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Edited Remarks by ADM Vern Clark  
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ADMIRAL VERN CLARK: Good evening ladies and gentlemen.

(APPLAUSE)

How great it is to be here with you tonight. What a wonderful crowd. Wow. This is one of those days and one of those evenings when I get to be a surface warrior. I'm also proud of the fact that I get to be the CNO for all the other communities. And if you know me, if you know me well, you know that I really mean that because one of the very special things about our Navy is that we do have communities. And of course, it's been said we have a tribal nature and what I've come to understand is that that can either be a weakness or it can be an incredible strength. And I have come to find out through the course of my thirty-five years of service that in our institution it is an incredible strength.

We're honored tonight to have the likes of the inductees into the hall of fame and it's just such a wonderful privilege to see the lives of people like this to set the example for all of us to follow. To characterize, not in words but in the way they chose to live their life, that they believe in a lifestyle of service and set an example for the men and women who will follow them of what service is really all about. Isn't it terrific? Congratulations to all of them.

(APPLAUSE)

Of course, those names go so far back and then they go all the way up to the present, and without getting into the list of names, I'll just tell you that it's really special to see a guy like Dave Robinson honored like this, especially when he's used to be my detailer. Maybe more about that later.

And I want to say that -- it was recognized already, but I think it's so great that Jim Ellis is here tonight. Jim, we so appreciate your service to the country.

(APPLAUSE)

And when I go to ANA or speak to the people who wear the wings of gold, I'm proud to tell them that I'm so glad that we have something called naval aviation in United States of America. And Jim wears his wings of gold proudly as one of the real fine aviators in the F/A-18 community. He commanded ships so he's a surface warrior at heart, too. And the things that he is doing

as the Combatant Commander at STRATCOM for the United States of America are truly phenomenal. Jim, we owe you a lot. God bless you, and thank you for what you're doing.

(APPLAUSE)

And this one will be just a little bit different. Yesterday, Connie went to a spouse program and some of those spouses went to the Naval Academy in Annapolis, and Connie got to meet a wonderful young woman there. She came home and couldn't wait to tell me about this story. Lieutenant Quast and his wife Bridget are here tonight, and they were married last Saturday, and they are on their honeymoon and came to the SNA. (LAUGHTER/APPLAUSE)

He must be really something. (LAUGHTER)

And I want to congratulate all of the honorees. I was privileged to sit at a table tonight with the young men and women who were honored today for their contributions, and I thank the SNA for what they're doing to shine the spotlight on our people. I think that is so important. One of the things that I like best about what's going on in United States of America, and I tell audiences this across the land is that I love the tone. I am so grateful for the message that is being transmitted by the citizens of the United States of America to our young people who are serving in uniform. And I have had the privilege to serve for a long time, and part of that time I got to know what it was like when it wasn't clear that the citizens of the United States of America understood what the service of the men and women in uniform was all about. And that's one of the reasons that I think it is so important for us to spotlight our people, and I was grateful that SNA decided that the theme for this convention would be about Sea Warrior, focusing specifically on the men and women who are serving in uniform, and the people who are part of the calculus that make our Navy great. And so I want to talk about Sea Warrior and foundations tonight for a few minutes.

We're running a little bit late, and by the clock, I was finished 25 minutes ago, but bear with me for just a few minutes.

Three and a half years ago now as we said we started down this journey, one of the most important things for us, and the number one item on the Top Five list was to win -- then we called it the war for people, that was before 9/11, and after that, we began to call it the battle for people because we were engaged in another war.

During these 3 1/2 years, it was reinforced to me, and I think it's been widely recognized, that our people are the foundation of everything that is good about what is happening in our Navy. And when people ask me what I like best about our Navy today and the experience that I'm being given the chance to be the Chief, what I say about that is that I love the tone of it. Secretary England spoke to you, and he always reinforces that without those warriors, with all the technology that our nation can bring to bear and muster on station, without those warriors, none of the rest of that matters. And 3 1/2 years ago, we started talking about things we thought were so important to get

to where we needed to be in our nation, and we talked about self-talk, corporate self-talk and personal self-talk. The facts and reality and principles that we become what we think and say about ourselves. We talked about pride and we talked about the importance of service, that little simple word that means so much. But frankly, in the decade of the 90's, my sense was we had kind of stop talking about it - the willingness to commit to something that is bigger than yourself. And of course, we started talking about the principles of covenant leadership, and I say the principles because one thing we didn't intend to do was to start some new program. But we talked about what it meant to respond and how we, as leaders, should respond when our young people raise their right hands and promise to support and defend the Constitution of the United States, and defend it against all enemies. And what it meant when they made that promise, and what we as leaders needed to promise in return, for the promise that they had made to the nation. And so we then began to talk about the requirement for us to invest in them because part of that covenant was that because they made the promise that they did, that we are going to make some promises ourselves. And one of those promises is that we were going to invest in their growth and their development and that we were going to give them a chance to make a difference, because all of the study and the research that I was able to come up with convinced me that more than anything else, today's generation, and this young generation of patriots, what they want more than anything else is a chance to prove what they can do and a chance to make a difference. And so we committed to the growth and the development of our people, and the results, frankly, have been absolutely astounding. For the third year now, the highest retention we've ever had in the history of our institution, and September 30th, we've just finished another year and if you've read the Guidance for 2004 we talked about it, just to reflect on what happens when a group of leaders commit to creating this kind of Navy that we've dreamed about. And our first return of retention this year, again, was the highest ever, 60.8 percent.

(APPLAUSE)

And of course we promised to them that we were going to see to it that they could succeed and prosper with this commitment that they made to the nation. And one of the things that I feel best about this is they have been able to take a huge chunk out of this attrition thing. When a young person commits to this lifestyle of service we want to make sure that they are successful in that commitment. And that since we believe that nothing succeeds like success and nothing fails like failure, it is our task as leaders to make sure that they succeed and that they prosper. And so these Sailors, these young men and women who have made this commitment to serve our nation, are the reason that the nation is enjoying today the success that we have had in the global war on terrorism.

I guess when I sum this up and think about Sea Warrior, it is my impression that the things that happened over the last three plus years have helped me redefine the art of the possible - helping us to build the Navy of our dreams. And it is my conviction that the Navy of our dreams, the Navy we see for the future, will forever and always be built upon these fantastic young men and women who make the commitment to serve.

Our vision for the 21st century is, in fact, people. Our vision is that we have a world-class Navy that is full of people desiring to work in a world-class organization. Our vision is that this Navy will be committed and built around a true total force, a force not just of the active structure, but the reserve structure as well, a force that's built also by the civilians who wear the nametag United States Navy, a force that is built upon the commitment of contractors, people like you in this audience, with all of your displays out here, who have also determined that you're going to commit your life to seeing to it that we bring the asymmetric advantage that we possess and deliver to the sons and daughters of America the most amazing technology that the world has ever seen and then unleash the genius of our people so that they could go out and do the nation's business.

(APPLAUSE)

There is not time to going to all of it tonight, but the idea that every job in the United States Navy is filled with such incredible job content that produces such satisfaction in committing to this task that has been given to us, with the right set of requirements for the numbers of people that we have to have, and the right mix between those various parties that I have described.

I believe that the future for us in this whole business of Sea Warrior is about the development of a new way of thinking about the human resource constructs for our Navy, the ability to access the best and brightest, the ability to compete in the marketplace. See, I'm a marketplace guy. I came into the Navy with an MBA. My focus on economic matters has led me to believe that the marketplace dominates. In fact, so much so that I don't think it really does much good to write glossy pubs. What I really think matters is that if your stuff is good you're going to win in the marketplace, because if it's good, guys like Jim Ellis are going to want more and more of it. And that's what our task is all about. But I also believe that the challenge for the future and this thing called Sea Warrior is that we must understand that to have the kind of Navy that we dream about, we must understand that we do in fact have to compete in that marketplace. And we must have a human resource strategy that allows us to do so. And so we must have a strategy that understands what the promises are about, and we must understand how to deliver on the promises that we have made to the young men and women who have chosen to serve. And we must understand how, in new and more effective ways, how to execute the growth and development challenges for these young people who decide to commit to the lifestyle of service.

Now, I'm really talking to those of you who are in an industry that will help us create this future. It's all about distance learning, NETC, and the whole Task Force Excel project which centers on a journey. Our year two project was to revolutionize the way we train and develop people and all of the pieces that go with that, and focus on human performance like we have really never understood before. The vision really is all about, in just a few years from now, when the world wants to know about human performance and integration of people with a task, and

this whole engineering dynamic, they will come to the United States Navy because our objective is to become the model for the rest of the world.

It is about the revolution in personnel distribution. And what does that mean? These are thoughts that get to be a little radical real quick, especially if you were in this organization many, many years ago. But here's what we fundamentally believe: the future really is about all the technology that is being brought to bear, and we will be a web-based organization throughout in a few years and the years to come, and we will institute this thing called freedom of choice and the power of choice in our human resource strategy in bold ways.

It means that there's going to be a kind of two-way competition for resources, if we believe in the marketplace. It means that every Sailor that has their own web page will in fact be the key in that market, inside the Navy. But it also means this: in the future, commands will also be competing for individuals because it is our conviction that one of the things that our people are looking for is that they are looking for a chance, not just to make a difference, which is very important to them, but they want a sense of and an ability to impact on the personal direction that they want to put on their lives with the choices that they are allowed to make. And we are going to create a Navy and a system and a process that allows them to do that. And then we are going to apply every technique that we can figure out how to apply to not just assess them, not just grow and develop them, not just give them opportunities and a chance to make a difference, but also ensure that we are able to retain the individuals that will continue to make our Navy the greatest Navy that has ever existed in the history of man. That's what Sea Warrior is all about. ...

(APPLAUSE)

Now, I'm convinced that this future has many, many challenges, but I'm also convinced that as we unleash the genius of our people we can achieve our dream. I define this human resource structure as the members who are active, the members of the reserve, the civilian members of the Navy, and all the contractors for us that helps make our Navy what it is. There are going to be some changes. As I sit at the table tonight and talk to the Chief over here, who was recognized this afternoon and at lunch for his great contributions to our Navy, it drives home the point to me again that we are going to see the lines blur between the senior enlisted structure and our officer corps, but we will do that in a way that continues to unleash the genius of our people, because the genius of our people is what will ensure that we remain the greatest Navy ever.

(APPLAUSE)

And so over the course of this conference, people have come and talked to you about the incredible new ships, but we will expand that to new airplanes, new submarines, new capability, deploying special operations capability, and a new and committed marriage to our number one joint of partner, the United States Marine Corps. All of this will allow us to take credible combat power to the far corners of this earth, taking the sovereignty of the

United States of America anywhere we need to take it, anytime we need to take it, and giving the President of the United States of America the options that he needs to face the challenges that exist for this nation in the 21st century.

We talk a lot about the hardware, we talk a lot about these new systems, and each new system will put new challenges in front of us as we develop the Sea Warrior construct for our Navy. And it should be that way. I mean who among us really knows what it is going to be like to be a Sailor on DD(X)? A ship that will absolutely revolutionize what time critical targeting response is going to look like in the wars of the future, in the crises of the future; the ability to reach out and touch someone at 100 miles in record response time. What kind of a Sailor is that going to be on a ship that in today's set of rules would have four, five, six or even maybe 700 people on it and tomorrow it will have 100 or so? These are going to be remarkable people, and they are going to take us to the future. I'm absolutely convinced that the most important study done in this town in the last 2 1/2 years is the Operational Availability Study. Without getting off into a 15-minute speech about FRP, it is about our ability to make sure that we offer the President of the United States the kind of options that he needs and the response times that will enable us, operating in the maritime domain, to provide those options to him.

Tim LaFleur, his leadership team, and the surface Navy are leading in new concepts like Sea Swap and the Optimal Manning and SHIPMAIN. None of these things are possible if we are not willing to embrace the potential for change that is before us, the potential for us to revolutionize the approaches that will make our Navy even better.

And so, ladies and gentlemen, I came here tonight to say thanks to the Surface Navy Association and the individuals who are here, who support the Surface Navy, a critical element, a critical community in a Navy that has great tasks ahead of it. I came here tonight to simply say this: thank you for your commitment to take us to the future. The reality is that this is a time for us to reach to the future in ways that release us from any of the things that held us back in the past and allow us to see the potential that is before us and what we can become. When you entitled this conference to be about Sea Warrior, you tagged where we need to put our first and foremost focus. It is absolutely clear that as we empower the young men and women who make the decision to commit to this lifestyle of service, you are focused on the principal issues that will make our Navy great.

And I want to congratulate you, members of the active structure, I want to congratulate you, everyone of you who are part of the Reserve structure in United States Navy, I want to thank everyone of you who wear the nametag Navy in your civilian uniforms that come and help make tomorrow's Navy. And I want to thank every contractor in this place, many of you who I saw tonight, many of you who wore a uniform in the past, that decided that for the rest of your life you are going to continue to serve this institution because what this is really all about is the intellectual capital to make tomorrow's Navy is represented by the people that are present in this place

tonight.

I see a future that is so exciting, and the most gratifying experience of having the task and an opportunity to serve like Connie and I have, is that we get to see the brilliance of your efforts. And I want to tell you that it is an exciting thing to watch. And so to each of you I say thank you for your commitment to serve. Thank you for reaching for our dreams. Thank you for your commitment to beginning the Navy of the 21st century, a Navy that is committed to giving our Commander-in-Chief the options that he needs, and a Navy that is committed to deal with the enemies that we face in the world today, an enemy who is fearful most of the ideals that this nation was built upon and we stand upon today, the principles and values that for the United States of America we have decided to live by the principle that there are some things worth fighting for. And we are going to continue to do so, assuring victory in this conflict that we face today. Thank you one and all for your commitment to making that a reality. God bless you one and all.

(APPLAUSE)

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