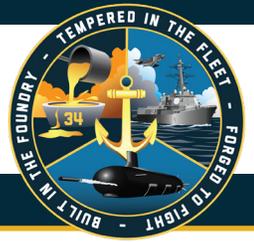


C-NOte #5



A MESSAGE TO THE FLEET FROM THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS

THE BACKBONE OF THE FLEET: CHIEF PETTY OFFICERS

On April 1st, we celebrate the 133rd birthday of the United States Navy Chief Petty Officer, honoring a legacy of deckplate leadership that has defined our force since 1893. Our Chiefs are the undisputed backbone of the Fleet; they are the seasoned experts who bridge the gap between intent and execution, turning rigorous standards into daily habits and molding our Sailors into elite warfighters. Simply put, the lethality of our Navy is built upon the foundation of a strong, unified Chiefs Mess.

Chief Petty Officers are the Navy's center of gravity at the deckplates. Officers may chart the course, but Chiefs make that course real. They train Sailors, enforce standards, maintain readiness, and deliver repeatable excellence in peace and in combat. The bond of trust between the Wardroom and the Chiefs Mess is fundamental to command at sea. Chiefs give junior officers the leadership repetitions they need to grow, and they keep Commanding Officers firmly connected to the daily realities of the mission. The anchors they wear are not decoration – they are a solemn promise of technical mastery, calm leadership under pressure, and uncompromising standards at all times.

As we celebrate the legacy of the Chief Petty Officer, we must also be clear about what we expect of those who wear the anchors today. A Chief is not defined by paygrade, but by presence, practice, and performance. The anchors represent a commitment to lead from the front, to train relentlessly, to enforce standards without hesitation, and to fight for the readiness of our Sailors, our ships, and our Navy. My expectations of every Chief are straightforward and uncompromising. They are highlighted in the following paragraphs.

\\ Put People First

Know your Sailors. Know their strengths, their challenges, and their aspirations. Ensure mentorship, recognition, and accountability are never neglected. Warfighting readiness begins with Sailors who are trained, confident, and cared for with empathy and intrusive concern.

\\ Drive Professional Mastery

Chiefs must be the Navy's technical and tactical experts. Our advantage at sea depends on deep rating knowledge, hands-on experience, and relentless attention to craft. Chiefs are the Fleet's most trusted authorities within their ratings, they must drive standards, mentor Sailors, and ensure warfighting excellence through mastery of their profession. Reviving our warrior ethos and creating lethal warfighting effects are central to that responsibility.

\\ Exemplify and Enforce the Standard

From operational discipline to material readiness to personal conduct, Chiefs set the tone. Standards are not optional, and they are not situational. Pride, professionalism, and attention to detail at the deckplates determine how we fight at sea. Chiefs set the example for ownership while underwriting the culture of excellence onboard.

\\ Train at the Deckplates

Chiefs do not lead from behind a desk. They lead in the spaces, on the line, in the plant, and on watch. Hands-on training, warfare qualifications, and repetition under supervision build the confident, competent watchstanders our Navy depends on in combat.

\\ Sustain Readiness through Transparency

Chiefs anticipate problems early and report them honestly. Maintenance, supply, and personnel challenges must be surfaced quickly so they can be fixed. Readiness is built on trust, and trust requires candor, genuineness, and effective communication skills.

\\ Turn Guidance into Outcomes

Chiefs translate Commanding Officer's intent into executable action. Sailors must understand the task, the standard, the timeline, and the purpose. Chiefs ensure that intent becomes results by delegation with feedback from Sailors. Chiefs are a Commanding Officer's force multiplier on the deckplate.

\\ Own the Plan and Execute with Discipline

Before every evolution, Chiefs set the conditions for success. They verify safety, confirm procedures, and remain present throughout execution. When the moment comes, Chiefs anticipate and ensure the team performs to high standards while being outcome driven.

\\ Debrief with Intellectual Honesty

Great teams improve every day in a pursuit of excellence. Chiefs lead candid, no-rank debriefs that capture lessons learned and drive continuous improvement. This is how we sharpen warfighting skill and maintain combat credibility. Chiefs turn brilliance on the basics into daily habits on the deckplate.

\\ Lead in Crisis

When casualties occur, Chiefs take charge at the scene. They direct damage control, steady the team, instill confidence, and restore order through experience and composure. In the most difficult moments, including the fog of war, the difference between losing control and saving the ship is often a Chief.

\\ Build Tomorrow's Leaders

Chiefs develop junior officers and enlisted alike. They shape future Chiefs, Commanding Officers, and Master Chiefs through daily example, resource management, honest feedback, and high expectations. Leadership is a craft that blends art and science, and Chiefs are masters of this craft.

GREAT SHIPS, SQUADRONS AND COMMANDS ARE NEVER ACCIDENTS

They are built through intrusive leadership, clear communication, disciplined execution, and hard work at the deckplates. Chiefs weave together mission accomplishment, safety, ownership, and Sailor development. Through their hands, the Navy delivers quality of service for its people, builds mastery throughout the ranks, and remains ready to fight and win.

To our Chiefs: thank you for your grit, your wisdom, and your unwavering commitment to our mission. The anchors you wear carry the weight of our history and the responsibility of our future.

To the rest of the Fleet: look to your Chiefs. Emulate their professionalism and lean on their experience. We are a more lethal force because of their leadership.

Happy Birthday, Chief Petty Officers. See you on the deckplates!

BUILT IN THE FOUNDRY - TEMPERED IN THE FLEET - FORGED TO FIGHT.



Daryl L. Caudle
Admiral, United States Navy

