

Sender:

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To:

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Cc:

Subject: SecNav ltr 23 Feb 99

990223

Arlington, VA

Dear Family & Friends,

Thought you might be interested in this very positive SecNav Letter. Put a GreenStripe on it and a Z-serial on it, and it would qualify for a 'Gram from 1970! Looks great. Sounds great. Action underway is great!

Best wishes to all,

Emmett

Feb. 23, 1999

Secretary of the Navy's "all-hands letter"

Dear Marines and Sailors,

When I was sworn-in just before Thanksgiving, I said that my priorities were to improve "The way we work, the way we live and the way we fight." I've now been in office for nearly three months. During this time, I have twice written letters like this one to tell you about what I am thinking and trying to do. This is a short report on the progress I think we've made over these 85 days.

THE WAY WE WORK: I've said that Sailors and Marines are working too many hours. To correct this, the CNO and Commandant have developed a rich array of initiatives, including reductions in the inspections regimen of the inter-deployment training cycle; greatly increasing our investment in spare parts; and accelerating our modernization efforts. Beyond that, I am particularly stressing that we need to give our men and women the time and tools to do their jobs. We need to minimize down- time between assignments. We need to assign people to jobs that take advantage of their special skills. We need to budget properly for people and equipment so that immense amounts of labor are not required for cross-decking, cannibalization or doing two jobs half as efficiently as is required to do one.

To attack this, we have done the following:

-- Made up a "Smart Work" program and added it to the 1999, 2000 and 2001 budgets. This allocates several hundred million dollars to buying off-the-shelf equipment that will make hard jobs easier. For example, we will acquire scrapers, sprayers, power-screwdrivers, etc., that will make back breaking, time-consuming labor less back breaking and time-consuming.

-- Directed improvements in ship design to improve workability and livability. For example, we are reversing decisions that were unwisely intended to save a few hundred thousand dollars in the LPD, such as eliminating pump improvements. We have allocated money to certify a new type of watertight door and get it into the fleet starting next year. I've discussed this issue with you in previous letters, and I'm pleased to report that we're moving out on a solution. We are also

questioning the habitability standards on board our ships - why are we among the lowest among NATO nations, why aren't we installing the sit-up rack more rapidly throughout our fleet, etc.?

-- Accelerated all our "Smart Ship" investments. Over the next six years, all our cruisers and 28 of our 32 Arleigh Burke destroyers will be equipped with Smart Ship improvements. This frees 44 enlisted people and 4 officers on our cruisers, by substituting technology for labor. I am directing that the saved manpower be retained and reallocated to other shipboard jobs where other Sailors are overworked.

-- Invested our time in working out a plan to fill the billets that are vacant under our present system. This number has recently been as high as 22,000 (with 18,000 of the billets at sea), but we are making progress in bringing it down. Seasonal variations and management steps have brought this down to 18,000 (15,000 at sea). The CNO, Chief of Naval Personnel and I have developed a plan to reduce the overall number to 14,000 by the end of this year; 7,300 by the end of next year and will keep working it beyond that. For example, this includes:

- Raising high-year tenure restrictions to keep E-4s and others in the Fleet.
- Putting a moratorium on discharging people who do not meet PRT standards. The CNO wants to install a better system of Navy PRT goals, and I support him. While we develop this system, both of us want to keep productive Sailors in the Fleet.
- Exploring possibilities for using civilians in place of Sailors on shipyard work for ships in overhaul. This would free Sailors for more valuable tasks than construction work.

-- Joined with the Commandant and CNO in pushing for the acquisition of more spare parts, maintenance funds and training time. I am pleased that the President's budget reflects substantial plus-ups in these regards. These effects will not be felt until this Fall, but if achieved, such budget changes will bring much needed relief to both the Marine Corps and Navy.

-- Added money for real property maintenance and military construction.

-- Given high priority attention to recruitment. We need to recruit 1,000 enlisted Sailors every week (15 percent more than last year) to properly man the Fleet. The Marine Corps needs more than 38,000 enlisted men and women this year. These are tough challenges that demand management attention and support. The CNO, Commandant and I are working together to ensure the recruiting commands have what they need. As a part of this, over the last few weeks I ordered an increase in training capacity at Great Lakes (letting us take in more high school graduates in the summer). Further, I redirected some Navy recruiting efforts from seeking high school graduates with below average test scores to recruiting 2,600 "Proven Performers" people who did not complete high school but have above average test scores and demonstrated success in civilian jobs. Experience shows these "Proven Performers" make good - indeed, sometimes exceptional - Sailors.

THE WAY WE LIVE: I said in my last letter that we cannot pay Marines and Sailors enough for what they do, but we can pay them too little. We need to provide better pay. This is evident from what you say, and by the simple, painful fact that too many Sailors and Marines I treasure are leaving. I also fully recognize that we must provide adequate services for our families. To address this I:

-- Have joined the Commandant, CNO and other Service Chiefs in pressing for a return to a retirement system that assures 50 percent of basic pay after 20 years of service. This is an important part of the budget the President just presented to Congress.

-- Pressed for a revision of the pay table to give substantial pay raises to our best performers -- those who are promoted most quickly. Under the President's budget, everyone will be guaranteed

a pay raise of at least 4.4 percent next January, but some rating skills and paygrades will see as much as a 9.9 percent raise. As I noted in my last letter, we have tended to allocate two-thirds of all pay increases as a reward for longevity; one-third a reward for promotion. I am pleased that we are moving to reverse this equation. Doing so will reward those who we most need to keep. -- Attacked the mindset of "zero defect." Maybe this belongs under the heading of the "way we work," because it certainly affects that. But it also affects the way we live. It is a right proposition that when they don the uniform, Sailors and Marines are Sailors and Marines 24 hours a day. Serious instances of misconduct, like convictions for drunk driving, need to be noted. But promotion boards and reenlistment criteria need to take into account the whole Sailor and Marine and recognize that we are being held instead to a higher standard. To emphasize this point, I directed promotion boards to find the "best qualified" officers, not officers whose records are the most immaculate; it may not be the same thing.

-- Initiated the Internet version of "Lifelines." This program revolutionizes access to our quality of life services by creating a virtual "shopping mall" of on-line Navy services. Users (to include spouses and children as well as service members or civilians interested in the Navy) can come on-line from any computer, choose a "store" and enter it, pulling down information relevant to that store, "chatting" with on-line experts, etc. A store specializing in -deployment, - for example, will provide all relevant information, including, for instance, where to park a car, how to compose a will, available personal communication systems while on deployment, etc. Other stores specialize, for example, in pay issues or health care. We formally unveiled Lifelines on January 27th. ... If it proves to be as helpful as I think it will be, I want to expand it.

-- Pushed for the most rapid expansion of private contracting as a method of building new housing and managing our existing housing stock. This Public- Private Venture (-PPV-) method of operating promises significant savings and most importantly, better housing where savings can be reinvested.

THE WAY WE FIGHT: I have invested heavily in understanding the perspectives and cultures of our largest warfare communities: Surface, Aviation (both Navy and Marine), Undersea, Infantry, Logistics and Special Warfare. I've provided a first installment of my thinking in a speech to our Surface Warfare Community that is on our Web site. I have also begun to look closely at a number of specialized communities, such as the Foreign Area Officer (FAO) program, the Public Affairs community, and our C4 activities. Redirection in these areas will take some time to develop, but I look forward to the results. I am also looking closely at our investments for the future: our aircraft, carrier, and other surface ship programs; our investments in C4, missiles, guns and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs); and our doctrines of war-fighting. More about that in the future.

CONCLUSION: I feel good about our progress. I have great regard and affection for our CNO and Commandant. We're going in the same direction and I think it's a good one.

I look forward to the next 85 days - and beyond.

Richard Danzig

Secretary of the Navy

Editor's note: The letter is from the Secretary of the Navy's site.

PILOT ONLINE - MILITARY