

**Chief of Naval Operations  
Adm. Jonathan Greenert**

**OCS Graduation**

**25 October 2013**

**Admiral Greenert:** Thank you very much. It's an honor and a privilege to be here this morning. Coming up from Washington, first of all I want to thank you for the weather. If you want to know the definition of fall, just take a picture of today and put it in the encyclopedia, and you've got it.

At this time usually we recognize the distinguished visitors today, and I do want to recognize my shipmate, Dr. Rayburn. She works with me in the Pentagon on the battle of the budget. Real wars go on out there and we are really honored and privileged and fortunate to have Dr. Rayburn as our Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Financial Management in our Comptroller. Thank you for coming this morning, Susan.

But the real distinguished visitors today are out behind these candidates who will soon raise their right hand and join the officer corps, and that is the men and women out there, the fathers, mothers, uncles, aunts, grandparents, friends who have chosen to nurture such a wonderful group of people and a generation that choose to come and serve their country. As Captain Kemper said, they could have done something maybe a little more easy, but they wanted something to challenge them, and we will do that for sure.

So I congratulate you, candidates. You came here for a challenge and I want to thank the drill instructors, I want to thank the Marine Corps -- my good friend General Jim Amos who they provide for us a group that helps bring together and not only teach them discipline and make them physically fit, but also see that this is a team sport out here -- the Navy/Marine Corps -- and a team that can't be beat. It can't be beat at all.

It's customary to tell the grads here this is going to be a great opportunity. Sometimes you're out there facing a challenge and sometimes you're not. Today I can assure all of you that you will see things that you haven't thought about, and it will not be very long before you will.

Our mandate in our United States Navy today is presence. We need to be out and about in the world. We are the away team. We are out there where it matters and we are always ready to respond when it matters. We reassure allies. We make sure that adversaries understand that it's not a good idea to test us, to test our mettle. We respond to any crisis out and about. I don't need to put you through examples because it's happening today in so many different areas.

The future is uncertain and we have to be prepared to deal with that unexpected future.

So if you're sitting here in front of me, one of the 85, you're saying well, yeah, I've got time for that. Maybe you do. Maybe you think you do. But let me give you just a few examples. It won't be about if for some of them that you're involved in, it's about when.

Think about what you were doing two years ago. You're going to go be a pilot. In two years you can be flying aboard a carrier or flying a P-8 or a P-3 out on patrol. If you want to be a naval flight officer you've got 18 months before -- What were you doing 18 months ago? If you're going into submarines you've got about 15 months, and you could be out and about on a patrol, six, seven, eight weeks, or if you're on an SSBN, 70 days, ten weeks. You want to be a SEAL? You've got 14 months. I don't think I have to tell you, you're going into the fray if you go into the SEAL community. Intelligence, supply, you've got about give months, six months. And by the way, intel officers that's not office duty down in the catacombs or some area today. Intel officers are embedded out and about with our folks out and around the world, the same with supply corps officers. Civil engineers, you've got about three months. Things are getting close here, ladies and gentlemen. It's not going to be long. If you're in information warfare or other kinds of information dominance area you've got about two or three months. And if you're going surface warfare it's a matter of weeks when you do the out and about, in the globe, headed toward a dhow or something out there and they say Mr. Johnson, Ms. Smith, Ms. Whatever, what are we going to do now? And you're in charge.

I can give you examples of kids that have done the same thing. But don't worry. You've been trained well. Go back on your training, reach within, you'll do just fine. I'm sure you'll make us all very proud and make your country proud.

I would be remiss if I didn't give you a little advice. I've been around a few years, and so let me pass along a couple of things that I would ask you new leaders to think about, and those of you who are supporting them because everybody behind them is the wind underneath their wings that makes them go.

First of all, you all will be looked at for leadership among the people that you lead -- your division, if you will, your platoon, your squadron. They don't want to really be your friend, but it would be nice if you were friendly. They expect a human being, not a machine. But they expect a leader. They want somebody to stand up and show them the way. That's what we've trained you to do. You need to reach within.

You need to guard your integrity. No one, no one can take your integrity from you. People can take a lot of things from you, but nobody can take your integrity away. That is uniquely yours. Only you maintain and guard that. I assure you that will be challenged. But I also assure you your integrity, the ability to always know the truth, to always come forward and deal with the facts is the foundation of what we do out there. We must believe what everybody tells us. Our lives depend on it.

Your allegiance, when we present the oath, when you take the oath here, your allegiance is to the institution. It's not to your buddy, it's not to necessarily your shipmate, your wingman and all that. That's all very important. But the absolute allegiance of what you're about is to the institution. Remember that when you take your oath.

Be kind to everybody. Treat everyone with dignity and respect, because no one in this institution you are about to join is unimportant. We can't afford to have folks who are unimportant. It's uniquely ours. If you go to sea, if you fly in an airplane, a jet, if you're out among SEALs, if you're with an explosive ordnance detachment, everybody is part of that. We need to treat everybody with that dignity and respect and that understanding that your life -- your life -- depends on it, and their lives depend on you.

With that, you have to learn to trust shipmates. I will tell you that will be unique. You have never had to trust anybody as much as you're going to have to trust people out there that you're working with. Your life will depend on it. That's one of the unique parts of our business.

Learn your Navy heritage. Everything that you have on today, your hat, your shoes, the rank that you have on the insignia, is all built on a heritage and a legacy and it has a reason, believe it or not. But it's true. Learn it and you'll understand it. It defines who you are and who you will be.

You need to wear sunscreen, kiddo, because if you don't wear it today, it will take 20 years for sun cancer to emerge, but it will emerge. If you go out and about in the sun it's probably the thing that will be the biggest threat throughout your life, more than anything else. Wear sunscreen.

Lastly, this is the only directive I'm going to give to you. You'll get enough direction out there, but this is from me. I want you to call or write or text your mother once a week. [Applause]. No one has the unconditional love for you than that person and that's why you're here today, because of that.

You've come a long way since you started OCS. You are in fact part of the finest Navy in the world, as Captain Kemper mentioned earlier, and it is true. It is a group of 630,000 sailors, civilians and reservists also joining us in there. You are part of the all-volunteer force.

We are a great Navy. We are a great nation. We are a great military. We have amazing technology and we have amazing operational experience. But what makes us different and gives us the asymmetric advantage over anybody else is the all-volunteer force that you are about to join.

So lead on, good luck, and welcome aboard. Thank you.

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