

Chief of Naval Operations
Adm. Jonathan Greenert

PREPARED REMARKS TO THE USNA CLASS OF 2015
22 May 2015

Thank you, Captain Byrne. Vice President Biden, international partners, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, thank you all for being here. And thank you to the team that has delivered the graduates here today, from Admiral Carter and Dean Phillips to your family and friends – well done!

40 years ago, I was sitting on the other side of this podium. Today, I have the honor for the last time to welcome our newest group of leaders. Class of 2015, you are the future and I trust you will do great things in the fleet.

In our previous discussions, I gave you a preview of the fleet you are entering and the Sailors you will lead. Keeping with tradition, I have given you a preview of the remarks I'm giving right now; they are on my Facebook and Twitter. I know you have waited four years for *your* chance to hear this and you will hang on my every word. But remember, you can re-read this later, re-living this moment whenever you want. We've got the technology.

First, congratulations to you all, whether you leave here today as Ensigns or Second Lieutenants. You are members of an unbeatable Navy-Marine Corps Team. We live in a complex world. None of us can face the challenges alone. Our bonds were forged over two centuries ago, and we will continue to answer the call, together. Our forces are currently deployed around the world, on station and on watch, where it matters, when it matters.

Now, I'd like to give you a few words of advice.

Be brilliant in the basics. Let others debate partisan issues, budgets, sequestration, etc. Master your job, know and take care of your people, and do the right thing. It's that simple. You are entering a unique profession. Our mission is to deter aggression, and should deterrence fail, win our nations wars. This is a serious business, and involves life and death decisions.

Everything we do is underwritten by trust, unconditional trust. If trust is lost it undermines unit effectiveness. Members of your unit, whether senior officers or junior Sailors, will take note of your every action or inaction. You must work to build trust every day. We've taught you what to do.

Guard your integrity. No one can take it from you; you are in control here. Make all decisions through a moral lens. Act, speak, and exercise judgment with character. It will serve you well.

Your Sailors will look to you for leadership, not friendship. It is up to you to take charge and accomplish the mission, whether it is preparing for an inspection or executing combat operations. No matter how unsurmountable a challenge may seem, remember that you are part of a team, and that your Sailors will not let you down. Treat them with dignity and respect; your lives depend on each other.

Learn your Navy heritage. It is our shared legacy and defines us. Our customs, ceremonies and traditions are tangible links to those who have gone before us throughout our rich history. Today you become another link in the chain.

Finally, I wanted to wrap up with a few final tips:

You need to wear sunscreen, because if you don't wear it today, it will take 20 years for skin cancer to emerge, but it will emerge. Wear sunscreen.

Keep your social media private. Not only is it a treasure trove for criminals and foreign intelligence services, your significant other, parents, and boss are probably already keeping tabs on you. What seemed like a good idea to share at the time, in retrospect, could prove to be a very public record.

Lastly, if you only take away one thing from today, remember this: I want you to call or write or text your mother once a week. No one has that same unconditional love for you, without her you wouldn't be here today.

I'm honored to commission you. Graduates to be commissioned in the United States Navy: rise. Please raise your right hand.

Having been appointed an Ensign in the United States Navy to rank from 22 May 2015, do you solemnly swear that you will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that you will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that you take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that you will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which you are about to enter; so help you God?

[I DO]

Welcome Aboard Shipmates! Ensigns: seats.