Chief of Naval Operations
Admiral Gary Roughead
Remarks as delivered at the BEYA Stars and Stripes Dinner
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Thank you for the introduction. Congratulations, Chairman Mullen, for such a deserved recognition for the leadership that you have shown in identifying early on, how powerful different experiences, views and skills, can be for the teamwork that we in the military and indeed throughout the defense establishment rely on every day.

Tyrone Taborn, I'd like to thank you for this fitting tribute to the men and women of our armed forces, and for continuing to lead a discussion on education and diversity that is so important to our nation. I also have to recognize someone else in the audience [whom] I didn't know was a talented as she is. She is a hospital corpsman. Many of you also don't know that she was the commander of our Silent Drill team of the Navy's ceremonial guard. Maybe because it was the silent drill team, Senior Chief Wallace, I didn't know you could sing the national anthem like that.

It really is great to be here with you tonight at this Stars and Stripes dinner and moreover a part of this year's conference.

For 25 years BEYA has recognized, as we do in the military, that we have a stake in ensuring the security and prosperity of future generations of Americans. I'm pleased to see the conferences practical focus on STEM education, the robotics competition and exposure students can get here to the latest research science that is so important. I'm still struck however that so few Americans aspire to study high-tech fields, precisely when- if you recall the President's State of the Union Address- educational trends should signal to us as parents, as leaders and as mentors that revolutions in technology have changed the rules of the working world.

In my own line of work, and that of my fellow service chiefs, I sense that we are entering another period of great change in military technology. The Navy is an organization that values being at the forefront of those developments. The Navy remains a technically advanced service, in our ships, our submarines, and our aircraft, and now in the realm of cyberspace where we continue to lead change for the nation.

Our Navy is busy today. The Fleet is in demand across the globe for everything from humanitarian assistance to ballistic missile defense. We are able to answer that demand because we are forward, flexible, formidable and fast to respond.

We are a powerful Navy with global responsibilities because of our people. We have the finest Sailors serving in the history of the Navy, today. Our young Sailors and Navy civilians have the opportunity to do and see things that few people could imagine at such a young age. They routinely achieve greatness in defense of our nation. Some become steeped in nuclear physics by the age of 21. Others complete their training as naval aviators in aircraft like the EA-18 Growler- the most advanced electronic warfare aircraft in the world- by the time they are 24.

Some work with cutting- edge electronics months out of high school. They find themselves training others as experts in their fields before they reach the age of 30. Still others spend a career in scientific research and engineering, designing and working to deliver that next transformational capability in military affairs.

As we speak, Navy scientists are working in cutting- edge fields like directed energy, agile sensor networking, bio-robotics and future fuel alternatives. They are drawing on a proud tradition of naval innovation dating back to the 'Ironclads'- a history made glorious by people coming from all walks of life, not just people who look like me.

We have some real champions who are not able to join us tonight. Vice Adm. D.C. Curtis, who is the commander of Naval Surface Forces. He has, during the time he has been in that position done critical work, to get our fleet back, as he says 'to the basics' in the best interests of a sustainable force. Vice Adm. Cecil Haney, who, when I was the commander of the Pacific Fleet, was my right hand man and my best adviser. He is a leader in the submarine community and over the last several years he is someone who has shaped the future direction of the Navy on the Navy headquarters. Today he is the Deputy Commander of the United States Strategic Command. Rear Adm. Vic Guillory, commander of our 4th Fleet. He led the Navy's response to the earthquake in Haiti just a little over a year ago, providing relief where it didn't appear that it could come from anywhere else but from the sea. Rear Adm. Sinc Harris who led our relief efforts into Pakistan this past year.

Whether we are familiar with the 'Centennial Seven' in our submarine community or the 'Golden Thirteen' from World War II, or trailblazers like Jesse Brown, Joan Bynum, or Vice Adm. Samuel Gravely, Jr. - in whose honor we named a ship just last year - the history of our Navy and that of the people - all of the people - who have defended this nation at sea are inextricably linked.

This is how it should be. At the practical level, this is how it must be if we intend to keep today's Navy and our military great, to weather tomorrow's challenges.

Our Navy is recognized for its best practices in diversity- from minority outreach, to enlisted accessions, to diversity accountability reviews- that we could only have achieved with a sustained approach. There was no short cut to achieving the most diverse Naval Academy and Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps accessions ever. With the class of 2014 at the Naval Academy we reached a 35 percent minority admissions and the Navy ROTC reached 40 percent. Those numbers did not just happen. Those numbers are because people care.

The 'Navy City 'outreach and the regional initiatives we conduct to reach out to those who do not know us. The Nuclear Propulsion Officer candidate scholarship program or the Supply Corps internship-to-employment model, these are not short term approaches.

Our educational partnerships, which emphasize STEM education at the middle school level, pre-college experience at our working labs, and graduate- level scholarship opportunities are the types of models that we need to pursue for the future of our nation, let alone our Navy.

While we have senior leader 'buy- in' and good initiatives yielding measureable results, our work is not yet sustainable in its own right. It must be. Our leadership must reflect the face of the nation if we intend to remain relevant in providing for our nation's defense. If we agree that diversity of thought yields better solutions to the problems we face, what may have the commitment of key leadership now must be sustained for the long term.

STEM education and diversity are strategic and operational imperatives for all of our military services. We know we can't assure the outcome we want without more broadly- based mentorship of individuals over the long term. It takes citizens sharing their expertise in their communities. Such as Alma Gravely, the widow of Vice Adm. Gravely, who to this day, involves herself in her community in Haymarket, Virginia, in an elementary school named in honor of her late husband.

It takes reaching out to someone who may still not know about the many distinct opportunities out there for them in the armed forces, or what they need to focus on to realize their goals. It will take officers and enlisted, men and women, active and reserve, the uniformed and civilian- within the chain of command, through professional organizations, or informally- to act as mentors and to provide that example our junior leaders can relate to. If not, the flag and general officers ten years from now will find too few minority candidates for senior leadership positions and we will have too slim a grip on the direction of our all-volunteer force.

A new program focused on quick wins won't do it. An assigned officer or special staff will not suffice in the long run. We must and will move past our current model where diversity programs remain peripheral as opposed to institutional endeavors. Rather, they should be part of every leadership core curriculum and, within our Navy, as fundamental to the Fleet's understanding of combat effectiveness as safe navigation and damage control.

Looking forward, global trends point to even greater demand for credible American sea power. Having people of diverse backgrounds working together channels the resourcefulness inherent in our citizens towards the innovation we will need. Operating at the confluence of unmanned, directed energy, and cyber technologies will require new skills and new models to unlock potential developments.

These are exciting and important times. They really will require the services to attract and retain the best America has to offer if we want to strengthen the foundation of our future prosperity in challenging economic and security environments.

The United States faces a crucial test to its global leadership today and for the foreseeable future. Yet no nation is better-equipped to lead in the international system. No organizations are better-suited to contribute to the agile power we will need than our armed forces. For those of us in the Navy, the questions ahead of us are less about recognizing, as individuals, the value of a diverse and technically informed Fleet, but rather how each of us must act to ensure that tomorrow's Navy reflects that recognition institutionally.

The naval history we write from this day forward will only build on our strong foundation if we get to a place where the tangible benefits of diversity are uniformly viewed as core strengths, and where we all trust that the best ideas to keep our Navy and our nation great are being heard.

Thank you very much.