CNO: First of all, it’s great to be down here at the very cutting edge of naval aviation at a really exciting time.

I’ve started to begin my speeches at the beginning of our nation. There’s a really famous quote by President George Washington. Some of you may be familiar with it. It goes something like this, that as sure as night follows day, without a definitive naval force you can do nothing decisive; and with it, everything honorable and glorious.

You’ve got to love that quote if you’re a Navy person, particularly coming from George Washington, one of our Founding Fathers, our first President, the General who helped us liberate ourselves from British rule, start our independence. And we talk a lot about what it takes to be a decisive naval force. We lock in on that decisive thing and nothing makes us more decisive as a naval force than naval aviation and the role of everything that you do here, the impact of what you do here at NAVAIR can’t be understated. It’s just absolutely important. And if you think about some of the most important things, some of the biggest advances in naval aviation right now, they all come here.

So we’ve got some headlines recently with the unmanned tanker, the MQ-25 Stingray, partnering with Boeing on that. Really cutting edge business, not only from a technological standpoint but integrated unmanned with a manned air wing, that’s going to be a huge step. And then the way we’re going after this in terms of acquiring it, working with industry, really cutting edge stuff to get this thing out on deck very, very fast.

So we committed to this in ’18, I think, Admiral Peters? If that’s about right. Last year. And we’re going to have this thing on deck in 2023, 2024. We’re moving as fast as possible. So that’s five, six years to get an aircraft out on deck. That’s moving pretty fast. First flight later on this year.

And unmanned throughout, whether it’s Trident or what have you.

The other thing, F-35C, IOC, that’s a huge step forward. Thanks to everybody who contributed to that. And you can go on down the line. You’re making big advances in additive manufacturing,
leading the Navy’s way forward. Our ability to make parts on-
scene rather than having to order them. That’s going to be a
huge advancement as well. So cutting edge, leading the way in
so many different areas, helping us be that more decisive naval
force.

None of that would happen, we talk a lot about technology, but
the motive behind all that technology, what makes it all happen
is all of you. Right now, if I took a measure of human
performance, of your talent, we’ve got the most talented Navy
than we’ve ever had before. All of your scores, your physical
fitness scores, your intellectual scores, all the tests that you
take. You’re better looking than any other Navy we’ve had in a
long time. You’re much more charming than any Navy we’ve had.
It’s really, by every measure of performance, it’s the best Navy
we’ve ever had. Ever. And I’m not saying that just to make you
feel good. I’ve got the numbers to show it.

What that means is that you really could go any place on the
planet. We’ve got this global economy. You could have gone
anywhere you wanted to in the world and you chose to come to the
Navy. By making that choice you chose to literally raise your
right hand, make an oath to support and defend the constitution,
to be part of something much bigger than yourselves, something
noble, something honorable and glorious just like George
Washington said.

I hope that part of that is related somehow to the values that
we embody. These values of honor, courage and commitment.

I know it’s probably not salary. You know I can’t pay you as
much as a lot of the private sector can pay you. And oh, by the
way, we’re going to ask you to make some sacrifices, right?
Many of you are going to deploy, separate from your families, et
cetera. All of that I think deserves a tremendous amount of
respect.

I’m going to stop talking here, but I wanted to end on that.
More than anything else, if you wanted to describe what it is
that the CNO does, is that I leap out of bed every morning
looking for opportunities to remove obstacles from you, any
obstacle between you and your maximum potential. And just to do
everything that we can to allow you to do the job that you
signed up to do. That’s the expression of this respect that
I’ve got for you.
Then at the end of the day, before we go home the team, MCPON and I, we’ll circle back and make sure that well, the decision we set out to make and the impact we set out to do, is it actually happening? Sometimes things get changed. Sometimes despite the best efforts, things get distorted. You’ve got to go back and make sure that things are working out the way we thought. This type of session helps me make sure of that, helps me get a better sense of that. Is it really working out the way we hoped?

So I look forward to the conversation. I hope there’s an opportunity here, get ready to ask some good questions and I look forward to answering them.

CNO: Who’s got the first question?

Audience: Good morning, sir. HM3 Farris from Naval Health Clinic, Patuxent River.

My question is concerning the Fleet Training Wholeness 2025 Initiative. I know it talks about opening up a lot of billets for sea and operational commands. And I know currently there’s a lot of need for sea commands and Sailors have gone through via the volunteer sea duty program to volunteer for those but have been denied due to undermanning at their current shore commands.

So I was wondering how that initiative might affect that manning?

CNO: I’m going to try and answer your question, and you let me know if I get to your question.

Just like she said, we are prioritizing, well let me back up a little bit.

The Navy’s growing right now. For the first time in a long time. For a long time, like a decade, we’ve been a Navy that has been getting smaller. About two years ago we started turning that around and we started getting bigger. So when I came into the Navy we were 272 ships, if you want to count ships, and we’re north of 285 right now. 288, I think, as I count today.

Then of course, you can’t just build ships and expect them to go. You’ve got to get the people to crew them. Also back a few years ago we had a number of gaps at sea. Overall, if you draw a thread through all of the personnel policies, whether it’s
acessions, retention, training, all of those things, the theme has been that we want to keep people in the Navy, we’re bringing people into the Navy as fast as the system can bring them in and train them, and then we want to prioritize those billets at sea to fill those gaps that we were seeing at sea.

Just about everything that we have done has been to make some kind of a contribution to bringing people in, keeping them into this growing Navy, and then providing opportunities to get to sea. So there’s been a number of initiatives to do that.

What exactly is the nature of your question?

Audience: [Inaudible].

CNO: So you want to go to sea and we’re saying no. Brad? Talk to this Marine over here, and we’ll help you out. That doesn’t make any sense to me. Thanks. I’m glad you asked that.

Anybody else want to go to sea right now? There’s a line right over here. Major Motz will take your name and we will find a way to get you to sea.

To be honest, of course there’s a balance that has to be struck. Particularly here, I imagine that the billet you’re filling is very, very important. But as I said, the priority is at sea. And for those of you at shore commands already, you probably have noticed that there is a priority for sea, a lot of the shore commands are under-manned a little bit because we’re prioritizing those sea billets. So we’ll take a look at yours specifically, and make sure that you understand exactly what’s going on. And anybody else that wants to go to sea, Major Motz is standing by. Thanks. Great question.

Audience: My question is, sir, with the highest rates of suicide affecting our ranks throughout the Navy, what is the Navy doing to improve or replace the Sail Program? Or will more measures be put into place to further improve the safety and the care --

CNO: Got it. Let me talk about this a little bit.

One, what we’re doing as a Navy is we’re searching everywhere, and this challenge of suicide which is maybe the most extreme challenge in the mental health business is very hard. I don’t know of a truly successful program anywhere in the world that gets after this. We are hunting it like crazy. We’re looking
for the beset of breed, right? For the very best program in the world to do this.

I will say that our Navy represents the United States in many, many ways. We pull from the United States population. And the rate of suicide in the nation is going up. The rate of suicide in the Navy is generally, if you correct for population and age and all of that, is generally 50-20 percent lower than it is in the general United States. So something about being in the Navy and what we’re doing, maybe just unit cohesion, team behavior, is contributing 15-20 percent. But I’ll tell you, we can’t be satisfied. Right? If there’s even one, it’s too many. So we’re looking to be effective in this area.

We all need to think about this. I’ll tell you what I’m thinking. One, I want to make it as easy as possible for a Sailor to get help. And what we’ve been thinking about is that if there are ten programs out there it’s almost more confusing to try and figure out what to do than if there was just one number to call, or one way to get help. So we’re simplifying the program a great deal and trying to converge on a program that’s been proven to be most effective. So we’re looking at that. SAIL is one of those.

The other thing is, we’re moving more counselors and people to talk to down closer to the fleet. So we’ve done some pilot programs and those seem to be pretty good. If you’ve deployed recently, you might have had a deployed resilience counselor on board which has been somebody who’s actually at sea with us, deployed. Somebody to talk to and work through these things.

But my sense is the most effective approach to this is going to be ourselves. And we all exist, we all work, we all deploy, we function in small units. Whether that’s your work center, your division, you name it, your squadron. We’ve got these small units. And if we think about just the power of that small unit to take care of one another, the small unit leadership, right? The chief and the division officer. To really know their people. Who might be doing well, who might be struggling a little bit? We know the things that make people struggle. The transitions. When you leave one team and maybe go to another. In between those two times is a time of struggle. Certainly if you’re having a relationship problem or something like that. We know what causes trouble. And if we’re aware of that, if we’re talking to one another, if every one of us feels like we’re connected to that team, that we’ve got some people -- ideally the leadership and maybe a couple of other people, peer to peer
support. That’s going to be the thing that is most effective, so we’re really trying to stress that as well as any kind of top-down Navy program that can provide some effective help.

We really are centering up on that as our best guess at what will be most effective.

I think these personal technologies are great. But sometimes they can distract us from making the human to human connection that is really required to help us through these tough times. Particularly these decisions to take our own life, they happen very, very fast. Sometimes it’s mere minutes between the time that a person decides to do that and then takes the action. So we’ve got to interrupt that so that the person never gets to, our shipmates never get to that position where they feel like this is the only path left.

I think it’s this human to human connection that is going to matter.

We just had a week where we brought in all the Navy flags and senior executives and we talked about this. It exists throughout the entire chain of command, and the need to have somebody you can connect to, talk through things, bounce ideas off of, share your problems. It’s really, really important. And it’s not going to happen on Instagram, it’s not going to happen on Facebook, all those things. It’s going to happen by virtue of us connecting person to person. And this is how leadership happens as well. Right?

We need to make sure that we take full advantage of whatever these technologies can offer us, but let’s not leave behind the essential role of human to human connection.

We’re doing all of the above. We’re enhancing the SAIL program. We are getting more and more of these counselors and putting them closer and closer to our sailors in the fleet, in the squadrons, et cetera, and we’re emphasizing this idea that maybe the most effective thing is just to really understand the people in your unit and bring us together to connect on a human level.

Audience: [Inaudible]?

CNO: The Truman in terms of the overhaul?

Audience: Yes, sir.
CNO: Is that your question?

Audience: I was going to ask another one.

CNO: I’ll take which one’s easiest and I’ll answer the one that I want. [Laughter].

Audience: An article I read recently that our fleet could go from 11 to 10 carriers. How is that going to affect the Navy’s warfighting abilities and deployment cycles?

CNO: You’re reading all the right articles. I’ll tell you right now there’s a lot of discussion about aircraft carriers, isn’t there? If you’re reading the news, lots of opinions about aircraft carriers. There is a, well certainly as things have developed, the dynamic of -- it always goes this way, just to answer your question. There are advances in military technology that change how we operate and how we conduct both offense and defense of our forces. This is the way it’s happened.

You go back to Henry V. Anybody watch that movie, Henry V? Shakespeare scholar, right? Dabbles in Shakespeare. You go back to Henry V’s moving his Army into France and the French Army outnumber Henry’s Army by I think about 10 to 1. It was overwhelming odds. But what did Henry’s guys have? King Henry’s guys had archers. And they could reach further than the French. So there’s always been, even since the Medieval times, there’s back and forth about offense and defense. And it’s proceeding.

So right now we’ve got this dynamic going on. There is a, the latest move forward in this has been the advent or the introduction of long-range precision missiles. Even ballistic types of missiles that can go out a thousand miles and hit a target with precision.

So people conclude from that that’s the end of the aircraft carrier. There’s been a lot of discussion about can a carrier defend itself? I will tell you that the answer to that question is yes. A well operated aircraft carrier is the most survivable airfield in the theater. There is something tremendous about being able to move that airfield 720 miles in a day that makes it very, very hard to find and hit. And if you think about all the things that need to happen to make that weapon hit the target. First, you’ve got to find it -- the carrier. Second, you’ve got to pass that information back to some kind of a fire control system. Then you’ve got to get it into the missile.
Then you’ve got to launch the missile. The missile has to go up and execute its trajectory. And it’s got to find the carrier. And then it’s got to home on the carrier, et cetera. Every link in that chain can be disruptive. That’s what we’re doing. That’s how it happens.

Then right around the corner, particularly with some of the work that’s been done in this corridor, up and down the East Coast, we’re going to have a new suite of defensive weapons like high power lasers. We’re going to put a high power laser on a ship this year. High power, this is something that could knock a missile out of the sky. It’s a great defensive system, and it costs pennies to shoot. It’s not a million dollar interceptor.

Again, back and forth, back and forth. Advance in offense, advance in defense.

So this all is coming down to this discussion about the future of carriers. I think we’re going to be okay in this. We’re doing a lot of studies this year to ensure that we’ve done every possible analysis that we can to understand the strengths and vulnerabilities of an aircraft carrier and then respond to what those studies tell us.

So we’ve got all the flexibility in that. It’s been getting a lot of news lately, I know, and we’ll see how this works forward. But I think we’re going to get the force that we need, to have that decisive naval force that George Washington talked about.

So stay tuned. It’s a dynamic discussion. I’m glad you’re part of it. Everybody here should be part of it. Naval aviation, the carrier is very, very important in naval aviation so we’ve got to be tracking this closely.

But you should be confident that the United States Navy’s super carrier is the most survivable airfield in the theater. All of those land-based ones, I don’t even have to solve for those. I already know where they are. That’s something to take to the bank.

**Audience:** Good morning, Admiral. Thanks for coming down. Ken Karka from the Small Business Office. I’m also one of your classmates.
A two-part question. How are we doing implementing the changes that came out of the investigations on McCain and the Fitzgerald collisions at sea?

And more importantly, Admiral Davidson about a year ago before Congress made a comment that we pretty much have ceded the South China Sea to the Chinese. What are we doing operationally to change that paradigm?

CNO: Two monstrous questions.

Look, I’m going to give you a reading assignment on the first one, because we’re doing a ton. It would take me 45 minutes to talk about everything that we’re doing, everything we have done to respond to the collisions in the Western Pacific. We’ve been really transparent about this. Talk to Major Motz, give him your email, and we’ll send you a bunch of stuff because it’s just a lot. And we’re at a different place with respect to surface warfare than we were even a year and a half ago. So that’s a monstrous question, but lots of advances made. Career path changes, course changes, we’re testing everything now. Fundamentally, we’re not sending ships to sea that aren’t trained and certified for the mission that we’re doing. We have schedule discipline. All of those things.

The one thing that we’re still trying to crack is maintenance, and it’s still taking us too long to get through maintenance periods, so we’re working very hard on that as well.

The second part of your question is the South China Sea. The United States Navy has been in the South China Sea for 70 years. Steady. Since the end of World War II, and we’re not going anywhere. We’re staying there. We’ve been consistently there and we’re going to be consistently there. Why is that?

Well, the Navy got started for the nation, one of the first missions it went over and did was go to the Strait of Gibraltar and protect our trade from the Barbary Pirates. We stood the Navy up to do that. We still do that.

If you think about what the Navy’s doing, this freedom of navigation business, there’s more to it than just steaming around the world. This is our economy. The United States has a maritime economy. Two-thirds of our trade is tied to the sea. We are a maritime nation. One-third of the entire world’s trade goes through the South China Sea. How much of the world trade travels by sea? Almost all of it. Ninety percent. So it’s
very important to keep the access to the markets overseas. It’s very important to make sure that we can ship goods from those markets to our shores and vice versa when we do exports. So we’re going to be in the South China Sea and we’re going to preserve freedom of navigation down there. That’s not changing.

Audience: Good morning, sir. My name is HM Vizny from Naval Health Clinic Pax River, Aviation --

CNO: A lot of corpsmen here. What is going on with the corpsmen and the questions?

Audience: My question for you today is in regards to education. There’s a lot of programs right now that are in place for sailors to receive education and tuition assistance, but there used to be a program in place called the Navy Student Loan Repayment Program or the LRP. That would allow sailors who had received their college education prior to service to receive up to $65,000 within the first three years of service to help repay back their student loans.

So I’m wondering, is there any chance that that program might come back in place to help sailors like me and many others that are needing help to pay their student loans?

CNO: I’m not aware of any discussions about that, but I’ll ask. We remained, even through the hard times of sequestration and continuing resolutions and all of the budget craziness that’s been going on, we’ve held the line and maintained our support for tuition assistance. Okay? And so we’ve got a solid commitment to education.

And then we do have a lot of other programs to allow you to go and get education. I’m not familiar with this one. I have to study up. But I’m also -- if it was being talked about I might know about it. I’m not aware of any discussion. So again, I just want to answer you personally. We need to get your email. I’ll find out and get back to you. Okay? But I’m not hopeful.

Audience: -- Edmonds from the Branch Health Clinic Dahlgren. Good morning, sir.

I had a question about the shift into the new performance evaluation system and why there was a need to change into the peer-based system with the [15-second] time window. Especially in the current competitive nature.
CNO: Good. It’s a great question. First of all, I want to back out a little bit, and then I’ll zoom in to answer your question. Okay?

Are there any non-corpsmen in the room? [Laughter]. All you non-corpsmen are shy.

Probably nowhere, besides naval aviation, here on the cutting edge of naval aviation, just as exciting as everything that you’re doing is what Admiral Burke and the team at Chief of Naval Personnel is doing to overhaul the way that the Navy talks to our sailors in particular about everything associated with their career. So the first part of that, as some of you might imagine, was to transform the information technology that allows us to manage our human resources.

Anybody know who Admiral Grace Hopper is? Raise your hand if you recognize that name. She was a pioneer in computer science. She was a Navy admiral. It was really a great Navy story that we had somebody in our ranks who was literally defining the cutting edge of computer science as computers were being born. Right? Being invented.

I think that Admiral Grace Hopper wrote some of our personnel databases herself, and they’re still in effect. So we have something like almost 300 different databases, none of which talk to each other. They came up over the decades since computers were invented. So we made a decision about two years ago that said hey, this system is just ancient. We’re not going to try and fix it, we’re going to completely replace it with modern information technology. Right? And we’re going to store it in a very secure place and we’re going to bring modern software to allow us to have the tools to really understand what each one of you, what your priorities are.

The sailor who asked the question about education. Hey, if you want to get some education I’ve got some opportunities to give you some education. If I know about that, know what you want, then I can make an offer. Some of you just want to go back to sea. Right? You want to go to sea, and then when you get back you want to go to sea some more. Right? Hooyah. I’ve got opportunities like that. I’ve got lots of sea billets, operational billets. Some of you might want to get some geographic stability because you’ve got kids going through school or something. Right? I can help you there. I’ve got places that you can go, and you can have a terrific career and
stay in the same place. If I know that, I can think about that, right? We can make you an offer.

So this technology’s going to allow us to know what each and every one of you at an individual basis, what are your personal priorities? And then we’re going to put together through this detailing marketplace a counter-offer. An offer, right? Hey, do you want to go to school? Here’s an opportunity to get some education. You want to run to the sound of gunfire? I’ve got opportunities like that. Whatever it may be, we’re going to come back to you.

So this is the fundamental nature. And it starts with recruiting. We’re doing recruiting way, way different than we did before using a lot of information technology. And it continues through boot camp and A school, lots of opportunities. This ready, relevant learning program we’ve got going on is bringing the most advanced learning technologies and science to bear to teach us as effectively as possible.

Part of this program, part of this revolution in human resources is the evaluation system. Okay? So now we’ll zoom in and get to your question. Why are we doing it?

Well, how many people have been around this business for ten years or more? Okay. So if you have, I would say that you might agree with me that our current evaluation system could be vastly improved. For one, the system is designed right now, the current system is designed not to talk to you, who’s being evaluated, but really it talks to the boards. It talks to promotion boards and screening boards and all those things, so that we can -- and that’s not the primary audience I want to address.

If I’m evaluating somebody I want to speak to that person. I want to provide that person the most effective information about how they can improve in their job. I talk a lot about fast learning. The key to fast learning is good feedback. So I want this evaluation system to be focused primarily on giving you good feedback in terms of how you can do your job better. It’s a clear signal from all of you, as I’ve sampled around, all you want to do is figure out how to do your job better. What can I do to be more effective? I want to give you that information.

Two, the new system gets rid of the force distribution. The competitive ranking within teams. Because that’s not healthy. What we were seeing is this crazy internal competition inside
our teams, our small teams in particular, to get that EP. It’s nutty. And we were coming up with all these crazy collateral duties to compete for that EP. Right? So it’s like hey, I really want that petty officer job. And then I want the assistant petty officer job. And all of this stuff because we were looking at all these crazy ways to get these breakouts. It wasn’t helpful. This internal competition wasn’t productive.

The third thing is, as we, I’ll tell you what. For those of you who raised your hands who have been around the business for a little while, and even folks who are just getting started, you’re probably surprised at how fast you’re put in charge of something. Right? I mean you come on board, and whether it’s a ship or whatever, you just basically learn how to get to your rack, how to get to your desk, where your work center is, whatever. And before you know it, you’re put in charge of something.

We build leaders very, very fast. It’s what we do. We’re a leadership factory. And as we think about leaders, one thing we want to make sure you do is you know your business. You know the technical requirements of your job. There seems to be an awful lot of corpsmen in this room and we want, when a corpsman comes to help you, we want that corpsman to be very well trained about what it takes to do medicine. Right? And similarly, when you repair that aircraft, I definitely want you to know what you’re doing so that aircraft gets up, performs at its maximum potential and lands safely. And on and on and on. Right? So there’s an expertise thing associated with effective leadership.

I will tell you what. There’s also a really important character dimension to leadership. The people we want to put in front of our sailors, we want those leaders to be people of character. And so this evaluation system gets after that. It also starts to evaluate, hey, is this a person that we want to lead our sailors? Our civilians? So there’s a character dimension to this.

It’s also very, very flexible, as you pointed out. So let’s say I’m a new leader. I’ve just been put in charge of a team for the first time and I have ten people in my team. About six months in I want to know how I’m doing because I want to be the most effective leader as possible. This system allows you to put together like a little 360 degree evaluation system. So you can ask okay, who’s my boss? I’ll ask him to join in. I’ll get all my ten sailors to join in on my team. They can evaluate me and I can use it. It won’t go to the board, it’s just for you.
Okay? It’s tailored just for you. So there’s a tremendous amount of flexibility that comes in with this.

And although it seems like this system -- also, it takes about ten minutes to do an evaluation now. Who’s done a current Fitrep in ten minutes or less? No way. There’s no way. That’s not true. His transfer eval. Okay.

It generally takes a lot longer. It’s a whole deal, right? Fitreps. So this gets at this Fitrep a lot faster, and we’ve done a lot over the years. We’ve been at this for years, to make sure that it is just as effective as our current system. There’s been a lot of pilot programs that have compared the new system to the old system. It’s just as accurate in terms of getting at what really matters.

We’re confident this system’s going to be pretty cool. We’ve had some amazing talent like Nobel prize winning people come in and help us with this, so we’re really looking forward.

We’re going to kick it off in a trial period where we can use it as a counseling tool to become familiar with it, and then after that trial period we’re going to kick it in as an official eval system. Okay?

But it was generated, the motivation was one, I wanted to speak to you, not to some board. By the way, if you’ve been in this business long enough you know there’s code in those words, right? There’s codes. And that’s not right. You can sit down and you can read your eval and it would sound just fine to you. You would leave that session thinking I feel pretty good about that, right? But because we’re writing in code, the board knows you have zero chance of being promoted. The right words weren’t in there, and it’s not honest. So I want this to be an honest system as well.

So it’s going to speak to you in honest terms, it’s going to tell you how to get better. It will be just fine for the boards. It will eliminate this unhelpful competition. And it will speak to character. That’s why we did it.

Audience: Good morning, sir, AW [inaudible]. My question is concerning housing, right now a hot topic in the news cycle. I’m wondering what we’re going to do after it falls out of the news cycle to hold the housing companies accountable?
CNO: There’s a lot of accountability to go around here. That’s one of the reasons I’m down here. I’m going to be doing a focus on housing here in the local area, and everybody’s looking at it.

To your point, you’re right, this is going to come in and out of the news cycle and then when it goes out it’s going to be up to us. So I want to put in place this system that is sustainable, and is focused fundamentally on the residents in the housing. It will include a relationship that advocates for the sailors and their families in housing. Persistently. And so I would say that the current system has been shown to not be a sustainable system focused on the residents. The incentive system was just crazy. It was set up with the wrong influences in place, and so that’s how we arrived where we are right now. Some of the assumptions that were made in the initial system didn’t hold. Right? So the dynamic that we have right now is not the one that we foresaw in 1996 when we did this, what was that, like 22 years ago, 23 years ago.

These forces act over time, and you’ve got to be very mindful about the system you put in place. Where I’m concerned is that we need to create and preserve a vibrant role for the chain of command. It’s not just in housing but in everything.

Any of you guys watch Facebook Live? Did you see my thing on Facebook Live? Raise your hand if you saw it. I don’t even know why I do these things. All right. I’m sure it was very moving for the six people in the room who saw it.

What we’re after is, there’s a fundamental role. It goes back to this human connection question that I answered earlier. A fundamental role for the chain of command. I would hope that we are or quickly move to and continue to strengthen ourselves to be a Navy where if a sailor, any sailor has a problem, that their first call almost would be to their division leadership. This is how we become a strong and effective fighting team, is that trust and confidence that is built in within the teams. Then as soon as that chief or as soon as that division officer hears about or finds out about a problem because the sailor has 100 percent confidence that if they tell that leader of their problem, they will devote themselves to fixing it. Right? We’ve got to preserve a role for the chain of command in this thing going forward. That’s where my concern is.

If you had listened to that Facebook Live thing, I mean I do these All Hands Calls all over, and they’re really great. And
one sailor stood up and said hey, CNO, thanks for coming. I just want to tell you I’ve got a little bit of an issue. My last paycheck was 17 cents. Okay? I’ve got a family, I’ve got expenses, my last paycheck 17 cents.

Now you know how that happens, right? It’s because we have computers doing our business. So somehow the Navy or DFAS, the Defense Finance Accounting System, made an error and overpaid you. Anybody ever been overpaid? Of course it happens, right, because it’s complicated. And it’s too complicated. Then what happens? The Navy realizes hey, our mistake -- and it’s not the Navy, it’s DFAS. Our mistake. We overpaid you by $5,000. Not a problem. We’re going to take it all back in one paycheck, or two. So here’s your 17 cent paycheck and the good news is, you’re going to get 17 cents next paycheck too because, and then we’ll be even. Right? It’s just machines doing what people should be doing.

So when that sailor stood up in front of, it was a big All Hands Call. There were probably a thousand people there. I said okay, that’s a very legitimate concern. Is your XO in the room? And sure enough, he was. He was raising his hand. Here I am. I said XO, why is one of your sailors telling the Chief of Naval Operations that they got a 17 cent paycheck? Did you know about this? I didn’t know about it. Okay, well now you do so let’s get on this. I’m on it. I’m on it, CNO.

So then we go on with the All Hands Call and then just like today, what I like to do at the end of All Hands Calls is hang around with you guys for a while. Okay? Come on up, get a chance to shake hands, say hi, take a selfie, whatever you want to do. And during that time the XO came up. I was like XO, do you want to take a selfie? He’s like no. [Laughter]. I don’t. He said, I called PERS and the pay thing is fixed. All right?

My point being, when the chain of command knows and is engaged and they should be, these things can get fixed very fast. Right? It took one phone call to get this thing squared away.

This happened when I was XO one time. It was the December 15th paycheck, right before Christmas. One of the sailors on my crew came up and said I got 8 cents. Merry Christmas. You know? It just takes a phone call. But the thing that is most important is the climate in the command where I felt great because that sailor just knocked on my door and said hey, I’ve got a problem and I need you to fix it. One phone call later, it was all fixed. That’s the relationship we have to establish.
What we’re seeing too often is, maybe because of some perceived legalistic framework, like housing is one of those things. We’ve got contracts and public/private ventures and all that stuff. It’s off-putting. We can maybe convince ourself there’s not a role for the chain of command, and we need to get over that. There is always a role for the chain of command for our sailors. And it’s not just for housing, but it’s also for pay and schools and whatever it is. Food. We need to make sure that those fundamental needs are taken care of, and that’s leadership business.

So as we go forward, we’ve got to put this system together that’s sustainable, and sustaining in its focus on the resident and their family. And then supported by the chain of command. In housing, in every other matter that might trouble our sailors.

Watch Facebook Life. All right? I spent a lot of time.

**Audience:** Good morning, sir. Agent [Inaudible] with the Health Clinic here on base. [Laughter].

**CNO:** I’ll get back to you. I need a civilian question.

**Audience:** Good morning, sir. Brian Abbott. I’m the Aviation Safety Officer here at DX20.

Sir, over the last couple of years there’s been intense scrutiny on the services for the spike in aviation mishap rates, and I’m wondering in the discussions that you’ve had with other services chiefs, have there been any discussions about trying to improve our ability to automatically share safety data among the services? And sir, what I mean by that is if the Air Force has a C-130 mishap, the lessons learned and the results of that don’t always translate over to us in the Navy very quickly. We can get the information, it has been done, but it can be a lengthy and involved process. I’m wondering if there’s a way to improve that process so we’re not learning and making the same mistakes amongst the services?

**CNO:** That’s a great question, and nowhere more important to focus than on safety. So all in on that, right? And I think this is an area where big data -- we’re like the kinds of small data in safety. We’re not in big data, we’re in small data. Everybody’s got their own little database, it probably resides
on their hard drive. All this stuff should be up in the cloud and accessible to all. Authoritative data.

I also think we’re working with the Safety Center on this too, so it’s just not me with bright ideas up here at the front of the room. We classify safety events by cost. Right? There’s got to be a role also for I would call it causality. Why did it happen? I get it that it cost a lot so it’s a Class A mishap. But I’m after eliminating them and the cost gives me very little data on how to stop that in the future.

So what caused that incident? And then share all of that. Then our investigations take way too long. We’ve got this self-imposed silence. What happened? It’s under investigation. Okay. Well do we know anything? It’s under investigation. Six months later, anything yet? Still under investigation. It’s like for crying out loud. In the mean time that six months of information we could have shared to say hey go out and check this bolt. Right? And so we’ve got to get a lot more agile. We’re working with the safety center.

I would tell you that, in fact why don’t we take a note of this. We’ve got to leverage the local safety officers in this discussion so that ideas like this get into this conversation we’re having. Just like you said, hey, all you want is the most data you can get your hands on to help us be more safe. And if we’re not sharing that type of stuff, then we’re not being as effective as we can in this. Great idea.

**Audience:** Sir, Dan King, NAVAIR 4OM. Warfighting Readiness Analysis.

My question is regarding the fact that at NAVAIR we’re always developing advanced capabilities. We’re trying to provide the capabilities out to the fleet as fast as possible to fight the high-end fight. And there’s been an expression of a willingness to postpone and perhaps terminate deployments based on a lack of readiness expressed by Fleet Forces in PACFLT, testimony to Congress.

My question is, is DRRS-N giving us what we need in terms of the ability to assess, measure readiness? And then the follow-up question to that is what is SYSCOM’s role in ensuring that we quickly and effectively deliver capability to the fleet and that it’s accurately measurable in DRRS-N. Thank you.

**CNO:** Super complicated question.
First of all, let me say that with respect to readiness and deployment, you’ve all been in this business in one form or another. And it’s not like no. I’m not deploying. I’m not ready. Right? That’s never the conversation. The conversation might be I need a little bit more time. My maintenance upkeep finished late, and therefore I didn’t finish all the training I needed to do so I need a little bit more time to finish the training and then I’ll deploy. Sometimes if we get a lead on that we can say well, we can adjust the training cycle, compress it a little bit, but there comes a point beyond which we can’t compress it and still get everything done we need to get done.

So it’s not a yes/no question that we do here. It’s a when. What more do you need? I need to get this piece of gear fixed. Okay, let’s get that fixed and then we’ll send you out. Right?

This is the type of mature conversation that happens, and it should happen. And it happens better in naval aviation because you’ve got these NATOPS rules. You’re just not going to send the aircraft up unless it’s safe to fly, and there’s hard and fast rules, and nobody questions that. It’s just, that’s your culture. Okay? My culture. I was raised as a submariner. Same. We’re not going to take the ship out and submerge it unless it’s safe. Right? We want it to surface again.

So we need to get that culture spread around and have these conversations. It’s not like hey, I’m not going to deploy this squadron. It’s hey, I need to fix the planes before I deploy. I need two weeks to do that. Okay, in two weeks, get them fixed. If you can get them fixed faster than that, that’s great. But we’re not going to deploy the squadron until it’s safe and effective to deploy.

So it’s not a yes/no, cancel/not. It’s what do I need to do to get ready, and let’s not deploy until we’re ready. And we have schedules, of course. And if we’re doing our business great and our estimates are good we should be on-schedule. By and large we are. Right? Every now and then something happens and we have to adjust, and we do that all the time. We do that all the time.

Your second question, does DRRS-N accurately reflect the actual readiness of each unit in the fleet or whatever it may be? We’re working on that. It’s too complicated right now, first of all. DRRS-N, in fact in some commands you’ve got a person or
maybe a little team whose sole function is to keep the database alive and up to date. That’s crazy.

And oh by the way, one time I went in to a team, it was mine countermeasures, the mine hunting ships. Those ships are super old. Well past their designed life. And oh by the way, they’re made of wood. Because we don’t want to light off a mine that detects metal. So these ships are old. They’re hard to keep running.

So I went into a unit where there were some mine countermeasure ships, and I was looking at their DRRS-N paperwork and it was all green, everybody’s good to go. Right? So I went in and I said hey, I’m really happy to be here. This is really kind of -- well, I wasn’t too alarmed, there’s nothing of concern. I’m looking at your paperwork. There’s some stuff, but nothing too concerning. Looks like you guys are ready to go which is good because we might be using you soon. They said well, you know, about that, CNO. Nobody’s been underway more than ten percent in the last year, because it’s hard to get the ships fixed and get them underway. So you’ve got to wonder about is the database reflecting reality? With a ten percent optempo, do you even know if you’re ready? You haven’t been out there to rehearse or anything, or train.

So we’re working very hard. I’m making sure that DRRS-N reflects accuracy. And that’s so people who look at this stuff can have confidence in the system. But what I need more than ever is the leadership, commanding officers of the unit, you know better than anybody if your team’s ready or not. Right? And you get together with your team leadership and say okay, are we ready to deploy? Are we fully effective? And if they say yes, then I’ve got a lot of confidence in that. Way more than some database or spreadsheet. So we need to make sure that we get the command judgment in that as well.

You had like a fifth part of your question.

Audience: [Inaudible].

CNO: You guys are the technical warrant authority, right? What’s the official term? That’s it, right? You’re the authoritative source. When we have a question about is this technically suitable to fly, is it safe, effective? If it’s an aircraft, we come here. There’s no bigger role. You are the ones that say yes/no. Because you have all the expertise to
make that judgment. So it’s tremendously important, what you do.

**Audience:** Good morning, sir. AW [Inaudible] 21.

Sir, my question is with the not having a viable replacement for the MH-53 Echo, what is the future of AMCM, Airborne Mine Countermeasures, sir?

**CNO:** Mine countermeasures is, as I just -- did my comment spur on your question? Sort of. Alright. He was going to ask it anyway.

There’s an urgent need to get this mine countermeasure mission on track. And we were going to do most of it through LCS. We were going to have a bunch of LCS’s, and one of the mission modules in LCS was a mine countermeasure module.

We’re changing the attack a little bit. We’re going to take mine countermeasure capability, we call it making it expeditionary, but you can think of it as hey, a fly-away kit, if you will. It’s a big kit. Certainly in LCS, but any vessel of opportunity that has power and space, we can put this kit on board and that ship can be effective in mine countermeasures. And it’s going to be a lot of unmanned. So it’s going to be a lot of high tech sensors that are going to be towed by unmanned surface vehicles. They just go out and it’s like mowing the grass, right? If you’ve done this business, you just have to search out this area. We can get something programmed to do that without putting a person in jeopardy.

I think we’re pretty close to having something that can go in and clear it. The role for airborne in that I think is still to be determined. As you know, those Echo’s are getting old and we came through a troublesome spot as a Navy on those. I think we’re in a better place now, but the clock is ticking, and we don’t want to get back into a troublesome spot.

So stay tuned on this about the role for airborne mine countermeasures as it fits into the whole new scheme of doing a lot of this with unmanned surface vessels, et cetera. It’s a really dynamic part of our Navy right now, and urgent too. We’ve got to get these old mine countermeasure ships, we’ve got to get them retired and replaced with new ones.

These new systems, they’re pretty good. They’re as effective as we’ve got right now, probably a little bit more, they just go
out and do it remotely. And their operational availability is like 95 percent. When you turn them on, they turn on and they go.

So a combination of those two. Plus you can do some of this artificial intelligence to look at the sonar data, whatever it is. And those things are starting to be able to detect mines better and faster than people. Like 100 times faster. So there’s a lot of promise in this area.

**Audience:** Shaw Thompson of the E2 Program Office.

With the drive for speed to the fleet being such a big thing right now, but our main drops of money coming from the POM process where if we put in a POM issue this year we get money in ’22. What’s your recommendation from the top down to get a capability to the fleet before the seven years from now that it would take of regular development using the POM process?

**CNO:** The POM process, all it does is generate a budget for the next five years, so we’ve got a plan.

If you’ve got an urgent thing that’s ready to go right now, it should be flexible, in fact it is flexible enough if you make the case to put money in to the current year. There’s nothing that prohibits that. So it’s not like it’s a force of nature that hey, the fastest we can go is seven years, to use your number. We’ve got a number of cases, this rapid acquisition thing we’ve got going on. If it’s ready now, mature enough, sound enough, you’ve got a good budget figure, good schedule figure, and it’s competitive, we can do it now. You’ve got to make that case and you probably have to get it up, Admiral Peters will make the case and he’ll get it to Admiral Merz in N9 and Admiral Lescher who built that budget. But if you’ve got something that’s super cool, very effective, ready to go, I’m ready to listen and we’ll get it going as fast as we can. Okay?

Competition’s pretty stiff. And we’ll never have as much money as we can spend, so we have to always prioritize. But if you’ve got a game-winning idea that’s ready to go, we’re responsive, we’ll take that. Even if we have to tell you no this year, don’t be patient. Be troublesome. Get some righteous anger and come back next year. All right? We’ll try and scrape together some money to do it.

**Audience:** My question is, can we see any changes to ABs being assigned more in-rate shore duty stations? An example of an

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airfield, to maintain our proficiency and our technical expertise as opposed to being at a health clinic --

CNO: That’s your situation, right? Have you done a survey of all the ABs?

Audience: Sir, this is my fellow ABs, more than one branch. More than just the clinic.

CNO: What are you doing?

Audience: Right now I’m in safety. Doing safety.

CNO: It’s pretty important. Are you contributing to that?

Audience: Yes, sir.

CNO: I know you are, right?

Audience: Yes, sir.

CNO: Let me take a look at it, but particularly as we go to the sea/shore rotation sometimes, to give you a little bit of a shore tour we might not be able to assign you directly in rate. But as soon as you go back to an operational tour you’ll be back. So it’s a bit of a give and take on that. But we’ll take a look at it, and I imagine that we’ve got all of these shore-based AB slots filled with ABs, I hope. And then we’ll put the other ABs, after we fill up all those we’ve got to find a place for you ashore, right? It sounds like aviation safety is a great spot. Okay? But I’ll check on it.

We are also, for all of you who just want to do things like, well maintenance. High-end maintenance and those sorts of things in your rate, we’re adjusting as Navy, we’re adjusting to do more of those types of jobs at the fleet concentration areas in deep maintenance, advanced maintenance. Okay? So the pendulum is swinging back on that to create more billets in maintenance types of roles so that you can get not only some time ashore but also in your rate, also doing advanced maintenance. Then when you go back to sea, you’re that much more capable of keeping that unit up when you’re deployed. So it makes us better as a deployed Navy.

I think we’re probably at the end of our time together. Let me finish where I started.
One, it’s just great. These questions have been fantastic.

Two, again, nothing but respect for everything that you’re doing. Our Navy team, we’re hitting all elements of the Navy team while we’re doing here. Certainly our sailors. Also thank you to all of our Navy civilians who do such great work here, across the Navy but here at NAVAIR, and then also our families who deserve safe and quality housing. That’s one of the other reasons I’m down here.

If I wanted to come to a major theme that I’m trying to convey it’s this idea of coming together, making a human relationship in our teams. Particularly our small teams. We’re all parts of many teams. Your division is a team, it’s part of a departmental team, it’s part of a ship team or a unit team, on up. But man, we’re most effective if that small team is firing on all cylinders, that we’re in touch with one another, we’re making that connection so that we know the aspirations, the troubles, the challenges, the hopes and dreams of one another and we’re fulfilling those. And particularly for chiefs and junior officers, this is why, it’s the most rewarding part of our job. So let’s come together as the small units to build that trust and confidence. And you know what? It will translate into warfighting effectiveness which is really what we’re about.

We’re going to have to depend on one another in combat for each other’s lives, and that starts with trust and confidence on the day to day stuff.

By doing that, we’re going to be the safest Navy for our sailors. We’ve had a number of people who have talked to safety. We’re going to be the most effective partner for all of our allies and partners. The best friend to all those guys. And for all of our enemies in the South China Sea or wherever, we’re going to be their worst nightmare. All right? They will never want to take us on.

Thank you all very much. Have a great day. I’ll hang around up here for a little while.

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