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Captain's Call Kit

Winter 1998/99

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CCK articles may be easily copied for posting on command bulletin boards. Articles may also be used for Plans of the Day, Captain's Call, SITE-TV, the command newspaper or reading and reference purposes. This quarter's articles include the following:

If you have any suggestions or comments for articles or ways to improve CCK, please write, call or fax a comment to:

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COMBATING Terrorism

Although Navy commands around the Pacific Fleet have increased security following the strikes in Afghanistan, Sudan, and most recently, Iraq, Sailors, family members and Navy civilians should increase their own vigilance, fleet officials said.

"It's important that everyone gets involved - from the top down - in force protection because it has to be ingrained in how we do business everyday," said LT Jeffrey Kinsman, acting head of Fleet Security Programs, Pacific Fleet Headquarters, Pearl Harbor. "We have to think about protecting ourselves and protecting our families everyday."

Kinsman said that DOD personnel are often targeted by terrorists because they are easily identifiable.

But awareness and protection measures can deter many terrorist acts because terrorists prefer striking at easily accessible, undefended targets.

"Our best weapon against terrorism is an alert and aware Sailor, Marine or family member," Kinsman said. "We put a lot of our emphasis and effort in training our military members and their families to be aware of the threat and to properly report any suspicious activity that they see. If [they]

see it and report it, we can intercede before something happens."

There may be a threat of retaliation in the wake of the U.S. military strikes against Iraq in Operation Desert Fox.

"Force protection is at the very top of the agenda as far as we're concerned when our forces are forward deployed," Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen said. "So our military installations are all potential targets of terrorists."

The strikes were launched after Iraq denied United Nations Special Commission Inspectors access to suspected chemical weapons facilities.

Military members and their families can take many personal precautionary measures to help prevent terrorist attacks, many of which are common sense.

"Pay attention to your gut feelings," Kinsman said. "If you think something is suspicious, it probably is. Usually your gut instincts are correct."

Kinsman emphasized that everyone must do his or her part to prevent terrorism.

"We don't want to react to an incident. We want to prevent it," he said. "The only way we can do that is by having everybody involved in the force protection program know what to do if they see something that looks weird or suspicious. That's the most effective way to do it."

Navy edition Monopoly Game available
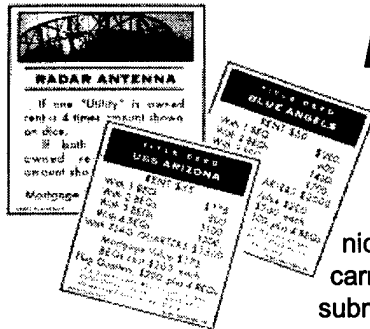
Wouldn't it be nice to own an aircraft carrier? Or how about a submarine or F/A-18E/F *Super Hornet*? Sound like possessions out of your league? Not anymore. Purchasing such items is as easy as playing Monopoly®.

The U.S. Navy is now immortalized with a Monopoly® edition of its very own. Navy men and women are being honored by USAOPOLY, an Encinitas, Calif., company, with its newest release: The Monopoly Game: United States Navy Edition. Now Sailors, retirees, veterans and Navy enthusiasts can take risks and make deals for the chance to own the entire fleet.

This is the first time a branch of the military has received such an honor. Monopoly® has been a part of American culture since 1934, when Charles Darrow, from Germantown, Pa., publicly introduced the game.

The Monopoly Game: United States Navy Edition is based on the original game design with the traditional four corners and taxes (GO, GO TO JAIL, FREE PARKING, JUST VISITING/JAIL, Luxury Tax and Income Tax) remaining the same. The special edition features prominent Sailors, ships, famous submarines, important U.S. naval bases and some of the most advanced aircraft ever manufactured.

The renowned Blue Angels and USS *Arizona* are highlighted as the two most prominent properties on the game board replacing Boardwalk and Park Place.

The Navy Edition features a battleship as well as custom pewter playing pieces, including a submarine, an anchor, a CH-46 *Sea Knight*, an F-14 *Tomcat*, a white hat, an aircraft carrier and a flight deck shooter.

"Monopoly® is proud to be able to honor our United States Navy veterans by creating the Monopoly Game: United States Navy Edition," said Dane Chapin, President and CEO of USAOPOLY. "We've tried to capture the excitement and tradition associated with this elite branch of the Armed Forces."

Navy images available on-line

The Navy's News Photo website has images and captions available for newspaper and magazine publication. Images for newspapers can be found on the internet at **<www.navy.mil/navpalib/news/in-news.html>** in the "AROUND THE FLEET" section.

Images suitable for newspaper reproduction are indicated by the words "Hi-Rez" in the captions. Once a high-resolution image is brought up on the screen, click on it with the right mouse button and save it per the interactive menu.
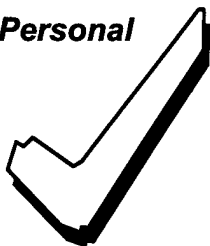
The Navy News Photo Division is constantly looking for high-quality images to tell the Navy's story. Images should be in a 300-dpi .JPG format. E-mail them to **<navynewsphoto@hq.navy.mil>**.

News stories should be sent to the Navy Wire Service at **<pubs@mediacen.navy.mil>**.

Anti-terrorism Precautions

Personal

— As a foreigner, maintain a "low profile" by avoiding unnecessary news media coverage, ostentatious dress and habits.
— Whenever possible, avoid wearing military uniforms during travel or recreation or wearing military headgear while traveling by vehicle.
— Know what to do in emergencies.
— Know and avoid high-risk areas; be cautious when mingling with crowds.
— Vary travel routes, patterns and personal routines.
— Keep offices and families informed of your itinerary and whereabouts.
— Be alert for surveillance; exercise caution with strangers; avoid casually giving personal data such as address and telephone numbers.
— Learn emergency phrases in the local language and be able to use the telephone.

— Familiarize families with the local terrorist threat and the necessary protection measures and techniques. Review them on a regular basis.
— Ensure family members know what to do in emergencies.
— Post emergency numbers on the home telephone.
— Have family members keep each other informed of their whereabouts and report their whereabouts regularly.
— Remind family members periodically to report suspicious persons or cars near the house, not to give out personal information and to be wary of strangers.
— Advise family members to travel in groups as much as possible; to avoid high risk areas and disturbances; and vary their movements so as not to be predictable.
— Don't answer the phone using rank and name.

Family
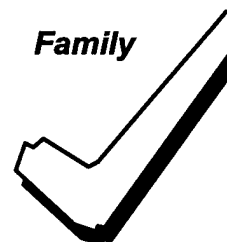
Residence

— Leave a few lights and a radio on when absent from your residence during the hours of darkness.
— Develop friendly relationships with your neighbors.
— Destroy all envelopes or other items that reflect your name and rank.
— Try not to have mail that is addressed to you indicate your military association.
— Report all threatening phone calls to security officials.
— Do not place your name on outside name plates or parking spaces.
— Secure your valuables when you go on extended leave.
— Make positive identification of callers before allowing admittance.
— Avoid frequent exposure on balconies and near windows.
— Windows should have heavy, opaque draperies which should be closed during periods of darkness.

— Ensure your office attracts as little outside attention as possible.
— Control entry.
— Consider the capabilities and limitations of police.
— Prepare personnel and building for emergencies. Provide for a safe room.
— Ensure personnel are aware of their individual responsibilities including locking doors and windows, escorting visitors, protecting personal data from unwanted disclosure and taking actions in emergencies.
— Protect roof from access, lock roof openings securely.
— Ensure glass and framing are burglar-resistant.
— Ensure floodlights on buildings, parking areas and grounds are operable.
— Ensure hinges and hasps are tamper proof.
— Locate trash receptacles away from buildings and fences.
— Conduct security checks on a daily basis, and ensure availability of security checklist to authorized persons.
— Have employees and personnel periodically rotate parking spaces.

Office

Captain's Call Kit, Winter 1998

CNO answers questions from the fleet

The following questions and answers have been compiled from responses by the Chief of Naval Operations ADM Jay L. Johnson during recent meetings with Sailors.

What changes will the fleet face as we head into the next century?

"We are at 341 ships today. By 2003 we will have reshaped the Navy to one of about 300 ships based around 12 Carrier Battle Groups and 12 Amphibious Ready Groups. They will be the combat core of the U.S. Navy-Marine Corps Team.

The people side of that force will go from about 381,000 active and about 93,000 Reserves today down to about 369,000 active and about 89,000 Reserves. We believe that within two years we will essentially be there on the people side and the ships will come down by 2003.

The message in that is we are reshaping ourselves into what I call a leaner but more capable force. And the money we save will be used to improve our lives by investing it in filling our operations, maintenance and manpower accounts at a level we have not been able to in the last decade. That means we'll have more money for things like permanent change of stations and manpower, ship and aircraft maintenance and operations.

So, we're putting our money where our mouth is. FY99 is going to be a better year than FY98 — and that's a fact. We've made huge strides working the issues in Washington, D.C., and it takes time to work its way through the system to where Sailors can feel the effects. But, I'm here to tell you that 1999 is going to be a better year. You need to know that's happening because it's good news."

How do you see quality of life affected by the reshaping we are undergoing and won't reshaping mean we will have to do more with less?

"I don't ever want you to think we are going to do more with less. We can do more with more or less with less, but not more with less. We have reshaped ourselves, we have come down in size, but the commitments have not shrunk. We are at the point where we can't go lower and meet our commitments. We need a 300-ship Navy. We need every person that we've got to be able to do it the right way. We can't get any smaller than the force we're planning for and do what we are being asked

to do today. So don't give me 'more with less' — we can't do that. We are out of that business. I would say that we are very sensitive to what we are doing to our enlisted and our officer force. It is a great concern to the leadership in the Navy today.

There is a quality-of-life initiative which we are working that is backed by our four-star leadership. It will make your lives a bit easier when you're not deployed. The effort is designed to help achieve one of my chief concerns — keeping good Sailors in the Navy.

We have given you too much to do and not enough resources to do it with. So we're taking a commitment at the four-star level to look at the non-deployed side of our lives and carve out 25 percent of it, clean it up and give it back to the commanding officers for them to do with as they need to.

The effort is aimed at stabilizing the time spent between deployments by reducing inspections and assist visits and streamlining underway training time.

I believe we can do it. I believe it will help. I believe it will make our lives a lot better when we're at home. We're committed to that and it's not something that's out five years. The Fleet Commanders in Chief (CINCs) have delivered to me a plan that essentially gives a significant portion of the inter-deployment training cycle (IDTC) back to skippers. That's a big step forward for all of us."

What about uniform changes? When will they go into effect?

"In response to inputs from you in the fleet, I have approved several significant changes to Navy uniforms. The most significant of these changes is a new utility uniform that will replace the Navy dungaree uniform worn by enlisted men and women for more than 60 years. In addition, coveralls will be added to your seabag.

Replacing dungarees for E-6 and below will be a 65 percent polyester and 35 percent cotton-blend uniform consisting of dark blue straight-leg trousers and a chambray shirt.

The new style utility uniform transition period will begin Jan. 1, 1999.

Another change is coveralls made of 65/35 percent poly-cotton with embroidered collar devices, breast insignia, badges, name and U.S. Navy tapes will be added to your seabags for use aboard ship and ashore for tasks that put excessive wear and tear on the working uniform.

I approved these uniforms after months of testing last year with many of you throughout the fleet on ships and ashore. The new working uniform was designed by the Uniform Board for the improved wear, better fit and appearance you requested."

What is the Navy doing to alleviate the recruiting shortfalls we are hearing about?

"Because of a robust economy and record low unemployment in the private sector, we are facing a recruiting shortfall this year. We are increasing the number of recruiters and stabilizing the size of the recruiting force to help solve this challenge, and for the first time we're asking E-4s to be recruiters. As it turns out, the other services have successfully used E-4s for some time.

But we're all recruiters right now. We need to get more young, quality men and women in the Navy and we all can play a role in that. Many of you, as you rotate, may be asked to be recruiters. We have a great recruiting force out there now. We need to help them a little bit by upping the number of recruiters and give them more resources to work with."

What about retention?

"We are retaining enough people, but we can do better. The numbers are getting better and retention has been improving slowly across the board. There are several reasons for that, including the fact that advancement numbers are coming up, we are addressing pay and compensation issues, and as the downsizing ends, we are no longer asking people to leave. Retention is an issue we must all pay attention to. The Navy has a lot to offer and we want our great Sailors to stay."

I've heard about something called "Operational Risk Management." What is it and how will it affect the fleet?

"One of the most challenging aspects of naval operations is successfully managing risk — identifying and assessing hazards, then employing tools to make sure those hazards don't harm our shipmates and destroy equipment.

During operational planning, a concept called operational risk management (ORM) promotes two-way communication in the chain-of-command, makes better use of lessons learned, and equips us with the ability to minimize hazards which are a by-product of change.

It has already produced great results in numerous squadrons and ships, but we have much more to do. I am encouraging top-down interest in the ORM process, from the flag level all the way to the deckplate Sailor.

To accomplish that, our fleet CINCs have conducted a complete review of the inter-deployment training cycle using the ORM process. This will help all levels of the chain-of-command better understand the risks concurrent with tasking subordinate units.

Mishaps have cost our Navy 724 lives and $3 billion during the past five years. That is a staggering toll and a trend that must be reversed. ORM is a proven process that prevents the loss of precious lives and valuable systems. But it can only work if all of us integrate ORM into our daily routines. This really is all hands' business and I charge each of you with making ORM a core element of Navy life. [NOTE: The Naval Safety Center Website, **<http://www.norfolk.navy.mil/safecen>**, contains more information about ORM.]"

With all of these changes how do you rate the Navy today?

"We've got a great Navy and you should be very proud of that and should also be proud of your role in it. I'm counting on each and every one of you to do your job, to do it well and to be proud and share the pride we have in our Navy."

NEW CREO LISTING RELEASED
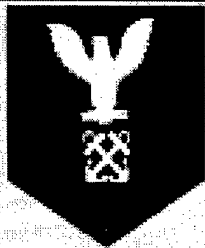
A revised listing of rating entry and advancement opportunities has been released by the Chief of Naval Personnel.

NAVADMIN 252/98 is an update to the previous Career/Reenlistment Objectives (CREO) listing last revised in May. CREO listings establish rating availability for non-designated strikers, advancement forecasts, CREO rating classifications and critical skills lists.

Several rates were affected by this message. Advancement opportunities, which are ranked low, good or excellent, changed for E-4s from low to good for ship's serviceman (SH), and good to excellent for damage controlman (DC) and interior communications electrician (IC). Operations specialist (OS) changed from excellent to good, while boatswain's mate (BM) and personnelman (PN) changed from good to low. A low advancement rating means there is a less than 30 percent advancement opportunity, good means there is a 30 to 69 percent opportunity and excellent means greater than 70 percent.

Sailors in several rates saw their CREO level change from 2 to 1. CREO 1 is assigned to rates that are undermanned, CREO 2 to rates manned at desired levels and CREO 3 to overmanned rates. First-term Sailors in rates changing from CREO 2 to 1 were disbursing clerk (DK), interior communications electrician (IC), postal clerk (PC), storekeeper (SK), sonar technician (submarine) (STS), and steelworker (SW). Yeoman (YN) (submarine) for career Sailors changed from CREO 2 to 1.

First-term SHs went from CREO 3 to 2, along with career DKs, electronics technician (submarine other than nuclear) and STS. First-term photographer's mates (PH) and career master-at-arms (MA) Sailors changed from CREO 1 to 2.

For further information and details, see NAVADMIN 252/98, available on the Navy Personnel Command homepage at **<www.bupers.navy.mil>**, or contact a command career counselor.

The Navy's newest enlisted aviation, surface and Seabee combat warfare Personnel Qualification Standards (PQS) programs have been completely overhauled and went into effect Oct. 1, 1998.

"We knew the products we would develop would affect every enlisted Sailor in the Navy," explained Master Chief Gunner's Mate (SW/AW) Tim Merrill, Naval Education and Training Professional Development and Technology Center (NETPDTC) PQS production officer. "We started from ground zero, and we're very proud of the final product. We know it will work because it is what the fleet wants."

The PQS development team did not use the old program as a reference in writing the PQS. More than 500 fleet subject-matter experts — and all force master chiefs — played a role developing the new standards.

One of the major differences between the old and new program is that now candidates will have to complete the PQS core book and a unit-specific platform PQS. In addition, the program is no longer voluntary. Enlisted Sailors, E-5 and above serving in Type 2 and Type 4 sea-duty assignments, will now be required to complete the program within an 18-month window. Program completion will also be a requirement for advancement to E-6 and E-7 for Sailors serving with these units. In addition, Sailors will also have to re-qualify upon reporting to different platforms. Hard charging E-3 and E-4 personnel, if recommended by the senior enlisted community, may also participate in the program.

"In the past, commands were pretty much allowed to tailor their own PQS programs for their commands," said Senior Chief Aviation Systems Operator (AW) Bill Rainwater, NETPDTC enlisted warfare PQS coordinator. "That is no longer the case. The new standards task command master chiefs with implementing the program within their commands. The new standards are unit specific. If you are assigned to an aircraft carrier, for instance, then you will complete the PQS core book and the carrier platform. If you transfer to a destroyer, you must then qualify at that platform."

"The end result," Rainwater said, "will be a Sailor who not only fully understands the mission of his command, but also, the importance of his job in completing that mission. They will be more aware of the role their aircraft, ship or battalion plays, as a team, in the overall big picture of things."

The new PQS Program CDs were mailed out to Type 2 and Type 4 sea-duty commands last fall. PQS books are available electronically, via CD ROM and mailed out semi-annually. The program is also available on the Internet at **<http://www.cnet.navy.mil/netpdtc/pqs/default.htm>**, on the NETPDTC Bulletin Board at DSN 922-1280/1364 or through the Ship's Automated Transmission Systems.

MCPON addresses quality-of-life issues
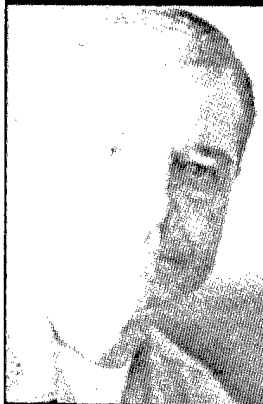
As the Navy's senior enlisted advisor, Master Chief Machinist's Mate (SS/SW/AW) Jim Herdt said he makes it his top priority to get input from Sailors for input on matters affecting morale, retention, career enhancement and other quality-of-life issues affecting the enlisted ranks.

"We are striving to be properly manned with the right quality of people," said the 28-year Navy veteran from Casper, Wyo. "After all, we can have the most modern, technologically advanced ships in the world, but with mediocre Sailors, it wouldn't be a good asset. If we have a ship with a high-quality crew, that ship becomes one of our biggest assets."

"My goal is to get you compensated for your education and to have you be taken care of the way you ought to be taken care of," Herdt said. "I would like to see you have a retirement program and that you are all treated equally. I would like to see you get the pay that you certainly deserve, and that we (the Navy's senior leadership) give you the quality of life that you want."

The MCPON offered some advice for junior Sailors. "Trust your chain of command, believe them when they tell you something," he said. "Hard work and trust will help any Sailor reach his or her goals. When you walked through the doors at the recruiting station, you didn't join the Navy just to waste four years of your life. You joined expecting to succeed. Don't forget that, and you will succeed."

Solving Your
TRICARE problems

Perhaps you have recently tried to resolve a TRICARE problem and weren't completely happy with the results. Maybe you called a TRICARE Service Center (TSC) and received incorrect information. Or, maybe your TRICARE Prime primary care manager referred you to a specialist who is not in the TRICARE Prime network, and the claims processor handled the resulting claim as a more-expensive "point-of-service" claim.

Or, maybe you went to a provider who you thought was authorized to render care under TRICARE Standard, only to find out afterward that the contractor hadn't processed the provider's certification request in a timely manner. The end result is you got care from an "unauthorized" provider, and now the government won't pay any of the bills.

Problems such as lost claims, incorrect processing and so forth can occur when processing claims. But the bottom line is, you've got a complaint, and you want to know what to do about it.

The first thing you need to do is let someone know what the problem is. Give the system a chance to help you resolve the issue. The place to start is your nearest TSC. There you can discuss a problem with staff members or possibly file a grievance.

TRICARE contractors have established TSCs throughout the regions they serve, and TSC staff may be able to help you resolve the problem at that level, with only a phone call on your part. Depending on the problem, you might want to write a letter, so a written record of your attempts to resolve the difficulty will be established. Include all documents relevant to the problem, and keep copies of everything for your own records.

Whatever method you choose, keeping the communication process civil and rational helps expedite getting your problem solved. If your efforts at the TSC level fail, try writing a letter to the contractor's headquarters. Explain the problem, and state what sort of resolution you'd like to see. Another option for those living near a uniformed services medical facility is to present unresolved issues to the service hospital's point of contact. That person may be a patient advocate, someone in the managed care office or the hospital's contracting officer's technical representative.

Military hospitals welcome the chance to work with TRICARE contractors and help get TRICARE issues resolved to everyone's satisfaction. If other means fail, you may call (303) 676-3526, or write to the TRICARE Management Activity's Benefit Services Office, 16401 E. Centretech Parkway, Aurora, Colo., 80011-9043. Staff members in this office are government employees who help TRICARE-eligible customers with problems they haven't been able to resolve with their regional TRICARE contractor. Again, be sure to include copies of all documents that are relevant to your problem, and make sure you keep either copies or originals of each document for your own records.

TRICARE contractors process 25 million claims per year, nearly half a million claims every week. Standards for the contractors require that, to perform satisfactorily, they must process at least 75 percent of all claims within 21 days after receipt. Claims processing contractors for all TRICARE regions are currently meeting or exceeding those standards.

Accuracy in the processing of claims is also a high priority for contractors. If even 1 percent of all claims received is processed incorrectly, that's 250,000 or more claims per year. Perfection may not be possible, but each contractor strives for the highest levels of accuracy in claims processing.

New Selective Reenlistment Bonus

A new Selective Reenlistment Bonus (SRB) award plan became effective Dec. 1, 1998. NAVADMIN 253/98 released by the Chief of Naval Personnel supersedes the July 1998 SRB plan and provides new SRB award levels. Previous administrative procedures remain in effect.

Sailors may request to reenlist any time within the same fiscal year as their Expiration of Active Obligated Service (EAOS). Because SRB is calculated based on the number of months for which a Sailor is reenlisting beyond his or her EAOS, reenlisting early will generally reduce the SRB amount received. The Chief of Naval Personnel recommends Sailors reenlist as close to their EAOS as possible to preserve maximum value of their SRB.

SRB reenlistment requests must be submitted 35 to 90 days in advance of the member's EAOS or reenlistment date to ensure the approval/disapproval message reaches the member's command prior to reenlistment date.

Requests submitted less than 35 days in advance of reenlistment may result in delay of the SRB posting on time. Sailors with an approved request may still wait to reenlist up to their EAOS. Those with an approved request who do not reenlist on the date specified in the message must contact Navy Personnel Command (NPC) code 815 (SRB execution section and help desk) to revise the reenlistment date and receive a corrected message with the new reenlistment date. Any adjustments or changes to reenlistment data as detailed in the message, such as paygrade change, must be corrected and approved prior to reenlistment.
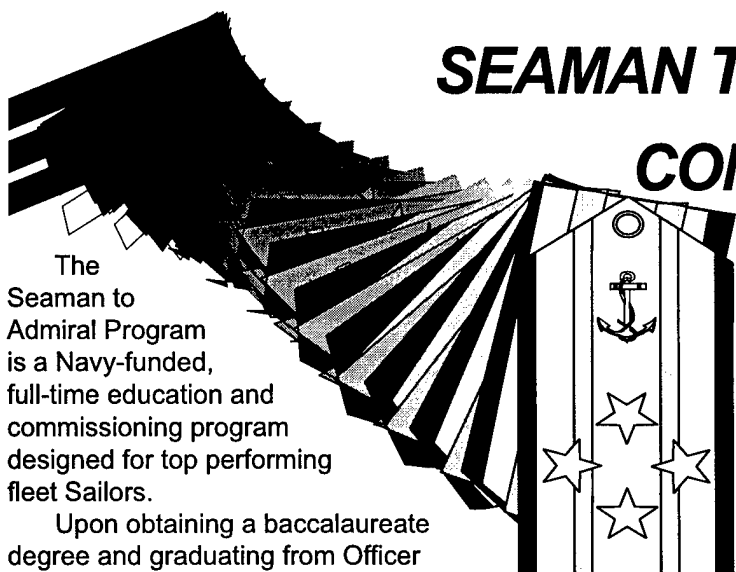
Eligible Sailors with an NPC-approved SRB request who have not yet reenlisted or executed an SRB qualifying extension and who would benefit from a higher award level under this plan must resubmit an SRB request to qualify for the higher award level.

Sailors in skills listed for reduction or termination who have an approval message in hand for a reenlistment date after Dec. 31 must resubmit an SRB request for a new reenlistment date prior to Jan. 1 to be eligible for the higher award level.

Details on the program and ratings affected are provided in NAVADMIN 253/98, available on the Navy Personnel Command homepage at **<http://www.bupers.navy.mil>**. For further information, contact a command career counselor or NPC-815 at DSN 882-2526/3193 or (901) 874-2526/3193.
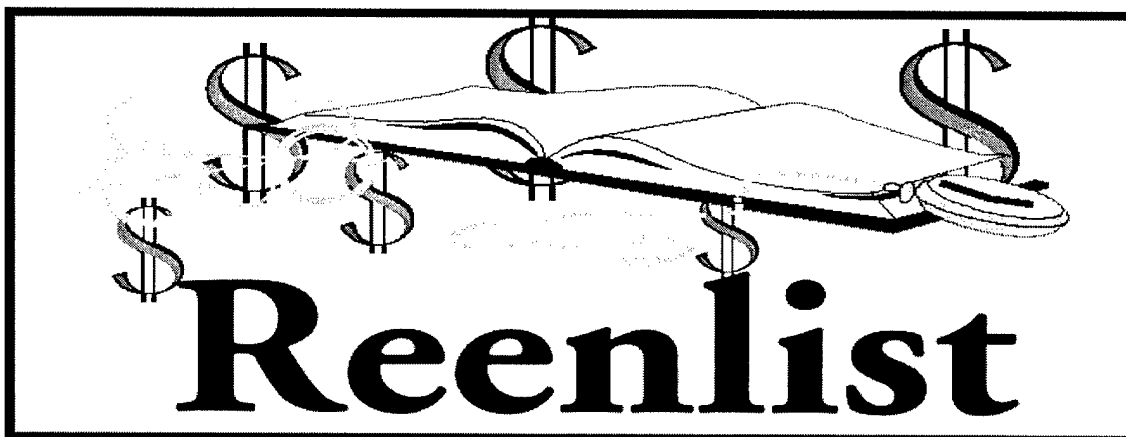
SEAMAN TO ADMIRAL

COMMISSIONING

PROGRAM

The Seaman to Admiral Program is a Navy-funded, full-time education and commissioning program designed for top performing fleet Sailors.

Upon obtaining a baccalaureate degree and graduating from Officer Candidate School in Pensacola, Fla., Sailors will receive an Unrestricted Line (URL) commission as an ensign in the Naval Reserve.

Selectees are given up to 36 months to complete degree requirements, depending on the number of prior transferable college credits. They will be assigned to an NROTC Unit at one of three locations while earning their degrees – San Diego; Jacksonville, Fla.; or Norfolk. Selectees retain their enlisted status while completing degree and commissioning requirements.

An annual NAVADMIN, published between January and April, announces the program, gives eligibility requirements, and provides a sample letter of application. The NAVADMIN is available on BUPERS Access. Applications are due July 1, and a selection board is held in September.

Typically, the successful selectee will begin putting their package together six to nine months prior to the application deadline. This provides adequate time to review and refine the package. Additionally, it may take up to two months to receive SAT or ACT test scores. Application packages must also include high school and college transcripts. For many military personnel, this could mean contacting several schools, and the potential lengthy delays to receive these documents. So start early!

Command leadership should be watching for those individuals who have what it takes to become a naval officer. Look within your commands and encourage them to apply.

Commissions available to Sailors with bachelor's degrees

The Navy is looking for highly-motivated, qualified Sailors who possess strong military leadership potential for commissioning as officers.

Applicants must meet Officer Candidate School and Naval Flight Officers must meet Aviation Officer Candidate School program eligibility requirements.

Requirements include being a U. S. citizen with a bachelor of science or arts degree from an accredited college/university, who meets physical readiness and age requirements. Applicants must also obtain at least 40 on the Officer Aptitude Rating (OAR) exam.

Recent program changes have raised the age limit for active-duty pilot applicants to 29, and 31 for flight officer applicants.

There is no deadline for application submission. Application processing time varies from four to six weeks after receipt. Notification of selection status will be made by Navy Recruiting Command to the applicant, or the applicant's commanding officer or command representative.

For details on application requirements and procedures, see NAVADMIN 202/98 and OPNAV Instruction 1120.2C, "Directive For Applying To OCS and AOCS Commissioning Programs." Inquires may be addressed to Navy Recruiting Command (Code 312) at DSN 426-4683 or (703) 696-4683.

HEALTHWATCH cholesterol facts

More than 97 million American adults have it, and it's a leading risk factor for heart attacks-high cholesterol. But, it's a health problem that can be prevented.

Cholesterol belongs to a group of compounds known as lipoproteins. Fats, also called lipids, are carried in the blood by joining proteins to form lipoproteins. When more lipoproteins than the body needs are present, deposits form in blood vessels. This process of arteriosclerosis, or hardening of the arteries, is a risk factor for heart attacks.

Total cholesterol levels are important, but other lipoproteins also have a role in heart disease. Low-density lipoproteins or LDLs, are lethal. They are especially good at creating fat deposits. On the other hand, high-density lipoproteins or HDLs, can be remembered as "healthy" because they keep cholesterol deposits from forming. In fact, high HDL levels can decrease the risk of heart attack.

Because there are rarely symptoms of dangerous cholesterol levels, testing is required. Most medical authorities advise us to begin being tested for cholesterol levels at age 20 and every five years thereafter. However, individuals with medical problems such as diabetes or with many heart attack risk factors may require more frequent testing. It is recommended that testing be discussed with a physician to determine an appropriate individual plan.

The good news about high cholesterol is that a healthy lifestyle can prevent high cholesterol from developing. An additional benefit of a healthy lifestyle is that it eliminates other risk factors for heart attack as well. Patients with high-risk cholesterol levels can usually reduce their cholesterol without medication.

Although some diseases increase cholesterol, the most dangerous cholesterol levels are the result of being overweight. The typical American diet contains more fat than the body can use, but there are ways to avoid excess fat. Some suggestions for a healthy diet include:

* Eat lean cuts of meat and remove visible fat.
* Avoid fried foods.
* Remove skin from chicken before cooking.
* Limit dairy products with high fat content, such as whole milk and sour cream. Skim milk and low fat cheeses are good alternatives.
* Eat more fiber. Three to five servings of vegetables and two to four servings of fruit each day will not only lower cholesterol but may also decrease the risk of certain cancers.

Exercise is another part of a low-cholesterol lifestyle. Regular exercise lowers cholesterol and promotes weight loss. It also reduces stress and lowers blood pressure. High blood pressure is an additional risk factor for heart attacks. Before beginning an exercise program, it's a good idea to discuss your plan with a physician.

Diet, weight reduction and exercise are not the only components of a low cholesterol lifestyle. Limiting alcohol use also helps. Men who consume more than two drinks of alcohol a day and women who drink more than one drink of alcohol a day have an increased risk of having elevated cholesterol.

Smoking also influences cholesterol levels. Smokers who want to quit should talk with their physician. Effective treatment is available.

High cholesterol is a killer, but the decision to live a healthy lifestyle can reduce the risk of a heart attack. See the dietician or wellness center personnel at your local medical facility for more information about cholesterol.

Anthrax and pregnancy

Just mention vaccinating against anthrax and some people imagine the worst of side effects, without even understanding the vaccine's lifesaving benefits. This may be of particular concern for women who plan to or might become pregnant during their vaccination series. Women can be assured that there really is no scientific or medical reason for anxiety about the vaccine.

At the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, infectious disease experts agree the overall benefits of the anthrax vaccine far outweigh any potential side effects. Dr. Steve Ostroff, associate director for epidemiologic science in the National Center for Infectious Diseases emphasized that the anthrax vaccine has a long history of safety and effectiveness with few side effects reported. The vaccine has been used safely since it was approved by the Food and Drug Administration in 1970.

"We know anthrax vaccine doesn't hold any greater risks to the developing fetus than virtually any of the other bacterial vaccines," Ostroff said. "As far as [the CDC] is aware, there are no special risks associated with this vaccine if it is given to someone who is pregnant.

"That's because vaccines made from killed material tend to have a low incidence of side effects. The anthrax vaccine doesn't include anything that's live so there isn't a risk of getting the disease."

Just to be on the safe side, women who are pregnant should not get any vaccinations, according to Ostroff.

"As a rule, [the CDC] recommends that women who are pregnant should not receive any vaccines that aren't essential during pregnancy," Ostroff said. "It's based on prudence more than anything else, because there might be a risk that hasn't been recognized and the cautious course is to wait until the pregnancy is over."

If a pregnant woman is exposed to a disease, most experts agree that the best course might be to give her a vaccine rather than doing nothing. For example, it is safer for a pregnant woman exposed to anthrax to receive the vaccine rather than risk coming down with the disease.

No specific studies have been done on pregnancy and the anthrax vaccine, Ostroff admitted. But this is not unusual. "With a lot of the vaccines, not just anthrax, and even with a lot of the common medications we use on a day-to-day basis," he said, "there haven't been studies that have specifically looked at their use in pregnancy.

"For instance, when you read the labels very carefully on a lot of medications, it will say the risks in pregnancy or with children aren't very well defined. That's because specific medical studies on those particular groups haven't been done. So, you'll see warning labels about their use during pregnancy. The warning is not because there is a definite risk, but just because studies haven't been done on that specific population."

If a woman discovers she is pregnant after receiving one or more doses of anthrax vaccine, she should receive no further doses until she is no longer pregnant. This situation should not necessarily prompt any action regarding the pregnancy, but should be discussed with her obstetrician or other health care provider. Also, she need not wait a certain period of time following pregnancy before receiving another dose.

There have been no reports of adverse reproductive outcomes (infertility, fetal harm, etc.) associated with administration of the vaccine since it was licensed nearly 30 years ago. This, coupled with knowing the vaccine is made up of non-infectious components, lends confidence that it can be safely administered to women with little concern for any problems associated with pregnancy or fertility.

More information on the anthrax vaccine and the Navy's Anthrax Vaccination Implementation Plan can be found on the Navy Environmental Health Center website: **<http://www.nehc.med.navy.mil>.**

Y2K: Embedded chips –
dispelling some myths

By Dave Bettinger

The very essence of the Year 2000 (Y2K) problem is the potential failure of devices that rely on embedded chips for date/time information. Non-Y2K compliant chips will not comprehend the calendar rollover from 1999 to 2000, and, as a result, machines that rely on them may fail. If this problem gives you a cold sweat, you're not alone. All over the world, organizations are assessing their vulnerability to embedded chip failure. Unfortunately, there's no quick fix for the problem, but you can minimize its impact by applying some good, old fashioned horse sense.

Essentially, the embedded chip problem boils down to one question: Does the device use a calendar to schedule events? The person with the most technical knowledge of the machine can best answer this question. If no one knows, someone should contact the manufacturer, distributor or service facility to find out.

The next obvious question is "Is it capable of displaying the date?" While not sufficient for a conclusion, this is a helpful question to explore. If the date can't be displayed, it can't be changed. If it can't be changed, it can't be set. If it can't be set, it can't hamper the operation of the equipment. Consider a video cassette recorder (VCR) with its perpetually blinking clock. You can set the clock and calendar as soon as you power up the machine. Unplugging it causes the clock to "forget" everything. When you plug it back in again, the clock reverts to blinking, but the machine is still functional. It simply means you don't know what time or day it is until you reset the clock and calendar.

The bottom line is that everything with a power cord or a battery is not necessarily a failure waiting to happen. Take a good look around your workcenter and evaluate each piece of gear or system in it using the handy checklist below. If you're not sure about a device, ask your LPO or Division Officer for guidance. Remember: if there's no way to display the date, even on a device with a microprocessor installed, the device is not likely to fail. (Sometimes a date may only be displayable when the device is connected to a piece of diagnostic equipment.) If there is a displayable date

function, but no onboard power supply providing continuous power when the device is unplugged, Y2K is also not likely to kill it.

Lastly, if a device in question has any impact on crew health or safety and you are uncertain whether a date problem would cause that device to fail, keep it on your inventory of items requiring a complete Year 2000 check. Never compromise safety, even if you are 99% certain the item poses no Year 2000 risk. That last 1% uncertainty could kill or injure a shipmate.

EMBEDDED CHIP CHECKLIST

1. Does the device operate with electricity? If no, it's low risk. If yes, keep reading.

2. Does it have a battery or power supply? If no, it's still low risk. If yes, look further. Low risk items include hair dryers, analog clocks, electric pencil sharpeners.

3. Does it have a display? If no, it's low risk. If yes, keep going. Low risk examples include refrigerators, paper shredders, older microwaves.

4. Does it have a microprocessor? If no, it's low risk. If yes, keep looking. Low risk items in this category include television sets, stereo equipment, computer monitors.

5. Does it have a calendar? If no, low risk again. If yes, look further. Low risk items include microwave ovens, coffee makers, printers and most copiers.

6. Does the device use a calendar to schedule events? If no, it's low risk. Examples: digital clocks or calendars that don't schedule anything, cameras, watches, etc. Examples of high risk items include: phone systems, fax machines, irrigation systems, energy management systems that control lights, heat, etc., based on time and date.

Editor's note: Mr. Bettinger is the director for Business Solutions for CST2000, LLC, Portland, Maine, and co-leader for the Society for Information Management's (SIM) International Year 2000 Working Group. He is also former Navy YN1 and served tours at Naval Station Roosevelt Roads and with Patrol Squadron (VP)10. He has written numerous articles and spoken throughout the United States on Year 2000 issues.