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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS (MILCON)**

**STATEMENT OF
MASTER CHIEF PETTY OFFICER OF THE NAVY
(SUBMARINE WARFARE/SURFACE WARFARE)
RICK WEST
BEFORE THE
HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY CONSTRUCTION**

February 4, 2009

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, it is an honor to represent before you the brave men and women of the United States Navy. On 12 December 2008, I was selected as the 12th Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy (MCPON). I was previously assigned as the 14th Fleet Master Chief for Commander, U.S. Fleet Forces Command and also served as the Pacific Fleet, Fleet Master Chief.

With the knowledge I have acquired in this short period as MCPON and my years of experience as Fleet Master Chief, I am prepared to provide you an overview on the Quality of Life programs supporting our Sailors and their families.

Introduction

The United States Navy has risen to meet the challenges of this critical time in our nation's history. Our men and women are highly motivated and carry with them the quiet confidence found in a well-led and well-trained Navy. Sailors are deployed all around the world, standing shoulder-to-shoulder with Marines, Soldiers, and Airman accomplishing missions that just a few years ago would have seemed out of the question.

On behalf of over 399,000 Active and Reserve men and women who make up our all-volunteer Navy, I would like to thank Congress for your commitment and longstanding support of the United States Sailor and our families. Our men and women deeply appreciate the new authorities included in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009 that enhance the quality of life for our Sailors and their families.

Between our Navy's traditional maritime requirements and the many non-traditional missions we have adopted in support of the War on Terror, the strain on our Sailors and their

families is greater than ever seen before. Nevertheless, our personnel know their mission and the value of serving our nation on and below the sea, in the air and on the battleground.

Over the past year, I have visited with Sailors and Navy families stationed both within the continental United States and abroad. The issue foremost in their minds as I visited with them is the high OPTEMPO and the stress associated with it on both our Sailors and their family members. Thanks to the attention and support of this Committee and our military leadership, our Sailors and their families take great comfort in knowing the strides we've made to significantly improve their quality of life in recent years to combat stress.

With a majority of our Sailors assigned to high cost living areas, we must continue to provide them with adequate pay. We must also continue to provide our Sailors and their family with quality health care, child care, education, and housing analogous to the sacrifices they make in service to our country. The value and importance of these pillars of support has allowed the Navy to not only attract, but retain our nation's best talent to sustain maritime dominance, meet emerging threats, and maintain our capability to provide humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

A great number of our Sailors joined the Navy after September 11th, 2001. They enlisted into a military at war and they did so to help protect this nation from further attacks. They served this nation when we needed them to, and now many are recovering from injuries sustained in battle, both physical and psychological. Wounded service members and their families are being asked to adjust to a lifestyle none of them could have ever anticipated and it is our responsibility to remain committed to pressing forward on the quality of service we provide them now and in the future.

Safe Harbor and Healthcare

Navy Safe Harbor is the focal point for the non-medical care management of seriously wounded, ill, or injured Sailors and their families. Eligibility includes combat-related wounds or injuries and extends to those Sailors seriously injured in the line of duty or liberty accidents, or those who incur a serious illness, whether physical or psychological. The program provides a lifetime of care bringing resources together to assist and support Sailors through recovery and rehabilitation enabling them to return to duty or reintegrate into their local community.

Since January 2008, Navy Safe Harbor has doubled its staff to support over 5,000 military members and their families at 15 locations. Non-medical care management support is individually tailored to meet the unique needs of each Sailor and their family encompassing administrative matters, lodging/housing adaptation, child/youth programs, transportation needs, education/training benefits, respite care, Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)/Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) support services, and much more.

PTSD is often found to co-occur with a variety of mental health conditions which can seriously detract from operational readiness and a service-member's quality of life. The number of new PTSD cases continued to grow in FY-08. Currently the Pre- and Post-Deployment Health Assessments (PDHA) and Post Deployment Health Re-Assessment (PDHRA) are the primary screens for PTSD symptoms in Sailors re-deploying from Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF).

Our Warrior Transition Program (WTP), located in Kuwait and established by the Expeditionary Combat Readiness Center (ECRC) in November 2006, provides a venue for Individual Augmentee (IA) Sailors to decompress and transition from the stresses of a war zone to life back in CONUS in a non-threatening environment. The Global War on Terrorism Support

Assignments (GSA)/IA Sailors going through WTP-Kuwait are now completing the PDHA prior to re-deploying to the continental United States (CONUS) resulting in increased PDHA completion rates. Individual Augmentee Manpower Management (IAMM) and RC GWOT augmentees are completing their PDHAs at Navy Mobilization Processing Sites (NMPSs) upon re-deployment from theater or shortly thereafter at their parent commands.

To reduce the stigma associated with seeking psychological services and improve overall resilience in our Sailors and their families, the Navy implemented an Operational Stress Control (OSC) program in 2008. OSC, supported by Navy Medicine, is organized under a single Navy-wide umbrella that ensures various Navy policies and initiatives are coordinated. It assists leaders in recognizing the early signs and symptoms of stress-related injuries and illnesses.

Preliminary OSC Awareness Training has been provided to over 1,400 non-mental health care-givers and 700 senior Navy leaders to date. Additionally, basic OSC Awareness Training focusing on signs, symptoms, and mitigation strategies has been provided to over 4,000 Sailors.

By the end of FY-09, a formal OSC curriculum will be developed and delivered at key nodes of training throughout the career of the Sailor, from accessions to Flag Officers. This is being established at Deployment Health Centers (DHCs) co-located with NMPS-related Medical Treatment Facilities (MTFs) to serve GWOT deployers as part of their pre-deployment preparations.

Understanding mental health needs of returning service members and providing necessary support to their families are two issues being better addressed by recent policy and program initiatives such as an expanded PDHA and PDHRA program, the establishment of DHCs at 17 MTFs, aggressive case management services, a Navy-wide OSC program and an expansion of the USMC Wounded Warrior Regiment and Navy Safe Harbor programs. Navy

line leadership and Navy Medicine remain devoted to providing superior care for all beneficiaries, both in deployed settings as well as at our medical treatment facilities.

Childcare

The Child Development and Youth Programs help families balance the competing demands of mission readiness and family responsibilities. The Navy provides high quality child care, youth development, and school transition services for over 89,000 children ranging from four weeks to 18 years of age. Currently, the Navy operates 103 Child Development and Youth Programs, 128 Child Development Centers, 3,000 Child Development Homes and 86 School Age Care Programs at the present time.

The Department of Defense (DoD) goal is to achieve capacity for 80% of the potential need which is sufficient capacity to place children from waiting lists within one to three months after care is requested. Our current capacity meets 72% of the potential need with a corresponding three to six month placement. However, placement wait times in fleet concentration areas are usually longer.

The availability of child care remains a top issue among our dual-income families and single parents. The Navy's expansion plan to attain the DoD goal includes adding approximately 7,000 new child care spaces and 25,000 additional hours of respite child care and youth services for families of deployed Sailors.

On a Separate, yet related note, the Navy has recently expanded its School Liaison Officer program to reach most major installations within the coming year. This highly successful program is designed to help Navy families address dependent education issues arising from frequent moves and deployments.

Homeport Ashore/Navy Bachelor and Family Housing

The Homeport Ashore (HPA) initiative was created to improve the quality of life of fleet Sailors by moving junior single Sailors off ships and into barracks ashore while in homeport. Our ability to place junior single shipboard Sailors into adequate enlisted quarters is consistent with the Navy's Quality of Life goals

While the DoD standard for single Sailor accommodations is 90-square-feet per person, the Navy is currently doubling room occupancy in an effort to provide shore accommodations for Homeport Ashore sailors. In many instances, this required reducing bedroom space to a minimum of 55-square-feet per Sailor. Even with HPA as a Navy priority initiative, we will still have approximately 2,100 Sailors living aboard ships by FY10 in our Fleet concentration areas like San Diego and Norfolk.

The Bachelor Housing (BH) program serves more than 100,000 personnel of which 40,000 are permanent party single Sailors. The Navy has 1,850 BH facilities and many of these facilities have critical capacity, condition, and configuration deficiencies. Over 200 of our BH facilities are over 50 years old and 70% of permanent party barracks are rated as partial or non mission capable.

Recently, the Navy awarded two BH Public Private Venture (PPV) pilot projects, providing 4,250 new spaces for E1-E6 Sailors. The first project in Hampton Roads Virginia, provided 2,367 spaces targeted at E1-E4<4. The second project, Pacific Beacon in San Diego, is a first of its kind PPV bachelor housing facility that provides an alternative for our senior Sailors to living out on the economy. Additionally, four new Military Construction (MILCON) market-style BH projects will be completed this fiscal year. A forthcoming Bachelor Housing Master

Plan will further articulate BH solutions for the Navy by codifying common BH standards, including plans to renovate or replace existing infrastructure to meet those standards. It is essential that we provide living accommodation for our Sailors commensurate with their counterparts in other branches of the DoD.

The Navy successfully eliminated in FY-08 inadequate family housing through a combination of privatization and MILCON projects. A total of 18 privatization projects have been awarded to provide for an end state of 40,355 homes. These projects account for 95% of our CONUS family housing. We continue to require investment in non-privatized CONUS and OCONUS Family Housing Construction and Maintenance to properly meet the Navy's family housing requirements.

I cannot stress enough the importance of providing our Sailors and their families the opportunity for suitable, affordable, and safe housing. This critical Quality of Life issue is a major factor that assures our Sailors their families have a safe, stable and adequate living environment while they are deployed around the world.

Sailors in Action

Within a week of assuming the duties and responsibilities as the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy, I had the opportunity to travel with Admiral Roughead, Chief of Naval Operations, to Afghanistan, Bahrain, the USS SAN ANTONIO, USS RAMAGE, and the USS CARTER HALL. During our visits, I had many opportunities to converse with our Sailors and I could not be prouder of the commitment, dedication and motivation our Sailors express. They recognize the significance of our mission and are answering the call to stand the watch to protect our Freedom and way of life.

Maintaining a global Navy presence and engagement is critical to the success of the larger DOD effort in the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). The Navy has flexed to continue to provide forces expertly trained in littoral combat, ground combat support and combat service support for OEF/OIF.

Navy Augmentation forces remain vital in meeting the GWOT manning requirements. As of 15 January 2009, Navy has mobilized over 53,000 Sailors filling traditional and non-traditional requirements in support of GWOT with 4,800 RC personnel currently activated for GWOT and 5,700 AC currently on IA assignments around the world in support of the War on Terrorism.

Today, in the FIFTH Fleet AOR we have more Sailors ashore with boots on ground than we have at sea. Many of our Sailors are carrying out non-traditional duties, such as providing security on the Iraqi oil platforms and in the waterways, conducting customs inspections, civil affairs and detention operations. Sailors are making critical contributions to maritime security operations and the war on terror.

The Navy is optimizing the integration of AC/RC resources using flexible tour lengths, providing enroute training and allowing for flexibility of orders to meet emergent demands. We continue to seek innovative ways to effectively utilize the RC for evolving GWOT missions.

We are committed to ensuring that our Augmentee Sailors maintain competitive status for professional development; receive world class continuum of care; and have access to a network of family support throughout their IA assignments. The 2008 institution of GWOT Support Assignments (GSA) allows Sailors to negotiate with detailers for PCS IA as early as nine months prior to detaching. The purpose of GSA assignments is to greatly stabilize the sourcing of IA requirements and provide enhanced predictability for prospective augmentees and their detailer

in managing Sailor's careers. Additionally, the GSA process energizes Navy families providing them with adequate time that significantly improves their readiness and preparation for the extended absence of the service member. We will continue to monitor the impact of GSA assignments.

Family readiness means Navy families are prepared for the absence of their loved ones. Through Fleet and Family Support Centers the Navy offers quality services to assist in preparing Sailors and their families to anticipate, understand and cope with the unusual demands associated with Navy lifestyle and OPTEMPO.

We are an ANY MISSION, ANY TIME, ANY WHERE force ready to respond as needed by our great Nation.

Recruiting

In an all volunteer force and in the increasingly competitive 21st century marketplace, the U.S. Navy's support programs and policies are critical elements for successful recruiting and retention. In FY-08, we attained 100.2% of the Active Component (AC) recruiting goal and 100.1% of our Reserve Component (RC) recruiting goal.

We are stabilizing the total force at approximately 329,000 AC Sailors and 67,000 RC Sailors to support a Navy of 313 ships and 3,800 aircraft and meet core and new capability operational support missions throughout the world. Retaining the best and brightest Sailors is accomplished by offering rewarding opportunities for professional growth, development, and leadership. Navy's goal is to maintain a balanced diverse force, in which seniority, experience, and skill sets are matched to requirements.

Reserve Force

The Navy Reserve Force continues to fulfill critical roles in the Navy's Total Force mission and GWOT requirements. There are currently over 67,700 RC Sailors supporting the fleet. There have been nearly 52,000 contingency activation events since 9/11, and over 5,000 are currently mobilized. The Selected Reserve is our primary source of immediate mobilization manpower and Operational Support as part of the Total Force. However, volunteers from the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) have also been used, and continue to be used to meet the GWOT requirements. At present, Navy does not foresee a need for involuntary recall of IRR members to meet projected RC GWOT requirements, but remains ready to use these manpower resources if needed.

At the end of FY-07, successful recruiting and retention strategies were set in motion and carried on through FY-08. We exceeded our recruiting goal and expect this positive momentum to continue in FY-09. The accession and retention bonuses for RC Sailors remained at approximately \$108-million in 2008, continuing Navy's ability to recruit and retain the right person for the right job.

One of our biggest challenges is the wide dispersion of RC families throughout the United States and territories. To extend services offered by Navy Fleet and Family Support Centers to those families lacking convenient access, the Navy Reserve hired a full-time Family Support Program Manager on the Commander, Navy Reserve Forces Command headquarters staff, and a full-time Family Support Program Coordinator at each of the five Regions across the country.

Additionally, Navy Reserve Ombudsmen are a critical link between the Sailor's command and their families. These trained volunteers provide essential information and referral

services on various topics and most importantly act as a command representative during the entire deployment cycle.

With the integration of the Active and Reserve Components complete, the work and operational support our RC Sailors provide the Fleet has never been more relevant. The Navy Active and Reserve components are ready and make a most effective “Total Force” team as we face the challenges that lie ahead.

Conclusion

For our men and women to be able to better perform their mission, we must continue to provide an environment that enhances quality of life for our Sailors and their families in a manner that is constant and predictable. Resources like our MWR facilities and world class healthcare, child care facilities, housing, and education benefits will ensure we retain our best personnel while maintaining the mission readiness our country requires. Additionally, through the proactive detailing afforded by our Individual Augmentation process, many of our Sailors now have the ability to better predict their time at home and their deployment schedules. This allows for a more stable home environment further enhancing our Sailors’ ability to spend quality time at home.

Never before has our Force been asked to sacrifice so much. However, your continued support to the Navy’s Quality of Service and personnel programs for our Sailors and Families, have enabled our Sailors to be more informed or more ready to meet the Nations needs.

I look forward to our continued relationship as we move our Navy and our Military into meeting the mission requirements of the future.