Admiral Richardson: Ladies and Gentlemen, and Recruits. Thank you for having me here. Congratulations to our newest Sailors on this momentous day.

Families, you have come from all over the country. Let’s not waste this moment to one last time show our newest Sailors how proud we are of them. Let’s give it up for them. [Applause].

I’ll tell you what, many of you family members probably have two thoughts running through your head right now. One is, it is amazingly cold outside. I mean this is just incredibly cold, particularly if you traveled from the South.

The other is probably something along the lines of who has this person become? They left home weeks ago to come and join the Navy, and the person standing before you now is a much different version of the person who left home. And I’ll tell you what, we have got to respect their choice to come here so much.

This is the most talented Navy that we have ever had. By every measure of human performance, this group is the top. And it says a lot -- [Applause]. They could literally go anywhere in the world they want. They could write their own check anywhere. Any organization would be proud to have them on board. And with all of the choices in front of you, this group of Sailors chose to come here, to raise their right hand, to take an oath to support and defend the Constitution of the United States of America, to be part of something bigger than themselves, and that commitment is something that we have to respect.

And I’ll tell you what, to all the family members here, that commitment grew in your family. All right? We have taken your sons and daughters and made them into Sailors, but it is you who instilled this commitment in them.

So I’d like for the family members, give yourself and each other a great round of applause for what you have done to bring us to this day. [Applause].

And to our graduates, to our newest Sailors. Today is the culmination of a tremendous amount of work that you have put in. We are so proud of you. And today marks a significant
milestone, but it is not the end. You are still going to continue to become a fighting Navy Sailor, and this becoming is going to be the hallmark of your entire career. All right? You never arrive in our Navy. Being something is to stand still. Becoming something is to be constantly on the move, constantly improving, constantly learning. Becoming is what today’s Sailors do.

So today is a day that we need to recognize, we need to celebrate, but today is not the end. The past several weeks are not about being a Sailor, they are about becoming a Sailor, a fighting Navy Sailor, and that process of becoming never ends. Becoming a fighting Navy Sailor means becoming an effective member of a combat team. Period. Becoming a fighting Navy Sailor means working within that team so that you are ready to fight, better than any team that’s ever fought before. Period. Becoming a fighting Navy Sailor means getting you and your team ready to put the enemy on the bottom of the ocean, and you sail away with your team alive and well. Period. [Applause].

United States Navy Sailors, Navy fighting Sailors, have been doing that in the defense of our country, in our interests, for 243 years. And today you join that proud legacy. You should feel amazingly proud of what you’ve accomplished here in Great Lakes. I know that your families are proud too. Proud of the honor, courage and commitment that you show. Proud of the competence and character that you display and that they instilled in you and enabled you to stand here today.

So one last time, with the family members present, let’s show them what they mean to us with a great round of applause. Welcome aboard, shipmates. And I will see you in the fleet.

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