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SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

STATEMENT OF  
REAR ADMIRAL (LOWER HALF) (SELECT) MARC PURCELL, U.S. NAVY  
ASSISTANT COMMANDER, NAVY PERSONNEL COMMAND  
FLEET SUPPORT  
BEFORE THE  
PERSONNEL SUBCOMMITTEE  
OF THE  
SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

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## **Opening Remarks**

Mr. Chairman and subcommittee members, thank you for this opportunity to update you on the Navy's efforts to support our Sailors and their families. Our two primary means for delivering this support are our Fleet and Family Support Centers (FFSCs) and our Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) programs. The mission of these two programs is to ensure that both our Sailors and their families receive whatever support is necessary to maintain the Navy as an effective fighting force.

Frequent deployments are integral to life in the Navy. Over half of all naval personnel are assigned to ships, overseas bases or Special Forces units. While our primary mission has always been to support those deployed personnel, we also believe our Sailors will only maintain their readiness if they are secure in the knowledge that their families are continually receiving the support they need, before, during and after deployment.

In order to meet this challenge, we have focused our efforts in the following broad areas:

## **Fleet and Family Support Programs**

Fleet and Family Support Centers (FFSC) are located at all major Navy installations and deliver services at sixty-five full-service sites worldwide. Many Centers also operate satellite or part-time offices at other work and housing sites to provide better access to Sailors and family members.

FFSCs had 3.7 million client-service contacts in FY02 representing a 15% increase over FY01. These included information inquiries, counseling and advocacy contacts, and class participants. FFSCs experienced a 196% increase in deployment and mobilization services in the first six months of the current fiscal year.

Beginning in FY03, all Navy FFSCs receive a formal inspection assessment of performance and quality standards in each of their basic service programs. This rigorous review process ensures quality and standardization of programs and services Navy-wide.

FFSCs offer three categories of basic services:

- Deployment and Readiness Programs
- Crisis Response Programs

- Career Support and Retention Programs

### Deployment and Readiness Programs

These programs directly support deployment and mission readiness by preparing service and family members to anticipate and understand the demands associated with the Navy lifestyle and operating tempo. These programs include:

- **Relocation Assistance Program (RAP)** offers pre-move planning and post-arrival settling-in services for permanent change of duty station moves. Sailors and family members are provided workshops, briefs, and relocation counseling on an individual basis.

- **Life Skills Education Program** offers general educational programs on such issues as stress management, couples communication, relationship skills, and parenting skills.

- **Information and Referral Program** provides assistance in identifying available resources within a local military or civilian community. These include information, such as educational resources and community social services, that may be

useful to service members and family that have moved to a new location.

- **Repatriation Program** is the Navy program for assisting and tracking Navy family members who have been evacuated from overseas areas. FFSCs ensure families are provided a personalized point of contact for information regarding entitlements and benefits. FFSCs also coordinate any assistance offered by other agencies. This year, FFSCs have assisted families evacuated from "hot spots" in Indonesia, the Ivory Coast, Bahrain and other Middle Eastern countries.

- **Ombudsman Program** coordinates the training of ombudsman volunteers who provide a vital link between the Commanding Officer and family members in the command. Ombudsmen are married to a member of the command and provide information directly to and from the commanding officer to command families regarding local command and Navy policies, military and community social service assistance, deployment schedules and assistance to spouses when the service member is deployed. All Navy commands, including shore activities, have an Ombudsman assigned. FFSCs provide on-going support to Ombudsmen in areas such as coordination of training for new Ombudsmen, establishment of Ombudsman support groups, provision of

information and referral resources when individual family problems are presented to the Ombudsman, and maintenance of area Ombudsman rosters.

- **Deployment and Mobilization Support Program** provides services in pre- and mid-deployment. This year the program was particularly busy supporting the mobilization for Operation Iraqi Freedom. Navy FFSCs conducted 1,600 sessions of deployment and mobilization briefings and related activities for a total of 35,000 customers from January through March of this year. Homeport briefings included programs for children as well as Sailors and spouses, and often included the fiancées and parents of single Sailors. Special attention was focused on coping with the suddenness of many deployments and the significant increase in reservists' departures. Ombudsmen training and support group services began increasing simultaneously with this pre-deployment period.

FFSC staff provided consultation and briefings for Command Family Support Groups, and organized local support groups when command groups were not available. In March, additional efforts were focused on families with school-aged children as the stress and impact of Operation Iraqi Freedom and its news coverage affected students and schools. Requests for Teacher/Counselor

and Student briefings reached an all-time high with 158 sessions conducted for 947 teachers and counselors, and 3,996 students. Attendance at Stress Management classes quadrupled from 628 in February 2003 to 2,602 in March 2003 and requests for counseling services more than tripled from 240 to 849 sessions during the same period.

FFSCs have been providing deployment support services for the past 23 years. The Navy has shared lessons learned, counseling information, training materials and procedures with the other Services as requested. Informational material developed by Family Centers in Hampton Roads for the training school administration personnel was distributed throughout the Department of Defense.

In post-deployment, the challenge is to prepare commands, Sailors and family members for return and reunion, which involves both reestablishing relationships and readjusting family roles. This became a larger than normal challenge as three Battle Groups returned home nearly simultaneously. FFSC staff at the primary homeports of Everett, San Diego and Yokosuka, Japan formed Return and Reunion Teams, augmented by trained staff from other FFSCs, to ensure proper coverage of all the ships in each of the first three returning Battle Groups.

Funding was made available from the FFSCs and Regional Commands to fund these first teams.

For all returning Navy units, special programming is being provided on Stress and Anger Management and on Combat Stress. For Command Leadership, we also provided tailored training in identifying Post-Traumatic Stress Symptoms and Treatment Resources.

Packages of materials and resources for reservists including resources and links to the nearest military Family Support Center in their local community are also being provided. Reservists of all services are eligible for full use of Navy FFSC resources, at no cost, for up to 120 days after release from active duty.

At the same time, FFSCs are offering similar "reunion" briefs for Families and Support Groups at home, with discussion on normal stress reactions and resources (such as Medical) to contact about Post-Traumatic Stress. FFSCs are assisting Family Groups and Ombudsmen with preparations for Homecoming Activities by providing homecoming planning assistance for Ombudsmen, updating their local Homecoming Guides, and scheduling Family

Wellness Days or Resource Fairs with representatives from local and regional support agencies.

FFSCs are also providing expedited or priority appointments to returning service members and their families to ensure prompt assistance if problems develop. A new pocket guide on Stress Management for Sailors entitled "Thriving on Stress" has also been distributed.

In addition, the new required Navy Training on Suicide Prevention is now available through our FFSCs. This training was a joint project between Naval Education and Training Command (NETC) and the Chief of Navy Personnel's Suicide Prevention Program. It provides Sailors with response strategies to reduce suicide risk among both Shipmates and family members. The Navy suicide rate is currently about 50 percent below the civilian rate when matched to Navy demographics, and within the Navy is now down 22 percent overall since 1998. This new Navy Suicide Prevention video was awarded a production industry standards award (Bronze Telly), achieved by only 12-14 percent of the 10,000 annual video industry entries.

## Crisis Response Programs

The second major category of basic services offered at Navy Fleet and Family Support Centers is Crisis Response. Crisis Response programs provide professional and paraprofessional assistance to Sailors, family members, and commands in response to both personal and community emergencies. Program services run the gamut from assistance resources for personal and positive life-changing events like those offered in the New Parent Support Program, to services offered in the midst of tragedy such as those provided during casualty and disaster response, family violence counseling, or in the aftermath of a sexual assault. The following services are included in Navy's FFSC Crisis Response Programs:

- **Casualty and Disaster Response.** These emergency response services most commonly include provision of critical incident stress debriefing to commands and the Navy community in response to small-scale events, such as suicides within the command, or larger events, such as natural disasters.

- **Crisis Intervention.** These services include providing emergency assessment and, in most cases, referral for

Sailors/family members, such as those who present a danger to themselves or others.

- **New Parent Support (NPS) Program** is a military community-based child abuse prevention program funded by DoD through the Family Advocacy Program. While all the services have an NPS Program, specific implementation varies. Navy NPS is available to any family in the military community with infants under the age of 4 months, regardless of branch of service. It is a voluntary service available to all expectant/new mothers and fathers, not just first-time parents.

This program aims to reduce the risk of child abuse and neglect by enhancing parenting skills and positive parent/child interactions, promoting healthy childhood development, and increasing access to prenatal and general healthcare.

NPS provides two levels of service. All families receive systematic screening and assessment. NPS Standard provides links with community resources, as well as educational programs on childbirth, growth, development and newborn parenting. The second level of service, NPS Plus, is available to those parents screened as most in need. This level includes home visiting services by a nurse or social worker and may continue for up to

5 years with parental agreement. The Navy NPS Program provided assistance to 16,600 new parents in FY02.

- **The Family Advocacy Program (FAP)** is a DoD-mandated and funded program responsible for prevention, identification, reporting, intervention, and follow-up in cases of alleged child and spouse abuse.

Since 1997, there have been two levels of response to alleged incidents of Child or Spouse Abuse. Incidents assessed to be of low risk or low severity, as determined by licensed and credentialed FAP case managers are diverted from the FAP process to the Families In Need of Services (FINS), through which families are offered voluntary services. Once referrals for those families wanting support services are made, FAP involvement ends. Command involvement in FINS incidents is minimal. The Defense Task Force on Domestic Violence endorsed adoption service-wide of a process similar to Navy FINS.

Incidents assessed by a FAP case manager to be of moderate or higher severity, or of moderate or higher risk (with or without a known history of abuse) are managed by FAP. Command involvement is required, and the recommended interventions for service member offenders will be enforced by the command.

Incidents are professionally assessed on an individualized basis. FAP monitoring may continue for up to 1 year for substantiated incidents, and the command may discharge a member for treatment failure or repeated abuse.

FFSCs/FAP Centers provide a range of prevention and education services for general military audiences, including child/spouse abuse awareness briefs to commands, families and community organizations. Classes and groups are also offered on parenting skills, anger management, couples communication, and stress management.

In addition to offering these prevention services, the Department of Navy's Family Advocacy Program leads the way in victim advocacy. The Navy and the Marine Corps are the only services to provide fleet-wide domestic violence victim advocacy services. The Navy provides 31 paid victim advocates at 21 locations. Advocates provide safety assessment, safety planning, and a range of support services including assistance in securing civilian restraining orders or Military Protective Orders, accompanying victims to medical/legal appointments, securing shelter services, and more.

Navy Family Advocacy Program initiatives include:

**-- Training Initiatives:**

--- Domestic Violence Video and Training Materials, in partnership with Naval Education Training Command, for mandatory FY04 GMT.

--- Web-based, interactive domestic violence training for Command leadership will begin in FY04.

- **Sexual Assault Victim Intervention Program (SAVI)** is also among the FFSCs Crisis response programs. Navy's Sexual Assault Victimization Intervention (SAVI) Program is unique and was established in 1993. The goal is to provide a Navy-wide comprehensive, standardized, victim-sensitive system to prevent and respond to sexual assault. Program components include awareness and prevention education, and victim advocacy and intervention. Awareness and prevention education classes include: preventing sexual assault; minimizing the risk of becoming a victim; responding to sexual assault incidents; and measures commands can take to ensure a safe environment for service members and their families. In addition, a new SAVI video is being released this month.

The victim advocacy and intervention component includes a highly responsive, volunteer victim advocate support system to

provide immediate emotional support to sexual assault victims, even when deployed aboard afloat commands. SAVI Coordinators also insure the availability of professional intervention services for victims, if desired, and act as a go-between for the victim with the legal system. Victim advocacy within the SAVI program complements and enhances the Victim and Witness Assistance Program already in place, and also provides a mechanism outside the chain of command to insure appropriate response to alleged sexual assault.

- **Professional Counseling Services** are also included among the FFSCs crisis response programs. The provision of these services in military family and community support centers is unique to the Department of Navy. The Navy has provided these services since the establishment of FFSCs 23 years ago. Professional Counseling Services are available for all active duty, family members, activated reservists and their families, and to retirees and their families on a space available basis.

Mental health professionals, independently licensed to meet civilian standards, provide these counseling services. Either Command or self-referrals are accepted. Brief (less than 8 sessions), problem-focused counseling is provided to individuals, couples, families and groups. Services include

assessment and counseling for commonly occurring life problems - e.g., marital, parenting, school or occupational problems. Individuals who are assessed or suspected to have a more significant, psychiatric diagnosis are referred for further assessment and intervention. Active Duty Members are referred to a Medical Treatment Facility and family members are referred to the TRICARE network.

These professional counseling services are free and afford Sailors and their families a great degree of privacy, as FFSC counseling information is not incorporated into the individual's medical record and rarely rises to the level of a command's "need to know". In FY 02, FFSC professional counseling services saved military families an estimated \$1.5M in TRICARE co-pays or \$7M in out-of-pocket expenses.

### **Career Support and Retention Programs**

Career Support and Retention Programs comprise the third and final category of basic services offered at Navy Fleet and Family Support Centers. These programs are integral to increased service member retention and the planning of successful military and civilian careers for Sailors and family members. This category includes the following programs:

- **Transition Assistance Management Program (TAMP)** prepares separating and retiring individuals to enter the civilian sector and pursue goals whether they are employment, education, or retirement.

- **Personal Financial Management Program (PFMP)** provides services to assist Sailors and families to plan and manage their finances and financial future through education and training.

- **Spouse Employment Assistance Program (SEAP)**. In 2001, the Navy Personnel Research Science & Technology (NPRST) Study, rated SEAP the highest-ranking program in "exceeding client expectations." Ninety percent of spouses agreed that SEAP:

- Improved their job search skills
- Increased their opportunity for employment and
- Positively impacted their family's financial well being.

However, lack of employment portability remains a dissatisfier for many spouses. The Navy is addressing this through partnerships with corporations like Adecco (the world's largest placement agency) and the Virtual Business Owners Program. As of March 2003, 937 Navy spouses have registered with the Adecco Career Accelerator Program, with a hire rate almost matching Adecco's nation-wide rate of 34%.

## **MWR Program Support for Families**

Besides caring for the emotional, financial, and psychological needs of Navy families, we also provide a wide variety of MWR programs that directly support the leisure and childcare needs of families. Some of our MWR programs include the following.

### **Child Development Programs**

The Navy's child development programs are among the most highly ranked and valued programs for our service members with children. Without these programs, many parents would not be able to balance the demands of work and family, particularly during times of deployment. These services are designed to ensure military children receive high quality developmental care at an affordable cost.

We use three delivery methods. Navy Child Development Centers provide high quality care in a facility-based setting. Our child development homes provide the same high quality care in a home-based environment, particularly appropriate for very young children and for those who need flexibility because of scheduling or work related demands. The Navy's School-Age Care

(SAC) Program provides before and after school care with activities that complement rather than duplicate the school day. The Navy SAC programs are affiliated with the Boys and Girls Club of America and offer programs focusing on five core areas: Character and Leadership Development, Education and Career Development, Health and Life Skills, the Arts, and Sports, Fitness, and Recreation. SAC programs actively provide services and special events that foster family involvement.

These three programs are the foundation of our support for families and are essential to our strategy of ensuring quality, affordable care to as many children as possible.

Navy childcare, as part of the military child care system, has been frequently recognized as a model for quality childcare. Our child development programs are accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). This credentialing is consistent with the requirements of the Military Child Care Act and provides assurance to military families that their children are receiving top quality care that equals or exceeds the highest national standards.

In FY02, Navy met 69 percent of the potential demand for childcare as defined in DoD standards, which was our highest

percentage to date. By the end of FY03, we will reach the 73 percent level. The Navy continues to work toward meeting the child care goals established by DoD to meet 80% of potential need. However, the funding outlook for FY04 and beyond will make this challenging as the Navy has many competing operational demands for resources. We are exploring a variety of methods to enable us to maintain the program within the resources available to us. These include expanding Child Development Homes both on and off-base, partnering with local state and government programs, and improving our ability to manage waiting lists more effectively.

In support of contingency operations, we have developed a pilot project now underway in the Norfolk and Pearl Harbor regions to provide increased childcare availability to meet the extended hour care needs of shift workers and families of deployed Sailors. Our Child Development Home Program team has offered increased subsidies to home care providers in these regions to provide expanded hours of in-home care. In addition, we are also adding overnight care services in each region accommodating 12 to 18 children whose parents work night shifts. The response from Sailors and their families has been very positive. The child development homes have been operating at very high capacity levels since February 2003. The overnight

facility in Pearl Harbor has just opened and the one in Norfolk will open in a few months but demand is also very high for those centers. Although this approach will not be sustainable in all areas, we believe it will be very useful in large fleet concentration centers where there are large numbers of deployed personnel and shift workers.

Childcare services are one of the centerpieces to the Navy's commitment to take care of our Sailors and their families, particularly during times of long separation.

### **Youth Programs**

One of the many worries our deploying Sailors and their families face is ensuring that their teens have healthy outlets for their energies and opportunities to grow. In helping families meet this need, MWR has found a great opportunity for some creative programming ideas to reach out to these teens.

We continue to operate an extensive summer camp program, presently serving over 30,000 youth per year. We have expanded many of these basic summer camp programs to include Youth Outdoor Adventure Camps as well. These camps provide more adventure oriented recreation opportunities (e.g., rock climbing, surfing, kayaking) that meet the interest levels of

today's teens and increase the availability of camp spaces. In FY04 we plan to build on the popularity of Youth Outdoor Adventure Camps and expand them to include parents and family members. Our pilot Family Outdoor Adventure Camp project in FY04 will combine teen and adult outdoor recreation experiences into a single program for a few days as a means of building family unity.

To ease separation anxiety for youth with deployed family members, the Navy used a portion of the supplemental funding provided by Congress last year to implement a Teen Scholarship Camp Program and a Teen Employment Program. These efforts have generated a lot of excitement and have a significant positive impact on many Navy teens. The summer scholarship program includes specialty camps, which emphasize extreme sports and life-skill development. A few examples include camps on Outdoor Leadership, Space Flight, Snowboarding, Sailing, Drama, and Photography. We awarded 122 all expense paid scholarships in FY02 and project a 10% increase in participants this year. As you might expect, feedback from parents and teens was extremely positive.

MWR also focused in its own small way on the lack of teen employment opportunities that has been raised by teens and Navy

Youth professionals attending Navy sponsored Teen Summits. A Teen Employment Program was piloted successfully in FY02 to provide teens an opportunity to develop job and life skills that will be beneficial through their career. The aim of the program was not just to provide a job but rather to use the job as an opportunity to teach these teens the key skills they need to succeed in the working world. For most, it was their first such exposure. We have expanded this program by 45% in FY03 to increase the number of employment opportunities for Navy teens. The results are most gratifying.

Our Navy youth are just as interested as our Sailors in using e-mail to stay connected with their parents while they are deployed. Navy Youth "Operation Connect" has been set up to connect children with deployed/separated family members through Internet and digital photography Navy-wide. About 70% of our activities will be operating this service by the end of FY03.

### **Saluting Sailors and Families**

Sailors and their families make significant sacrifices. MWR wanted to do something a little extra to show our appreciation. Saluting Sailors and their Families is a series of central and regional contests that offers Sailors and their

families chances to win MWR sponsored "trips of a lifetime". Notable family events in FY02 included a "Sand and Slopes" vacation where winners enjoyed a few days in a mountain setting and then were taken to a tropical beach resort for some relaxation in the sun. We hosted a group of winning Navy families in Orlando for a "Family Safari". A group of Sailors and their families enjoyed a "Monumental July 4<sup>th</sup>" holiday in Washington, DC. Others were treated to a special New Year's Eve celebration in New York City. We have received excellent publicity from within the Navy and in the community at large from this program. The program has provided another positive incentive for promoting the Navy, as an employer of choice and letting families know their sacrifices are appreciated.

#### **Other Special Events**

- To support families during homecoming events, Navy MWR has provided homecoming grants to ships and submarines returning from Operation Iraqi Freedom. These grants were used for welcome home celebrations that were designed to create a stress-free environment for the families by providing food, childcare, and other services on the day of arrival.
- MWR distributed phone cards during the holiday season to every Sailor to help them stay connected with home. Several

organizations partnered with MWR to make this program successful. VFW and its corporate partners (Hallmark, Wal-Mart Good Works, and FedEx) provided the Navy with a gift of 200,000 60-minute prepaid telephone cards, which were distributed to overseas and deploying commands. Running parallel with the VFW initiative, Navy MWR, through a commercial sponsorship agreement with AT&T, secured 235,000 15-minute "Homeland" (CONUS) prepaid calling cards. These cards were distributed to all stateside active duty personnel and all reservists recalled to active duty.

- The Navy MWR Movie Program initiated a "Sneak Preview" program with showings of 26 first-run movies to over 330,000 Sailors and their families in Navy theaters up to a week before commercial release. Many of the local MWR programs included free concession packages for patrons.
- The Navy MWR entertainment program has also been very active this year, bringing big name entertainers to deployed personnel and those assigned to overseas bases as well as families at home. While much of our focus has obviously been on satisfying requests from afloat units, we also supported numerous stateside events for families, including a summer concert series in the Norfolk, VA, Southern California, Great Lakes, IL, and Groton, CT areas.

## **Navy Family Team Summit**

Navy MWR hosted a summit of over 200 individuals from every segment of the Navy including spouses, active duty personnel, family members, Navy leaders and single Sailors. The objective was to engage this broad spectrum of naval personnel in identifying opportunities and empowering families to tell us how we could work with them to better support the Navy mission. Our focus was on identifying and developing realistic achievable pilot projects, which addressed their needs. They identified the need for expanded child care hours to assist in mission related circumstances and provided suggestions for refining teen programs to provide greater teen empowerment in programming.

In FY03 we have been implementing the five most promising program initiatives from the Family Team Summit. These initiatives include improving the affordability of child care; providing extended hour child care for shift workers; improving the quality, accessibility, and timeliness of information about the Navy for families; seeking standard in-state tuition policies nationwide for military members and their families; and establishing a series of training sessions for families at key points in a Sailor's career. All these innovations are either being finalized or already have been initiated. We will

continue to maintain dialogue with Sailors and their families by conducting another summit in July 2004. These summits have proven to be an effective way to include Sailors and families in the improvement and development of Quality of Life Programs.

### **Creating a Welcoming MWR Environment for Families**

Over the past several years with the support of Navy leadership and Congress, MWR has made substantial strides in training staff, creating, and outfitting facilities so that we create programs where the families of our deployed Sailors feel comfortable. There is an often overlooked but very important sense of security for our families to know that there are high quality and familiar services available to them on base. These range over the entire spectrum of MWR services from name brand food outlets, to outstanding and well-equipped fitness centers. They include ten new youth centers that we have completed in recent years and MWR employees who are now extensively trained to provide world-class customer service. Our Sailors and families are not just customers. They own MWR and we want them to feel that way.

**Summary**

Navy Fleet and Family Support and MWR programs remain focused on being a significant contributor to our guiding principal: "Mission First-Sailors Always". We thank you for the continued strong support of the Congress in our partnership to ensure Sailors and their families enjoy the benefit of wholesome and quality lifestyles as they lead the fight in our war against terrorism.