

Assumption of Command

18 SEP (10 min remarks)

- Good afternoon, and thank you for being here today. Special thanks to all of the distinguished guests, family members, and friends who are here.
 - Class of 1982 – back here where it all began...just wanted to be sure that this was true...shocked and surprised
 - So many friends...USNA's mission is to prepare midshipmen mentally, morally, and physically...Dana and I are blessed to have made those true friends that have picked up that mission – and have done so much to support us and make us better people. We are so grateful that you are here to share this day
 - Family – extended. Big. Loud. Uncles, aunts, cousins from all over the country – Oregon, Hawaii, Virginia, Texas, etc.
 - Dad – you got us started with your naval service and showed us how it should be done. I know mom would love to be here as well, and is in spirit.
 - Brothers and sisters – it's not often all six of us get together – terrific
- As I was thinking about everybody joining us – both the Greenerts and the Richardsons for this event – the Change of Office – I thought, you know, we could do this in so many different ways. CNO Greenert and I could just go into Secretary Mabus's office, salute one another, and it would be done – completely official!

- This is killing Admiral Carter—“Slapshot” – “well, NOW he says that” – thousands of parking spots and office calls and planning hours later...
- But we’re here in force – over 1200 of us. What is it that brings us here? Why do we do it this way? As I thought about it, most of the people are here for one – or maybe more – of three reasons.
 - First, to pay tribute to CNO Greenert. You have heard so much about his service and leadership of our Navy.
 - For my part, I can bring a personal perspective. To have the chance to work with ADM Greenert – to have he and Darleen as friends and mentors, is like being an immediate family member. We go back some ways...
 - You know, we both commanded USS Honolulu...and Admiral Haney commanded it between CNO Greenert’s time as CO and mine.
 - To the best of my knowledge, there’s never been another ship or submarine *ever* that had 3 CO’s become 4-star admirals.
 - When I first made Flag, Admiral Greenert was Commander of Fleet Forces Command – an immense responsibility! Amongst all of his responsibilities, he took the time to have me over for lunch to personally welcome me into the flag wardroom...as a junior officer, no doubt, but a member nonetheless. He has been a mentor ever since.

- I don't want to spoil anybody's headlines or legacy, but CNO Greenert was WAY out in front predicting our need to rebalance to the Pacific. From before his time at 7th Fleet, he's led the way in strategic thinking.
 - And most recently, he and Darleen have spent hours and hours working turnover with Dana and me. They have been incredibly generous with their time. As I said, like family.
 - So the take away here is...that my true talent is that I am an expert at following ADM Jon Greenert!! Just finding just the right wake to tuck into...
 - CNO Greenert and Darleen, thank you so much for all you have done for Dana and me.
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- A second reason people might come is to honor the meaning of the ceremony – to witness the formal passage of authority.
 - In a time when many are fleeing accountability, we come together to mark a salute. A salute that embodies that transfer of authority, accountability, and responsibility.
 - We take full ownership of our job and welcome scrutiny and accountability...these have been features of Admiral Greenert's tenure as CNO, and they will remain features in mine.

- Third, I believe that many are here in recognition that America, since its conception, has been a maritime nation.
 - Reliant on the oceans for our prosperity
 - As we grew to become a global power, our appreciation of the seas as THE system that connects and unifies the world grew as well
 - ...and as fluid as the oceans, and movement over the oceans are, travel at sea is not all uniform
 - There are parts of the ocean that have almost no traffic, and then there are heavily traveled sea lanes... lanes that connect countries to markets and resources... lanes that traverse through defining geographic straits and channels and canals... "choke points" they are called, because they can literally choke off a nation's lifeblood if passage is restricted
 - The first ships of the U.S. Navy went to the Strait of Gibraltar to protect the passage of our goods from the Barbary Pirates.
 - So we've always been a maritime nation and I believe that's another thing that brings us together today - it's in our national DNA

- But I think that there's more to it...there's an urgency that we feel that goes beyond our historical sense of things...
 - I think that deep in our guts we sense a shift in the world, and we sense that once again it will be vitally important to protect our interests on the seas
 - Things are changing....there are regions and countries that are growing, economic centers of gravity that are shifting
 - And as it has been forever, when nations become strong enough to have global ambitions, it is only a matter of time before they turn to the sea to enhance their prosperity and their security
 - And so today, perhaps for only the second time in the last 70 years, things are getting sporty for us as other nations have global ambitions and are going to sea to achieve their aims.
- So we're brought here by a sense of our DNA as a maritime nation, and a sense of change, and maybe some urgency, but there's more still....
 - for the first time in human history, the system of oceans and seas is not the only unifying system...we now live in the Information Age, and we have a global information system that connects us as fluidly as the world's seas...
 - it cannot *replace* the seas, but this information system is clearly global, and it is just as vital to our prosperity, and it moves at the speed of light! So fast!
- How many of you received your invitation to this ceremony via email? See? That's a big shift from even four years ago...

- As an aside...let me take this opportunity to ask you please don't change your email address!! LOTS of bounce backs...In four years, I'll invite you back using the same address...
- So these three factors unite us today –
 - The recognition that we are a maritime nation
 - the re-emergence of the seas as a domain that we must attend to and protect as vital to our prosperity
 - *and* the undeniable emergence of the Information Age that will complement and accelerate how our nation will thrive going forward

This is a challenging time to be sure. Dr. Kissinger has remarked that we live in the most challenging and complex time since the end of WWII.

- As an American and as your CNO, I am very optimistic.
 - Because this is EXACTLY the environment in which Americans thrive, and we WILL thrive
 - As an American, I am optimistic because there is something uniquely creative and innovative about us – we find a way to succeed under any circumstances, and we're at our very best when the chips are down and the stakes are high...and they are very high indeed right now
 - As an American, I am optimistic because we are part of a strong and growing network of allies, partners, and friends. We will not be on our own!
 - At home, we have brothers and sisters in arms - Our closest relative is the USMC!
 - Worldwide, we have international allies and friends
 - Together, we share a common interest in preserving the systems that have led to our common prosperity and can enable future prosperity for all
- As your new CNO, I am optimistic because there is
 - nobody more creative
 - nobody more resilient
 - nobody who learns faster
 - nobody who adapts quicker
 - nobody who shows more initiative
 - and there is no better partner
 - and there is no more dangerous competitor than the United States Sailor!

- They are magnificent! Under any circumstances, in any situation, in any crisis, and certainly any fight, American Sailors, working together in high-performing teams, will find a way to win.
- Dana and I feel such privilege to be able to serve and lead this magnificent team, and we will give everything that we have – our last molecule of energy.
- In closing, I would ask one favor of you all.
- As you put your head down tonight, before you go off to sleep, take a moment to say a quick prayer for our nation, our Navy, and our Sailors at sea around the world.
- Thank you and God Bless you.