

NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL
RELEASED BY THE SENATE
ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

STATEMENT OF

THE HONORABLE

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ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE NAVY

(MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS)

BEFORE THE

PERSONNEL SUBCOMMITTEE

OF THE

SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

ON

ACTIVE/RESERVE MILITARY & CIVILIAN PERSONNEL PROGRAMS

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Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, it is a pleasure to appear before you today to testify on behalf of the outstanding men and women of our Navy and Marine Corps -- active duty, reserve and civilian -- who truly embody the "One Team, One Fight" concept in this challenging new time. At the outset, let me thank the members of this Committee and the entire Congress for the outstanding support you have shown for our Nation's military. Building on prior successes, you have continued your strong commitment to our people, quality of service, and readiness. That commitment is deeply appreciated and is having a positive impact; however, we must remain dedicated to our "Quality of Service" concept by continuing to build on our investment in our Sailors and Marines. This is all the more critical during this time when we ask so much of our personnel in the defense of our nation, and as we sustain the global war on terrorism.

CONTINUING OUR INVESTMENT IN OUR SAILORS AND MARINES

The demands of today's security environment, both at home and abroad, mean that the Department of the Navy requires the best trained, equipped and prepared Navy and Marine Corps personnel.

The Fiscal Year 2003 (FY03) budget will allow us the opportunity to build on successes of last year, which included

meeting annual end strength and recruiting requirements. For our Marine Corps, FY01 marked the sixth straight year of mission achievement and our Navy has met with recruiting success for three consecutive years. Coupled with improved retention in both Services, this has enabled us to strengthen the manpower posture of each service allowing for improved battle group manning.

We have also worked to demonstrate our resolve and commitment to improve the quality of service for our personnel by creating an environment conducive to professional growth, advanced training, and upward mobility, in addition to better pay, health care and housing.

In order to sustain this momentum, the budget submitted for FY03 reinforces our commitment to people, their quality of service, and overall Navy and Marine Corps personnel readiness. Our budget reflects an expression we often use.. "Mission First, People Always." Included is a \$4.1 billion increase in the department's military personnel accounts. This includes needed funding for pay increases, Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH), Career Sea Pay, additional end strength funding for the 4th Marine Expeditionary Brigade (4th MEB), and health care initiatives, all of which places us on a solid path toward transformation.

PAY AND COMPENSATION

The Department of the Navy has made tremendous strides in the last year to improve the compensation and benefits systems. I would especially like to thank you for your commitment to the well being of our Sailors, Marines and their families by supporting them with the recent pay raise and for your continued support of innovative, flexible and cost effective compensation programs.

BASIC ALLOWANCE FOR HOUSING (BAH)

Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) out-of-pocket expense for CY02 was at 11.3 percent, down from 15.0 percent in the previous year. The FY03 budget will further reduce Housing (BAH) out-of-pocket expenses to approximately 7.5 percent and bring us closer to the goal of zero percent on average out-of-pocket by CY05. Our end state is for Sailors and Marines to receive military compensation which is competitive with the private sector, provide equitable treatment to all Sailors and Marines and afford flexibility in shaping and addressing Service-specific manpower management challenges.

SPECIAL AND INCENTIVE PAYS

Special pays, in conjunction with concerned leadership, are key elements in retaining Sailors and Marines with critical

skills and experience. Our special and incentive pays remain an essential part of our overall compensation package. While remaining keenly aware of both the unique manpower requirements and cultural ethos differences between the Navy and the Marine Corps, we walk a fine line in developing and implementing special and incentive pays which meet the needs of each service but maintain equity between the two. I believe we have found great success in accomplishing this feat.

Career incentive pays for both Surface Warfare Officers and Special Warfare Officers as well as major enhancements to Aviation Continuation Pay have had an overall positive effect on these critical warfighting communities, as have the enhancement of the Enlistment Bonus (EB) and Selective Reenlistment Bonus (SRB) programs for the enlisted force. We thank you for your past support, and seek your continued assistance as we explore further improvements which will enhance Service Secretary flexibility in adjusting and targeting cost-effective special and incentive pays to react quickly to the ever-changing recruiting and retention picture.

RECRUITING

The Department of the Navy is committed to recruiting the nation's finest young people to serve in the Navy and Marine Corps. Although the events of September 11th did increase expressions of patriotism among Americans and early indicators

showed increased interest levels, there is no evidence that recruiting is easier or that enlistments have increased as a result of the terrorist attacks. Despite competition and other challenges of the marketplace, both the Navy and Marine Corps achieved their recruiting requirements in FY01. While the Marine Corps is poised to continue their six-year streak, the Navy is not yet postured for long-term success.

Of concern is the growing number of high school graduates, our traditional target market, proceeding directly to college. This makes finding operators and technicians for technologically advanced systems challenging. The Navy's objective is to improve recruit quality by targeting certain skills and increasing the number of recruits with college credits, while increasing high school graduates from 90 to 92 percent of accessions.

RETENTION/ATTRITION

Retaining the best and the brightest Sailors and Marines, enlisted and officer, continues to be a high priority within the Department of the Navy. To that end we must offer a quality of life and service that is directly tied to combat readiness. Creating an environment conducive to professional growth and supporting an attractive quality of service, adequate pay, health care and housing will all aid in our retention efforts.

In addition to the FY01 and FY02 pay raises, increased allowance for housing and special pays like the Selected Reenlistment Bonuses (SRB) and targeted officer continuation incentives will all positively impact career decisions by our Sailors and Marines.

MANAGING TIME AWAY FROM HOME (PERSONNEL TEMPO)

Navy and Marine Corps personnel have been fully and productively involved in Operations Enduring Freedom and Noble Eagle, demonstrating the highest levels of professionalism while protecting America and the world from the terrorist threat. The Services have worked hard to balance increased operational requirements while maintaining a sustainable personnel tempo. Despite their best efforts, some units have had to deploy longer or earlier than planned. We greatly value the operational flexibility and reduced administrative burden obtained by using Personnel Tempo suspension authority that was provided by Congress in Personnel Tempo legislation.

In addition, by significantly increasing Career Sea Pay and extending it to more paygrades, the Department has tried to compensate those service members who fill the most arduous duty assignments at sea. No matter when the war on terrorism ends, a career in either the Navy or Marine Corps will still require at least several long deployments. We are committed, over the long

term, to reach the right balance between burdensome deployments, compensation, and quality of life.

As required by Personnel Tempo legislation, the Services are preparing a report that will be presented to Congress in March, 2002. The report will continue the beneficial dialog that exists between the Services and with Congress on this important topic.

STOP LOSS

Both the Navy and Marine Corps have implemented stop loss plans to hold on active duty those individuals with critical or unique skills in support of current operational requirements (e.g. Special Warfare, infantry, linguists, medical, Chemical/Biological experts). Stop loss policies are under continual review. Any changes in stop loss measures will be based on emerging requirements driven by the evolving global war on terrorism.

MANPOWER FOR ANTI-TERRORISM/FORCE PROTECTION

The terrorist actions of September 11th have thrust new requirements on the Armed Forces in general, and the Navy and Marine Corps in particular. While Anti-terrorism and Force Protection (AT/FP) requirements were being addressed within the prior budget submissions, the Navy has identified additional

requirements in this area in order to adequately pursue the ongoing War on Terrorism and to safeguard the public, our Sailors and Marines, and associated assets. The FY03 budget includes funds for the recently re-activated Marine Corps' 4th Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) as an Anti-Terrorism unit. 4th MEB (AT) provides a dedicated, sustainable, rapidly deployable capability to detect, deter, defend and conduct initial incident response against acts of terrorism.

HEALTH CARE

Force Health Protection in support of our warfighters remains our medical department's primary mission. This mission is furthered through Readiness, Optimization and Integration. There is an absolute expectation that our Sailors and Marines, around the world and in whatever circumstances we place them, will have quality care by dedicated military medical professionals. That expectation includes the assurance that they will deploy healthy and with the most advanced medical science available to ensure their protection. Their confidence in this standard, and their confidence in the care of their families through TRICARE, whether the member is home or away, is a key enabler for the Navy. Navy Medicine is linked to the Transformation that will keep the Navy agile, versatile and responsive in the 21st Century. This will occur through

recapitalization of the legacy medical force, leveraging current day technology to build the interim medical force, and pursuit of advances in medical research, science and technology to develop the medical force of the future. We are also coordinating with our sister Services, the Veteran's Administration, Federal Agencies and civilian healthcare providers through TRICARE contracts, to combine our efforts into a force multiplier that yields increased efficiencies. During these uncertain times, full integration is important to ensure optimal healthcare delivery to all of our beneficiaries.

RESERVE AFFAIRS

On September 11, 2001, our Navy and Marine Corps Reserves showed up at Reserve centers and military installations all around the country. They were not even called. But they knew something had to be done and that they would be called upon to do it. The defense of our nation has historically been based on the concept of the civilian who prepares for active service during peacetime and becomes the "citizen-soldier" in times of national emergencies. This is the militia tradition of our great country and today's Reservists are the modern day minutemen, tracing their lineage back to these citizen soldiers, the militia with their muskets in Lexington and Concord. On September 11th, the tradition continued, only now with

Reservists wielding F/A-18 Hornet strike fighters instead of muskets.

The mobilization alone does not reflect the whole story of success in the past year. The Reserve Components are an integral part of day-to-day operations. There are approximately 75,000 Navy Selected Reservists and 40,000 Marine Selected Reservists. In addition, another 140,000 Navy and Marine Corps personnel are members of the Individual Ready Reserve and subject to involuntary recall in support of the current national emergency. Long before the events of 9/11, our Reservists were, and continue to be, on difficult assignments in some of the most hazardous areas of the world. In response to three concurrent Presidential Reserve Call-ups and to other crisis response operations, they were in flash-point regions such as the Balkans and the Arabian Gulf. They have provided essential port security capabilities in the Middle East to US Central Command since the attack on the USS Cole and participated extensively in counter drug operations. From real world contingencies to exercises to routine operations, Navy and Marine Corps Reservists provided more than 2.5 million man-days in support of the active force in 2001.

MOBILIZATION

Reserve Component members were both victims and heroes in the attacks at the Pentagon and World Trade Center and within minutes of the attacks, Reservists responded to the call to duty. There were chaplains on duty in Washington administering to the needs of Pentagon personnel and their families and there were Reservists manning the Navy Command Center. Naval Reserve F/A-18s were flying combat air patrol missions in Texas. A Reserve helicopter squadron training in northern Virginia provided Medevac support at the Pentagon. Reservists also provided Naval Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers to New York and Washington, DC. Marine Corps Reservists from the New York area volunteered to help with the immediate response and aftermath cleanup. Marines were also mobilized to augment staffing levels in most Marine Corps commands, Joint and Department of Defense staffs and to augment individual bases and stations for force protection.

In response to operational requirements, mobilization of Navy and Marine Corps Reservists for the War on Terrorism is ongoing, with approximately 12,500 Naval and Marine Reservists activated in support of Operations Noble Eagle and Enduring Freedom, providing critical force protection, intelligence support, and staff augmentation.

Most of our recalled Naval Reservists have specific skills as individuals, primarily in law enforcement and security. Because of the requirement for large numbers of auxiliary security force personnel, many personnel were trained enroute to their duty station. Other skills in the mobilization include medical, supply, intelligence, construction and logistics. Most of the Navy units recalled were Mobile Inshore Undersea Warfare units, Inshore Boat units, Harbor Defense units, Construction Augment, Personnel Mobilization Teams, and Naval Criminal Investigative Service units.

The majority of activated Marines are providing planning, force protection, intelligence, civil affairs, communications support and backfill. The Marine Corps also mobilized a company to relieve the Fleet Antiterrorist Security Team at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. This freed up that highly skilled unit to be used in other areas for force protection. Two battalions have been mobilized to provide force protection and backfill units now assigned to the Marine Anti-Terrorism brigade, and Reserve aviator units are augmenting the active force.

Both the Navy and Marine Corps expect to involuntarily extend some Reservists with high demand skills beyond 365 days. The requirement to extend individual Reservists beyond 365 days will be based on operational requirements, which continue to evolve. Our intent is to minimize the impact on individuals

beyond an initial 365-day commitment. Most Reserve personnel currently filling requirements for Noble Eagle and Enduring Freedom will be demobilized at the end of one year, and active duty personnel or other Reservists will fill those requirements that remain valid.

This mobilization has required a great deal of flexibility and responsiveness from individual Reservists, gaining commands, and headquarters elements. To minimize personal hardships, the Secretary of the Navy directed that, consistent with operational requirements, all Selected Reservists will be provided a minimum of 72 hours notification prior to required reporting. Non-drilling Reservists are given a minimum of 14 days notice. Additionally, at various levels of the chain of command, authority is granted to delay individual reporting dates to allow reasonable time for the Reservist to meet his or her obligations or to determine if an exemption from mobilization is warranted. Each of the Services has carefully adjudicated delays and exemptions requests, taking into account the needs of the military, the needs of the individual Reservist and the needs of the employer.

The mobilization has not been flawless. Once activated, some Navy and Marine Corps Reservists have experienced problems with pay and billeting, although nearly all obstacles have been overcome. Some of the problems were the result of different

active and reserve pay and personnel systems. The Defense Integrated Military Human Resources System (DIMHRS) that is currently being developed will incorporate both active duty and Reserve personnel into one system and simplify the management of mobilization data, but we need to review the overall compensation and benefits package provided for involuntarily activated Reservists.

RESERVE COMPENSATION AND BENEFIT CONCERNS

Mobilization can be financially devastating for Reserve families when active duty pay is substantially less than civilian pay. This was a very real problem during Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm, prompting an 'income protection' initiative by DoD during the 1990's. The concept and requirements were valid, but implementation was a failure and the program was terminated. The current mobilization again highlights the issue as one of significant importance. Both officers and enlisted and in particular self-employed personnel can suffer a substantial decrease in income that result in family and financial hardships upon mobilization. This remains a problem that must be addressed.

Continuity of health care for families of Reservists is another significant concern. Reservists on active duty are eligible for the same healthcare and dental benefits as other

active duty service members. For service members activated for 30 days or more, their family members are also eligible for TRICARE. The recently introduced TRICARE Reserve Family Demonstration Project provides special protections to Reserve Component families in order to preserve continuity of care with their existing healthcare providers. This demonstration waives deductibles (to avoid Reserve Component families paying both private health insurance and TRICARE deductibles); authorizes TRICARE to pay up to 15 percent above the TRICARE allowable rates for care provided by non-participating providers; and waives the requirement for families to use nearby military treatment facilities for inpatient care.

Still, health care issues are perhaps the number one obstacle to seamless integration of Reserve personnel into the active force. As medical costs rise, health insurance and health care benefits take on greater importance. We are greatly pleased that Congress authorized Federal employing agencies to pay both employee and government contributions to the Federal Employee Health Benefit Program (for up to 18 months for Federal employees who are members of a Reserve component called to active duty for more than 30 days in support of a contingency operation). Given the frequency and length of recent deployments of Reserve personnel, this in-again, out-again health care coverage may result in lost or reduced health

benefits at a time when most families can least afford it. This is a readiness, recruiting, and retention issue.

RESERVE RECRUITING AND RETENTION

The effective integration of Reserve and Active components is indispensable as demands on military forces increase while active force size has stabilized. The authorities provided by a supportive Congress, coupled with the manning strategies the Department has executed, have provided America with a very effective force that serves as a source of pride and confidence. Our recruiting and retention programs are the cornerstones of that capability.

Paradoxically, as a result of success enjoyed by the active force in its efforts to improve retention, the recruiting mission for the Naval Reserve becomes even more challenging. Despite that, the Naval Reserve came within two percent of its authorized end strength and made recruiting goals in FY01. Additional enlisted and officer Reserve recruiters in FY02 will help to ensure future recruiting goals will also be met. And a restricted line special designator has been developed for Naval Reserve recruiting officers allowing for a more professional, better managed community.

The Naval Reserve is working closely with Fleet manpower personnel to better shape the Reserve force to meet Fleet

requirements. Force shaping tools include the use of bonuses, targeted recruiting and retention efforts, availability of additional "A" school seats and programs to transition Sailors from overmanned to undermanned ratings. Reservists are being matched to specific job requirements, and this allows the Navy to determine, at any given time, specific skill requirements and where Reserve personnel are most needed.

In addition to working with the active force to determine requirements, over the last two years the Naval Reserve Recruiting Command (NRRC) has been working more closely with the fleet and active Navy Recruiting Command (NRC) to fill those requirements. All sailors leaving active duty are contacted prior to separation, a NRRC liaison officer has been detailed to NRC, and the NRRC Call Center has been co-located with NRC. Further, in FY01 the majority of Navy Achievement Medals presented to individuals for successful referrals to the Naval Reserve were presented to Regular Navy recruiters.

Recruiting results indicate that increased expressions of interest by young people following the attack upon our homeland did not translate to hikes in enlistment contracts. The major change Naval Reserve recruiting has experienced since September 11, 2001 is the decrease in Navy Veteran (NAVET) accessions. Historically, about 80 percent of SELRES accessions have been Navy veterans. However, the pool of eligible Navy veterans is

shrinking due to the desire of many sailors to remain on active duty serving their country. In FY02, NAVET accessions are running around 55 percent and the NRRC fell 7 percent below its enlisted accession goal in the first quarter. (Naval Reserve recruiting is currently well ahead on officer recruiting.) In order to offset this decline, the Reserve force increased recruiting reservations to include greater numbers of non-prior service (NPS) accessions. Naval Reserve recruiting also received authorization to recruit in the 21 to 25 year old age group, which should help both NAVET and NPS recruiting efforts. The Marine Corps Reserve has traditionally relied on non-prior service recruits and continues to achieve recruiting goals.

The Reserve forces have adequate funding in place to retain officer and enlisted personnel with critical skills, and the reduction of attrition rates has received significant command attention. However, attrition rates in FY02 are in line with last year's percentages and it is too early to know what impact the ongoing mobilization will have on Reserve attrition. The long-term impact will be tied first to the job satisfaction experienced by mobilized Reservists. The second critical factor will be the impact of demobilization and assimilation back into local communities. Those members who experience difficulty in family or personal life, civilian careers, or personal finances may be expected to have a decreased interest in continued

Reserve participation. If the Reserve forces are to assume a new role of regular periods of involuntary active duty, new policies, additional schools and training pipelines, and new legislation concerning sustainment of the force will be required.

ENSURING EQUAL OPPORTUNITY IN THE MILITARY

We have succeeded in recruiting our Sailors and Marines from every part of society so that they truly represent the people they serve. Through careful training and development, we have bonded these diverse Americans into the world's pre-eminent naval force. There is no place in the Department of the Navy for discrimination that denies us access to capable and talented individuals from any background, or that impairs the bonds of trust and respect so necessary for cohesion and victory.

Looking to the future, we are keenly aware that military leaders cannot be hired from outside but must be cultivated from within each Service. Our priority is to retain and develop the best talent available and so ensure that our future leadership reflects the quality and diversity of the people we serve.

QUALITY OF LIFE PROGRAMS

Out of necessity, given the nature of the military profession, we ask our people to sacrifice a great deal. In the

aftermath of the events of September 11, Sailors, Marines, and their families are facing new, unprecedented challenges and are being asked to sacrifice more than ever before. However, we cannot expect this sacrifice to continue unbounded. There must be a corresponding recognition by military and civilian leaders that we need to do what is necessary to ease the burdens of the individual and collective sacrifices that our Sailors, Marines, and their families make for the good of our nation. As a result, it is more important than ever that we provide adequate, reasonable and consistent quality of life programs and services for our people. This support is critical to military readiness and stands as a mute testament of our commitment to the well-being of service members and their families.

The Department of the Navy's Child Development, Fleet and Family Support, Voluntary Education, Morale, Welfare, and Recreation, retail exchange programs and our other wide-ranging Quality of Life programs continue to provide a broad combination of support services for our service members and their families.

MORALE, WELFARE AND RECREATION (MWR)

The focus of the Department of Navy's Morale, Welfare and Recreation program continues to be in providing high-quality, consistent services and activities throughout the Department of the Navy. The cornerstone of our MWR programs is physical

readiness, with a goal to provide "total fitness" to all service members, whether stationed ashore or afloat. Sailors and Marines greatly depend on our fitness centers ashore and fitness equipment onboard ships to maintain their readiness for combat. Each MWR activity is now responsible for having professional fitness staff, equipment, and activities to support the Navy and Marine Corps' goal of developing a fitness-based lifestyle that includes a well-rounded fitness program. We also encourage family members of our military personnel to take advantage of these programs ashore. In support of this emphasis on physical readiness, the Department's FY03 budget provides \$67 million for physical readiness programs across FY03 and the Future Years Defense Plan to augment current staffing levels, replace cardiovascular and strength training equipment, and implement an aggressive training and certification program for fitness and sports staff members.

During the last five months, our MWR programs have also focused on supporting service members and their families during Operation Enduring Freedom. Among the initiatives undertaken have been the following:

- To give personnel assigned to remote and isolated sites a welcomed leisure outlet, Navy MWR developed a self-contained "Theater in a Box," which provides 288 videotapes along with a videotape player, projector,

screen, sound system and all connectors needed to set up an indoor or outdoor theater. Three of these packages were shipped to the Naval Support Unit in Bahrain prior to the year-end holidays.

- As part of a "Let Freedom Ring" sponsorship agreement with AT&T, every shipboard Sailor and Marine on December 23 and 24 had the opportunity to place a 15-minute long distance call to family and loved ones for only 15 cents.
- Country music superstar Garth Brooks performed aboard the USS ENTERPRISE on Thanksgiving Eve for Service members and their families in Norfolk, Virginia. The concert, aired live on network television, was held in honor of military families as part of the annual Military Family Week celebration.

Deployed Sailors and Marines have also taken full advantage of MWR services and activities designed specifically for them as part of our Single Sailor and Single Marine programs. Single Sailor Centers provide recreational opportunities and places to relax for young Sailors and Marines who live onboard ships or in bachelor quarters. These centers feature large-screen televisions for viewing sports and movies, video games, computers with free Internet and e-mail access for keeping in close touch with family members and loved ones, billiards, and

much more. The Single Sailor/Marine programs support the retention effort of an important segment of our military members - our first-term Sailors and Marines.

CIVILIANS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

The Department of the Navy employs about 182,000 civilian workers in a wide variety of professional, administrative, technical, clerical and blue-collar occupations. In addition, we employ nearly 3,500 foreign national employees at our bases overseas. These hard working and dedicated civilian employees can be found in every major command, working alongside our Sailors and Marines, performing the vital work of the Department. The civilian workforce forms an integral part of our Total Force team. It is a diverse workforce, which in large measure reflects the diversity of our Nation.

The civilian workforce of the Department of the Navy is 45 percent smaller today than it was in 1989, which marked the beginning of a decade of steady downsizing. This reduction of more than 149,000 employees was accomplished in an extraordinarily smooth manner. Department of the Navy commanders and civilian leaders made maximum use of authorities for separation incentives and early retirement. Whenever possible, civilian employees were retrained to prepare for transitioning to other work, and existing DoD and government-

wide placement authorities were utilized to effectively assist employees in finding continuing work. When our employees reached a decision to retire or to leave by other means, we provided every available resource in helping them through the transition.

Now the Department of the Navy faces an employment challenge shared across the Federal Government: shaping the workforce to ensure that we have the right people, with the right skills, in the right jobs to help us meet the challenges of the future. We have adjusted our focus to concentrate on targeting recruitment and hiring versus downsizing, and workforce shaping versus workforce reductions. A Recruiters' Consortium was established, bringing together experienced recruiters from our commands to share best practices and seek innovative ways to attract highly qualified individuals to the Department of the Navy. In keeping with our goal to improve the diversity of the workforce, special efforts are being made to attract candidates from populations currently under-represented in our workforce, with particular emphasis on Hispanics and the disabled.

Throughout the downsizing and concurrent budget reductions, we have continuously sought ways to improve the management and operations of the civilian personnel and equal employment opportunity functions in the Department of the Navy, with a

strong emphasis on performance and results. Today and in the future, our civilian workforce remains focused on its role as a crucial part of the total force supporting the military mission of the Department of the Navy.

CONCLUSION

On behalf of our Sailors and Marines, civilians, retirees, and their families, I want to thank you again for your outstanding support. The initiatives and programs approved in last year's National Defense Authorization Act have been a significant investment in our Sailors and Marines, and toward ensuring the Quality of Service these dedicated men and women deserve. I am confident that, with your continued support of our efforts to maintain the course of improvement, our Fleet and Marine Forces will be the versatile force required to combat the threats and capitalize on the opportunities of the 21st century.