

**Chief of Naval Operations,
Adm. Jonathan Greenert delivers remarks at
the CNO Change of Command Ceremony
September 23, 2011**

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen thank you very much for coming today and good morning. Secretary Mabus, Admiral Roughead, thank you very much for your support, getting me here, for your mentorship and for all that you have taught me and most of all for your trust during these years. I appreciate that very much. I am honored that the President and Secretary of Defense would nominate me and that Congress would confirm me as the 30th Chief of Naval Operations. Two thousand and eleven is a big three zero year because this is also our 30th wedding anniversary, so it makes it pretty easy to remember some things.

As Admiral Roughead and Secretary Mabus said, it is terrific to see our international military leaders here today. I thank you very much for joining us. Your partnership is so incredibly important and I look forward to seeing some of you at the International Seapower Symposium next month.

Folks I understand the traditional role of the incoming officer. You get up, I did that. You dress up, so far so good. I showed up and if I do this right in short order I'll shut up.

This morning I had a gee whiz moment and I drove through the gate out here and boy what a flashback. Forty years ago, almost, I passed through the same gate as a midshipmen selectee, a skinny kid from western Pennsylvania from a steel town. Horned rim glasses, Buddy Holly look, hair too long. My sister in law says squirrel bait, I don't know what that means yet, but that's what she says that equals. And all I wanted to do was not be in the steel mills. That was my plan. You know, you've got to reach certain goals easily.

I knew what I didn't want to do, but I didn't know what I wanted to do. And I thought well this Naval Academy thing and this Navy will be a good enabler and then I'll take off. Well folks, I haven't figured it all out yet, but here's where you end up how about that.

Now how did this happen? How do you get here? I will tell you it is not possible without parents, who couldn't be with us today, who taught me hard work, humility, honesty and the blue collar values of those of us who live in the Pittsburgh area. I had great loving siblings. Here today checking out to make sure I do this right, four sisters, anyone who has four sisters, you know what I am talking about. And a younger brother who was gone all the time and I couldn't teach him anything. But most importantly, perhaps, many of you in the military knows how this works you have got to marry up, you have definitely got to marry up. And in Darleen I found a loving, giving, patient - underlined, dedicated woman. Dedicated to me, to the family, to the Navy that she loves and to all those Sailors and families that she loves and who has agreed to take one more job. She has raised amazing children who we dragged all over the world, Jonathan, Brian and Sarah who all continue to serve in the Navy or our country in their own ways today, each choosing to serve their own way.

But as we all know, we can't be here, I look across the audience and I see mentors, mentors for 36 years. People who have taken the time to nurture me, again patience, and many who took a chance on this young pup here. For my first department head, Steve Arndt, now that's patience, my first CO Corbin McNeill, all the way to Admiral Roughead who brought me along and Admiral Mullen who also brought me along in my recent years.

But it's also pretty important when you come from an institution like this to graduate with the best class ever, the flower children, the Class of '75.

Well now that Admiral Roughead is not my boss anymore, just another four star and having been accused of being his only vice, I have to tell you something. I talked to Ellen and that is not what she said.

Sir, a few words. I want to thank you again, you have been an amazing boss and mentor with again great patience. I thank you for shaping me, and for leading our Navy and all that you have done. It is wonderful that this is in fact the omega for you and Ellen, where it all began. Ellen, you are really the finest first lady of the Navy and the best Ambassador that I have seen for our country, leading our spouses and our families. Thank you again so much, from Darleen and I thank you very much.

Well the last two years as the vice chief I have had a part in crafting I guess what I'll call the Navy's navigation plan for the future. I take a fix today, I look at it and I say we are pretty much on course and we're not in shoal water, things are good. Admiral Roughead has explained it and I think he has done a magnificent job. My plan is to keep it that way.

But I know we have got uncharted waters ahead. I see storm warnings out there and I see the clouds forming. Folks, we are in for some heavy weather, I think, out ahead. Unfortunately in a former life I would say prepare to dive and we would submerge and avoid it all together, but that's not going to work. Our first step, we've got to rig for heavy weather. And when you do that and are out to sea the first principle is you've got to ensure the safety of the crew, very important. You've got to establish a reliable gyro that you know will get you to where you need to go. That you can steer to and you have got to stay on course.

My priorities, our course, are one. We've got to remain ready to meet the current challenges today. We've got to build a relevant and capable future fleet. And we have got to continue to care for our Sailors, our civilians and their families, and recruit and nurture a motivated, a relevant and a diverse force.

We will approach our challenges and we'll implement our changes that will have to be done in the future with three tenets in mind. Number one, warfighting first. We have got to be able to apply our craft to fight and win if we are called upon. We will build the ability to win tomorrow as well. Two, we have got to operate forward. That is where we are most effective.

We provide, as Admiral Roughead and the Secretary said, an offshore option. We will have access to the maritime crossroads of the world. And three, we have got to be ready. We have got to be ready for our assigned missions. We will harness the teamwork and the talent and the imagination of this wonderful diverse force that we have. But we have to be responsible to employ the resources that we are given. And we have a professional and moral obligation to uphold the covenant that we hold with our Sailors, civilians and our families. Ultimately we will give the President offshore options, no permission slip

required. They will be effective, they will be efficient. Our solutions will be joint and the Marine Corps will remain our primary partner.

Folks, I am very excited to be the Chief of Naval Operations. If you are going to go into heavy weather and you're on a ship, the best place to be is right on the bridge and steering. I am confident that we'll get through there. We will stay on course. We will need to be judicious, deliberate and vigilant. It is my honor and pleasure to lead these young men and women of the finest Navy in the world. I look forward to taking on the challenges with them and with you.

And I thank you very much for coming today.