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UNTIL RELEASED BY THE HOUSE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY CONSTRUCTION
VETERANS AFFAIRS, and RELATED AGENCIES
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

STATEMENT OF
MASTER CHIEF PETTY OFFICER OF THE NAVY
(SUBMARINE WARFARE/SURFACE WARFARE)
RICK D. WEST
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY CONSTRUCTION,
VETERANS AFFAIRS AND RELATED AGENCIES
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

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Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy

MCPON (SS/SW) Rick D. West



Master Chief Rick West became the 12th Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy on Dec. 12, 2008.

West was born in Rising Fawn, Ga. He graduated from Northwest Georgia High School in 1981 and immediately entered the U.S. Navy.

West received recruit training and Quartermaster training at Orlando, Fla., followed by Enlisted Submarine School at Groton, Conn. His first duty assignment was aboard *USS Ethan Allen* (SSN 608) where he completed Submarine Qualifications. Other assignments include *USS Thomas Edison* (SSN 610), *USS Sea Devil* (SSN 664), Commander Naval Activities United Kingdom (COMNAVACTUK), *USS Tecumseh* (SSBN 628)(Blue), and COMSUBPAC Staff (TRE Team).

West was assigned as Chief of the Boat aboard the San Diego based Fast Attack Submarine, *USS Portsmouth* (SSN 707), completing two Western Pacific deployments and earning two Battle Efficiency “E” awards.

West served as Command Master Chief in Submarine Squadron ELEVEN. Upon completion of his tour at COMSUBRON ELEVEN, he was selected as Force Master Chief (FORCM), attended the Senior Enlisted Academy in Newport, R.I., and served as Force Master Chief, Submarine Force U.S. Pacific Fleet (COMSUBPAC) from Jan. 2001 to Jan. 2004.

West then reported to *USS Preble* (DDG 88) in San Diego, Calif., where he completed a deployment to the Arabian Gulf and qualified as Enlisted Surface Warfare Specialist.

West was then selected to serve as Pacific Fleet, Fleet Master Chief from Feb. 2005 to June 2007.

Prior to being selected to be MCPON, he served as the 14th Fleet Master Chief for Commander, U.S. Fleet Forces Command from June 2007 to Dec. 2008.

West's personal awards include the Legion of Merit (two awards), Meritorious Service Medal (three awards), Navy Commendation Medal (four awards), Navy Achievement Medal (two awards), Enlisted Surface Warfare Insignia, Enlisted Submarine Insignia, and SSBN Deterrent Patrol Pin.

Introduction

Chairman Culberson, Ranking Member Bishop and members of this subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you. As the Enlisted representative of the Navy, I am honored to have the privilege to speak before you on behalf of more than 430,000 active and reserve Sailors who make the finest Total Force in the history of our great Navy.

Last year, I visited many commands around the world and most recently I traveled with our Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) to Afghanistan, Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Landstuhl, with which I was impressed by the quality of Sailors serving with such great enthusiasm and devotion. I am constantly amazed and truly awed by the daily sacrifices and outstanding capabilities and resiliency of our Sailors who serve with distinction on ships, squadrons, submarines, and on land. No matter where they are in the world or what they do for our great Navy, everything they do is very important and it all plays part in our nation's and Navy's Maritime Strategy. Our Sailors are the best we have ever seen as a Navy, they are performing their missions well and I am very proud of what they do everyday.

America's Navy is a global force for good on station around the world, around the clock building partnerships through maritime security cooperation and spanning our core capabilities of our Maritime Strategy of forward presence, deterrence, power projection, sea control, maritime security, and humanitarian assistance, and disaster response. Our Navy's responsibilities have increased because the challenges our country faces are so unpredictable and diverse. We need to be ready to confront these challenges, and we are.

In addition to our traditional maritime mission, below, on or above our world's oceans, we are boots-on-ground alongside our brothers and sisters in the Army and Marine Corps in

places like Iraq and Afghanistan. In fact today, we have the second largest force operating in that Area of Responsibility (AOR).

The Navy's contribution in support of Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) has been a vital component of our national effort to secure a safer world. At any given time, there are more than 15,000 Sailors in the Individual Augmentee (IA) pipeline worldwide, either with orders, in training, or deployed, filling almost 11,000 IA requirements. The Navy has almost 24,000 active and reserve Sailors on the ground and at sea in the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) AOR supporting Navy, Joint Force and Combatant Commander requirements in support of OCO.

Using skills traditional to the Navy, our Sailors continue to fill combat support and combat service support missions. These missions include medical support, Joint Task Force and head quarters staff, base operating support, detainee operations, engineers, intelligence and surveillance, embedded training teams, and provincial reconstruction teams.

To date, there have been more than 90,000 IAs in support of OCO with more than two-thirds of these Sailors mobilized from the Navy Reserve. Most IAs are concentrated in the CENTCOM region, which includes Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait, and Bahrain. But there are also IAs serving in other regions to include, but not limited to, Germany, Philippines, Cuba, Horn of Africa, and Japan. I assure you that your Sailors are ready to take on any challenge necessary to protect our great nation by providing a constant, well-trained forward presence throughout the world.

With more than 40 percent of our ships deployed daily, America's Navy is making the world a better place. Our Navy has conducted counter piracy operations in the Indian Ocean and deployed ships to provide proactive humanitarian assistance with global partners in missions

such as Pacific Partnership and Continuing Promise 2010 in the Caribbean. Our Sailors perform remarkable and selfless feats every day out of devout patriotism and commitment to helping others. Last year, our Sailors responded compassionately providing humanitarian assistance and disaster relief to the earthquake in Haiti and flood in Pakistan, and today they are providing assistance in strength to the people of Japan after the devastating earthquake and tsunami. With all the events and coverage by our Navy worldwide we conducted the world's largest maritime exercise, which brought together 14 nations and more than 20,000 military personnel, to improve coordination and trust in multi-national operations in the Pacific. Our nation's Navy has a global presence and are the first responders when the nation and the world calls.

Recruiting and Retention

We have been very successful in our recruiting and retention efforts over the past three years. However, we are encountering challenges in recruiting Active Component (AC) Direct Accession Physicians, and Reserve General Officers, Physicians, Chaplains, and Dentists.

Our mission is to attract, recruit, develop and retain a highly-skilled Total Force for our Navy. In FY10, Navy recruiting achieved all enlisted sub-goals, including total female, women in no-traditional ratings, nuclear field, Naval Special Warfare/Special Operations, and all OCO ratings. We continue to exceed Department of Defense (DoD) quality standards in all recruit categories. For new contract quality in FY10 we achieved 97.4 percent High School Diploma Graduates (HSDG) and 83 percent scored 50 or higher on their ASVAB (Test Score Category I-III A). We expect this trend to continue into FY11.

America's Navy has transitioned from a posture of reducing end strength to one of shaping the force. Our force shaping efforts remain focused on maintaining a balanced force in

terms of seniority, experience and skills, while staying within our congressionally authorized end strength limits. We expect to meet our FY11 authorized active end strength of approximately 328,700 and Navy reserve end strength of approximately 65,500 by the end of the fiscal year, as well as our active and reserve end strength targets in FY12.

We are recruiting, training and retaining superb Sailors who are dedicated to serving our nation. We are committed to providing them and their families with meaningful service and a high quality of life.

Navy Reserve Force

Since 1915, Navy Reservists have played an integral part in service to our nation. From World War I to World War II, through Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm, to 9/11, and to Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO), Navy Reservists have continually stepped up, supported and defended our nation against enemies foreign and domestic. Since 9/11, our Navy Reserve has filled more than 63,000 mobilization requirements. As of October 2010, more than 7,000 reservists were mobilized to support of OCO. Our Navy Reserve makes up slightly more than fifty percent of the IA force, with slightly less than fifty percent being Active Component Sailors. Our Navy Reserve Warriors continually prove they are more than capable to meet any challenge and conduct any mission, anytime, anywhere.

As I travel the world to meet and talk with Sailors, I could not be more proud of the day to day efforts and tenacity of our Sailors. I'm amazed at the integration that has taken shape over the years between our Active and Navy Reserve. We are one Force working side by side in all corners of the world; a Total Force integrated and executing the Navy's mission where ever and when ever called.

Even though we have always had an operational Navy Reserve, since the terrorist attacks on 9/11 we have relied heavily on our strategic reserve force in order to meet various Naval and joint military missions. Our Sailor's Creed begins with "I am a United States Sailor" and that is exactly what I see when I travel throughout our Navy active and reserve Sailors from all walks of life working side by side as one team, one family and one Navy.

We ensure that billets are filled and missions are manned properly, but our Navy families are top priority, and we remain committed to balancing mission requirements with family needs.

Sailor and Family Readiness

As our Navy changes and we continue to have the most advanced equipment, technology, weapons systems and platforms one thing remains the same, the engine that truly drives our Navy and the reason we are the best is because of our people.

I greatly enjoy every opportunity I get to travel around the world to meet and talk with Sailors and their families. When I see our hard-working, high-spirited and amazingly capable Sailors, it makes me very proud and humbled. Now, that I am toward the end of my career, I am entering a new career field, that of being a Navy family member. My oldest son, Zach, is a Navy Diver and my wife Bobbi and I know what it is like to watch our son deploy in harm's way, waiting, wondering and praying that everything will be alright and he will return home safely. I also know what it feels like to be the spouse at home watching your loved one deploy. I experienced this first-hand this past year when my wife was deployed to Afghanistan with the Naval Criminal Investigative Service. As we all know, we certainly could not do our jobs and probably would not be where we are today without the love and support from our families and spouses.

I could not be more proud of our Navy families for their remarkably selfless dedication and steadfast support of our Sailors. Our families have sacrificed so much as they have supported their Sailors and our great Navy. We are the greatest Navy in the world and a big part of that is our Sailors being ready and able to focus on the mission and their individual jobs because they have the confidence that our Navy is taking care of their families.

Deployments are an integral part of Navy life. We have been deploying our forces since we formed our great Navy during times of both peace and conflict, but it is important not to underestimate or take for granted the incredible strain that a long deployment imposes on our Sailors and their families. Multiple deployments, frequent relocations and the stresses associated with being part of a military family all impact the overall readiness of the unit, the readiness of the individual Sailor and the readiness of their family.

Keeping our Navy families informed about resources available to them to mitigate the strain of deployment and provide support is instrumental to their peace of mind while waiting for their Sailor to return from a year-long assignment in the Middle East or a six-month deployment safe guarding our seas. Through resources such as 'Navy for Moms,' 'Navy Dads,' Military OneSource, Navy.mil and various other web sites, our Sailors and their families are more informed today about the resources available to them than they have ever been in the history of our Navy. Another success in communication has been the use of smart phone applications such as 'Navy Life' and 'Navy IA' as well as social media web sites such as Facebook and Twitter to connect with Sailors and families. Both CNO and I are committed to using social media because it is a great opportunity to remain connected with our Sailors Navy-wide and a great tool in our outreach efforts for getting information out in a timely manner to our entire Navy family, which includes active and reserve Sailors, families, retirees, and Department of the Navy civilians.

We have great resources to support Navy families, providing our Sailors with the peace of mind that their families are being taken care of so they can focus on the job at hand. Fleet and Family Support Centers offer a number of personnel and family support programs to reduce life stressors including Operational Stress Control, physical readiness, life skills education, financial management, health promotion, and religious ministries. The Navy offers quality services to prepare Navy families for the absence of their loved ones. We make every effort to reach service members and families no matter how remote their location through webinars, monthly electronic newsletters and deployment preparedness handbooks.

Our family readiness programs promote healthy and resilient families, focusing on areas such as the prevention of suicide and domestic violence, and providing developmental child care and youth programs and services.

Child Care

In today's military, many of our Sailors have working spouses or have the responsibility of being single parents who depend heavily on our military child and youth system of care, which includes Child Development Centers (CDC), to provide quality child care. Due to frequent relocations and the length of deployments, many of our Sailors do not have the option, like civilian families, to rely on family members and friends to assist with taking care of their child when they are away.

An important facet that stands out in the quality of our child care programs is the continuity of service from location to location as we operate a standardized world-wide program. Sailors and their children can count on the same quality of care whether they are stationed in Chinhae, Korea, or San Diego, California. Additionally, our programs are among the most

affordable. Commercial programs charge parent fees based on the age of the child while our programs base fees on total family income. This model is critical to the economic viability of our families. Children under the age of three are the most costly to care for due to the lower child-to-staff ratios, and typically our most junior enlisted families have children in this age group.

This fiscal year, we will complete an expansion of approximately 7,000 new child care spaces meeting the Office of the Secretary of Defense guidance to provide 80 percent of potential need for child care spaces (54,000 total spaces for children ages infant to twelfth grade, including 19,000 CDC spaces). With the construction of these spaces, we will reduce the waiting time for child care to three months or less Navy-wide with first priority given to single parents.

Our continuing expansion initiatives are not only meeting the needs of our families living on or near our installations, but also those living and working throughout the United States, including Reserve members. Our contract programs “Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood” and “Mission Youth Outreach” provide subsidized child and youth services from commercial programs that meet community quality standards. We continue to work with communities, assisting them with raising the quality of their standards.

Homeport Ashore, Bachelor and Navy Family Housing

Thanks to the support of this subcommittee, we have made significant strides in improving the living conditions of our Sailors and their families. Our Homeport Ashore program continues to provide adequate off-ship quarters to junior Sailors who are not entitled to a Basic Allowance for Housing and would normally live aboard ships. This effort marks the most

dramatic quality of life improvement initiative for our single Sailors that I have seen over the course of my career.

Still, one of my biggest quality of life concerns is that we have approximately 5,400 single Sailors, E-1 to E-4 with less than four years of service living aboard ship while in their homeport. The Navy has made considerable progress toward achieving the Homeport Ashore goal through military construction, privatization, and intensified use of existing barracks capacity (based on an interim assignment policy standard 55 square feet of space per person). Moving our single Sailors off ships remains a priority and requires us to assign two or more Sailors per room. Although housing these Sailors does not meet the DoD requirement of 90 square feet per person, our Sailors are very thankful for this initiative and know that we will continue to work to meet this requirement.

Our Bachelor Housing provides permanent party personnel, student, and mobilized Sailors with suitable, affordable, and safe environments in community, privatized, or Navy-owned housing. It supports unaccompanied permanent party personnel, student, and mobilized units worldwide. The FY12 Bachelor Housing program is focused on completing Homeport Ashore by 2016 and eliminating substandard Bachelor Housing conditions. With respect to addressing the condition, the Navy has increased its investment in the restoration and modernization of bachelor housing across the FYDP to bring 90 percent of the inventory to Q1/Q2 (or adequate) standards by 2022.

In FY11, the Navy would begin this initiative through the renovation of barracks in Milton, Florida; Atsugi, Japan; Ventura, Lemoore and San Diego, California; Whidbey Island and Bremerton, Washington; and Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

The Navy owns approximately 10,000 family housing units worldwide. Based on revised OSD criteria directing the use of Q-ratings, the Navy has identified approximately 3,700 Navy-owned homes as inadequate. The revised definition is based on the physical condition of the home as a function of its replacement value. The previous inadequate definition was identified as a building in need of more than \$50,000 of repairs. We have privatized approximately 40,000 homes in the CONUS and Hawaii inventory. The privatization of the remaining 870 homes in the Northwest is scheduled for the end of 2013. The privatization of the remaining 226 homes in the Southwest is under review. When the Public Private Venture (PPV) transition is complete, the Navy will own less than 100 homes in CONUS and Hawaii, but will retain ownership and management of all foreign assets.

Thanks to the support of this Committee and members of Congress, we have improved the housing available to our Sailors through PPV. Sailors cite the PPV initiative as one of the most effective quality of life improvements in recent years.

Quality of life *does* affect retention and recruiting. PPV and Homeport Ashore are examples of initiatives that have had a direct impact on the retention, morale and the quality of life of our men and women. Young Americans deciding whether the Navy is right for them look at quality of life initiatives as indicators of the Navy's commitment to Sailors and families.

Continuum of Care

Health care is one of our top recruiting and retention tools for our Sailors, and I hear just how important access to healthcare is for them and their family members. Navy Medicine continues to focus on developing an economic and quality-centric strategy for the delivery of top-quality health care to our beneficiaries, and the recruitment and retention of providers in

critical specialties allowing the fulfillment of the wartime mission, while sustaining the benefit here at home.

The Bureau of Medicine and Surgery (BUMED) published an instruction implementing Medical Home Port (MHP) throughout Navy Medicine in 2010 as a new model of healthcare delivery in primary care. Care delivered in the MHP model includes, but is not limited to, readiness, prevention, wellness, behavioral health, and disease management. MHP increases access to care, improves clinical quality and patient outcomes, enhances patient satisfaction, promotes a healthier and fit force, and reduces healthcare utilization, resulting in a reduction in overall healthcare costs.

In June 2010, Navy Medicine completed the first phase of implementation of MHP clinics in three Naval Medical Centers and five Family Practice Teaching Military Treatment Facilities. Navy Medicine began the second phase of implementation, which expands MHP to all primary care clinics by June 2011.

Combat casualty care is provided by Navy medical personnel assigned to and serving with Marine Corps units, in Expeditionary Medical Facilities, aboard casualty receiving/treatment ships and hospital ships, and in military and Department of Veteran Affairs hospitals. Recent advances in force protection, battlefield medicine, combat and operation stress control, medical evacuation, and family support programs have led to improved survival rates, healthier family functioning and enhanced operational effectiveness.

The Navy continues to provide support to Sailors and their families through a variety of programs that increase medical and non-medical assistance to wounded, ill and injured service members utilizing a comprehensive approach designed to optimize their recovery, rehabilitation and reintegration. Navy Case Management is the link that connects resources and services which

allow injured service members to reach their optimum goals in healthcare. Case Management provides the critical support service members need during this challenging time in their lives. Case Management will continue to be at the forefront of providing optimal care to our service members with war-related injuries. Navy Medicine has 192 Medical Case Managers providing service to our wounded, ill, and injured Sailors in Military Treatment Facilities and ambulatory care clinics.

The Navy's Safe Harbor Program is the Navy's lead organization for providing the highest quality non-medical care to all seriously wounded, ill and injured Sailors, Coast Guardsmen and their families. Using a holistic approach, Navy Safe Harbor offers a lifetime of individually tailored assistance designed to optimize the success of a Sailor's or Coast Guardsmen's recovery, rehabilitation and reintegration activities. Since January 2008, Safe Harbor has grown from nine personnel supporting 145 Sailors and families at six locations to serving a case load of more than 1,200 wounded, ill or injured service members at 16 locations. Safe Harbor's goal is to return Sailors and Coast Guardsmen to duty and when not possible, work collaboratively with federal and non-governmental agencies, including the Department of Veteran Affairs and state and local organizations, to ensure their successful reintegration back into their communities.

Suicide and Sexual Assault Prevention

We continue our suicide prevention efforts through a multi-faceted system of communication, training and command support designed to foster resilience and promote psychological health among Sailors. In Calendar Year 2010, the Navy had 38 Sailor suicides compared to 46 in 2009.

The Navy continues to develop and enhance programs designed to mitigate suicide risk factors and improve the resilience of the force. These programs focus on substance abuse prevention, financial management, positive family relationships, physical readiness, and family support with the goal of reducing individual stress. We continue to work toward a greater understanding of the issues surrounding suicide to ensure that our policies, training programs, interventions, and communication efforts are meeting their intended objectives.

More and more shipmates, leaders, and family members are noting signs of concern and are reaching out to get Sailors the help they need. We recognize that long before thoughts of suicide occur, we have opportunities to build resilience, intervene early when risk factors are present, and create the connections that help sustain us in times of challenge. Most of these efforts fall within our broader family readiness and health promotion activities.

The Navy has expanded the surveillance and analysis system for Navy active and reserve suicide deaths and attempts; supported command prevention and stress control programs with printed resource and interactive training materials; provided training world-wide to suicide prevention coordinators and first responders; and provided Navy representation in DoD, VA and other cooperative efforts.

For most Sailors, suicide prevention is more than just a training topic. About half have personally known someone in their lives who was lost to suicide. Sailors and leaders genuinely care and have shown it in the way they have engaged vigorously in focus groups, put forth tremendous creativity in developing suicide prevention posters and materials, and enthusiastically embraced new hands-on training materials. Their caring shows in the dozens of times each month someone assists a struggling shipmate to get some help. This past year, we

implemented programs such as the Coalition of Sailors Against Destructive Decisions (CSADD) which is gaining momentum with our younger Sailors.

CSADD's mission is to provide military members of all branches with the best prevention and intervention tools possible to deal with the issues of drinking, reckless driving, and other destructive decisions while maintaining good order and discipline, to assist sailors in making life decisions that will maintain positive lifestyles in keeping with the Navy's core values, to guide sailors away from making poor and destructive decisions by providing them with positive and dynamic training and to show sailors how to make quick positive decisions and put their training to use in moments of high stress and peer pressure.

The Navy has a 'zero' tolerance policy for sexual assault; it is a criminal act. The majority of sexual assaults are service member-on-service member and it is incomprehensible that a Sailor would commit such a horrible crime against another shipmate. It undermines teamwork, morale, unit cohesion, and operational readiness.

At the close of calendar year 2010, reports of sexual assault increased from 2009. This increase could be attributed to victims' increased willingness to report the crime. This demonstrates that our education and prevention efforts are showing progress, but we acknowledge sexual assaults are still occurring in our Navy. The highest risk group for victims over the past several years remains E-1 to E-4, ages 20 to 24, with most incidents occurring during the weekends. In most sexual assault incidents, alcohol was a major factor impairing the judgment of offenders, victims and bystanders.

In order to remove sexual assault from our Navy, we are ensuring commands have a strong partnership with Sexual Assault Response Coordinators (SARCs) and a robust Sexual

Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) Program which fosters an environment where ‘shipmates help shipmates’ by not allowing destructive behavior to occur.

The SAPR program, established in 2004, promotes training, builds awareness and provides advocacy and supportive services for victims of sexual assault. It is a victim-focused program that focuses on response and offender accountability. The SAPR program is conducting a comprehensive review of training curriculum for those entering the Service ranks and attending professional military schools. The Navy embraces bystander intervention as the core of our strategy to protect Sailors from sexual assault. Bystander intervention is key to preventing sexual assaults before they occur. Our goals include reducing the incidents of sexual assault, improving support for victims of sexual assault, and building prevention based upon insights from data-driven critical assessments. We will continue to revise and improve the SAPR program to create an environment free of sexual assault for all Navy personnel.

Conclusion

America’s Navy is very much a global force for good on station around the world and around the clock, deterring aggression, keeping the sea lanes open for free trade, projecting power and maritime security, and delivering humanitarian assistance and disaster response where needed. Sailors are the key element in our Navy’s future force.

Our Navy family members share our sacrifices while providing support. They have courage, strength and deep devotion to our country. Our Navy families endure the challenges of multiple deployments and moves, spend holidays and life milestones apart, juggle everyday tasks while a spouse, parent, son, or daughter is in harm’s way, and honor the service of their loved ones and memories of those lost.

We must continue to ask hard questions and make hard decisions that will enable us to provide a quality of life commensurate to the sacrifices our Sailors and their families make. The Continuing Resolution (CR) for 2011 is affecting us in several areas including various military construction projects that are likely not going to be executed. But most of all, it is having a negative effect on our ability to support quality of life for Sailors and their families.

Due to the way resources are phased and allocated under the CR, the Navy does not have sufficient manpower funding to allow for normal lead times for Sailors to receive Permanent Change of Station (PCS) orders as funds must be allotted to cover pay and benefits. Average lead times have been reduced from 4-6 months to approximately 2 months or less. This places great emotional and economic stress on Sailors and their families. In today's economy, there is a great possibility that if they own a house, they will not be able to sell it or have enough time for the spouse to be able to find a job in the new location. Our Navy families affected by these constraints are often forced to live apart. The impact of Navy's PCS funding level is being felt across the force, and will continue until funding is resolved.

On behalf of our Sailors who sacrifice daily and their families who faithfully support them, I want to extend my sincere appreciation for your unwavering support for our United States Navy. Thank you.