RTC Graduation Speech  
December 15, 2016, 9:45am

Good morning! Rear Admiral Evans, Thanks for the invitation to speak here today! There is nothing more important to our Navy than our people - they are our nation's asymmetric advantage in an increasingly challenging world. So for me, as the Chief of Naval Personnel, it is truly a privilege to be here this morning at the Quarterdeck of the Navy on such an important day for these young men and women, where we welcome our newest Sailors into the Navy!

Congratulations to you all! (Please join me in a huge round of applause for our Nation's newest Sailors!!!)

For the parents and families in the audience, you have all played vital roles in these young men and
women’s lives, tirelessly supporting them and molding them into the people they have become today – Sailors in the greatest Navy in the world.

I know your sons, daughters, husbands, wives, and significant others will attempt to explain the enormous impact the past several weeks have had on their lives. Listen to them, their enthusiasm, their pride, and know that while they have changed, the full transformation has only just begun.

What you will hear are the ideals of Service before self, honor, courage, and commitment.

What you will see going forward is an awakening within them, the empowerment of belonging to something larger than oneself, and the pride of knowing that they are
part of an organization designed to make the world a better place.

These past few weeks have no doubt been hard. The program has been rigorous, demanding more from these men and women than they probably thought possible as the Recruit Division Commanders, instructors and staff here at the United States Navy's Recruit Training Command shaped them into Sailors over the past several weeks.

But, each of them has overcome any doubts as they repeatedly answered the call to duty. You should be proud. I know I am.

To the graduates – you are no longer Recruits. You are now Sailors. Not just any Sailors, but Sailors in the
United States Navy, the finest Navy to have sailed the seas. You’ve chosen to serve your country at a time when it is most needed, when America must show a strong presence throughout the world.

You’ve taken on the responsibility of defending our nation, and have earned not only my respect, but that of a grateful nation.

And no matter what happens from this day forward, you will be part of a very elite organization with a rich tradition that goes back even beyond the beginning of our great nation. You are more than a citizen now. You have proven yourselves worthy of wearing the uniform and all that it symbolizes throughout the world.
Today, you wear the cloth of the nation, and because of that, you bear more responsibility. You will be respected for the uniform you wear; you will be credited for the work ethic, the intellect, the warrior spirit and the resourcefulness of those who have gone before you. And even after you leave the Navy, folks will have a certain expectation of what you bring to the table.

I am envious of you all – envious of the career upon which you are about to embark – and of the opportunities that lie ahead. But to be clear, there is no shortage of hard work to be done or challenges that will be handed to you.
There will be tough days ahead… We will ask things of you that will cause you to reach deep within yourselves to answer the bell. You will have to have done the homework, learned your trade, and be positioned to seize the opportunities that come your way.

And as you progress in your careers, don’t forget to make time to do it right at home, take care of your family, yourselves, and stop and smell the roses along the way.

Godspeed, fair winds, and following seas…. And … Congratulations, to the newest Sailors in our United States Navy!