Thank you Admiral Faison. And I want to thank all of the medical professionals here today and serving around the world.

From every ship to every base, from the decks of the COMFORT and MERCY to the most remote forward position, you are there, fulfilling the sacred oaths you’ve taken to both your profession and your country. And I am grateful for everything you do.

I also want to extend a word of thanks to your families. No one gets to this point in their careers without the dedication and support of their families, and this is a particularly demanding profession. I know the sacrifices your families make on behalf of all of our Navy-Marine Corps families. I appreciate it, and know that it directly supports our national security.

Everywhere I’ve gone as Secretary of the Navy, I have been inspired and humbled by the Sailors and Marines I have the privilege to work alongside. I am proud of their service, their attitude, and their achievements. Thanks to them, and thanks to you, the foundation for restoring readiness and increasing lethality has been set. Now we must build on that foundation.

The transition currently underway within the Navy medical enterprise is designed to strengthen that foundation and increase our maneuverable readiness, so we’re prepared for what the National Defense Strategy describes as the most complex and volatile security environment we’ve experienced in recent memory.
Our vision for the Navy-Marine Corps Team prioritizes agility, sustainability, and superiority in high end of maritime conflict. That means we have to be out where the fight is. For the naval medical enterprise, that requires forward positioning of our professionals and resources, ready throughout the Navy-Marines Corps team to render the finest care possible under conditions of disbursed operations, disruptions to logistics, transportation and communication, without the guarantee of sustained air and ground superiority.

We need a force capable of addressing our expeditionary needs, with the medical support our people require to enable their mission and safe return, comfortable in the knowledge that their families are cared for as well. And that’s exactly what you’re helping bring about through the transition process.

Under Admiral Faison’s leadership, you are meeting the challenge I set for you last year when I asked you to seek solutions to the problems in front of you and enable your colleagues and subordinates to do the same. You’ve taken the initiative, and advocated for your customers. You’ve reached across organizational lines. You’ve borrowed best practices from private industry. And you’ve improved the lives of your patients.

I know you have faced challenges. And you will continue to do so as this process moves on. Let me know how it’s going – what’s improving - and what’s not. Speak up. Relentlessly. The medical and naval professions are each built on tradition but fueled by innovation, and we can never rest under the banner of “business as usual.”
It is my expectation that you will speak up whenever there is a way to mitigate challenges and seize the opportunities of change to bring about greater effectiveness in the system. In everything we do, we must be disciplined in our focus on people, capabilities and processes. I mention people first because they are our most important resource, and our greatest strength. People are the foundation to all we do - and people are the basis of your profession.

As you care for the members of the Navy-Marine Corps team and their families, we must recommit ourselves to excellent customer service and constantly seek customer care improvements. I am committed to recruiting, training, and retaining the best America has to offer. You, here in this room, represent that investment in human capital. You represent the thousands of doctors, nurses, administrators and support specialists who keep us healthy in garrison and save lives in battle.

I want you to foster a culture of inclusion and open communication, where everyone is encouraged to make suggestions and leaders are empowered to act on them. Our people are our strength, and I intend to take full advantage of this collective expertise and ingenuity.

In the end, all leadership comes down to trust. I trust that you put the Navy-Marine Corps Team and the Nation first and make us better every day. I trust you to take care of our people. Your people trust you to take care of them. We must all prove ourselves equal to the trust that we place in each other.
When the public looks at us, they need to have confidence that we are professional, competent, and ready. Nothing proves our value to our fellow citizens and the world like seeing that red cross on a white background arriving in a time of crisis.

Navy medicine must remain that perfect ambassador to the world, that professional strength of our force, and that ever present source of comfort and care to our military families at home. We need all hands on deck to effect the change we need to see. When we all move forward, with a sense of urgency and personal accountability, we will come out stronger on the other side.

Thank you for your leadership and your service. I appreciate the hard work you’ve put in day in and day out over the course of your career. I’m certain that the leadership needed to move our force and our medical enterprise is right here in this room, and that together we will continue to provide the finest care in the world to the world’s finest Sailors and Marines.

Thank you.