

Remarks by the Honorable Ray Mabus
Secretary of the Navy
21st Century Sailor & Marine
USS Bataan
5 March 2012

Captain, thank you so much. I'm glad to be back on Bataan. It is great to have so many Sailors from the waterfront and Marines from Camp Allen here as well. I am honored to be once again standing in the hangar bay aboard Bataan. Sailors and Marines aboard this ship made history a few weeks ago, when they came back here to Norfolk after a successful ten-and-one half month deployment.

The Bataan Amphibious Ready Group deployed ahead of schedule last year, in support of the NATO-led mission to Libya, and went on to conduct several security operations and also provided support in Afghanistan. It was our Navy's longest deployment in over 40 years. Thank all of you here today on Bataan, you exemplify the service, the readiness, and the resiliency of all Sailors and Marines.

Readiness and resiliency is what brings us together today. In the time I have had the privilege of serving as your Secretary, I have visited with Sailors and Marines wherever stationed and deployed on countless ships and bases around the world. Those Sailors and Marines, and the thousands they represent, in other words the people I'm talking to right now, here in this hangar bay and around the world are dedicated to the job and to our nation, and willing to do what it takes to get our mission done.

Over the past decade, you in the Navy and Marine Corps Team have proven you can withstand sustained, high-operation tempo. The new Defense Strategy will put increased responsibilities on the Navy and the Marine Corps in the years to come. You the Sailors and

Marines are the Department's most essential asset, and it is the duty of this Department's leadership to do all we can to provide every individual Sailor and every individual Marine with the resources to maintain that resiliency.

The 21st Century Sailor and Marine initiative I am announcing today puts together a set of objectives and policies, new and existing, to maximize every Sailor and Marine's personal readiness. We have the most effective combat force in history now and it is our job to maintain and to hone that effectiveness.

The programs that I'm announcing are divided into five areas: readiness, safety, physical fitness, inclusion, and continuum of service. I will briefly describe some programs in each category, but first: Why are we doing this?

Being in the Navy and Marine Corps is rewarding. But it is also difficult and it's demanding. All Sailors, Marines, and their families have to be equipped to meet both the physical and the mental challenges of being in our military. We've had an understanding of the need but the approach has been too piecemeal.

Dozens of programs designed to improve health and well being of Sailors and Marines were implemented, but there was not enough attention paid to the fact that many of these programs should be interrelated. What was lacking, and what we are launching today, is a comprehensive and more effective approach.

Now, one example of a factor cutting across a lot of concerns and a lot of programs is alcohol. I'm going to highlight it and I'm going to talk about it first because it is bound to get a lot of attention. Programs to prevent suicide, sexual assault, domestic violence and to improve fitness and safety are all directly affected by alcohol abuse.

Promoting the responsible use of alcohol comes under the first area: Readiness. Sailors and Marines have to have the ability to avoid career-altering, career-ending or life-threatening or life-ending incidents with alcohol abuse.

We are not telling you not to drink, if you are old enough. We are telling you that it is important to keep legal, responsible use of alcohol from turning into a problem. Your jobs and your lives are too important; you work in and on the most technologically advanced systems in the world, and you have to report to work prepared to meet the challenges that come with the incredibly important, work that you do. The effects of drinking, even that done several hours earlier, can affect you and your shipmates in a very serious way. Sailors who drink excessively or too late the night before and report to duty can place themselves, their shipmates, and equipment at risk.

So, beginning in this year, the Navy will expand a pilot program where duty sections reporting to work will take a breathalyzer test. Other Sailors will be subject to random breathalyzer testing. The test will be used only as a training and prevention tool.

This is a deterrence tool used to identify and direct appropriate counseling or treatment before any of those career or life-altering incidents happen. Pilot programs using these tests have shown a marked reduction in alcohol related incidents.

And it's not just young Sailors and Marines who are at risk. Poor decisions with alcohol have affected our fleet in all the ranks. In 13 of 20 recent Navy Commanding Officers relieved, alcohol was a component in the incident for which they were relieved. The Marine Corps will be implementing a similar program in select units before moving it as soon as possible force-wide.

I want to stress this is not done to punish but to help. To help Sailors and Marines make good choices before something happens that cannot be undone.

There are several other individual programs under readiness like suicide prevention, to help Sailors, Marines, and their families meet the mental and emotional rigors of military service.

The second big area is safety. And I want to emphasize two things in this area. The first is enhanced prevention of sexual assault. A sexual assault is an attack on a Sailor or Marine and none of their shipmates should tolerate such an attack. They should intervene to prevent it whenever they can.

The Department of the Navy is working aggressively to prevent sexual assaults from occurring, to support sexual assault victims, and to hold offenders accountable. All Sailors from now on going through “A” School will have three 90-minute sessions about how to spot and how to intervene in these cases. Sexual Assault Hotlines are staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week by Uniformed Victim Advocates, by Victim Advocates and by Sexual Assault Response Coordinators. They are trained to provide emotional support, advocacy, information and critical resources to victims. We are coordinating with the Department of Defense to eliminate barriers to reporting, such as requirements to report post-assault counseling on any federal application forms. Commanders, COs, have to set the tone and establish an environment of trust and respect.

The Marines have hired 18 new full-time sexual assault program managers, and both Services are working to implement new standards for training and certifying Victim Advocates and also Sexual Assault Response Coordinators. NCIS, the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, has hired new investigators with expertise in sexual assault at all major Navy and

Marine Corps installations and we have conducted special training on sexual assault cases for both criminal investigators and military lawyers.

Overall, we are working to try and to make sure that victims do not lose control of their lives or their privacy and are not stigmatized for reporting an assault. Also, the message that we are sending is that there is no place for sexual assault in the Navy or Marine Corps. All allegations will be thoroughly investigated and, where appropriate, prosecuted.

The next thing under safety is driving. Statistically the most dangerous thing a Sailor or Marine does every day is drive a personal motor vehicle. Going back to alcohol abuse, drinking and driving can't be tolerated. One thing we will do to ensure that our officers set the example of zero tolerance for drinking and driving, is we're establishing a formal policy that requires any alcohol-related incident be properly reviewed prior to an officer's promotion.

More training is going to be mandatory for motorcycle riders. The Navy had 12 sport bike fatalities last year, and in nine of those, the rider had not yet attended an advanced motorcycle course. So, every motorcycle rider has got to have Basic Rider Course (BRC) and every sport bike rider also has to complete the Military Sport Bike Rider (MSR) course within 60 days of completing the Basic Rider Course or you won't get a permanent decal to bring your ride on base.

Third is physical fitness. We have to move from a "culture of testing" to a "culture of fitness." There are some who approach exercise like they do studying for a test; cram before the PRT, and give it up as soon as you pass. We are going to try to change that. First, all waivers for body composition assessments (BCAs) have been removed. You're going to have to have a BCA even when you scored an "Outstanding" or an "Excellent" on the PRT or even if you're

over 40. Fitness needs to be a more central part of the culture, and that means everybody has to meet the fitness standards required.

And we are going to provide the tools you need to meet those standards. Navy Operational Fleet and Fueling Series (NOFFS) provides Sailors aboard ships, submarines, and other operational platforms with fitness programs designed to replicate the activities Sailors conduct in their operational duties. And we even have an app for that, downloadable to smartphones. We have developed different workout regimens that can be followed anywhere: on submarines, on smallboats, or in an expeditionary setting with no gym. We're going to improve nutritional standards at our dining facilities with the introduction of "Fueled to Fight" nutrition program ensuring that healthy food options are available and understood at every meal.

Any effort to improve or maintain fitness levels have to include efforts toward a smoke-free Navy. There's no question that smoking seriously hurts your physical readiness and your health. So we will be launching a big, an unprecedented educational campaign, and we will provide free smoking cessation either products or services—afloat and ashore—to any Sailor or Marine who wants to quit.

And, beginning in this Fiscal Year, we are going to end discounts on smoking products in our exchanges and our ships' stores. It doesn't make sense to promote quitting smoking and moving toward a smoke-free Navy and Marine Corps while at the same time making it cheaper to buy cigarettes.

Next, fourth area, inclusion, and this is to ensure that all personnel are given every opportunity to succeed. To that end, we are establishing a new Department of the Navy Diversity Office, with the Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) Juan

Garcia , who is here today, serving as the Department's Diversity Officer. Diversity is important for a lot of reasons, but the most important is that we are better warfighters when we have a diversity of ideas, experiences, expertise, and backgrounds to fulfill our variety of missions.

We've had success in some areas, which is obvious just by looking at the Sailors and Marines here today. And one example of that is in women in the Navy. In the last 33 years, the number of women in the Department of the Navy has increased by 240 percent. But we have to do better in making the Navy and Marine Corps a place where more women want to stay and make a career and move on to the top ranks of our officers and our NCOs.

Among the programs to help do this: a 12-month operational deferment following the birth of a child, and a career intermission program that we're now in pilot form, which allows men or women to return to service after up to three years without penalty after taking time off to care for a child or a relative and lets you keep health care during that time and Exchange privileges, Commissary privileges during that time so that your career gets restarted after that three years at exactly the point that you left off. We're also doing flex work hours during shore duty, and a telework option for up to two days a week at some commands.

The Navy is the only service where, regardless of mission, women are permanently assigned to operational units such as ships, and aviation squadrons, afloat staffs, Naval Construction Force units and some submarine platforms, and that will be expanding to all our subs soon.

Starting this summer, the Marine Corps, under an exception of policy, unrestricted female company grade officers and female noncommissioned officers in the grades of E-6 and E-7 in

open occupational specialties, will serve in direct select combat ground units at the battalion level. This builds on the Marines' highly effective Female Engagement Teams in Afghanistan.

The final area is continuum of service. This 21st Century Sailor and Marine initiative is focused on the whole life of an individual and that individual's family. When a Sailor or Marine's time in the military ends whether it is after four years or 40, we want your productive life to continue and for you to leave the service in better health, more trained and better educated than when you came in.

While you're on active duty, The Navy's Voluntary Education (VOLED) program provides continual academic support to pursue a technical or college degree, regardless of location or duty station.

Support assistance programs and benefits available to those transitioning to civilian life include educational benefits, transition assistance, career management training, individualized counseling, life-work balance programs, and morale, welfare and recreation programs; programs which have been recognized as some of the best personnel support mechanisms anywhere in the country. One example is Navy Credentialing Opportunities On-Line (Navy COOL). This is a centralized, web-based hub that consolidates information on certifications, on licenses, on apprenticeships and on opportunities that correspond to every Navy rating, job and occupation. It also provides funding to the enlisted ranks to get these civilian licenses and certifications.

The Navy itself highly values former Sailors and Marines, hiring as civilians nearly 13,000 in 2011 and more than 3,000 already in 2012. So as you leave, don't forget where you work now.

We have a special, wholly deserved and appropriate commitment to Wounded Warriors. We are providing tailored lifetime assistance. Again, the Navy is a leader in Wounded Warrior hiring.

The ethos, “Once a Marine, always a Marine” sums up the Marine’s approach to continuum of service. The Marine For Life network—including employers, educational institutions and mentors—helps Marines make connections that lead to their success in the community, in the workplace and in civilian life.

The eMarine web site provides information, resources, and support to Marines and their family members 24 hours a day in a secure environment. Commanders use eMarine to communicate directly to Marines and their family members. The Wounded Warrior Regiment provides assistance to wounded, ill, and injured Marines and their family members, throughout all phases of recovery.

There is a whole lot more to the 21st Century Sailor and Marine. But I’m going to stop before this All Hands feels like it is longer than Bataan’s last deployment. There will be more information about 21st Century Sailor and Marine soon. It is going to include a web site that will be online before the end of this month, which brings together all the things in this effort for use by Sailors and Marines and their leadership.

So talk about this, we want to know what else and what more you think can be done. The new defense strategy that I mentioned that the President announced in January, with its focus on the Western Pacific, the Arabian Gulf region and the need for global presence using innovative, low-cost, light footprint engagement requires a Navy and Marine Corps team that is built and ready for any eventuality. You prove your excellence, your resiliency, and your endurance every

single day all around the world. I hope that the programs I've touched on today and the others that will be available will help you with the responsibilities and the readiness you have and will have.

For 236 years, from sail to steam to nuclear; from the USS Constitution to the USS Carl Vinson; from Tripoli to Tripoli; you have upheld a proud heritage, protected our nation, projected our power, and provided freedom of the seas. In the coming years, this new strategy and our plans to execute it will ultimately depend on your skills, your talents and your well-being that will assure that our Navy and Marine Corps not only perseveres but continues to prevail.

Semper Fortis. Semper Fidelis. Thank you all very much.