

**Chief of Naval Operations**

**Adm. Jonathan Greenert**

**23 May 2014**

**REMARKS TO THE USNA CLASS OF 2014 – AS PREPARED**

Thank you, Captain Byrne. Secretary Hagel, it's great to have you here – Secretary Mabus, my shipmate General Amos, thanks for being here. Admiral Miller, Dean Phillips, and family and friends of the Class of 2014. It's an honor for me to be here today. The best part of the job is bringing new leaders into the fleet. Class of 2014, you are our future and I look forward to seeing you in the fleet.

For those of you about to become Ensigns, I ask you to remember our discussion earlier this week. I decided from that discussion, that I like you. So much, in fact, that the full text of my remarks are currently posted on my Facebook page and you can read it later or, maybe on your smartphones while you're waiting for your diploma. But I do have a few points I'd like to make on your behalf.

First, I'd like to congratulate the Second Lieutenants entering the fleet today as well – you're joining a great institution, an unbeatable Navy-Marine Corps Team. We stand shoulder to shoulder. I very much appreciate the Marine Corps and I stand beside it – our naval team is the very best in the world. We present the Secretary of Defense and the President with a ready force. Presence is our mandate; we must operate forward where it matters and be ready when it matters.

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

You will be looked at for leadership among the people that you lead -- your division, 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 also 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 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 that your integrity, the ability to always tell and insist on [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 you take the oath momentarily, your allegiance is to the institution. It's not

to your buddy, it's not necessarily to your shipmate or your wingman. 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. If you go to sea, if you fly in a jet, a helo, if you're out among SEALs, if you're with an explosive ordnance detachment, each member of the team has a critical part. 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, it will take 20 years for sun cancer to emerge, but it will emerge. If you are on the bridge or on the flight deck, 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 your mother once a week. No one has the unconditional love for you than that person and that's why you're here today, because of that.

I'm honored to commission you. Graduates to be commissioned in the United States Navy, please rise.

All midshipmen entering the United States Navy, please raise your right hand.

Having been appointed an Ensign in the United States Navy to rank from 23 May 2014 do you solemnly swear that you will support 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 moral reservation or purpose of evasion; so help you God?

[I DO]

Welcome Aboard Shipmates! You may be seated.