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CNO, MCPON Plot Course for CPO Mess of 21st Century

By Senior Chief Journalist (SW) Brian Roscoe and Master Chief Hospital Corpsman Mark Hacala, MCPON Public Affairs

DALLAS (NNS) — A new image of the Navy's chief petty officer (CPO) mess was born in Dallas when Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Vern Clark and Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy MCPON(SS/SW/AW) Jim Herdt hosted the first worldwide CNO-MCPON Command Master Chief (CMC) Conference June 25 through June 26.

The 748 command master chiefs and chiefs of the boat met to discuss "Building the CPO and the CPO Mess of the 21st Century," and introduce a new way of thinking and defining the role of the chief petty officer community.

"We are sending a very clear message here today that this is the beginning of an investment in our CPO mess," said Herdt in his opening remarks. "Our goal is to build a mess that is more adaptive and agile. This is our chance to build the mess we want, a mess that you will continue to be proud to be a part of."

The purpose of the conference was giving the CPO mess the tools to be prepared for change and the tools to build a CPO mess that the Navy will remain vital and relevant well

into the 21st Century.

The CNO emphasized his support of the CPO community.

"This is a very important day for us in the Navy," Clark said.

Recalling one of his earliest experiences with a CPO, Clark recalled his arrival to his first ship in 1968.

"I had been there for two weeks, assigned to the engineering department, when Master Chief Leedy walked up to me and put his arm around me and said 'Mr. Clark, I like you and I'm going to teach you how to be a good officer,'" the CNO said.

Clark's early experience with that master chief influenced not only his image of chiefs, but also his image of the command.

In the CNO's first command policy statement, written as a lieutenant in 1974, he wrote: "I am going to eradicate the idea that this command does not know how to use chiefs." This concept policy has remained with the CNO through today.

Clark told the master chiefs that he considers them senior leadership and tasked them to partner with their commanding officers.



Adm. Vern Clark, Chief of Naval Operations.
U.S. Navy photo

He said he sees a Navy that provides more responsibility to the chief's mess and holds them more accountable for mission accomplishment. He also challenged the chief petty officer community to continue to grow, encouraging these leaders to read a book a month on leadership and management.

Herdt agreed, "The CPO mess needs to open its shutters and doors to new leadership and management ideas from outside of the military."

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Herd announced that he plans to update the CPO required reading list to include various leadership and management books.

In addition to the CNO and MCPON, guest speakers included retired Vice Adm. Lee Gunn, who heads the Executive Review of Naval Training, and Dr. David Cooperrider, author of the book "Appreciative Inquiry."

Gunn explained several recommendations for naval education that are currently under review. His proposed initiatives include a greater use of electronic means to deliver training to the Sailor.

He discussed proposals such as online electronic training jackets formulated before they report to boot camp that Sailors could use throughout their careers. Gunn also discussed the idea of a resource Web site called "Ask the Chief" that could be used to help Sailors access the information they need to succeed.

While Gunn's presentation offered the command master chiefs an in-depth view of new ideas for changes to Navy education, Cooperrider's lecture provided them with a new way of looking at change.

Cooperrider's theory of appreciative inquiry is a way of looking at change by focusing on an organization's strengths rather than its weaknesses.

The goal of Cooperrider's lecture was to give the command master chiefs new tools to achieve dramatic

results in their CPO messes.

Herd noted that appreciative inquiry was only one tool to help chiefs strengthen their skills.

"If you go to the store you might see a tool of a particular brand," Herdt said. "But that brand has many tools, and there are many different brands."

The Navy's senior enlisted leadership along with the CNO conceived this conference, Herdt explained.

"This is more than a one-man show. The fleet, force and CNO-directed command master chiefs worked long and hard to develop the concepts delivered at this conference," Herdt said.

Those concepts developed by the senior enlisted panel included the following statement that defines who and what a chief petty officer is and the core competencies common to all chief petty officers.

Chief Petty Officers are enlisted warriors who lead and manage the Sailor resources of the Navy they serve. As such, chief petty officers are responsible for, have the authority to accomplish, and are held accountable for:

- Leading Sailors and applying their skills to tasks that enable mission accomplishment for the U.S. Navy;
- Developing enlisted and junior officer Sailors;
- Communicating the core values, standards and information of the Navy that empower Sailors to be successful in all they attempt;
- Supporting with loyalty the



MCPON(SS/SW/AW) Jim Herdt, Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy.
U.S. Navy photo

endeavors of the chain of command they serve and their fellow chief petty officers with whom they serve.

Presentations at the conference also included a set of terminal learning objectives based on the core competencies that the training of every newly selected CPO will be directed towards achieving prior to pinning on their anchors.

For more information, contact MCPON Public Affairs at DSN 225-5591 or (703) 695-5591.



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