

## **CNSF Remarks to SNA**

Barry – Thanks much for that kind and generous introduction and to all of you for the warm reception.

Let me apologize right off the bat - I grew up just outside of Boston - home of the best sports teams in the world – hand downs. But I tend to talk wicked fast and don't necessarily “pronuncify” my words good – so please bear with me!

I want everyone to know up front that I have a personal interest in ensuring we have the best and most lethal Surface Navy ever because my son, Rob, is a brand new Surface Warfare Officer, having just earned his SWO pin in November in USS ROOSEVELT (DDG-80). And although I'm just Dad to Rob, and don't know anything about anything and I'm not nearly as smart as his CO, Commodore and Strike Group Commander – I know my job and I'm getting after it!

This is set to be an exciting week, where we are surrounded by surface warriors – young and old, active and retired, industry and government. The great thing about SNA is that we all have shared experiences, and I know that everyone here cares deeply about Surface Warfare and Surface Warriors.

Over the next three days, we will talk about the current state of Surface Warfare. We'll hear about the programs that will sustain and, where necessary, regain our dominance; we'll hear about community issues important to our Sailors, Chiefs, and Wardrooms; we'll talk about maintenance and modernization; and we'll talk about organizing, training, and equipping the force of today and the future.

But for the next twenty minutes or so, I want to focus on something I've thought a lot about this year, so much so that I have come to see it as one of the most important task before us – and that is a transition from a culture of compliance to a culture of excellence. A culture that simply strives to be the best of the best – always improving - always focused on Owning The Fight.

So what is the difference between a culture of compliance and a culture of excellence? Compliance is important – it's what's needed to build a culture of excellence - it's the foundation. But, compliance is about inspections; excellence is about superior performance and winning. A culture of excellence demands a sense of urgency in all that we do -- not just frenetic activity -- but focused action to deliver the outcomes our Navy requires.

The need for urgency is clear from the President in the National Security Strategy, from the Secretary of Defense in the National Defense Strategy, and from the CNO in the classified Navy Strategy.

If you don't feel this sense of urgency, then you have not been paying attention. And the common theme in all of these strategies is that they are Maritime Strategies – strategies that call for sea control whenever and wherever we need it – requiring our Surface Navy to deter, but if necessary, fight and win the battle for sea control now in an age of Great Power Competition.

Most of you know that we've been here before, that this isn't the first time we've faced Great Power Competition. For 45 years after the end of World War II, an alliance of freedom contested with the Soviet Union and its allies in a global struggle to determine whether the world would be free or live behind the iron curtain.

This contest was underway when I was commissioned in 1985, and many of you in this room remember it well. It shaped us. It drove our shipbuilding programs, it drove our tactics, and it resulted in the most capable cruisers and destroyers the world has ever seen – ships with the AEGIS Weapons System.

It required having your sea bag packed every time you got underway – you just might keep heading east or west. It resulted in constant interaction with the Soviet Navy – we always had to be ready. We could count on Krivak and Slava class frigates and cruisers jockeying to get into the inner screen, routinely operating within hundreds of feet of our ships -- full rudders, 30 knots -- and sometimes even trading paint. We could count on endless hours tracking Soviet submarines. The lesson we learned during the Cold War was that we had to be ready to fight now.

But then in 1989, something happened. Something wonderful happened. On November 9th, as the Cold War was thawing across Eastern Europe, the spokesman for the East Berlin Communist Party announced a change in his city's relations with the West - and actually he made a mistake. There are YouTube videos and documentaries – you'll see the confusion on his face as the media pressed him to explain his statement.

He misspoke saying that citizens of the German Democratic Republic were free to cross the country's borders immediately with no restrictions – the beginning of the fall of the Berlin Wall. And in two short years, the Soviet Union collapsed. Their ships were tied up, rusting, sinking. Their submarines couldn't or at least didn't get underway. For a time, their Navy wasn't even getting paid.

And, by the mere fact that the United States Navy woke up in the morning – we had sea control – unfettered access and control of the sea to go and do whatever we wanted, wherever we wanted, and whenever we wanted. We had no peer competitors. For the next few decades, and especially after 9/11, we projected power ashore in places like Iraq, Afghanistan, and later, Syria – because we could put our carriers anywhere we wanted them, at any time.

We can still do that, make no mistake, but we are being challenged in this era of Great Power Competition, one that could be an even sterner test than the Cold War.

This time, we have two revisionist and resurgent nations – Russia and China. Russia is once again sailing their nuclear-powered submarines through the GI-UK Gap, and challenging us in the Eastern Mediterranean and North Atlantic. China is in full challenge mode inside the first island chain – as a matter of fact, every U.S. ship within the first Island chain has a Chinese escort. We also have the two regional, rogue nations of North Korea and Iran to deal with, as well as the continuing fight against Violent Extremists.

We still remain unmatched in sea control, but we have to work at it harder now and we must continue to get better -- we must learn rapidly, we must innovate faster and we must be tougher than our adversaries.

History provides us with lessons about when our Navy had to achieve these things, and two particularly important lessons come from World War II. At the Battle of Savo Island in August of 1942, we didn't do so good. We lost 4 cruisers in a horrendous night action, even though we had better technology.

Fast forward one year later to November of 1943 – when “31 Knot” Arleigh Burke and 5 U. S. destroyers met a similarly sized Japanese force off Cape St. George. Burke and the Little Beavers sank 3 Japanese Destroyers and severely damaged another without a single loss. The battle represented a significant victory for the Americans and was later described as an "almost perfect action" and Burke was awarded the Navy Cross. He and his team of Surface Warriors did this by rapidly learning the lessons of the last year, practicing them and then executing.

You know, the Battle of Guadalcanal was a brutal campaign, but shows us what the next fight could be like. From August of 1942 to February of 1943, the Japanese made several attempts to retake Henderson Field. These attempts resulted in three major land battles, seven large naval battles of which five were nighttime surface actions and two were carrier battles, and almost daily aerial combat.

The naval engagements went something like this: usually at 1 or 2 in the morning, a sailor, either Japanese or American, saw a silhouette on the horizon, the search lights came on, and the opening salvos of 5 to 16 inch shells began slamming into ships at an average range of 3400 yards. Usually, the CO, XO and senior officers – even Admirals – were killed immediately – but what happened?

Quartermaster 3rds took command of pilot houses and kept the ships in formation, engineers kept steam to the main engines and the screws turning, damage control teams kept the ships afloat and Ensigns and JGs put their gun mounts in local control and continued firing – *continued firing* – and we won.

That's what's required of today's Sailors. We need to have them prepared on a moment's notice to turn the readiness we are building into lethality.

The urgent demands of renewed Great Power Competition require us to drive towards a culture of excellence – a culture that recognizes that standards are the baseline; a culture of rapid innovation, of creativity across all ranks, and of outcomes that favor our strategic needs. We must instill toughness and trust in our Sailors as the foundation for this culture of excellence.

Most importantly, we must prepare for this Great Power Competition by embracing the concept of Mission Command.

Mission Command requires combat ready warships — materially sound with full system redundancy — to go to sea and support sustained combat operations.

Mission Command requires tough, battle minded crews — trained, cohesive, and eager to fight and prevail over a thinking adversary — crews that have had the opportunity to think, practice, and refine independent tactics before someone shoots at them.

Mission Command requires bold, confident, and tough Commanding Officers — driven to win and hungry for the challenge of command.

Mission command requires innovation and creativity, experimentation and rapid learning.

While we need to deliberately plan for largescale fleet engagements-- and we're doing that-- emphasizing mission command will prepare our Commanders to react to an environment rife with the fog of war, loss of communications, and imperfect information—while still executing commander's intent.

We can do no better than to look to the legacy of the 1930's to gain insights into how to proceed.

This was an era where fleet exercises, backed up by rigorous intellectual work at the Naval War College, created and refined concepts that ultimately helped win the war.

Now is our time to do these hard things. It is our time to begin aggressive experimentation again in Surface Warfare. The work that our Warfare Tactics Instructors at SMWDC are doing is critical for instilling this warfighting edge in our crews. They are cultivating the culture of experimentation, tactics and procedures that the Surface Navy needs in an era of Great Power Competition.

But we aren't just experimenting at SMWDC. Our proposal for the Surface Development Squadron or SURFDEVRON fits squarely in this construct for experimentation. We need this squadron to develop solutions to tough operational problems, accelerate new warfighting capabilities, and rapidly assist in the development and validation of tactics, techniques, and procedures. It will be a place to take calculated risks and see what works, and we have to do this with urgency!

It is our time to define and build the platforms and capabilities that will enable us to deter and, if required, win Great Power conflict. Just as Admiral Wayne E. Meyer and his team rose to the challenge of the last era and produced the AEGIS weapon system, we must rise to ours. And I am confident in two of the leaders charged with this task.

Ron Boxall and Stretch Coffman will follow me on this stage, and we are relying on them to deliver lethal and capable platforms to the fleet – both manned and unmanned – with the full range of weapons and sensors. We must be able to fight as part of the Fleet Tactical Grid or independently in a communications denied environment. Additionally, we need advanced, long range, multi-mission weapons, like SM-6 and Maritime Strike Tomahawk for surface combatants, and we need a VLS launched hypersonic weapon.

Ron and Stretch will also work together to deliver an Integrated Combat System that doesn't care if it is on a Cruiser, a Destroyer, a Frigate or an Amphib, but that provides for rapid capability upgrades and fleet commonality.

We also need medium and large Unmanned Surface Vessels. We need a capable Frigate and we need a new Large Surface Combatant.

We need to fully integrate the F-35B into the fleet and rapidly leverage the capability that this airplane brings to the warfighter. We need to deliver the full range of capability available in the LCS fleet, even as we work to improve it. And we need to dramatically improve the capabilities of the Surface Mine Countermeasure fleet.

For Industry partners – we need to work hand in hand to create the best warships with the most lethal weapons, the most reliable networks, and the most advanced technology. We need Industry to help produce the integrated combat system that Ron Boxall, Stretch Coffman, and Doug Small are pursuing. We need Industry to build, maintain and modernize warships on time, especially as we grow our fleet. And we need to do so by working as a team.

Also, we need innovative ideas about how to provide targeting data to our ships affordably and reliably, and we need to figure out how to get that data to those who can do something with it regardless of where they are operating.

For the Acquisition community - we are relying on you to work hard – to work really hard – to turn operational requirements into capability and capacity more rapidly and reliably than ever before. Wherever law and regulation provide the means to deliver capability faster, we should consider it.

And finally for our Commanding Officers – It's all about you. I've said that from day one. The first message I released was titled "command." I wrote that I implicitly trust each of our Commanding Officers, but with that trust comes incredible and unyielding responsibility and accountability. We must continue the hard work of relearning how to train, operate, and fight in a Mission Command environment. We need squadron commodores and warship CO's focused on building winning teams. We need CO's to constantly challenge their watch teams to improve their warfighting disciplines, and to talk about warfighting at every opportunity. We need CO's to boldly embrace and manage risk, not avoid it. I am your biggest advocate with your operational chain of command for giving time back to you and the ship. We've set the conditions for our CO's to be more confident in taking risks by restoring firebreaks between maintenance, training, and operations and we improved training and assessments. So, we need CO's to seize the initiative, and to be confident, sensible risk-takers because winning in combat demands it.

I've said this many, many times: As the CO goes, so goes the ship.

We've been making changes to the Surface Force for nearly a year now. 2018 was a year devoted to raising standards, improving training, tightening up qualifications, re-emphasizing certifications, and reasserting the primacy of command. 2018 was about being the best!

It was a year of building readiness, but we don't build readiness for readiness' sake. We must turn that readiness into lethality. And we do that through an unrelenting pursuit of excellence over compliance.

Compliance stresses processes. Excellence stresses outcomes.

Compliance focuses on the "must do." Excellence focuses on the "should do."

Compliance sees standards as the goal. Excellence sees standards as the minimum.

Compliance is about inspections. Excellence is about superior performance and winning.

Compliance is about admin. Excellence is about warfighting.

And most importantly -- Compliance produces only survivors. Excellence always produces winners.

Well, the Surface Force is a force of winners and we will Own the Fight!