

Moran Stresses Speed, Urgency in Building Navy of the Future

ARLINGTON, Va. – Speed and a sense of urgency will be the keys to delivering the Navy of the future “for all the young officers and Sailors” now working their way up through the ranks, Vice Chief of Naval Operations (VCNO) Adm. Bill Moran said during his keynote address at the Surface Navy Association annual symposium Jan. 15.

After asking for the young Sailors and Midshipmen in the audience to stand and be recognized, Moran noted, “I hope you are excited about the future. ... There is a lot to look forward to.”

Addressing more senior military and industry leaders, he then emphasized that, “The mission we have is to deliver a Navy that’s bigger and more capable, a Navy focused on innovating and iterating the current force while growing new platforms and capabilities for the future.

“These young men and women deserve a Navy that moves faster, buys and delivers faster, orients and decides faster and, ultimately, puts a weapon on target faster than our adversaries. They deserve a Navy that places an aggressive, determined and unrelenting focus on readiness and warfighting in the here and now.

“Let’s do this together and take full advantage of the time we spend here this week to do something to ensure that we build and maintain a Navy worthy of the young men and women in the audience today,” he said.

Recent history has presented challenges in accomplishing that goal, Moran noted, with sequestration, continuing resolutions

and spending caps compounded by nearly 20 years of land- and air-based operations in Afghanistan and Iraq and an expanding mission profile for the fleet worldwide that have stretched resources thin and established a “mindset of scarcity” that has been hard to shake.

“We’ve garnered a whole bunch of experience meeting urgent requirements. Yet I would argue we have very little memory of the strategic long game. We became accustomed to staring at 1-meter targets instead of preparing for future uncertainties,” he said.

“In this new age of rising competition, meeting near-term mission at the expense of long-term investment in people and equipment will no longer be an option. It won’t prepare us for the high-end fight, and it won’t allow us to grow and maintain the Navy our Sailors and American people deserve.”

The larger budgets of the past couple years have allowed the service to address maintenance backlogs and manning shortfalls and improve training, but it has taken time to make wise investments in readiness, he said, time the Navy can ill afford. But the tide does seem to be turning.

“After a year of run-time and lessons learned, and an unrelenting focus on process improvements and a greater sense of urgency, we are now seeing concrete signs of progress. Our leaders are thinking different, planning for the future and owning readiness again,” Moran said.

“We’ve got a long way to go, but we’re on the right path,” he said. “There is renewed energy in the force about doing things the right way, re-establishing good habits, raising the bar and doing things better than we’ve done for some time and, ultimately, better than ever. This builds confidence, and confidence is essential in an uncertain world,” one where great power competition on the open seas is back in play.

The VNC0 stressed that speed remains one of the biggest

challenges for service leaders, noting “it will determine how we position ourselves in a world where everything is moving faster than the way our system was built to respond or anticipate.”

But, he said, “believing in our Sailors, their ingenuity, their intellect and courage to innovate,” can help overcome this challenge. “Our success depends on their imagination. Our reliance on their ability to create, to think critically, to imagine and unknown future is truly the only certainty that we have for tomorrow.

“I don’t think I’ll ever be satisfied that we are fast enough in any domain. But I am very encouraged by the amount of collaboration and cooperation ... in the effort to get at pace.”

Navy Birthday Ball Marks 243 Years of Service Above Self

WASHINGTON – Hundreds of Washington-area Navy personnel and their guests celebrated 243 years of “honor, courage and commitment” at the U.S. Navy Birthday Ball Oct. 13 at the Ronald Reagan Building, hosted by Navy League national headquarters.

The event featured a performance by the U.S. Navy band and remarks from Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Adm. John M. Richardson and Tammie Jo Shults, a former naval aviator and now a commercial pilot, who gave a riveting account of the teamwork, training and “steel-caliber nerves” that helped bring Southwest Airlines Flight 1380 in for a safe landing April 17 after the plane suffered a catastrophic engine failure at 32,000 feet.

The CNO and his wife, Dana, and Shults and her husband Dean, joined Navy League National President Alan Kaplan and his wife, Marnie, in the official party for the evening, along with Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy Russell Smith and his wife, Amy, and Undersecretary of the Navy Thomas Modly and his wife, Robyn.

The remarks and dinner in the Reagan Building's cavernous atrium were followed by the ceremonial cake-cutting with Richardson and Smith being joined the youngest and oldest Sailors in attendance, toasts to each of the sea services and "those in harm's way," and dancing in the adjacent ballroom with music from DJ Chad.

Rear Adm. Brent Scott, chief of chaplains of the Navy, offered the invocation.

"From the core of our soul, help us find faith in something bigger than ourselves, where toughness of spirit and strength of character emerge to carry us, alongside our families, through the storms that head our way," he said.

During his introductory remarks, Kaplan noted, "Our organization is honored to host the 243rd Navy Birthday Ball. ... It takes a special person to become a Sailor. Sailors are not born, they are forged. Tonight, it is our honor to thank you, your spouses and your families for the sacrifice, dedication and for all your service. ... You will always be our organization's North Star, lighting our way and inspiring us with your lifelong journey, forged by the sea," echoing the event's theme.

Richardson opened his remarks with a few words of thanks to the Navy League, noting, "The Navy League really has taken this to whole other level. What a great night to come together and remember what the Navy means to our nation."

He also asked that those in attendance remember those who would be marking the Navy birthday from the far corners of the

globe, where they were conducting the business of protecting the nation's interests.

"It is a maritime era, this is a maritime century, a maritime economy, ... and the stakes for us have never been higher," he said. "While we are here enjoying this wonderful meal in tremendous comfort, even luxury, it always is helpful to think about those 65,000 Sailors who are deployed on about 95 ships, protecting our security."

That is at the very heart of the notion of "forged by the sea," Richardson said.

"They are out there deterring bad behavior, deterring those who would want to take us on, building alliances and partnerships, responding to crises," he said, be it by providing hurricane relief in the Carolinas, assisting with drug interdiction efforts in the Caribbean and Eastern Pacific, participating in the Trident Juncture exercise with NATO allies in Northern Europe or Valiant Shield in the Pacific, or operating in the Mediterranean: "an increasingly hot part of the world. ... We do our job by being forward, by being at sea and we are at sea tonight."

The experiences at sea, being far forward on deployment, "are the experiences that forge us together to be much tougher, more capable versions of ourselves, inspiring us to levels of performance that even we didn't think that we could do on our own," Richardson said.

And he introduced Shults as "someone who embodies all of that. She is one of us, she is a naval aviator," he said. "Drawing on her extensive naval and civilian flight training, Captain Shults and her team remained calm under extraordinary pressure and circumstances. She piloted her damaged aircraft and nearly 150 passengers onboard to safety in performing an emergency landing in Philadelphia.

"Being a captain means something, and you set the tone. And

amid the toughest circumstances, she kept her cool. ... We celebrate the Navy spirit embodied in Tammie Jo Shults. She did not give up her aircraft, and we do not give up the ship."

Had either the Air Force and Army obliged, Shults might not have become "one of us," as the CNO noted. Growing up in New Mexico, "you don't see many ships there," she joked, but the jets from nearby Holloman Air Force Base "drew my attention."

Her desire to become an aviator, however, was rebuffed by the Air Force and the Army. So while the Navy was not her first choice, it did give her what the services would not: an opportunity.

"In March of 1985, I checked into AOCs (Aviation Officers Candidate School Class 16-85) in Pensacola, Florida. I got my head shaved, and I started doing push-ups like everyone else. I loved it. I had found my people," she said.

Shults entered the Navy at a fortuitous time, as more doors were being opened to women for roles that traditionally had been male-only, something that would come later – many years, in some cases – for other service branches. She went on to become one of the Navy's first female F/A-18 Hornet fighter pilots.

"The Navy itself is too noble, with a mission too big, to cater to personal prejudice," she said. "The Navy was moving on, from the best armada of men to the best armada.

"The experiences that we have in the Navy we could have nowhere else," she continued. "For me, carrier landings and A-7 night bombing stand out as the challenges that groomed more than my skills. They forged a new set of steel-caliber nerves for me. As an instructor pilot, I wasn't allowed to teach guns like my peers. ... I was sent to teach OCF [out of control flight] instead. This constant rehearsal of departing controlled flight and even a spiral served me well on April 17, when my Boeing wanted to depart flight."

Shults paused at the midpoint of her remarks as the harrowing audio of the air traffic control recordings that chronicled the battle to bring Flight 1380 in for a landing was played back for the audience, who then gave her a standing ovation when the tape concluded.

Twenty minutes into the flight from New York to Dallas, the 737's left engine failed over Pennsylvania, damaging the wing and the hydraulic and fuel lines, and sending debris into the fuselage that caused a rapid depressurization of the cabin. One passenger was partially sucked out of the plane.

"Everything was fine, until it wasn't," Shults said.

She was quick to credit her fellow crew for their teamwork in helping bring the flight back from the brink of disaster to a safe conclusion.

"A wise man once said, 'It is amazing what you can accomplish when you don't care who gets the credit.' I was blessed to be part of an incredible team that day," she said.

While the flight crew battled to keep the plane in the air, the cabin crew assisted the passengers with their oxygen masks and assured them that "we were not going down. We were going into Philly," Shults said. "A destination gave hope. It changed the atmosphere immediately."

One passenger, Jennifer Riordan, died as a result of the accident, despite the heroic efforts of several passengers to first pull her back into the plane and then give her cardiopulmonary resuscitation. And though the plane landed safely, "and we returned 148 people to their loved ones that day," the fact that one passenger was not still weighs heavy on herself and the crew, Shults said.

"There is a time to weep and a time to laugh," she said. "A time to mourn and a time to dance. That day I understood those words."

Going forward, Shults urged those in attendance to, come what

may, keep blazing a trail.

“It is my hope that when you get your head down deep into the details, or grow tired of your grueling schedule, or become weary of trying to balance saving the free world and still making it home in time for a family dinner, please do not let this one fact elude you: The ripples of your obedience in serving your country, a cause greater than yourself, it changes the very posture of the world we live in,” she said.

“You certainly changed my world, by opening your ranks, allowing women to fly in the military. The Navy blazed this trail. ... Your birthday quest? ... I implore you to lead on. You know who you are, and where you are going. You set a good course. Please continue. Lead on.”

Schultz Takes the Helm as Coast Guard Commandant

WASHINGTON – Adm. Karl L. Schultz took command of the U.S. Coast Guard during a June 1 ceremony at Coast Guard headquarters presided over by President Donald J. Trump and attended by most of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, homeland security officials, a large international contingent, current and former Coast Guard members, and family and friends.

“Today is a day of hails, a day of farewells and a day of thank yous,” Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen said in her introductory remarks at the change of command, which marked the end of the four-year tenure as commandant of Adm. Paul F. Zukunft, who officially retired from the Coast Guard in a ceremony immediately following the event.

“‘Service above self,’ an Adm. Zukunft quote, is a reflection

of his 40 years of service in the Coast Guard, words to live by that I share," she said.

Zukunft became the 25th commandant on May 30, 2014. His leadership and vision were instrumental in increasing the pace of the Coast Guard's recapitalization efforts, according to a release from the service. He worked with Congress and the White House to achieve funding for completion of the national security cutter program of record, the acquisition of new fast response cutters, and funding for the waterways commerce cutter and the offshore patrol cutter. He also ensured the Coast Guard began receiving necessary funding for the acquisition of the nation's first new polar icebreaker in more than 40 years.

Zukunft led the service's efforts to respond to the unprecedented 2017 hurricane season, where Coast Guard personnel saved or assisted nearly 12,000 victims from flooded communities in Texas, Florida and Puerto Rico.

Schultz reports to Coast Guard headquarters as the 26th commandant from Portsmouth, Virginia, where he served as the Atlantic Area commander since August 2016, directing all Coast Guard missions from the Rocky Mountains to the Arabian Gulf, spanning across five districts and 40 states.

Noting Schultz's oversight of last summer's hurricane response as Atlantic Area commander, Nielsen said "confidence, leadership and dedication to country was evident in the mission. As he assumes command today as the commandant of the Coast Guard, President Trump and I have full confidence in Adm. Schultz's ability to lead this proud organization with honor and integrity."

"We're gathered together today for a truly special occasion," Trump said during his remarks. "We are here to mark a change in command of the United States Coast Guard and celebrate the incredible career of its 25th commandant, Adm. Paul Zukunft.

On behalf of the American people, I thank you for a lifetime of noble service. Congratulations on everything you have achieved for nearly half a century. For 45 years, Paul has proudly worn the Coast Guard uniform. That's a long time, you don't look that old," he joked.

"In that time, he has led every kind of mission never backed down ... he's never lost a challenge," Trump said. "For the last four years, Adm. Zukunft ... has led with extraordinary skill, devotion and pride. ... Throughout the admiral's tenure, he poured his heart and soul into the service of our nation and he brought remarkable vision to the task of ensuring the Coast Guard's rightful place at the forefront of American security and prosperity. America is safe because our Coast Guard is strong."

Trump also thanked Zukunft's wife, Fran DeNinno-Zukunft for her own service as a devoted mentor and representative for military families.

"We are grateful for everything you've done to advance the Coast Guard mission, it's been a lot," he said.

After highlighting some of the Coast Guard's accomplishment's during Zukunft's tenure, Trump praised last year's "unbelievable" hurricane response and noted that, "with this ceremony we proudly pass the helm of the United States Coast Guard to the man who oversaw those emergency operations."

Echoing Nielsen's comments about Schultz, Trump said, "I have complete confidence that Karl will carry out his new mission with the same talent, strength and devotion that have characterized his entire career. He has had an incredible and very brave career. Karl, we congratulate you and we thank you for answering this call to service. ...

The change of command, Trump said, comes "at a great moment, not just for the Coast Guard, but for our entire nation. Your service makes all of America proud. American knows that we can

always count on the Coast Guard because the Coast Guard is always ready.”

“Today is the first day of hurricane season, this is a good day to cut and run,” Zukunft quipped, after receiving the orders relieving him of command. He used a series of baseball analogies to describe his tenure as commandant.

“When I came into this position, I told my senior leadership team that it is high time that we swung for the fences. For too many years we went up to the plate and squared around to bunt. You’re never going to hit a ball out of the park when you bunt every time you step up to the plate. Well swing we did. ... 2018 was the largest appropriation for the United States Coast Guard,” he said.

“When I look what we are investing in, our fleet of national security cutters, originally this was going to be a fleet of eight, we now have 11 on budget and under construction. The offshore patrol cutter, it was a hope in 2014 ... well it’s a reality, the first one will hit the water in 2021, with many more to follow. ... And we’re building polar icebreakers, the first one arrives in 2023. ... We’re building out a fleet of what we call waterway commerce cutters. In 2019, we will open up a cyber curriculum at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy. We have to grow the talent. We’re also investing in unmanned aerial systems. ... We’re investing our people as well, we’re growing the force.

“Yes, we swung for the fences, we hit a home run, but this is an infinite game and the game goes on and, yes, it must go on,” he said.

After reading his orders to report for duty as commandant, Schultz pledged to carry on the work that had begun under Zukunft’s watch.

“Our Coast Guard is in fact strong. We have been a well-run and led organization. The privilege of assuming command today

is amplified by the fact that this will be a seamless transition. Much more about a continuity of command than a changing of command. ... As I survey the waters and the opportunities that lie ahead for this service, I envision our heading remaining generally steady, but we'll look to pick up spend when possible and where appropriate," Schultz said.

"As I assume my new duties, I am confident that we have built a strong leadership team. We are eager to get about the work of leading this Coast Guard."

Modly: 'The Preeminence of U.S. Maritime Superiority' is Key to New Defense Strategy

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. – The undersecretary of the Navy capped the 2018 Sea-Air-Space Exposition by touching on a number of the recurring themes that emerged during the three-day event at the Gaylord National Resort and Convention Center.

In the final Sea-Air-Space keynote speech, at the Secretary of the Navy Luncheon, Thomas B. Modly, spoke of the rapidly changing security environment, the need for agility not only among the services but industry that supplies them to keep ahead of the threat, and the new National Defense Strategy and its notion of competition – and the implications that would have for the Navy-Marine Corps team going forward.

"I took my initial oath office in the Navy as a midshipman in 1979, and back then the world was a dangerous place, we all thought," he said. "But today's world is even more complex, and the threats to our security even more varied across a

broader spectrum.

These threats are outlined in the National Defense Strategy, which Modly said, “makes it increasingly clear that Russia and China want to shape a world consistent with their authoritarian models, and they will use every tool that is available to them to influence and coerce other nations’ economic, diplomatic and security decisions.”

At the same time, he said, “It does not ignore the growing and pervasive threats of North Korea and Iran, and it continues commitment to defeat violent extremism and the horrors they have perpetrated. ... In short, we are re-entering an era of great power competition on a global scale, so we must be focused on responsibly developing forces that protect our people and our interests and our friends and allies around the world.”

Fundamental to the implementation of this strategy, he said will be “the preeminence of U.S. maritime superiority,” something that has been increasingly challenged of late as new threats have emerged and existing threats have evolved.

“The Navy and Marine Corps will rise to this challenge and we will do so by building a bigger, better, more networked, more talented and more ready force,” Modly maintained. “Thanks to the support of Congress, we can say that we have already begun down this path to the future state of U.S. maritime supremacy.”

The recent budget agreement not only will arrest declining readiness, it will help begin to restore it while continuing to increase lethality by building both capacity and capability, Modly said. But that can only be maintained with future budget stability and avoiding a return to the short-term continuing resolutions (CRs) of recent years that he said have proven so devastating.

“The pace of operations has put an immense strain on our

fleet, leading to significant challenges to our ability to effectively provide forward presence and project power,” he said. “We must return to a condition where we have enough well-maintained ships – manned by well-trained, well-rested, focused and competent crews – to meet the relentless security demands placed on them.

“We estimate that the nine consecutive continuing resolutions that we have experienced over the last several years have cost the Navy nearly \$4 billion due to contract inefficiencies and interruptions that managing from CR to CR inevitably cause. We must end these inefficient boom-and-bust procurement cycles. Busts devastate workforce experience, they devastate efficiency and resiliency, and make it difficult for us to rebuild capacity when we need it.”

Building the fleet to the stated goal of 355 ships is going to take significant capital and time, even with a stable budget environment. Based on what Modly described as “stable assumptions” that include constrained top-line funding and estimates of current shipbuilding capacity, that 355-ship level would not be achieved until 2052.

And the number of ships is only part of the equation, he maintained.

“The right number is more like 355-plus, because we also need to increase the lethality of those platforms and their ability to work in a networked fashion with both manned and unmanned assets that contain, restrain, confuse, overwhelm and decisively defeat our enemies,” Modly said. “A larger, more agile force will be the key determiner of the success of our maritime strategy.

“For my perspective, how we measure that ‘plus’ is far more important than how we end up counting the number of ships that make up the 355 mix. Specifically, how flexible and adaptable is it? How well does it collaborate and interoperate with

allies and with unmanned assets or smaller combatant ships that don't fit nicely in the categories we have today? How fast is it, not only over and under the water, but in the information space? Or how quickly can it be reconfigured to address different types of threats?

"These are the critical questions we will ask ourselves as we build this new fleet, and we will demand that industry also consider these questions when they work with us to build it."

Building this agile maritime force also will require a serious and critical self-assessment of how the Department of the Navy does things as in organization, Modly added. "We must reverse the culture of normalized deviation that exists in some parts of the department. We will do this by demanding stronger accountability from all levels of the department.

"The quote 'close enough for government work' is a phrase I will not tolerate in the Department of the Navy because, frankly, that's not close enough to what we need to compete and win in this new environment we find ourselves in as a nation."

LX(R) Transitions to LPD Flight II

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. – The transition from the LPD 17 amphibious transport dock ship to the LX(R) amphibious ship replacement took a slight twist earlier this week when the nomenclature for the new ship was changed, according to program manager Capt. Brian Metcalf.

James F. Geurts, assistant secretary of the Navy, Research,

Development and Acquisition, has announced the term LX(R) will be phased out and the next-generation amphibious ships will be known as LPD Flight II, Metcalf noted during a presentation at the Naval Sea Systems Command at the Sea-Air-Space Exposition April 11. The program itself, and the number of ships, will remain the same, Metcalf said. Only the designation will be changed.

Plans call for building 13 Flight II ships to bolster an LPD 17 class of 13 ships, he said. The LPDs, which Metcalf said can serve as airport, seaport, and provide the transport and deployment of some of the Marine Corps' heaviest equipment, offers "some combat capability not provided by many ships in the Navy."

During an update of the overall program, Metcalf noted that the 11th LPD 17 ship, Portland, was set to be commissioned on April 18. It will deploy in 2020. But as part of its post-shakedown availability after commissioning, the ship will be outfitted next summer with the next-generation-capability laser weapon system for testing by the fleet and the Office of Naval Research.

The next ship in the class, Fort Lauderdale (LPD 28), is 18 percent complete and is expected to be delivered in 2021. The future LPD 29 will have its keel-laying in early 2019. Both ships were congressional add-ons that expanded the class to 12 and are considered transitional ships to what is now LPD Flight II, which will begin with LPD 30. LPDs 28 and 29 will employ a series of design and capability changes from previous ships in the class to make for a smoother transition to the new class, he said.

LPD 29 will be the first ship to employ the Enterprise Air Surveillance Radar (EASR) that originally was intended for the first LX(R). The radar will be installed after the ship is delivered in 2023, Metcalf said.

Maritime Gala Celebrates the Sea Services

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. – An Irish Tenor, country star Lee Greenwood and all four of the sea service chiefs helped the Navy League celebrate the sea services and their families during the inaugural Maritime Gala at the Sea-Air-Space Exposition April 10.

The event featured remarks from Marine Corps Commandant Gen. Robert B. Neller and was highlighted by the presentation of awards to honor service and business leaders whose devotion to duty deserved special recognition.

“We are so excited to have you here in celebration of all our sea services and their families,” said Navy League National President Alan Kaplan in his opening remarks.

John McDermott, founder of the Irish Tenors, sang the national anthem after the U.S. Navy Ceremonial Guard presented the colors, and Greenwood performed “Wind Beneath My Wings” prior to the gala dinner. He concluded the event with an encore performance of patriotic songs, including his signature “God Bless the U.S.A.”

Prior to introducing Neller as the keynote speaker, Chief of Naval Operations Adm. John Richardson offered a few words of thanks to the Navy League for the gala and the exposition as a whole.

“What a fantastic event, Sea-Air-Space in 2018, the biggest, the best, the most attended ... people fighting for the opportunity to come and join this team here at Sea-Air-Space,” he said. “That wouldn’t happen without the Navy League, just

one of the so many things they do for the sea services.”

In introducing Neller, Richardson described the commandant as “an innovative thinker; he is moving the Marine Corps into new territory to make sure that they continue to be relevant in this new era that we’re moving into with smart machines, digital communications, everything. He’s leading the way intellectually. Far more than that is you would never, ever hope for anybody else to go into a fight with you.”

Neller prefaced his remarks by noting, “This is an interesting year; there is a lot to talk about.”

Specifically, he addressed the theme of this year’s Sea-Air-Space: “learn, compete, win.”

“That speaks to the heart of our naval force,” Neller said. “As Marines, we like to think of ourselves as innovative. Innovation is a hallmark of our Corps and it remains so today. Your Marines are learning through testing and evaluation of new technology to gain advantages over our competitors, our rivals. And there is competition; we are in a competition right now.

“We are not at war; we’re competing below the level of conflict, but make no mistake about it – we’re competing every single day, whether it be in cyber, information or electronic warfare, command and control, engineering, manned and unmanned teaming, robotics, additive manufacturing, trying to figure out how to leverage artificial intelligence. Those competitions go on every single day.

“Advancements in those areas that many of you are involved in, and can help us with, will help propel us into the future, enabling us to compete,” Neller said, addressing the gala attendees from industry. “We don’t want to compete on the battlefield –we want to dominate the battlefield.”

At the same time, Neller noted, the nation’s competitors have

evolved and are increasing their capabilities.

“They are not standing by and watching us,” he said. “They want to dominate the battlespace, so it is essential that we, our military, our civilians, our leadership, our political leaders, our business community, all work together to keep our capability at a competitive advantage that we must have. We don’t know when the next fight is coming, but we have to be prepared in case it does.

“We need to drive innovation and come up with new advanced equipment where we can continue to dominate the battlefield. ... So this is an exciting time. We are always in continuous competition. We always must be ready to compete, learn and win. We have to win.”

Following Neller’s remarks, the Navy League honored several service and business leaders who Kaplan noted, “exemplify what it means to be a leader in their field.”

Outgoing Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Paul F. Zukunft received the new Semper Paratus Leader Award for his more than 40 years of service to the country. He was presented the award by retired Vice Adm. Jay Donnelly, who called the commandant “a Sailor’s Sailor.” Zukunft will be retiring next month.

Coast Guard Capt. Holly R. Harrison was presented with the U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps Distinguished Alumni Award. “She is a shining example of how the Sea Cadet program introduces young people to a lifetime of exemplary service,” said gala co-chair Bruce Mosler of Cushman & Wakefield.

Harrison was the first woman to command a Coast Guard cutter in a combat zone and the first to be awarded the Bronze Star. “I can trace the beginning of my Coast Guard career to when I joined the Naval Sea Cadet Corps in the fall of 1986,” she said after accepting the award.

Frank Bisignano, chairman and CEO of First Data Corp. received

the Teddy Roosevelt Award. "He epitomizes steadfast business leadership," said gala co-chair Tom Higgins of First Data.

Bisignano is the founder of the 100,000 Jobs Mission, a coalition of 170 firms that have hired nearly 450,000 veterans. As chairman and CEO of First Data, he is a steward of the First Data Salutes Program, providing opportunities and support for returning military and their families.

In a special presentation, Kaplan also honored Navy League Staff Vice President for External & Governmental Affairs Sara Fuentes with the Navy League National President's Award for her legislative affairs work on behalf of the organization.