



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

1730 IN REPLY REFER TO
Ser N097/03140
21 May 03

Dear Colleagues:

Last week, I convened a conference of three-dozen chaplains and RPs serving in (or have orders to) executive leadership positions in the Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard. We gathered in the Religious Education facilities at the Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division, Patuxent River, Maryland. We were supported wonderfully by the chaplains and RPs assigned there.

For three days, we grappled with the present and imagined the future. We soaked in briefings from military planners working on the cutting edge of transformation in the Armed Forces. We broke into small groups for hours of intense discussion about who we are, why we're here, where we need to take the Chaplain Corps as an organization in the years ahead, and how to do that effectively. The challenge of the task was reflected in the energy these very senior leaders poured into the assignments I gave them.

To prime their intellectual pumps, I asked these leaders to read two books before they arrived: *Good to Great*, by Jim Collins, and *Execution: The Discipline of Getting Things Done*, by Larry Bossidy and Ram Charan. Throughout the conference, we looked at the Chaplain Corps through their "microscopes." We talked about what "Level 5 Leadership" would look like in the Chaplains Corps, how to "get the right people on the bus (and in the right seats)." We looked for the "brutal facts" confronting the Chaplain Corps and our "hedgehog concept." By the third day, each group had a solid contribution to offer for transforming and positioning our organization for greatness in the years ahead.

That third day also happened to be three months to the day before the Change of Office ceremony that will mark the end of my tenure as your Chief of Chaplains. The plans and processes developed during this conference will not bear fruit for the Sea Services people we serve until I am gone and another has taken my place. Like Moses on Mount Pisgah; however, I can see the Promised Land from a distance.

So why would I bother to call your leaders together in the twilight of my tour? The answer lies in the theme of our conference: "For Those We Serve."

For three years as your Deputy and now almost three more as your Chief, I have watched hundreds of military honors rendered at Arlington National Cemetery across the way, the last and fitting tribute paid to those who have gone before us. In recent months, I have also watched on television the incredibly youthful faces of those who traveled to the other side of the world and then fought their way

into the enemy's lair. I have seen in them a new generation of our nation's (and freedom's) defenders.

You and I as chaplains and RPs are part of a tremendous organization with an honorable heritage. Our organization, despite whatever human imperfections or limitations it may manifest, is the source of spiritual blessings far more significant than any one of us. From our first day in this community until our last, whether that be three months or thirty years from now, we bear a sacred and noble obligation to give our best, and to position the Chaplain Corps to improve on that best even after we are gone—for the sake of those we serve. I pray that God blesses your work this day, and molds it into a lasting memorial to His presence with and love for his people—for those we serve.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barry C. Black". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

BARRY C. BLACK
Rear Admiral, Chaplain Corps
U. S. Navy
Chief of Navy Chaplains