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 Religious Program Specialists,

The dedication and service you provide as an RP cannot be measured adequately to quantify the positive impact the RP rating has provided the Sea Services for the past twenty five years. For a quarter of a century RPs have served in direct support of chaplains as vital team members in ministry. The following bullets represent historical events in the development of the RP rating:

- The Specialist (W) "Welfare" rating was established in 1942 to provide assistants to Navy chaplains for the duration of World War II. In 1948 the Specialist (W) rating was merged into the new Personnelman (PN) rating.

- In November of 1953 an emergency "Chaplain's assistant" rating was established during the Korean Conflict.

- The Chief of Chaplains convinced the Navy's Permanent Board for Review (PBR), that qualified, motivated, trained and experienced chaplain's assistants are needed. The Deputy Chief of Naval Personnel disapproved the recommendation by the PBR, in June 1956.

- From 1945-1979 the Yeoman (YN) rating furnished personnel in the Chaplain clerk's specialty (YN 2525) to aid and support Navy Chaplains. The YN-2525 NEC was approved as a secondary NEC for Chaplain's assistants. A survey conducted in 1972 found that out of an available 158 YN-2525 NEC billets, only 46 were filled and of them, only 11 were in direct support of chaplains.

- In 1973, RADM Francis L. Garret, CHC, USN, stated, "The Army and Air Force, on the other hand, have a system that creates an invidious comparison and solid sense of shame that the Navy support of the Chaplain community in the provision of trained and qualified enlisted support personnel is so woefully inadequate."

- In 1976, RADM John J. O'Connor, CHC, USN, stated "The YN-2525 program has been tried since 1965…this NEC places the individual in a field so disparate from his training and from the need that the yeoman aspirant is frustrated, the "A" school training is wasted, and the chaplain's expectations of enlisted personnel are lowered to clerical

"A" school training is wasted, and the chaplain's expectations of enlisted personnel are lowered to clerical help and janitorial services. The Navy is deprived of the benefit of a full spiritual ministry."

- In 1978, Mr. Hildalgo, Under Secretary of the Navy, signed the document which approved the RP rating, the focus changed from one of administration to one of Religious Programming Requirements (RPR).

- In 1979, the Secretary of the Navy approved the establishment of the RP rating. The rating was officially created on 15 January 1979. Initially 160 men and women were selected to provide support to Navy chaplains. A number of Marine Corps enlistees transferred to the Navy and became RP's. Rear Admiral O'Connor considered RP's "…as partners in ministry of religion." In June 1979 the RP Rating Badge was approved and the first RP Class "A" School graduated, followed by the first Class "C" School graduation in September 1979.

History proves the importance of the RP rating in providing direct support of Religious Programming Requirements (RPR). This broad base of knowledge is required for service with Combat Battalions, Fleet Hospitals, Joint Operations and with the United States Marine Corps. The RP is trained in combat arms to provide physical security for the chaplain who is a non-combatant. Additionally, through professional knowledge and logistical expertise, the RP helps to ensure that the chaplain is free to focus on providing quality religious ministry.

Today's RP is engaged during times of peace, conflict, war and terror, providing assistance to the Navy chaplain, helping to ensure that the religious rights and spiritual needs of all Sea Service personnel and their families are being met.

The RP's history is rich, yet with today's qualified men and women in the RP community, we can be certain that the future will prove to be even better. Happy "Silver Anniversary" RP's, and thank you for your continued and faithful service to the Sea Services.

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Chief of Navy Chaplains

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