CNO: Let me just start off with some preparatory material, if I could. One, what a first class event this is. I think for everybody who started off yesterday and then rolled into the early morning events this morning. I think we would all have to agree that this is absolutely world class and we should all give a nice super round of applause for the Navy League for putting this on, for bringing us all together. Thank you so much.

This does not happen without the generosity of a number of people, volunteers and corporate sponsors. So for the corporate sponsors, it really is go, no-go without your support so we thank you all. Let’s give them a nice round of applause.

Then I think one of the really cool dimensions of this event, Sea Air Space, is that it brings together so many aspects of our business. It brings together the corporate part, the industry part, the uniform part, retired part, the government part, and it also brings together our international allies and partners which are throughout the room today and make this event so much more powerful. So for everybody who’s visiting from a foreign country, foreign nation, foreign Navy, Marine Corps, let’s give them a great round of applause for joining us here today as well.

Finally, a bit of an apology. I think this is the third event that I’ve done today, so to inflict myself on you, you’ve got to be getting CNO fatigue by now. I’ve walked around and actually made a deal with a couple of people in the audience that if it just becomes unbearable they’re going to throw their napkin up in the air and I’ll just stop talking and leave the stage, okay? That’s our code word signal.

With those bonafides out of the way, let’s get started.

I’m starting a lot of my talks talking about the very foundational principles of the United States of America. And we go back, and we are quoting a lot from the Declaration of Independence. We’re quoting a lot from the Constitution, the Federalist Papers. Quoting a lot from great speeches that talk about the ideal that is the United States of America, the value proposition, and what it offers to the world. So we’re doing a lot with the Founding Fathers. And you cannot get any better in
terms of George Washington as a Founding Father. He’s got
tremendous street cred as a Founding Father, and if you’re in
the Navy business, what a great quote. Right? I mean it just
doesn’t get any better than this. This is excerpted from a
letter that George Washington, President Washington, General
Washington wrote to the Marquis de Lafayette in 1781. And in
our business we talk a lot about what it takes to make a Navy
decisive. And I want to talk a little bit about that at a
higher level.

Certainly this conference is organized in many ways around what
it takes to be decisive as a powerful element of the military
dimension of national power. That is why we exist. We’re a
military force in the maritime. So we’ll talk a bit about that.
Certainly most of our discussions here at Sea Air Space will
have that as part of the discussion. But also, if you just scan
your history all the way back to the beginning of our history,
you will see that first and foremost, the Navy was there at the
very founding moments of the nation. If you read Thomas Paine,
that pamphlet Common Sense. And I realize this is sensitive
material for our Royal Navy partners to hear, but as we were
getting our spirit together, there’s this pamphlet that Thomas
Paine wrote, Common Sense. A full chapter of that talks about
nothing else than how important it is for the nation to have a
powerful Navy. Go back and read it. It’s remarkable.

So there we were. We’re in the nation’s DNA, the Navy is. So
we’re spending time with both internal audiences, external
audiences, to make sure that as we move around the world, as we
interface both with our American citizens and everybody abroad,
we’re mindful that it would not be uncommon at all that the very
first real manifestation of America might be a U.S. Navy sailor.
Might be a Marine. And so it’s important that we understand all
that comes with that, that our sailors understand what it means
to be American in today’s world.

I’ll tell you, there’s a lot of turbulence out there right now.
There’s a lot of turbulence, so it’s even more important that we
spend some time reinforcing this narrative.

There’s this military element of national power, but back from
the very beginning, a quick scan through history, it’s easy to
see that the Navy has been very much been a part of the
diplomatic element of national power as well. It was a Navy
warship that took Commodore Perry to Japan and opened up our
relationship with Japan. It was a Navy ship that transported
President Roosevelt to Malta. It was a Navy ship on which the treaty was signed to end World War II.

When Navy ships visit foreign nations, our allies and partners around the world, it is almost routine that the U.S. Ambassador to that nation will host a reception on board that warship because it is U.S. sovereign territory. So he can host a reception on the United States.

So there is this diplomatic contribution that we make to national power. It’s very important. It has been throughout our history.

Then as Thomas Jefferson points out, we have a close link, a link between the Navy’s activity and energy and power and the economic dimension of national power is also very close. So you can see here that Thomas Jefferson articulating the causal relationship between the international order that leads to prosperity and the maritime security that is needed to secure and guarantee that order so that trade can flow freely, so that we can have access to markets overseas. In fact, it was Thomas Jefferson that sent the United States Navy on one of its very first missions over to secure the Strait of Gibraltar against the Barbary Pirates who were attacking our trade. So there’s this very close relationship and contribution of the Navy to the economic dimension of national power.

It’s very important. It’s kind of cool to be a sailor, right? Not only are you a maritime warrior, but you’re also a diplomat and you’re also contributing to the prosperity of every American. We remain a maritime nation. America depends on the seas. About two-thirds of our economy is completely linked to the sea. So all of those jobs. All of that flow of finance happens at sea and you can see on this slide just some aspect of the interconnection that we have with the seas. In fact, a little bit of audience participation. It’s been very dynamic, I will say, in the maritime domain. Very, very dynamic. You hear about Moore’s Law and exponential types of rates of change. It is the same at sea. And sometimes, because it happens at sea and not a lot of us spend time at sea, we can be a bit blind to that, right? But it’s been very, very busy.

So a show of hands. Everybody put your hand up just to make sure, I want to know that everybody’s hand works. Okay, so now I know what 100 percent looks like. Thank you.
How long have people been going to sea is the question before us today? How many think it’s more than 4,000 years? Raise your hand. Keep your hands up. How many think it’s more than 6,000 years? How many think it’s more than 8,000 years? How many think it’s more than 10,000 years. You’re on safe ground right now if you say 10,000 years. In fact, we’re going to plot very quickly the shipping traffic over time going back 10,000 years to show you just the incredible pace of change that has happened in the last quarter century. We’re going to take this year by year, describing quickly the maritime advancements -- here we go. We’ll get this done in about 5 seconds if PowerPoint serves me well. That’s the curve.

In the last 25 years the maritime traffic at sea has quadrupled, which is something, saying it took us 10,000 years to get there and then a factor of four increase. It looks like that.

But there are so many other parts of the maritime domain that have also changed a great deal. In addition to this rapid rise in shipping, we talked a lot in the panel this morning about the role of information and information warfare. Ninety-nine percent of that information travels on cables that are undersea cables. They connect continents under the sea. Ninety-nine percent. If those are disrupted, you can only reconstitute on the order of three or four percent in the electromagnetic spectrum. Very, very important.

And it’s not just that. There’s infrastructure that is associated with energy, our ability to reach oil and natural gas has grown exponentially in the past 25 years. Minerals. The top of that map that you see there, as we talked about today in the panel, the Arctic ice cap is as small as it’s ever been in our lifetime. And that’s given rise to channels for navigation, that’s given rise to access to continental shelves that we simply did not have before.

The amount of food that we get from the sea has been increased ten-fold in the last 25 years. Carbohydrate and protein. And that’s scheduled to just increase, forecasted to increase at that same or greater rate going forward. The number of megacities, those cities with populations of 10 million or more. There’s about 30, 31 of those now, scheduled to be in the neighborhood of 40 to 50 in the next 10 or 15 years. The vast majority of those megacities exist right near the shore. So very, very dynamic in the ocean environment.
So as a maritime nation and as the maritime force that provides the security that leads to our prosperity, we’ve got to be able to keep up on that.

Now it’s not all just about access, right? If you think about where that trade comes from, where geographic choke points are, and you overlay some of the hottest spots in the world right now, those spots where there are conflicts that are very likely to impact national interests, then you can see that there’s a great overlay.

Oh by the way, 50 percent of the world’s population lives inside that yellow circle. So this is where our interests lie. This is where our prosperity emerges. So it would make sense that we keep a very close eye on that.

We’re not the only ones. As China continues to expand and grow, they are reaching out to the sea as well, so you can see this, as you build this map of the maritime domain, a depiction of the activity of the People’s Republic of China as they exercise and manifest their Belt and Road Initiative. So very busy there. Moving out of the South China Sea for the first time since I think the 14th century, moving across the Indian Ocean, up through the Suez Canal and into the Mediterranean. We’ve seen Chinese naval missile exercises in the Mediterranean. We’ve seen Chinese Navy exercising with the Russian Navy in the Baltic. This is becoming a global navy.

So if that’s where all the activity’s happening, if that’s where the conflicts are happening. If that’s where our economic prosperity is. Then too, that’s where your Navy is going to be.

We just gave the Admiral Nimitz Award away. Admiral Nimitz captured it beautifully. We have a Navy so that we can move all of this off our shores and we don’t need to have these conflicts come back home. And ideally, if I could just with great humility and respect add to Admiral Nimitz, we win if we can do all that and not fight. This is our idea, is to deter conflict and still secure the prosperity. So your Navy is deployed around the world in all of those spots. We are forward. Your Navy/Marine Corps team, Coast Guard. The team that is really represented by the Sea Air Space exhibition here is forward. In all of those hotspots. You can just see some of the activity in recent years, just a smattering of it, a sampling of what we’ve been up to.
Going up to the Arctic Circle, certainly going more and more into the South China Sea. Why is the South China Sea important to us? Why do we read so much about it? A third of the world’s trade flows through the South China Sea. Still, 90 percent of the world’s trade flows by sea. A third of it goes through the South China Sea. Tens of trillions of dollars of U.S. trade flows through that body of water. It’s extremely important that those lines of communication, those sea lanes, remain open. So that’s why the United States Navy is there and that’s why we’re going to stay there. We’ve been there for 70 years, we’re there now, and we’re going to stay there. We just have too much of our national interest tied up in that part of the world.

Most recently we sent the Harry S. Truman Strike Group up north, north of the Arctic Circle to do strike group operations up there. This is one of the pictures from one of our escorts. As you can see here, while much has changed since 1991, it is still cold as hell north of the Arctic Circle in November.

So as we were preparing ourselves to get ready to go up there we had to open up books. It had been a while. So we opened up all the old manuals that said hey listen, whatever you do, don’t forget the baseball bats, because there’s nothing like a baseball bat to break off all the ice and smash it off and clear the super structure or whatever it may be. So you can see people clearing the ice up here.

When I gave this talk, a version of it, at the Naval Academy, all the midshipmen saw that picture and like every surface warfare officer selectee in the room was like you’ve got to be kidding me. That looks extremely cold.

Anyway, it’s been good to exercise this idea of dynamic force employment.

We took a question today during the panel about the Abraham Lincoln Strike Group. What’s going on with that? Well, what’s going on with the Abraham Lincoln Strike Group is exactly what you would want to happen for your naval forces. On a scheduled deployment, doing great operations in the Med with some of our high-end allies and partners there, and then able to dynamically respond to changes in the security environment and just move a tremendous force package to wherever national leadership needs it. This is your naval team.

I’ve talked a bit about what it means to be decisive. Decisive in the military element of national power. Decisive in the
diplomatic element of national power. Decisive also in the economic dimension of national power. And of course no mariner is going to sail by any other mariner in distress so there is this persistent humanitarian demand, whether at sea or near the sea, responding to any kind of a manmade or natural crisis.

So it is fully dimensional, this idea of being a sailor. It is really super cool because you are so much more than a warrior. You are the penultimate warrior but you are also a diplomat, also security our prosperity. Okay?

The other part of this quote is it talks about doing things not only definitive but also honorable and glorious, and we’re spending a lot of time. So the MCPON and I did a quick video today talking about how we are continuously refreshing our approach to leader development. It’s very important that our leaders are people of character and integrity so that when we put them in front of our sailors to lead them, not only do they know their business, they are experts at warfighting, but also they are people that we would be proud for our sons and daughters to follow. So we spend a tremendous amount of time on what it means to be honorable and glorious.

The asymmetric, decisive advantage of our Navy is our people, and knock on wood, in a recovering economy, we have met our recruiting goals now for 12.5 years straight. It’s a remarkable achievement. And in a recovering economy when salaries are going up, you’ve got to ask yourself why is that? Why is that? It’s not because of salary. I can’t compete on salary, particularly for those new skill areas -- coders, the cyber warriors and so many others of our skill areas. Oh by the way, we’re going to separate you from your family for seven months of the year as you go and deploy. And our retention is really good too, right now. Very strong.

So what is it? I think it’s this idea of honorable and glorious. It’s a value proposition that America represents and the fact that we would hope that if you buy into that, that there is no better organization in the world than the United States Navy to join and live a life that espouses those values. Okay? So this idea of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, it’s in the DNA of our nation. It’s in the DNA of our Navy. And it’s in the DNA of every one of our sailors. So that is also very, very important. And I think that is what keeps bringing America’s very talented young people to join the Navy and continue to man our ranks.
I mentioned Thomas Paine earlier. This is the metric of success for the CNO. That at the end of the day, it’s my job to build a Navy that when finished is worth more than it cost. That’s my deal with the American people. That’s certainly what I represent to Congress and everybody around the world. But I’ll just highlight that it has been a privilege to work with an amazingly talented team, to produce and deliver and deploy a Navy that we hope will be the absolute safest Navy for our sailors, the best partner Navy for our allies and friends, and for our enemies, a Navy that haunts their worst nightmares.

Thank you very much, and I look forward to your questions.

**Question:** [Inaudible]? So how do you feel that the folks receiving your comments, when you go forth with the words of this is what we need to project American power in diplomacy, et cetera, how well is that received in terms of our civilian Congress?

**CNO:** I think it’s being very well received. There’s been a broad appreciation of the fact that the security environment right now is very much reflected in the National Security Strategy and the National Defense Strategy. This is an important, at least 50 years going forward for the maritime forces. It’s a maritime century, if you will. So there’s broad recognition of that. That translates into very solid support in our relations with Congress. So we’re on solid ground there in terms of a full and widespread understanding of what it means.

Going back to the founding of our nation. Who’s read the book, Six Frigates? You read Six Frigates, these are like the very first six frigates that the United States Navy purchased, and it’s the same debates we’re having today. Nothing really has changed in terms of what it takes to support a Navy. It’s in the Constitution. But I think there’s terrific support.

Jim Loeblein, our Chief of Legislative Affairs is here. Would you agree with that Jim? Yeah. He says 100 percent, right? In fact, I think he said 110 percent.

**Question:** Rick Easton, sir.

We have peer competitors today. We have an ever-more complex technology base that our sailors are being challenged to employ in warfare. What are your concerns going forward that we are able to in fact really put our best foot forward from the perspective of being able to fight these complex combat systems?
In particular, from a manpower, personal training, education perspective.

CNO: You’ve articulated the technology environment pretty well. It’s becoming more complex. The Commandant of the Marine Corps invoked Ray Kurzweil today, the singularity is near, that exponential curve getting more and more vertical by the day.

But I’ll tell you what, there’s a couple of things that give me great confidence. One, a lot of that technology is brought to bear in the training of our sailors. We are harvesting, first of all just from a cognitive science standpoint, we have learned so much about how the mind works, how people retain information and all that, and we’re employing all of that in our training programs.

Then the technology, in terms of being able to deliver a very realistic representative environment to our sailors, and not only just a fancy video game, but one that gives you feedback in terms of the sailor’s performance so that we can coach them to becoming that much more effective.

Then measuring their progress along the way so we can prove that those technologies are making us better. That’s all contributing to the learning as fast as the technology is moving.

Then finally, if you think about it, this information technology allows us to create an interface that while it may be very very complex in the back plane, if you will, if we craft with a human systems integration in mind, we can craft an interface that allows the sailor to harness and employ all of that capability in a way that’s very intuitive.

So I’m not aware that any of our smart phones come with instructions anymore. You just turn it on and go at it. So many of our systems are like that right now. So it all reinforces itself and allows us to keep up.

Plus, by every measure of performance, the sailors we have today in the Navy are the smartest and most capable, most physically fit, the best looking, most charming group that we’ve ever had. This is a really very smart cadre. So give them a round of applause.

Question: [Inaudible]? If so, is there anything that this group can help you in achieving that goal?
CNO: I’m a huge team player, and I see that there are just so many terrific ways that we can team together. Dr. Levin asked if I could get at one thing, what might that thing be to fix. I will tell you, and I will just riff off of Secretary Lord who got us started this morning at breakfast. We have got to get capability into the hands of our soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines faster. More and faster.

I use this chess analogy a lot, so I apologize if you’ve heard it before. But if I was to play Gary Kasparov for a thousand games in chess, the tally at the end of that would be 1000 to 0, Kasparov. It would just be that straight forward because Kasparov is so much better trained than me. He’s a better chess player. If I asked him to take his bishops and knights off the board, and maybe his rooks, then play, it would probably still be 1000 to 0 Kasparov because he’s that much better. But if I get Gary’s queen and maybe half of his pawns, it starts to look like I could take a game from Kasparov. Right? Material matters. Mr. Kasparov is an exquisitely talented chess player, way more than me, but at some point material overcomes all of that.

So I get worried when people say hey CNO, don’t worry about a thing, it’s good. Our sailors are so much better trained than theirs. Well, that’s a margin that’s far too close for my comfort level. We need to make sure our sailors never go into a fair fight where we’re relying on training. Or don’t worry, CNO, our sailors are, our culture, our people are so much more innovative than the adversary. Okay, that may be true. Far too close of a margin. We need to get capability, decisive capability into the hands of our forces faster. And we all need to lean into this. We’re creating, as Secretary Lord said, it is not a matter of authorities. DoD 5000 could be better, but it is not an inhibitor. This is a human bias and we need to just lead into this because I think it’s one of our biggest strategic Achilles heels. We can get this done together if we team together. We’re having those types of conversations, so we all need to lean into it.

Question: CNO, as you reflect over your -- Charles Dupard.

As you reflect over your last four years, if you had to do it all over again, what three things would you do different or change?
CNO: Three things? That’s like a ten-page essay or something. [Laughter].

I don’t know. I don’t know that I would look back -- it’s a hypothetical situation. We had a great discussion about what it means to command this morning, and I hope that in hindsight for those scenarios that face all of our commanders, the most that we can ask for them is that they’re experts at what they do and that they understand their responsibilities and their accountability, and that they use their authority to get the maximum effect, right? When in command, command. Use all the authority that you get. Do not be timid.

If there’s any looking back that I’ve done, I hope that people will say that the whole team used these four years to get the Navy on track to not only compete but win in this great power environment.

Thank you all very much.

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