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IN REPLY REFER TO

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Building Our Future Together
Occasional Thoughts: Strategy XXI

Dear Chaplain:

I begin this letter with a quote from the *Navy Chaplains News Letter* of July 1943.

"Although the Navy Chaplain Corps is expanding very rapidly, it is felt that many opportunities for service are being missed by our chaplains for various reasons. It is impossible to attach a chaplain to each ship and shore of the Navy, but it is the desire of the Bureau to provide an opportunity for every man and woman in the Navy, Marines, and Coast Guard to have the services of a Navy chaplain when they desire such services."

Fifty-six years ago chaplains were asking the same questions we are asking today. In 1943, during the era of a huge military build-up, visionary leaders of the Chaplain Corps were working to address what they perceived as emerging needs. We have benefited from the forward thinking to help us to anticipate and assess future requirements and developments within our society and the Sea Services. Our task is once again to lean into the future on behalf of religious ministry in the Sea Services.

To facilitate our Corps' futures planning, in October 1997 we retained the expertise of the Center for Naval Analysis (CNA) to conduct a study known as, **Strategy XXI: Establishing the Operational Requirements and Future Organizational Structure for the Chaplain Corps.**" This expansive endeavor has drawn from commanders/commanding officers, chaplains and Religious Program Specialists (RP), Ecclesiastical Endorsers, and Sea Services men and women to collect a heretofore, unprecedented body of information.

In gathering the data, four major areas have emerged in the shaping of our preliminary strategic understanding:

1. We must grasp current chaplain/RP missions and tasks.
2. We must explore the role of chaplains/RPs in light of emerging missions and tasks.
3. We must analyze existing Chaplain Corps structures (to include religious ministry doctrine, organization and training) in light of emerging missions and tasks.

4. We must investigate possible alternative structures to enable continued and enhanced flexibility and latitude of response to the emerging requirements, as they are made known.

These pivotal insights are a direct result of your participation and support in the completion of the Skill Survey questionnaires, focus groups, individual interviews, and a myriad of CNA on-site visits hosted by so many of you. Therefore, the research and data-gathering phase has given way to the assessment process--with specific recommendations now forthcoming.

We are underway in a series of briefings to the Navy's leadership. The initial responses are encouraging and will directly inform our coordination of the FY 2000 Theme, *Charting Our Course into the 21st Century*. This strategic plan will be fully briefed to the chaplains/RPs at the Senior Leadership Conference 2000. For now, I want to provide you a succinct summary of these preliminary findings.

Religious Ministry

An emerging consensus is that our traditional understanding of providing religious ministry coverage severely limits our corporate and unit-specific ability to adequately meet the varied and numerous needs of those we serve. This is so in large part because the focus has been on the type and number of chaplains available at any given time or place. Historically, we have assigned chaplains to commands with the expectation that they would provide coverage to all command personnel. Today, however, our commands, both ashore and afloat, have decreased in size. And, at the same time, commands have increased in religious preference diversity among the assigned personnel. As a consequence, and by virtue of conventional practices of assigning chaplains, many religious requirements go unmet or seriously compromised.

Contrast the single dimensional aspect of coverage with that of access. When we speak of access we are focussed upon the Sailor and Marine to have available appropriate religious ministry resources. Ensuring access is three dimensional in its approach because it prioritizes the "caring for all" as a foundational component that contains providing (direct) and facilitating (indirect) as necessary aspects of ensuring nobody is outside the reach of religious support. Then, resources to meet the needs are not restricted to what any single chaplain may provide; rather, the chaplain(s) brings to bear all the necessary personnel and logistic support necessary---from any number of military and non-military sources.

Organization

CNA's preliminary findings indicate that the current organizational structure could be improved. Our current structure limits my ability and flexibility to maximize all of the personnel resources available in a timely way. Currently, little latitude exists to support emerging requirements (global sourcing) as events unfold and the larger naval structures also undergo change. There may be a way to remedy these restrictions through the establishment of the Chief of Chaplains as a major manpower claimant. This idea is undergoing intense exploration within the Department of the Navy.

Perceptions

The perceptions which chaplains hold are on a broad spectrum from promotion and denominational issues to racial, gender and justice issues. We have discovered that across the entire Navy, individuals within our Corps are clinging to negative perceptions about the institution and one another. Although much more detailed factual information will be provided by CNA at SLC 2000, the facts suggest a very different reality in the face of many negative perceptions and strongly held beliefs. However, we will endeavor to do all in our power to develop and implement appropriate solutions to real issues within our Corps.

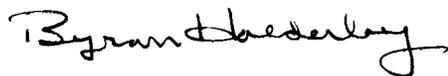
Religious Program Specialists

Two important concerns have quickly been made manifest regarding RPs. First, there is an inconsistent and shallow understanding of the RP Rating within and outside the Chaplain Corps. Second, in the minds of officer and enlisted alike, the Rating has been grievously mismanaged and/or neglected. We have already begun to redress this concern through the establishment of the Senior Enlisted Advisor (SEA) and Force Master Chief of the RP Rating, along with other critical assignments of RPs to strategic jobs at EPMAC and elsewhere. In just a few short months since the institution of the SEA, the RP billet structure was increased from 835 to 846 billets, the first billet gain in several years.

Summary

These four themes do not constitute a *strategy*. That is yet to come. However, they do provide us with a snapshot of our discoveries and begin to inform the charting of our course into the 21st Century in ways that are factually based and consistent with the larger institutional structures of the Department of the Navy. As a Corps, we are on the threshold of incredible, constructive changes. I cannot remember a time of planning more

consequential for our future than today. With your help, energy, ideas and enthusiasm, we will seize the moment on behalf of ensuring religious ministry access to all Sea Services men and women. We exist only for this contribution to them.



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