



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS
2000 NAVY PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20350-2000

IN REPLY REFER TO

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Dear Colleagues,

This administration has promised to keep you apprised of ongoing developments in the Chaplain Corps. This letter is offered to bring you up to date on the future of the Religious Program Specialist rating.

The Chief of Naval Operations has issued his guidance regarding naval personnel, and I'm sure that as both officer and chaplain you have read this guidance and pondered its relevance for our Chaplain Corps community. Admiral Clark has stressed that he wants to spend just enough money for personnel for fleet operations and "not one penny more." He expects the Navy leadership to capitalize on modern technology and configure a fleet that reflects the optimizing of personnel. He has directed the Navy to realign with a focus on the tooth or war fighting aspects of our mission, and less on the tail or support aspects. As such, he has directed a reduction in shore-intensive ratings by as much as 50%.

The Chief of Naval Personnel has proposed a study to consider the merger of four ratings: YN, LN, CTA, and RP. It is called the Naval Enlisted Occupational Classification Systems (NEOCS). Through a thorough investigation of current occupational standards and billet requirements, it was determined that these ratings are, in fact, shore intensive and administrative in focus. The merger study is multi-dimensional and considers all aspects of the issue at hand, including advancement opportunities, male/female percentages, ASVAB scores, professional development, post-Navy marketability, and sea / shore rotations.

Through mergers, the Navy hopes to minimize redundancies in functions and training, improve business processes, reduce infrastructure costs, and best serve the sailors of these ratings. The study is *not* intended to minimize the great contributions made by each of these ratings, but rather, to best serve fleet requirements.

February 10-11, 2004, RPCM Terry (SEA), RPCM Thompson (CFFC), RPCS Hutchins (Detailer), and (N971E) attended a merger proposal meeting in support of the NEOCS process. After two days of vigorous meetings, the intense debates of that meeting yielded facts that I believe should be shared with all of you:

- a) The merger proposal cited a 19% professional commonality among the four ratings.

- b) The proposal and commonality study used outdated, yet administratively current data from RP occupational standards that have now been superseded by the results of the JTA process (Level 1). The RPs and chaplains strongly protested any merger that did not reflect current standards and requirements. Representatives also stressed that the loss of specialization would result in the degradation of services to the fleet and fleet marine force, and the spiritual health of our Sailors and Marines.
- c) Questions surfaced concerning the career path/advancement potentialities. Would RPs advance in a rating dominated by members of other (former) ratings? Would the RMT concept in the joint, USN, and USMC worlds remain intact, or lose their institutional and professional relevance?

The positive aspects of a merger rating were also discussed and analyzed. Would there be greater diversity in the new rating with civilian certifications and qualifications? Would Sailors be more marketable in a post-Navy career? How would such a merger impact detailing and sea / shore rotations? How would it enhance professional development and promotion opportunities? Given the fact that these ratings appear to be a target for shore billet reduction regardless of merger possibilities, how would such a merger ultimately impact sea / shore rotation and the potential civilianization of billets?

For the information of all our chaplains and religious program specialists, it is important that you know that, at this stage of the process, *no decision has been made* regarding this merger. CNP and NAVMAC have agreed to postpone decisions until the JTA Level 1 results are in place (target date: March 30, 2004), thus reflecting the real versus perceived occupational standards of the RP rating. A new commonality study will then be initiated to reflect the new data and standards. In the interim, RPCM Thomas, RPCM Baltazar, and RPCS Spencer will continue to monitor the study and represent the needs, beliefs, and interests of the RPs and Chaplain Corps to merger talks.

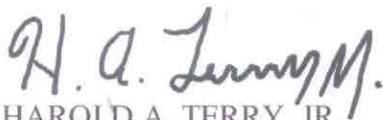
These talks come at a time when the Chaplain Corps is immersed in an extensive realignment initiative, one that will eventually move assets from the shore to the operational world thus better meeting the requirements of the fleet and fleet marine force. As we move from shore intensive to sea intensive, we realign to meet the emergent needs of our people, and especially the war on terrorism. This realignment is made to better meet the needs of our institutions and our people, not to downsize, right-size, or avoid billet reductions. These talks also coincide with the 25th Anniversary of the RP rating, twenty-five years of stellar and distinguished service to the fleet and fleet marine force.

This staff will remain faithful to my pledge to you: to inform you of any significant developments as we move forward with Chaplain Corps initiatives. The CRB will soon post a questionnaire to afford all RPs the opportunity to react to the proposed merger.

Please respond honestly and thoughtfully to the specifics of the merger and the principles established in the Navy's Revolution in Training. Like all decisions made by this staff, I encourage you to ask yourself these three questions:

- 1) Is the decision in the best interest of the people of God?
- 2) Is it in the best interest of the institutions we serve?
- 3) Does it best serve the interests of the Chaplain Corps?

I have directed that the next *White Letter* specifically address the potential merger of the RP rating. All pertinent information regarding the proposal will be forwarded to you for your study and discussion. Know that I value your ministry, your service, and your commitment to God and country.



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VOCATI AD SERVITIUM
"Called to Serve"