

Vice Adm. Richard Brown's Address
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On September 12th, 1962 at Rice University, President John F. Kennedy uttered the famous line “we choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard.”

I have always liked that speech – maybe because Kennedy was himself a Surface Warrior or maybe because he spoke English with the proper accent.

But, just before he delivered the routinely cited “we choose to go to the moon” line, President Kennedy said the following about space: “there is no strife, no prejudice, no national conflict in outer space as yet. Its hazards are hostile to us all. Its conquest deserves the best of all mankind, and its opportunity for peaceful cooperation may never come again. But why, some say, the moon? Why choose this as our goal? And they may well ask, why climb the highest mountain? Why, 35 years ago, fly the Atlantic? Why does Rice play Texas?”

While Kennedy was visualizing the endless expanses of space and the possibility that nations may compete to control it, he may as well have been describing the sea itself.

So now, 67 years later, we might ask, why must we continue to go to the sea? Why do we deploy forward and patrol vigilantly? Why do we relentlessly uphold the sanctity of the Freedom of the Seas? Why does Army play Navy?

We choose to go to sea because we are maritime nation.

We choose to go to sea to defend our national interests.

We choose to go to sea to safeguard the rights of mariners and freedoms of other sea going nations.

We choose to control the sea because if we don't, someone else will..."

We've known this since the earliest days of the American Revolution - lest we not forget it now. The Surface Force will not forget. We have been, we are, and we will be the premier surface force in the world, second to none, that provides combat naval power to our nation when and where needed. We are a part of a proud legacy of greatness with heroic examples of what it takes to win at sea.

So, let's talk about what winning at sea looks like – let's talk about a combat ready ship with a battle-minded crew. Ernie Evans was the Commanding Officer of USS JOHNSTON (DD 557). On March 25, 1943, the day of JOHNSTON's commissioning, he announced to his crew, "this is going to be a fighting ship. I intend to go in harm's way and anyone who doesn't want to go along had better get off right now." No one got off.

Fast forward to October 24, 1944 – as we were conducting the landings at Leyte Gulf, Admiral Bull Halsey's 3rd Fleet had just destroyed the Japanese Southern Force coming through the Surigosa Strait and had severely damaged their Central Force coming through the San Bernardino Strait. But then he got diverted north chasing a decoy Japanese Carrier Battle Group, and left the Landing Force and TAFFY 3 – six Jeep Carriers with just a few destroyers and destroyer escorts – unguarded.

Unfortunately, the Japanese Central Force had turned around during the night to re-engage.

At 7 o'clock in the morning onboard JOHNSTON, the officer of the deck could see water columns spraying over the decks of the carrier escorts – he immediately set General Quarters.

The MT 55 Gun Captain thought to himself, “why the hell is Halsey shooting at us!!!” But then they saw the Pagoda Masts on the horizon – 4 battleships, 8 cruisers and 11 destroyers.

Ernie Evans emerged from his at sea cabin and not waiting for orders, he commenced a hard left turn at 36 knots and charged directly toward the enemy. He called down to his engineers to make smoke and placed JOHNSTON between the carriers and the Japanese force.

He ordered his gunnery officer, LT Bob Hagan, to ready all guns and fire when in range of the Japanese heavy cruiser KUMANO. Hundreds of 5-inch rounds were fired, and Bob Hagan landed some 40 hits on the KUMANO setting the pilot house ablaze.

As the range between the Japanese and JOHNSTON closed, Evans ordered his torpedo officer, LT Welch, to ready all torpedoes. At 10,000 yards, JOHNSTON let loose. When the smoke cleared, they could see that the bow of the KUMANO had been blown off, crippling the Japanese cruiser. She was out of the fight.

A 2,100-ton Fletcher Class Destroyer firing 5” rounds and torpedoes took out a 13 and half thousand-ton Japanese cruiser firing 8 inch rounds.

After turning back into her own smoke screen, JOHNSTON took her first hits from the 26-thousand-ton Japanese battleship KONGO losing her port shaft and now limited to a max speed 17 knots.

The next battery came from the largest battleship, the 72 thousand ton YAMATO, launching continuous 6-inch rounds. The blasts to the port bridge wing tore the shirt from

Evans's chest and ripped two fingers from his left hand – shrapnel lodged in his face, neck, hand, and torso – and when the ship's doctor came to dress his wounds, he ordered “don't bother me now, help some of those guys who are hurt”.

Bob Hagan got on the sound-powered phones for a status update on his guns, all but Mount 54 rogered up – it was getting neither electrical power nor signals from the fire control system. BM1 Hollenbaugh – the mount captain – sent a messenger up to request permission to put his gun in local control. Hagan approved the request and BM1 began his own personal war against the Japanese, hand cranking his gun with his magazine crew manually loading ammunition.

At this point, JOHNSTON had given everything anyone would expect of a ship and crew, yet Evans again turned his small destroyer into the fight and crossed the T of the Japanese Destroyer Column, so severely damaging the first destroyer that it had to turn away, and then again, so severely damaging the second destroyer, it too turned away.

But at 0940, after the two-and-a-half-hour fight, the shell that sealed JOHNSTON's fate hit the forward boiler room and stopped the starboard screw. JOHNSTON was dead in the water.

The abandon ship calls were made and as the crew made their way over the side, Evans was last seen on the fantail shouting orders down the hatch into aft steering – he went down with his ship.

Ernie Evans was the only person awarded the Medal of Honor for actions at the Battle of Leyte Gulf because of his leadership and his toughness, and the actions of JOHNSTON and her crew.

But that was not the first time JOHNSTON was honored. As JOHNSTON was sinking, the crew in the water watched as the Japanese destroyer YUKIKAZE sailed directly for them. Many thought the Japanese were closing in for the kill. But as it slowed and started to pass, they saw that the Japanese crew was standing at attention and the Captain was on the starboard bridge wing saluting.

Ernie Evans was a fighting captain who had prepared his ship and his crew for the fight, and they Owned It That Day!

That is our legacy.

We are the world's premier surface force, second to none, that controls the seas and provides the nation with combat naval power when and where needed. We are and we will remain the best. We will talk, we will look, and we will act like the elite professionals we are.

This word cloud highlights the key messages and initiatives ongoing in Surface Warfare. We're doing a lot of awesome stuff and getting better every day.

These words directly capture the essence of what we are all about. It's all about readiness to fight. We are once again in Great Power Competition – and that competition requires us to operate forward, control the seas, and always be ready. To do that we must Own Tomorrow's Fight, today.

The initiatives and policies in place are not an end unto themselves – they are in place to generate Combat Ready Ships and Battle-Minded Crews.

When conflict comes, we'll go into the fight with what we have – that's all we can do - but we will ensure our crews are fully trained, fully certified and our ships are battle ready. The imposing silhouette of a warship off any coast tells friend and foe we are committed and ready.

The surface force provides this value on-par or better than any other community - or any part of the joint force. There is a reason why we have warships patrolling on either side of the Strait of Hormuz or sailing through the Taiwan Strait. We are the most visible sign of American determination to protect the peace, advance our interests, and support our partners and allies.

Our presence in contested areas of the ocean must be coupled with credible, combat effectiveness. As peer competitors advance in capability, we must take action to remain a step ahead. We cannot go backwards. We must identify our future warfighting needs and take action with urgency to deliver them when needed.

And, as new capabilities and technologies reach the fleet, we now have a command ready to conduct the experimentation needed to rapidly learn how to maximize lethality.

Last year I talked about the Surface Development Squadron and what it would bring to the fleet. Well, in May of 2019, Surface Development Squadron One established, dedicated to the rapid development of manned and unmanned capabilities.

Some of you probably saw the reporting in the first week of January on ADM Grady's order for SURFOR to develop concepts of operation for the unmanned surface fleet – SURFDEVRON ONE is now doing that work.

To ensure we remain the premier surface force, we are investing today for tomorrow's fight. Flight III DDG's, FFG (X), a full inventory of SM-6, SPY 6, Maritime Strike Tomahawk,

integrated combat systems, large and medium unmanned surface vessels, and we are literally putting freakin' lasers on ships.

SURFDEVRON ONE's charge is to figure out how best to employ these new systems and capabilities.

But make no mistake, we are already moving out on increased lethality as fast as possible. For example, USS AMERICA (LHA 6) completed her COMPTUEX last year with 13 embarked F-35 aircraft – and she can carry more than that.

You know, I don't think those 13 aircraft are just there for defense of the Amphibious Task Force – a big deck with that many F-35s is beginning to look a lot like an aircraft carrier to me – any other country would call it an aircraft carrier - AND it's part of the Surface Force.

The Surface Force is already moving out on Secretary Modly, Admiral Gilday, and General Berger's direction for the Navy and the Marine Corps to stop cooperating, stop interoperating, stop coordinating and start integrating!

So, as we look to the year ahead, we have three major lines of effort. First, the current readiness of the force will always be our collective number one priority. Combat Ready Ships and Battle-Minded Crews are the products the Surface Force provides to the numbered Fleet Commander.

Second, the enhancement of mariner and warfighting skills emphasizing professionalism will continue. With the help of the Congress and Navy leadership, the Surface Force made substantial and lasting mariner skill investments over the last couple of years. While we are not declaring “mission complete,” the pace of the enhancements—coupled with their initial results—

are cause for optimism. We've committed 3.8 billion dollars to individual, watchteam and strike group training.

The enhancements to our bridge and CIC simulators make them top of the line and more improved trainers are still yet to come. And we are matching this exceptional training with state-of-the-art training facilities – the Maritime Skills Training Centers. Complementing the ashore training is world-class training conducted at sea under the new Surface Force Training and Readiness Manual and Afloat Bridge Resource Management Workshops with Post Major Command CO Mentors.

Similar to what we have done with mariners skills, we are taking a hard look at the facilities and training requirements for our tactical watchstanders. We already know high-fidelity tactical simulators are central to the training and proficiency required to win the future fight – the margins of victory against peer competitors will be thin but decisive – this margin comes from our teams being faster and more fully integrated than any adversary. This advantage will increasingly come from reps and sets in simulators.

We built the Combined Integrated Air and Missile Defense and ASW Trainers or CIAT in San Diego and Norfolk where watchteams of specific AEGIS baselines train with the exact system and tactical program with real-life environmentals, as they would experience underway – as a matter of fact, they can't tell that they are not underway.

Last week, the On Demand Trainers, or ODTs, delivered pierside in San Diego and Norfolk. Watchteams can now continue tactical training during availabilities or Combat Systems upgrades.

Lastly, under the third and final line of effort, SMWDC is leading the Maritime Warfare Officer Tactical Training working group or “M-WOTT.” This group is charged with determining the skills required for each tactical milestone in a Surface Warfare Officer’s career, and how these skills will be trained to, developed and assessed so that we fully prepare officers and warfare commanders for tomorrow’s fight, today - creating a maritime warfare training continuum second to none.

In thinking about who we are, what we are, and where we are going, it is helpful to think about where we’ve been, and how this Navy, and this Surface Force, has always risen to the challenge.

Think about the Barbary Pirates, harassing our Mediterranean shipping and imprisoning our Sailors in the earliest days of this Republic. It was a new paradigm for our young nation, but we buckled down, and *we owned that fight, that day.*

Think about USS *Constitution* – one of the original “Six Frigates” running down HMS *Guerriere* in August of 1812, the battle in which *Constitution* earned her nickname “Old Ironsides”. We weren’t a big Navy then, and we weren’t a very powerful Navy then, but we were a Navy that *owned that fight, that day.*

Think about the dark days in World War II between Pearl Harbor, Midway, and Guadalcanal, when the Japanese Navy had us and our Allies on the run in the Pacific. But we buckled down. And *we owned that fight, that day.*

Think about the Soviet Navy and Air Force, looking to offset our Naval superiority by threatening our Surface forces with a variety of supersonic, high diving, corkscrewing anti-ship missiles.

And think about Wayne E. Meyer and the AEGIS program, and how his single-minded focus on end-to-end systems engineering excellence helped us to *own that fight, that day*.

And finally, think of the battles yet to come against some very real opponents. When they come, *we will own those fights*.

We will own those fights because today we are building the weapons, sensors, platforms, networks, and Sailors necessary to do so.

We will own those fights because today we are moving to the offensive, and arming ourselves with weapons we need to hold what our opponents' value at risk and at extended range.

We will own those fights because today our crews will have already fought them in the world's most sophisticated shoreside trainers.

We will own those fights because today we are integrating the Navy with the Marine Corps.

We will own those fights because today we are developing hypersonic weapons, electronic and directed energy weapons, and an integrated combat system underpinned by sophisticated battle management aids.

We will own those fights because today we look, act, train, and operate as the world's premier surface force.

And we will own those fights because today the people in this room – active duty and retired, uniform and civilian, military and industry - know that we can do no less; that the eyes of

the heroes that built our proud legacy are upon us, and the hopes of future generations are with us.

Thank you very much and I look forward to your questions.