



# PRESS RELEASE

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## **USFF Deputy Comptroller Receives Distinguished Civilian Service Award**

*By Mass Communication Specialist 1<sup>st</sup> Class Julie R. Matyascik, U.S. Fleet Forces Command Public Affairs*

**NORFOLK** – The deputy comptroller for U.S. Fleet Forces (USFF) Command was presented with the Navy Distinguished Civilian Service Award (DCSA) Aug. 8 at USFF headquarters on board Naval Support Activity Norfolk, Va.

Adm. John C. Harvey, commander, USFF, presented John D. Choplinsky with the award, which is given annually to a small number of civilian employees nationally and is the highest honorary award the Secretary of the Navy can confer on a Department of the Navy civilian employee.

Choplinsky earned the award for his exemplary service as USFF deputy comptroller throughout the last 10 years.

According to the award citation, “Mr. Choplinsky has been an innovator and leader in the financial management field, developing future financial managers, fiscal systems, and processes that have facilitated U.S. Navy maritime support to geographical combatant commanders around the globe.”

Choplinsky’s boss and co-workers said the award could not have been given to a better man.

Capt. Patrick Ward has been working alongside Choplinsky as the USFF comptroller for only five months, but their professional relationship goes back nearly 10 years to when Ward was an analyst in the Navy Budget Office (Financial Management Branch) in Washington.

“John's uniqueness is in his vision,” said Ward. “While most comptrollers exist very much in the here-and-now world of the "execution and budget years," John also has his sights on the horizon. He thinks, talks about, and moves ahead developing the ‘Comptroller Shop’ of the 21st century.”

As USFF deputy comptroller he is responsible for leading the day-to-day budget formulation, execution, funds’ administration, and financial policy and information systems’ processes for USFF and the Atlantic Fleet.

Born in 1950 in the small town of Eynon, Pa., Choplinsky went to Scranton Preparatory School before graduating from The University of Scranton with a Bachelor of Science degree in accounting in 1971. That same year he was hired on by the U.S. Navy and started work at Naval Air Station Oceana in Virginia Beach as an internal review accountant. By 1975, he moved over to USFF and held positions as

a systems accountant and resources analysis officer prior to his designation as chief accountant and financial management information systems' officer in 1984. Choplinsky has accumulated 40 years of federal service.

The DCSA is one of many awards he has received for his exemplary services.

"Mom always said 'it doesn't matter whether you're a burger flipper or a bean counter, try your hardest and give it your best,'" he said. "I always remember that and live by it."

Choplinsky says with all the awards he has received, there were many people that helped him along the way.

"You can't succeed without wonderful people. Whether they are officer, enlisted, civilian or contractor, they allowed me to become who I am today by watching over me and supporting me."

Sheryl Lee, Choplinsky's executive assistant for the past three years, said not only is he a great leader, debater and teacher, he is devoted to his family and colleagues.

"Our job is tedious at times, but we are a team and always have each other's back," said Lee. "With John, family always comes first and that's the way he makes everyone feel. We are not only part of a team, but a part of his family."

And a large family he has. As the senior civilian financial manager, Choplinsky oversees and mentors 55 individuals in the USFF comptroller office and 350 financial management personnel.

"Mr. Choplinsky's mark on the Navy is more than the tireless efforts and leadership he has given for the past four decades," said Ward. "What makes John almost a 'national treasure' is the impact he has had on developing financial managers throughout the Navy. Most of the senior civilian financial managers throughout the USFF area of responsibility have been mentored and trained by Mr. Choplinsky."

According to Ward, he motivates subordinates to be the best financial managers they can be through his sense of integrity and fairness, his blue-collar work ethic brought from the coal-mining region of northeastern Pennsylvania, and a grandfather's desire to make his world a better place for those who come after him.

For Choplinsky, forward thinking has been one of his greatest accomplishments. In 1982, he helped create the Command Financial Management System (CFMS), a financial database now used Navy-wide.

According to Ward, CFMS is the tool that allows funding to be decentralized while still maintaining the necessary tight fiscal oversight that the American public and Congress demands. The decentralization of funding allows functional decisions to be made at lower levels, which is necessary when the Navy is trying to institutionalize change while still maintaining accountability and a high level of support to the war-fighter.

“His development and promulgation of CFMS has been visionary,” said Ward. “John developed and guided its maturation to the point where it is hard to imagine how financial management functioned prior to the inception of CFMS.”

“I was fortunate to lead its development,” said Choplinsky. “CFMS is still operating 30 years later. When you look at the changes in information technology, it’s significant to have that consistency, while remaining contemporary and operating worldwide, 24-7.”

For Choplinsky, it is not just being a “bean counter” when it comes to managing USFF’s budget. He has an enthusiasm to do a greater good.

“We support within the confines of the dollar,” he said. “This is an operating fleet, whether it is supporting catastrophes like Hurricane Katrina or the earthquake in Haiti, or getting the dollars for equipment to sustain the NATO hospital in Kandahar; we are the behind-the-scenes, unsung heroes and I find it gratifying. It is great to know we are here to support and respond.”

Although Choplinsky has had the option to promote and work in Washington and is eligible for retirement, he has no desire to do either.

“I have had many opportunities to go to Washington, D.C. I place priority on my families. I take care of them, my wife Jean, my daughters, my grandchildren, my church family, my neighborhood family and my work family. This is home.”

Choplinsky has also received The Navy Superior Civilian Service Medal for his work with the Integrated Disbursing and Accounting Financial Management System, The American Society of Military Comptrollers National Computer Science Award, The Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) Certificate for Exceptional Service, The Navy Superior Civilian Service Medal for DFAS creation efforts, and The Assistant Secretary of the Navy Financial Management & Comptroller Echelon II Individual Achievement in Comptrollership.

The Distinguished Service Medal was authorized by Presidential Order dated January 2, 1918, and confirmed by Congress July 9, 1918. The Distinguished Service Medal is issued both as a military decoration and civilian award.

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