



COMMANDER U.S. FLEET FORCES COMMAND
SUBMARINE INDUSTRIAL BASE KEYNOTE REMARKS, 03 JUNE 23

Well, good morning, how's everyone doing today? This is really a fantastic event and thank you Matt [Sermon] for that kind introduction. To those completing the 2023 Virginia Talent Pipeline and signing onto a company or those celebrating a new addition to the team – Congratulations; or as we say in the Navy – Bravo Zulu!

I am honored to be with you for your signing day from this program and allowing me to be part of the conclusion of this chapter of your lives and the beginning of the next.

And what an exciting day! I can sense the excitement in the room, especially coming from your loved ones, who are extremely proud of what you have accomplished and what you will accomplish as Matt said in support of our national security.

And let me take a moment to address the families and friends directly... your love and support were essential throughout this demanding program and will remain crucial as they move into their new careers – and - I thank you for your continued encouragement as their careers take off. Now, how about a round of applause for the families and friends of this Hampton Road's Class of 2023.

This morning, we celebrate a success that is a year in the making – an achievement in which you learned your critical skills through dedication and hard work – including substantial technical education, valuable real-world waterfront experience, and comprehensive examination.

Thus, it is important to me, personally, to be with you today so that I could relay the special significance of this achievement to each and every one of you. You are part of truly something special.

No one else can do what our industrial base can do, anywhere in the world.

No one else is able to sustain a combat fleet of conventional and nuclear-powered warships, at such a high tempo over the class lifecycle of thirty, forty, or even fifty years.

No one else is so critical to our ability to deliver deterrence, sea control, and power projection at our timing and tempo.

You all should be extremely proud. I know I am.

It's impossible to see the talent before me today and not be excited and confident in the future of our country.

It's not only because of the mind-boggling scope and pace of repairs to the world's most sophisticated and lethal instruments of military power, it's also because of the people that do the work.

But, before I get too far ahead of myself, let's cover why you are here today:

Given this diverse group of government executives, program offices, industry leaders, retirees, veterans, I hope all are acutely aware of my "on the record" displeasure with our collective inability to produce and deliver ordnance on time and on cost, to complete maintenance and



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modernization availabilities on time and on cost, and the need to be at Flank speed to build the much needed capacity and output from our public and private shipyards.

On this 'Signing Day' and Talent Pipeline Program acknowledgment celebration, my message remains consistent – we must all work together to build concrete and accountable actions that will get our Navy's ship and submarine building plan back on track. This is an imperative that will ultimately allow Fleet and Type Commanders to generate the forces needed – that are combat ready to support our forward Operational Commanders and additionally have an equally prepared force standing at the ready to surge and support contingency operations.

What I am want to talk about today is this assembly of a world class team of shipbuilders, engineers, program managers, business leaders, industry partners, Sailors, and operators, welders, pipefitters, craftsmen, trainers and facilitators – what we will accomplish side-by-side, day-in and day-out, all in the name of peace, security, and prosperity of our great nation.

For those of you who are unsure of what I do as a Fleet Commander, or what we do exactly at Fleet Forces Command, across my many hats – I am charged with organizing, training, and equipping a force of over 125,000 Sailors and Civilians with hundreds of ships, submarines, and aircraft and support facilities across the U-S Atlantic Fleet that can ultimately prevail in a high-end conflict while meeting the objectives of our Combatant Commanders.

In short, we protect America from attack and go forward to defend our interests around the world - and if needed - fight and win on terms favorable to the United States.

I will tell you, as straightforward and simple as possible, we need everyone in this room and across the nation to be 'all-in'. Not only the Ship and Submarine Building and Repair Industry, but also the Defense Industrial Base writ large. There are threats on the horizons, and 'constructive kills' could one day become full kinetic warfare with little to no warning.

As you see and hear about in the news, we are operating squarely in a maritime era. For decades now, we enjoyed freedom of maneuver around the world and have supported our land and air forces securely from the sea.

We're in a different world today. The sea has once again emerged as a primary focal point for peer competition – and the stakes have never been higher.

Russia is actively waging an illegal war of ruthless aggression against Ukraine while year after year deploying its ships and submarines to our coastlines looking to shake our confidence.

China is the pacing challenge to our way of life with its unprecedented proliferation of combat power in the Indo-Pacific and its continued attack on the international, rules-based order.

China's Navy is the largest in the world with a battle force of around 340 platforms, including major surface combatants, submarines, ocean-going amphibious ships, mine warfare ships, aircraft carriers, and fleet auxiliaries.... This figure does not include approximately 85 patrol



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combatants and craft that carry anti-ship cruise missiles. The overall battle force of China's Navy is expected to grow to 400 ships by 2025 and 440 ships by 2030.

The U-S Navy is around 295 ships and will remain at that number over the next few years. With Strategic Competition here, the potential for Strategic Conflict steadily grows, and we cannot afford to continue to fall behind. We must leverage our areas of overmatch and enduring value.

That's why in 2021, the Department of Defense, through Program Executive Office Submarines funded this Talent Pipeline Program to serve as a consultant to improve small to medium defense employers' ability to attract, hire, train, and retain new hires beyond one year, significantly increasing the probability that employees will remain with the company or at least in the field – with the goal to ultimately improve the production capacity of the Submarine Industrial Base to meet the Defense Industrial Base requirements to re-capitalize the Fleet over the next 30 years.

Simply stated, the Department of Defense is investing time and energy into supporting the Talent Pipeline Program to build a strong foundation for private companies to ensure we never enter a fair fight with our Navy.

The Program Office, Joe Barto, his team and I all believe that positive performance and growth comes through teamwork on the production floor with transparent leaders championing constructive debate, innovation, hard work, and accountability.

We need our workforce to not just feel a sense of connectedness, but to feel a sense of belonging – a belonging and deep affinity to a world class organization enabled by trust and respect.

I think that the best teams weather the storms together – they have each other's back – they care about each other and pick each other up after a loss or tragedy. That's how we will remain the world's most elite, integrated, full spectrum and combat-credible fighting force.

And let me be crystal clear, elite is not perfect. Perfection leads to stagnation. Stagnation discourages innovation. And without innovation, we lose the ability to continually improve and attract and retain talent. An innovative and collaborative spirit attracts people like you to create, iterate, and produce the materials, equipment, and repair activities necessary to win in decisive combat.

We must never be comfortable with a product. Drive your teams to be "elite" by continuously and critically evaluating yourselves and improving. Any workforce, given the time, space and clear guidance will always create innovative solutions to our most challenging problems.

I believe that if the team of employers and employees in this program have the right level of support, you all will in-turn be able to provide greater support to the Navy Fleet Construction and Sustainment Programs, so that the Defense Industrial Base can increase the capacity to help build the two Virginia Class Fast Attack Submarines, one Columbia Class Ballistic Missile Submarine, two Arleigh Burke Class Destroyers each year, while continuing to build the Ford



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Class Carriers and the new Constellation Class Frigates plus continuing to support sustainment of our operational Fleet. That is a tall order, but the standard we need.

While China and Russia can build their ships, tanks, aircraft, ordnance and post pictures on social media all they want – our weapons systems are not just window dressing, they're not just talking points – our weapons systems are built by our talented industrial base and manned by our battle-hardened warfighters, are absolutely ready to take the fight to any adversary - **and WIN!**

Speaking of our Sailors and families, right now, there are 15 submarines deployed around the world, showing firsthand why the President, the Secretary of Defense, the Combatant Commanders, and Navy leadership rely on the Submarine Force as the “first to the fight and last to leave as the steely-eyed killers of the deep.”

Now, I'm not the first, and I certainly will not be the last to tell you – that it is an indisputable fact that our two Carrier Strike Groups, GERALD R FORD and RONALD REAGAN, operating off the coast of Norway and in the western Pacific are the centerpiece of not only our naval fighting force, but our ability to overtly project power and strategic deterrence around the world.

That force is a direct output of your efforts. You are joining an employer, which is part of a world-class team of professionals, focused and bore sighted on helping the Navy secure our nation's vital national interests.

We could not do it without you. As you will hear from the next few speakers, this program works, but it is still in its infancy. We will learn.

As the Talent Pipeline expands across the East Coast, from Philadelphia, to Hampton Roads, to New York and Boston, we must all remain committed to improving our processes and continuing to invest in ourselves, and in our talent base.

I would like to thank the many facilitators, training providers, and employers for participating in this venture. You are fighting to make companies better that will attract our nation's best to produce the platforms responsible for our nation's defense.

And so for each of you; that vocation, that mission, provides a vast array of opportunities as you continue to progress as an artisan and craftsman.

So to the employees beginning your journey, I encourage you to stick with it and lean on your loved ones in times of doubt. Your vocation – your mission – creates a positive and lasting fighting difference in our ships and submarines...and most importantly, for our Sailors of the Fleet who rely on your hard work and who sail the ships you have built around the world.

It is a noble pursuit. It matters to your family because you can provide them with everything they need to thrive. It matters to your community because your work keeps our local economy humming and the Fleet fighting. And it matters to your nation because that Fleet can be present where it matters, when it matters, to defend U.S.' interests around the world.



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No other institution contributes so directly or so significantly to the nation's defense.

For as long as the Navy has been America's Away team, Hampton Road's Industrial Base has been the heart of our Fleet – the readiness engine that revitalizes our ships, making them ready to fight and win.

So, celebrate today's occasion, because it is certainly an achievement worth enjoying. And we know that happiness in life is about enjoying its great experiences with those who you love and admire and with those who support you.

And I challenge you to continue to aggressively pursue excellence by becoming a master craftsman of the highest order.

You certainly have learned much over the course of the last year, but as the famous American journalist and author, Thomas Friedman observed, "... the most enduring skill you can bring to the workplace... is the ability to learn how to learn."

So in closing, I would argue that your journey towards true mastery of your craft is where you will find genuine fulfillment and passion for your career. It starts today!

All of the necessary ingredients are there.

And your apprenticeship program has you off to a very fast start, imbuing you with a powerful combination of comprehensive knowledge and superior craftsmanship.

You will work hard, dedicated to a career that has real meaning – real meaning to your family, to your community, to your Navy and nation, and to the world.

After all, when you see your ships doing great things, like what FORD and REAGAN are out there doing right now, you will have the privilege of telling yourself and your loved ones and everyone who would listen to you, "I did that. I helped make my country safe and secure today. I do it every day."

Thank you, and congratulations!