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SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE SENATE  
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

**STATEMENT OF**  
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**(AVIATION WARFARE/NAVAL AIRCREW WARFARE)**  
**BEFORE THE**  
**SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY CONSTRUCTION,**  
**VETERANS AFFAIRS AND RELATED AGENCIES**  
**OF THE**  
**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS**  
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Thank you Chairman Dent, Ranking Member Bishop, and distinguished members of this subcommittee for your time and attention to this statement. It is my privilege to address you again in my third year as your Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy. During my tenure, my wife Theresa and I have had the privilege of visiting tens of thousands of Sailors and their families in the United States and overseas.

I have watched them achieve their goals, exceed their potential, and perform beyond their limits. I have interacted with them and listened as they have shared their hopes and expectations. This statement is intended to summarize a brief depiction of the quality of life our Sailors and their families currently experience.

### **Overall Quality of Life**

Today more than 600,000 active and reserve Sailors and Navy Civilians serve in our Navy and they are the single most important aspect of our Navy's operational readiness. We demand much of our Sailors for which they earn, and deserve, commensurate compensation. Over the past 13 years, pay raises, improvements in housing allowances, health care benefits under TRICARE for Life, and enactment of the post-9/11 GI Bill, have yielded a generous total military compensation package to our Sailors and their families.

But, in the current fiscally-constrained environment, stemming the growth in personnel costs is essential to achieving a proper balance between compensation and benefits, with the cost of training and equipping the Force. My regular interface with our Sailors over the last year reveals an overall satisfactory quality of life; however, the ongoing discussion regarding possible changes to future pay and compensation has created an air of uncertainty.

Although the spirit of budgetary reform is to reinvest in the Sailor's quality of service, Sailors are concerned that more reductions will follow in family programs, medical benefits, and pay and compensation.

Uncertainty in the geopolitical and operational world is understandable, and our people "get it." However, ambiguity in those areas that we control such as sequestration, and military pay and compensation are not so easily understood. Discussions about sequestration, future retirement changes and Force structure cuts combine to cause anxiety and I believe, from speaking with our Sailors, this uncertainty about future compensation erodes their trust in civilian and military leadership.

Despite these uncertainties, I am continuously amazed at their drive and motivation. Our Navy trusts and relies on a very important weapon system - this weapons system consists of both individual and unit morale. In my opinion, without this weapon system, our Navy becomes far less effective.

I remain confident that you will hear and address their concerns with the utmost regard for their future and quality of life while you help us strike the proper balance between compensation and benefits, and the cost of training and equipping the Force. With your support we will ensure the weapons system of morale remains strong and effective.

### **Quality of Service**

Quality of service has two components: (1) quality of work, and (2) quality of life. Both are intrinsically tied to readiness. PB-16 invests in quality of service initiatives such as barracks and training building improvements, greater travel and schools. Expanded use of tactical trainers and simulators, and increased funding for spare parts and tools. It also leverages smart

technology devices and applications through an “eSailor” initiative to enhance training, communication and Sailor career management ashore and afloat.

## **Readiness**

Your Sailors are aware of the effects of potential sequestration in Fiscal Year 2016. Such uncertainties ultimately impact readiness. Concerns over possible pay and compensation changes weigh heavily on Sailors and their families who are already anxious about deployments, overseas duty and lengthy assignments away from home.

With the commitment of our Navy Active and Reserve Components, we have been able to stabilize, balance, and distribute the Force to ensure Sailors are worldwide assignable and deployable in support of the Chief of Naval Operations’ (CNO) tenets: Warfighting First, Operate Forward, and Be Ready. While the overall health of the Force and Sailor morale is good, Navy continues to closely monitor the tone of the Force and personnel readiness.

Navy is working hard to maintain a credible, modern and survivable sea-based strategic deterrent – our top priority, while improving deployed readiness and capability. Aggregate Fleet manning continues to rise; increasing from 93.5% in FY2013, to 96% in FY2014, exceeding our goal of 95%, and we reduced gaps-at-sea by roughly 3,500 over the past year. While this reduction has come partly from recycling deployed Sailors to fill gaps, our long-term solution will include utilization of the Reserve component under the 12304b authority recently passed by Congress.

Through a deliberate approach, we have aligned accessions and distribution to provide the right number of Sailors at sea. We also further incentivized sea duty this past year by increasing Sea Pay and establishing a new pay for Sailors on long at-sea deployments. With a

goal of ensuring that 92% of Sailors in at-sea assignments are serving in the required grade, and possess the requisite experience and training. We also improved in that area as well by increasing from 88% to 90.4% in FY2014. We continue to work to get the right Sailors in the right place at the right time, in support of Carrier Strike Group deployments.

### **Recruiting & Retention**

Ensuring Navy is positioned to meet future mission requirements is of paramount importance to readiness and operations, and so we must recruit and retain Sailors in the right mix of ratings or job types. Recruiting and retention remain strong, although retaining personnel with certain critical skills continues to present a challenge, particularly as the demands we place on Sailors and their families remain high, while the economy, and resultant increased job opportunity, continues to improve.

Active recruiting is expected to be more challenging in FY2016 due to the decreasing unemployment rate and continuing budget constraints. The attrition rate continues to be near historical lows. As the economy improves, historic trends indicate the most skilled Sailors will be the first to seek other opportunities in the civilian sector. As this trend begins again, we are leaning forward to retain their experience and skills in the Reserve Component.

Career incentives and special pays are necessary to retaining personnel and essential skill sets in both the Active and Reserve Components. Navy is committed to recruiting and placing the right Sailors in the right jobs, and will continue to closely monitor these trends for the best “fit and fill.”

## **Housing**

Family Housing and Single Sailor Housing is always a concern when it comes to supporting Navy readiness and the quality of life for our Sailors and their families. One of our largest quality of life goals is to take care of our Sailors and their families by providing them suitable, affordable, and safe environments in the community. Our family housing continues to remain at an adequate or satisfactory level and we thank you for your support in this area.

With respect to unaccompanied single Sailor housing however, Navy has prioritized critical warfighting requirements while taking risk in our shore barracks infrastructure. While Navy is scheduled to accomplish Homeport Ashore in 2016, this risk in single Sailor barracks is a large concern for me.

We continue to work towards achieving the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) adequacy goal of 90% “Adequate” permanent party barracks, however, sequestration in FY2013 increased fiscal constraints. Because we prioritized the operational readiness of our Fleet, the risk in shore infrastructure has resulted in the overall condition of our permanent party barracks at about 50% adequacy.

## **Family Support Programs**

Family Support programs are a critical component in enhancing mission readiness and Navy’s 21st Century Sailor initiative. Family support programs assist commanding officers, and Sailors and their families, in managing the unique demands of the military lifestyle, balancing military commitment with family life. Navy Fleet and Family Support Centers ensure military families are informed, healthy, and resilient through robust programs that include relocation assistance; non-medical and family counseling; personal and family life education; personal

financial management services; information and referral services; deployment assistance; domestic violence prevention and response services; exceptional family member liaison; emergency family assistance and transition assistance.

Navy Child and Youth Programs provide accessible, affordable, and high-quality child and youth development program through child development centers, youth centers, child development homes, and contract child care spaces. All Navy child development centers are Department of Defense certified and nationally accredited and provide consistent, high-quality care at affordable rates based on total family income.

The Navy Ombudsmen Program and Family Readiness Groups offer tremendous support in preparing Sailors and their families prior to, during and after deployments and other demanding missions worldwide. The Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program provides Reserve Sailors and their families with information, services, referral, and proactive outreach opportunities necessary for enhancing their overall state of wellness and readiness.

## **Health Care**

Health care is extremely important to our Sailors and their families, and is often very influential in recruiting and retention decisions. Navy also recognizes that health care is crucial to mission-readiness. Our Sailors must be medically ready and when they are deployed, they must be confident their families have access to the care they need. In support of this priority, Medical Home Port (MHP) is our response to the civilian patient-centered concept of care. MHP is increasingly becoming a part of our culture - in our military treatment facilities and in the Fleet - and provides an effective way for Navy to measure important metrics such as: readiness, continuity of care; access to care; patient and staff satisfaction; and the cost of care. As I

mentioned earlier, access to health care is a major incentive for Sailors and their families and I am grateful for your support in ensuring our Navy families have this critical benefit.

While we consider recommendations made by the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission (MCMRC), I trust this subcommittee will move forward in a cautious and deliberate manner. We can never take for granted the sacrifices that both our Sailors and their families make, and health care is an area that must be valued and protected for both Force readiness and quality of life.

### **Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR)**

Sexual assault prevention and response is an area that Navy continuously monitors. It has been my observation, in my interactions with the Fleet, that our Sailors have watched SAPR transform from a topic of discussion into effective training and way of Navy life. I feel our Sailors know what sexual assault is, how it hurts our Navy, how to play a role in preventing it, and how to report it. Sailors are responding to the seriousness of this crime and are recognizing it as a crucial element in keeping with our core values of Honor, Courage, and Commitment.

Sexual Assault directly impacts operational readiness and unit cohesion, not to mention the individual impact of an assault. I continue to aggressively challenge my senior enlisted leadership to daily influence their Sailors to “treat one another with dignity and respect” in the workplace, at home, and at all times. I have recently had the opportunity of receiving a very successful training program called the Bystander Intervention to the Fleet (BI2F) interactive training. In addition to providing training on sexual harassment, hazing, and fraternization, it focuses on ways in which Sailors can recognize situations that may lead to sexual assault, and safely intervene.



Teaching Sailors the skills to recognize potentially risky situations and how to take appropriate action is key to keeping shipmates safe and from making potentially destructive decisions. Our research indicates many sexual assault victims and offenders are junior Sailors, and we have excellent peer groups such as the Coalition of Sailors Against Destructive Decisions (CSADD) to promote smart and safe decisions.

We know that retaliation is a concern and we will better define and understand social retaliation, add retaliation to our discussion of destructive behaviors, and develop strategies to mitigate retaliation including training, awareness, and legal recourses. We will continue to include questions on retaliation in surveys to Sailors.

Preventing sexual assault is a challenge that must be approached on a cultural level, and influencing our culture has been critical in our efforts as we strive to fully and successfully reduce, and ultimately eradicate this crime from the ranks. Navy will continue to train, monitor, and evaluate our progress to improve our prevention and response efforts.

### **Suicide Prevention & Resilience**

Suicide prevention is an area that extends beyond policy or guidance; it is a face-to-face, command-led effort that is centered on influencing “Every Sailor, Every Day.” Navy’s suicide prevention training is equipped with an array of outreach and educational tools to help our Sailors successfully navigate stress. Navy also has an outstanding support system in the form of our 21st Century Sailor Office. This office captures all readiness and resiliency programs under one umbrella and provides top-level attention to ensure our Sailors and their families continue to grow and thrive.

## **Transition Assistance Program (TAP)/Transition Goals, Plans, and Success (GPS)**

Thanking our Sailors for their dedication, duty and service, and preparing them for life-after-Navy is an important focus area as we assist them in transferring to the civilian sector. The Navy's Transition Assistance Program is an excellent resource for our Sailors transitioning out of the service and is composed of four key components:

1. Mandatory pre-separation counseling.
2. Mandatory five day Transition Goals Plans Success (GPS) core curriculum.
3. Two-day career-specific educational, technical/entrepreneurship tracks.
4. Mandatory Capstone event that verifies a viable plan for transition. This event ensures service members have achieved Career Readiness Standards (CRS) and received all information and services they will need or have requested.

Those Sailors who do not meet CRS or need more help during transition are referred via "warm hand-over" to our partner agencies such as the Department of Labor or Veterans' Affairs for additional assistance.

Participation in TAP is mandatory for all Active and Reserve Component members separating after having served 180 days or more of continuous active duty.

## **Conclusion**

Today's Sailor is more capable than any time in our history. They are forward-thinking, educated, and extremely dedicated to their nation. These sons and daughters raise their right hand in service to our country and enter the Navy for various personal and professional reasons. Regardless, all of them pledge their honor and allegiance.

They are the future of our Navy and are the most important element of our maritime security and operations. While other nations continue to rapidly advance in the area of technology and work to mirror the effectiveness of our Force, our asymmetric advantage continues to be our people.

As I mentioned earlier, I have always believed one of your most valuable weapon systems is the morale of your Sailors. In large part, morale is supported on pillars of trust. What I have shared with you in this statement are a few of the programs that are instrumental in supporting those pillars. It is absolutely critical to the future of our nation's defense that we do everything in our power to ensure our Sailors and their families are afforded the best quality of life we can offer.

It is my hope that the decisions of the Congress will continue to ensure our Sailors' pay and benefits remain competitive without reducing their buying power so we will be positioned to sustain our all-volunteer Force. On behalf of the men and women of the United States Navy and the families who so faithfully support them, I sincerely thank you.