



A Vision for the Future

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A few weeks ago, VADM Mark Ferguson (Chief of Naval Personnel) and VADM Dirk Debbink (Chief of Navy Reserve) addressed the Surface Navy Association (SNA), and offered their combined vision for the future of the Navy, and in particular how we are creating a “continuum of service.”

A continuum of service is about integrating and balancing our active component (AC) and reserve component (RC) to meet our mission requirements. It is about considering the RC as the provider of choice for the right kind of requirement, creating a true Total Force for the Navy.

The *Navy Total Force Vision for the 21st Century* embraces a continuum of service philosophy — recruit a Sailor once and retain that professional for life by providing flexible service options. In the past, transitioning from AC to RC was referred to as an “off ramp.” Today, recognizing we’re all on the same career highway, we should refer to this as simply changing lanes.

Innovations under VADM Ferguson are working: our retention rates are at 10-year highs, and we’ve met fully recruiting goals the past two years. The manning shortfalls we were facing are easing as more quality people choose to dedicate their professional skills as a member of the One Navy team. A majority of officers leaving AC now affiliate with the RC. Under the Perform to Serve initiative, Sailors can choose a drilling Navy Operational Support Center (NOSC) before even leaving active duty. We are becoming an effective fighting force where the role of the RC is vital, relevant, and long-term.

In a way, this event is also a vision for the future ... of AUSN. Whereas we are successful in attracting distinguished speakers for our conferences, I see a future where the preferred venue for major policy decision announcements are AUSN events. CDR Aaron Bresnahan, our VP for Communications, attended the

conference so that his employer could exhibit their capabilities at a vendor booth — one of many. I see a future where major Navy suppliers see AUSN as a “must attend” event. The SNA conference was well attended by AC and RC members in an official capacity. I see a future where AC and RC participate at AUSN events, on orders, because Navy leadership sees the value in what we provide. I see a future where joining AUSN is considered a rite of passage for all newly commissioned officers and newly pinned Chief Petty Officers. I see a future where AUSN represents intrinsically what is best about being in the Navy, and provides that life-long link to our shipmates.

Visions don’t just materialize by themselves; they take hard work. Some of these things will take time. But remembering where we are headed, and why, gives us the commitment to continue when the passion wears off. At some point in time you felt strongly enough about our Association to become a member. Take some action this month to reinforce that decision — whether it be to visit our on-line Web community at <http://ausn.groupsite.com>, or contact some of your local members and get your chapter up and running again. Make the first phone call. Write the first letter. Take action; take initiative; take control of the future.

One of my favorite movie lines is at the end of “Back to the Future,” when Christopher Lloyd says, “Your future is whatever you make it, so make it a good one!” Take action today and be part of our Navy’s and our Association’s future now.

G. Mark Hardy