1.) Trump Signs Fiscal Year 2018 Defense Authorization / 13 DEC 17
DEFENSE MEDIA ACTIVITY, Jim Garamone

The act calls for $626 billion for the department's base budget and another $66 billion for operations. The act includes a 2.4 percent pay raise for military personnel.

2.) CNP Visits Everett, Whidbey Island Sailors, Talks Sailor 2025 Initiatives / 15 DEC 17
Chief of Naval Personnel Public Affairs

"In 2017, we worked to lay the foundation of Sailor 2025," said Burke. "Next year we will start building the framework and get the systems in place that are more aligned with how people conduct personnel business in the 21st century.

3.) Navy Releases Strategic Readiness Review / 14 DEC 17
Navy Office of Information

In September, the Secretary of the Navy, Richard V. Spencer, ordered a fleet-wide Strategic Readiness Review (SRR) in light of the recent surface fleet incidents which resulted in significant loss of life and injury.

4.) Sailors Making Sailors: Battle Stations-21 / 12 DEC 17
RTC Public Affairs, Alan Nunn

The recruits at Recruit Training Command are participating in Battle Stations 21 training simulator aboard the USS Trayer (BST-21). Recruit divisions work through a 12-hour experience as a comprehensive test of the skills and teamwork learned during their eight weeks of basic training.

5.) Supplemental Articles bi-weekly roll-up:
Every other week, we roll up the latest supplemental articles from around the Fleet. Below are the latest: (URLs on Last Page)

- Naval Hospital Bremerton Stresses 'Tis the Season to be Safe and Sober
- Stress Reduction Techniques for High-Stress Operations
- Suicide Prevention Resources for Military Families
- U.S. Navy Doctors Return from Humanitarian Mission

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The act calls for $626 billion for the department's base budget and another $66 billion for operations. The act includes a 2.4 percent pay raise for military personnel.

The act authorizes the department to spend money but the appropriations bill—which actually provides the funds—is still in Congress.

U.S. Military: 'Greatest Fighting Force'

"This historic legislation demonstrates our unwavering commitment to our men and women in uniform--the greatest fighting force in the history of the world--and we're making it a lot better than even that," Trump said before signing the bill.

The president said the legislation "represents a momentous step toward rebuilding our military and securing the future for our children."

Trump added, "In recent years, our military has undergone a series of deep budget cuts that have severely impacted our readiness, shrunk our capabilities and placed substantial burdens on our warfighters. History teaches us that when you weaken your defenses, you invite aggression."

The president recalled George Washington's belief, that to be prepared for war is one of the most effective means of preserving peace.

"With the signing of this defense bill, we accelerate the process of fully restoring America's military might," Trump said. "This legislation will enhance our readiness ... and modernize our forces and help provide our service members with the tools that they need to fight and to win."

Defeating ISIS

The act authorizes funding for the continued campaign to defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, Trump said. "As you know, we've won in Syria, we've won in Iraq," the president said. "But they spread to other areas and we're getting them as fast as they spread."

The act also improves missile defense capabilities in face of the danger from North Korea, the president said. The act also upgrades the Army and Marine Corps ground combat vehicles, allows for the purchase of new Joint Strike Fighter aircraft and paves the way for Virginia-class submarines.

"Finally, the defense bill authorizes major investments in our military's greatest weapon of all: its warriors," he said. "The NDAA increases the size of the American armed forces for the first time in seven years, and it provides our military service members with their largest pay increase in eight years."

The president called on Congress to complete the job by eliminating sequestration and passing the appropriations bill.

"We must work across party lines to give our heroic troops the equipment, resources and support that they have earned a thousand times over," he said. "Together, we will send a clear message to our allies and a firm warning to our enemies and adversaries: America is strong, proud, determined and ready."
WASHINGTON (NNS) -- Chief of Naval Personnel, Vice Adm. Robert Burke visited Sailors stationed at Naval Station Everett and Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, Dec. 11-12.

Burke spoke with Sailors during several All Hands Calls about Sailor 2025 initiatives and personnel changes such as High Year Tenure and the Physical Readiness policy, and took questions from Sailors.

"In 2017, we worked to lay the foundation of Sailor 2025," said Burke. "Next year we will start building the framework and get the systems in place that are more aligned with how people conduct personnel business in the 21st century. This means we will be more agile and customer centric."

Burke outlined the three pillars of Sailor 2025, highlighting how the Navy is overhauling its personnel system, institutionalizing Ready Relevant Learning and transforming career readiness, so Sailors have the tools and knowledge to succeed, and achieve their personal and professional goals.

"These pillars are key to Sailor 2025, and our future Navy and its workforce. We owe you and your families' better quality service to ensure you have a better quality of life. You are our customers and our most valuable asset. We want you to stay Navy and make the most of your career," said Burke.

Burke noted that by optimizing our processes, the U.S. Navy is better positioned to recruit, train and retain the force of tomorrow.

"Visiting Sailors, conducting All Hands Calls to talk about what we are doing, getting their feedback is critical to how we move forward and operationalize our personnel programs and initiatives," said Burke. "We need to retool our personnel systems and process because right now, they are too complex and not user-friendly. We are in a war for talent. If Sailors or their families have a difficult time resolving pay issues or simply trying to update a personnel form, but can't navigate through the website, we are doing them a disservice. To recruit and retain, we have make sure our Sailors and future Sailors they know we have their best interests in mind."

Burke also welcomed back Sailors stationed aboard USS Kidd (DDG 100) and USS Shoup (DDG 86) who recently returned from deployment as part of the Nimitz Carrier Strike Group, and had the opportunity to have lunch with NAS Whidbey Island Sailors of the Year.

Sailor 2025 is comprised of nearly 45 initiatives to improve and modernize personnel management and training systems to more effectively recruit, develop, manage, reward, and retain the force of tomorrow. It is focused on empowering Sailors, updating policies, procedures, and operating systems, and providing the right training at the right time in the right way to ensure Sailors are ready for the Fleet. Sailor 2025 is organized into three main lines of effort, specifically Personnel System Modernization, Ready Relevant Learning and Career Readiness.

For more information about Sailor 2025 visit the Chief of Naval Personnel website at the following link: http://www.navy.mil/local/cnp/mptestratdesign.asp


For more news from Chief of Naval Personnel, visit http://www.navy.mil/local/cnp/.
WASHINGTON (NNS) -- In September, the Secretary of the Navy, Richard V. Spencer, ordered a fleet-wide Strategic Readiness Review (SRR) in light of the recent surface fleet incidents which resulted in significant loss of life and injury.

The SRR was an independent review by a team of subject matter experts that examined the systemic conditions influencing and existing within the Navy over the last 30 years. The SRR ran concurrently with the U.S. Fleet Forces-led Comprehensive Review and considered its findings, but the Review’s assessments and judgments are independent of the Comprehensive Review findings.

Over a 90-day time period, the Review team consulted with leading corporations, organizations and current and past Department of Defense officials and advisors. The team also reviewed past studies and current instructions. The review looked beyond the particulars of individual ship and crew performance to examine the state of major generators of readiness; governance, operations, command and control; organizational structure; personnel management; and the fiscal environment during and since the end of the Cold War.

The SRR examined stress on the force due to operational culture, budgetary tradeoffs, accountability structures and risk management. Of particular importance was the examination of the force's prolonged deviation from accepted standards which, in hindsight, had become normalized and subsequently institutionalized. Additionally, the Strategic Review analyzed career patterns, manning trends, training architectures, operational tempo and the infusion of new technologies into the fleet.

These elements were evaluated and assessed for their cumulative effect on the Navy's operational readiness against shifts in U.S. strategy and evolving peer-on-peer threats.

Key findings in the SRR indicate that the Navy's emphasis on readiness as the primary enabler of warfighting capability and capacity must be re-energized, embedded and continuously monitored throughout the Naval enterprise. The Review provided four broad strategic recommendations: 1) Re-establish Readiness as a Priority; 2) Match Supply and Demand; 3) Establish Clear Command and Control Relationships; and 4) Become a True Learning Organization.

The secretary of the Navy has already begun to take action to address readiness issues, and Navy leadership recognizes that improvements in readiness will not happen overnight--they will require sustained focus, commitment and funding. The Strategic Readiness Review's recommendations will be examined by the secretary for acceptance and subsequent implementation. As directed, the Navy will execute with diligence and urgency throughout the entire organization.

DOWNLOAD: Strategic Readiness Review

GREAT LAKES (NNS) -- Thick, acrid smoke chokes a compartment, diminishing recruits' visibility and confidence in equal measure.

Blinding lights pulse irregularly, blending with a relentless and unnerving soundtrack of a ship in distress. A sensory overload raises the tension and confusion brought on by a long night of physical exertion and mental stress.

Out of the darkness comes an assured and urgent voice, "His life is in your hands; you need to hurry up!"
The recruits at Recruit Training Command are participating in Battle Stations 21 training simulator aboard the USS Trayer (BST-21). Recruit divisions work through a 12-hour experience as a comprehensive test of the skills and teamwork learned during their eight weeks of basic training.

The commanding voice belongs to Aviation Structural Mechanic (Equipment) 1st Class Christopher Collins, a BST-21 facilitator who has been in his position for the past seven months of his more than 14-year Navy career.

Collins is one of approximately three dozen BST-21 facilitators who evaluate as many as 16 divisions a week. On any given night, as many as 352 recruits face the ultimate test of what they've learned over the course of their training.

About 30,000 to 40,000 recruits participate in Battle Stations annually before graduating from RTC and beginning their Navy careers.

On this night, Collins is assessing a group of 10 recruits as they advance through 17 scenarios, some modeled after real-life events faced by Sailors aboard the USS Cole, USS Tripoli, USS Forestall and USS Stark.

Each scenario begins with a 5-10 minute briefing, in which recruits are given objectives and, if they're paying enough attention, will provide details and answers to help them achieve those objectives.

"Imagine you're taking a test, its 70 degrees, you have a nice glass of water, there's no ambient noise. You're probably going to do real well on that test you studied for," Collins said. "Now let's flip it. It's hot, you're in coveralls, and you have somebody in your face yelling, stressing you out a little bit more."

Collins explains that seeing how recruits respond and perform in stressful situations is a critical part of the assessment.

"Not everything in life is going to be perfect," Collins said. "That's what we want to show them, this event might happen. It might go 100 percent smooth, but now here's a curveball. Let's see what you can do under stress. We don't want someone in a training environment who locks up to go out to the fleet. That's where we see the true character."

That true character is put to the test aboard the USS Trayer, a 2/3-scale, 210-foot long mockup of an Arleigh Burke-class destroyer enclosed within a 90,000-gallon pool in a 157,000-square-foot building on board RTC. The trainer uses Hollywood-style special effects to create challenging and realistic training scenarios. More than 5,000 pieces used aboard USS Trayer are donated from decommissioned ships.

Collins remembers his first night aboard USS Trayer.

"I wandered around like a chicken without a head. All the other facilitators are just calm and collected and I don't know what's happening next," he said. "Everything's on a timeline and you don't know that timeline at first. Now, it's very familiar. I know at 2100 I have to be here, and at 2156 I have to be here and at 2236 ..."

Before recruits graduate from boot camp, they spend a night aboard USS Trayer, loading stores, getting underway, handling mooring lines, standing watches, manning general quarter stations, stopping floods and combating shipboard fires. It is as close to being underway as a recruit can get before they receive their orders to their first ship.

"Battle Stations facilitators, as well as the Battle Stations events, play a significant role for recruits as they complete their training here," Chief Warrant Officer Trevor Davis, Battle Stations 21 division officer, said. "This is the time where all that they have learned comes together and they get to have a first-hand, immersive experience to show the relevance and importance of everything they've learned during boot camp."

Collins, 33, joined the Navy after high school and 'celebrated' his 19th birthday just three days before his boot camp graduation. He was assigned to RTC as a recruit division officer in January 2015, graduating four divisions before moving to his hold position at Battle Stations. He's gaining a different perspective as a facilitator, one that will benefit him when he returns to being an RDC next summer.
"Those that are on the streets and pushing, we don't know what's going on," Collins said. "And now that I've seen the inner workings of it, it kind of makes sense why it's so secretive and why it's a big ordeal."

Having completed boot camp in 2003, Collins said he had no experience aboard the USS Trayer from which to draw from.

"My recruits would ask, 'What are we getting into?' and I would say, 'I have no idea,'" Collins said. "Now that I see it, it's an eye-opening experience. I like it. It gives the normalcy of what day-to-day ship life would be. But then we throw in the curveballs and general quarters and everything like that."

The 'curveballs' are mostly thrown by Fidelity Technology engineers, who run and operate the trainer, co-ordinate scenarios, communicate with facilitators via PDAs, monitor recruit safety and oversee computer operations. It's been said that recruits are trying to save a ship that engineers are trying to sink. So where does that leave the role of facilitators?

"Going that route, I'd be the Wizard in 'The Wizard of Oz,'" Collins said. "Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain. I'm here to brief you and watch you. I'd be on the side that's helping to save the ship, but not actually get my hands dirty doing it."

Each night of Battle Stations brings its own challenges according to Collins.

"With 80 different personalities, you have to find 80 different motivators sometimes," he said. "The big picture is, they need this to become a Sailor, to complete the contract. They've done eight weeks of, what in their mind, is probably hell and this is the final stepping stone to get to that."

Throughout the night, Collins challenges, questions and pushes recruits to face tough - and sometimes very personal - moral choices. It fits in well with the Battle Stations mandate of giving recruits a taste of the life and death decisions Sailors in the fleet have faced.

So what attributes make a recruit successful at Battle Stations?

"Listening and comprehension," Collins said. "You can be a leader all you want, you can be an alpha type all you want, but if you're not willing to sit there and listen to what we have to say as facilitators, as far as what's going on with the briefs and what is expected of you as a recruit in that scenario, then you're probably going to do everything wrong because you think you know what's going on."

An ever-rising combination of stress and fatigue gradually raise the stakes throughout the night.

"That's where the teamwork comes into play," Collins said. "He might catch step 1, she might catch step 2, someone else might catch step 4, 5 and 6 but nobody caught step 3. But they can figure it out together via context if they come together as a team."

Setting the example of how the sum can be greater than the parts is the Battle Stations 21 staff. In addition to the facilitators, there are more than a dozen others who work behind the scenes as the Battle Stations Training Team, and four rotating night check chiefs. The facilitators report any issues to the BSTT members and the BSTT members, many of whom are also qualified facilitators, resolve the issues and brief the night check chief as needed.

Machinist's Mate 1st Class Steve Welch said it won't be long before Collins advances and joins him as a qualified night check chief.

"(Collins) is hard-working, determined and smart," Welch said. "I cannot stress that enough. He is a very smart individual and he's moving up the chain pretty quickly because he's very motivated and involved. He definitely brings up the house when he's here."
Collins said job satisfaction also comes from seeing recruits transform into Sailors.

"As RDCs, you push them, you push them, and you push them, and then they're off for graduation," he said. "You see them hug their families and march on the drill deck, and you know you taught them all of that. I got that gratification from that side of the job aspect, but knowing that RDCs are bringing them to me for their final test, and I'm giving them back as Sailors, that would be the gratification of this side of it."

As late night turns to early morning, recruits and staff alike look forward the capping ceremony, where recruits for the first time have earned the right to replace the ball cap that identifies them as a recruit with one that reads Navy. Collins has witnessed his share of capping ceremonies, but each one brings its own sense of fulfillment.

"You see the recruits with the smiles on their face and the tears in their eyes and they thank you," Collins said. "You can just hear it and feel that it's sincere. In knowing that, whether it's an eye-opening experience, an 'a-ha' moment or an 'OK, now I know what I'm getting myself into,' they're grateful for the experience that you've lead them through that night, to transition into Sailors. I'd say that's the best story I could give - watching them take the recruit ball cap off in the morning and putting the Navy ball cap on shortly after."

Boot camp is approximately eight weeks and all enlistees into the U.S. Navy begin their careers at the command. Training includes physical fitness, seamanship, firearms, firefighting and shipboard damage control along with lessons in Navy heritage and core values, teamwork and discipline. About 30,000 to 40,000 recruits graduate annually from RTC and begin their Navy careers.

For more news from Recruit Training Command, visit www.navy.mil/local/rtc/.

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For more information affecting Sailors and their family follow @USNPeople on Twitter.