Mediterranean doing strikes in Operation Inherent Resolve into Iraq and Syria as we sort of close the door on ISIS and help that campaign along.

As you move across the northern part of Africa, we should be mindful that Navy SEALS are engaged in that counterterrorism fight on the African continent, in many cases in command and leading that fight as we continue the counterterrorism effort.

If you go down through the Suez now, you’re into the Red Sea. You now move further south. It used to be a fairly straightforward, somewhat calm transit. Since the fighting in Yemen, everything there has changed, particularly as you get to the south where Yemen, and there’s a choke point, a strait you have to travel through there called the Bab el Mandeb. Again, a tremendous amount of trade going through that choke point. The navy protecting freedom of navigation there. And that has become a hotly contested part of the world as well, as this Yemeni conflict continues to rage and comes out into the sea with more and more capabilities.

So you’ve seen, for instance, that the Saudi Navy has been attacked and hit a number of times by cruise missiles out of Yemen, out into the sea. So that is an area which has become much more hotly contested, and we have to be very very alert going through there.

You move now around through that Bab el Mandeb and you sort of hang a left and go north around the Horn of Africa. You see in Djibouti the first Navy base built by the Chinese, their first overseas base in the Horn of Africa there in Djibouti. Again,
the People’s Liberation Army/Navy has been there with a number of ships sort of 24x7 presence in the Mideast for some time.

You go through the Strait of Hormuz and into the Gulf. Right now the Nimitz Strike Group in there, also continuing, picking up where the George H. W. Bush left off and doing the counterterrorism fights into Iraq and Syria against ISIS.

You come on back out now and we’re going to continue east. We’ll be cross across the Indian Ocean. Again, you get to see why it is so great to be a United States Navy sailor. Certainly we’ve got the high end warfighting part. That’s why we exist, to do high end combat at sea. To protect America from attack. To protect our interests around the world. To protect that freedom of navigation through all of those choke points.

Just recently we had a cruiser visit Sri Lanka, down at the southern tip of India, providing, again, humanitarian relief after they had monsoon flooding and a mud slide. Again, restoring water, digging wells, rebuilding and getting kids back into school. So you start to see this multi-dimensional aspect of being in the Navy. Okay?

You continue around, and now you’ve gone so far East you’re pretty much West. You’re into now the southern Pacific, into the South China Sea. As you’ve heard about, a lot of island building and land reclamation down in that part of the world. We have been doing operations to make sure that we advocate for sort of a rules-based approach to doing business at sea. Right? So there’s a United Nations Convention that describes the conduct of free trade at sea and how everybody behaves. It describes how far out nations can claim either territorial rights or economic rights. And so we’re down there, as we are around the world, doing a number of these freedom of navigation operations to challenge these excessive maritime claims and make sure we advocate for the rule set that’s in place.

You go further up north, we start to again do diplomatic work, like we did in Europe. We’re partnering with our allies and partners throughout the Asia Pacific region. Some very very traditional and staunch allies -- Japan, Philippines. We’re now doing an exercise with the Indonesian Navy. So again, another dimension of being a U.S. Navy sailor. Not only warfighter, not only humanitarian relief, but also this diplomatic mission.

Every one of our ships, sovereign territory of the United States. So we’re working closely with those Japanese partners,
closely with the Republic of Korea, building relationships there, enhancing our joint capability particularly as we address sort of the urgent threat posed by North Korea.

As you move across, again, of course, you’ll see more of the Chinese Navy. This is their traditional operating waters.

You come back, you’ll get a chance to visit Guam. We have a big Navy base there in Guam; of course our base in Hawaii; and then you can pull ashore on the West Coast of the United States in San Diego.

Then you just have to continue your thought journey by pickup truck across the country and get back here into DC or Norfolk.

So I just wanted to take a quick, like I said, faux voyage around the world, provide some sense of how engaged around the world we are, how busy your Navy is, give you a sense of the principles for which we stand for, those rules for which we’re advocating, and the importance of the work we do to sort of guarantee not only our interest but also our prosperity.

I try and give people a sense of what this means. Next week I’ll be talking to a group in Fort Worth, Texas. So for somebody in Fort Worth, Texas, what does the Navy mean to them? And if you look around your living room, look around this room, roughly 60 to 65 percent of all of the things that we have come to us by the sea. So this freedom of navigation, this freedom of trade is very important. And similarly, many of the jobs in the country are linked to this free trade idea as well. So it really is sort of fundamental to not only our security, but also our prosperity.

So I hope that I’ve given you a sense of what we’re doing around the world.

Right now, as you know, we’re challenged. We’ve had two devastating collisions in the Pacific, and we’ve got the whole team as a top priority putting actions in place right now, figuring out what was going on, how did that happen. And then making those corrective actions necessary to ensure that we maintain safe and effective operations around the world. This is our top priority right now is to make sure we understand what’s going on, we continue to operate safe and effectively, to continue to do that important mission, all of our missions around the world.
So I’ll stop there, and I really want to hear what’s on your mind. It’s much more interesting to hear your questions.

Again, thank you very much for having me, and I look forward to what’s on your mind. Thanks very much.

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