

AS DELIVERED

Remarks by the Secretary of the Navy
Ray Mabus
ADM Donald Retirement
Navy Yard
Friday, 2 November 2012

Thank you CNO Greenert. To all gathered here, particularly to Kirk and Diane Donald, retirement ceremonies are always bittersweet occasions, but it is particularly so in this case as we pipe ashore Admiral Donald and celebrate a remarkable 37-year active-duty career. His impact on our Navy Nuclear community is like fission itself: releasing incredible amounts of energy in multiple directions.

Navy's nuclear program pioneered this alternative power, while setting unrivaled standards for performance and safety. Now at the time, skeptics of the program said that nuclear energy was way too dangerous, way too costly and impossible to contain in a submarine or a carrier. Today, all our carriers and all our submarines are nuclear powered and provide the United States with a technological and warfighting edge that helps our national security and global stability.

And that's the history of the United States Navy, a history of energy innovation, particularly energy, moving from sail to steam-powered coal in the middle of the 19th Century and then to oil in the early part of the 20th Century and then to nuclear in the middle of the 20th Century – every time in the teeth of skepticism.

Admiral Donald's eight years as commander of Naval Nuclear Propulsion and Deputy Administrator for Naval Reactors incredibly enhanced Navy nuclear's already sterling and spotless reputation. His watch witnessed 12 million miles of safe nuclear steaming. In leaving the ranks of the Navy, he is joining Navy legends like Jones and Farragut, Nimitz and Rickover.

His impact will also continue to be felt as we transition to a new defense strategy, a maritime-centric strategy focused on the Western Pacific and the Arabian Gulf, while still maintaining and building our partnerships around the world. One of our greatest partners in the Pacific and in the world is Japan and we welcome today the ambassador from Japan, Ambassador Fujisaki. Admiral Donald's leadership during Operation Tomodachi - the Japanese word for friendship - showed the strength of that relationship and the depth of that friendship.

Naval Reactors was one of the first organizations to recognize the severity of the nuclear accident and, at Admiral Donald's direction, over 140 radiological response personnel were very swiftly deployed. But this wasn't the first time because he had been developing that relationship for years with his typical thorough presentation, his typical attention to detail and it led to the first forward-deployed nuclear-powered aircraft carrier in Japan in 2008. We owe Admiral Donald a huge debt for these efforts and everything he did, but particularly these efforts to build our relationship with Japan and enhance security with the region.

We also owe, as CNO pointed out, Diane Donald a great debt of gratitude. She has graciously agreed to be the sponsor of one of our new nuclear powered submarines, so we will have a Donald connection far, far into the future with the Navy.

And it has been Admiral Donald's daily mentoring and direction of the hard-working people of Naval Nuclear Energy that I know brings him the most pride. Under his leadership, this program has trained and qualified over 3,000 naval officers and 12,000 enlisted nuclear reactor operators to maintain nuclear propulsion plants in our ships under the sea, on the sea and around the world. Also CNO pointed out, he was one of the champions of opening the submarine service to women, helping to continue to expand opportunities to all those who serve and to make our force as diverse as the nation it represents.

So, Admiral Kirk Donald, we cannot thank you enough for all you have done for our Navy and our nation. You have left an amazing legacy which will be carried on in fine form by your successor, Admiral John Richardson. The Naval Nuclear community of engineers, scientists, and nuclear propulsion plant operators has relied on you to keep Naval Reactors and the Naval Nuclear Propulsion Program as the premier organization, not only in support of the Navy, but also in support of our Commander in Chief, of the Department of Defense, the Department of Energy, and other public and private organizations across the country and around the world.

While you leave our ranks today in the Navy, I know you will remain a certain counsel and reliable friend to us all in the years to come that will ensure that our Navy and our nation not only perseveres, but prevails. Bravo Zulu, Kirk Donald.