

Ceremony Culminates 12 Months of Centennial Activities

DAHLGREN, Va. – Navy and congressional leaders joined Naval Surface Warfare Center Dahlgren Division (NSWCDD) personnel to celebrate a centennial of technological innovation that revolutionized surface warfare at a grand finale ceremony here, Oct. 19.

Over the past year of centennial activities – from a concert and picnics to podcasts and a rocket contest – government civilians, defense contractors, and military personnel working at NSWCDD travelled down memory lane leading up to the 100-year mark this month.

“The first shot of the new base was fired from a 7-inch, 45-caliber, tractor-mounted gun, just like the one over there,” said Capt. Godfrey “Gus” Weekes, NSWCDD commanding officer, while pointing to the century-old gun on display.

Since that shot was fired on Oct. 16, 1918, Dahlgren scientists and engineers rose to the occasion time and again to provide the Navy with innovative solutions based on their technical capability to integrate sensors, weapons, and associated weapon and combat systems into surface ships and vehicles.

“The men and women of Dahlgren are dedicated to the mission and have always answered the bell,” Weekes told the audience which included 65 distinguished visitors. “We answered the bell in 1918 and we’re answering the bell today. Just like during the Cold War or the Korean War, we’re up against near peer or peer threats. The need for Dahlgren is never more apparent.”

Today, NSWCDD leads in the research and delivery of technological solutions that enable warfighters to counter

emerging threats. The command leverages core naval warfare systems development and integration capabilities in electric weapons such as the electromagnetic railgun and high-energy lasers, mission engineering and analysis, and cyber warfare engineering.

“I’ve been blessed with the opportunity to recognize our workers who have given so much to this institution,” said Weekes, recounting that he has presented scores of certificates recognizing Navy civilians for 30 and 35 plus years of federal service. “I’ve been privileged to recognize employees who were pioneers in GPS, to those who pioneered Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense and the Standard Missile as well as any advanced weaponry which the U.S. Navy is now in the process of realizing or advancing.”

As participants celebrated the division’s impact upon the Navy and nation, a time capsule – 10 105 mm shells surrounding a 16-inch shell – was unveiled and all in attendance had the opportunity to write notes and share their thoughts with future generations.

The writers conveyed how they personally met the challenges of our time and solved them through innovative collaboration, placing their letters inside the capsule that will be displayed on base. Dahlgren personnel can write notes to be placed inside the capsule until the end of 2018 when it will be sealed and opened on Oct. 16, 2068, at the command’s 150th anniversary.

“Think about the contributions Dahlgren has made over the past 100 years,” said John Fiore, NSWCCD technical director. “We have over 500 patents to our name thanks to the men and women here who have done that work. When the Navy struggles with challenges, it is often that they come to Dahlgren to ask what they should be doing, what they should be thinking about, what we should be working on. Our innovations that have become programs of record are changing the face of warfare systems

today.”

Since June 1918, when U.S. President Woodrow Wilson signed a proclamation to acquire nearly one thousand acres to create the original ordnance proving ground during World War I, through today, Dahlgren has served as the center for the scientific research and development that led to hundreds of patents, innovations, and scientific breakthroughs for the U.S. Navy. Dahlgren, today, hosts nine different commands with an expansive array of scientific research and development, and is one of the hubs of naval weapons and weapon system development nationwide.

“There is no technical director who does not appreciate what has happened in the past but let’s think about where we are headed in the future – the kinds of systems and solutions the Navy needs in the future,” said Fiore, speaking to a crowd of more than 700 people – government employees, military personnel, defense contractors and visitors, including former NSWCDD technical directors and commanding officers.

“As I thought about that, I thought about our values. Values that we hold dear at Dahlgren – integrity, courage, imagination, esprit de corps, and urgency. We here overcome change, and we overcome the things we need to do to in order to make a difference in warfare systems throughout the Navy, and that takes courage. The value that I’m the proudest about is urgency, and I think Dahlgren exemplifies that. We’ve been talking urgency and that’s been a core value of Dahlgren for years.

“Recently, I’ve had the privilege of hearing the secretary of the Navy talk. He signs his name, ‘urgently, Richard Spencer’ – understanding that we live in a time when what we do is urgent. If we do not do what we do in developing warfare systems, we’re not enabling our Sailors and Marines to go out and do their mission effectively and come home safe to their families and loved ones – that’s critical.”

Dahlgren's enduring success in research, development, test, and evaluation stems from its ability to handle complex mathematics and engineering associated with ballistic weapons and projectiles. Moreover, the command's civilian scientists and engineers always had the capability to test their ideas in collaboration with military personnel on base to produce proven technological solutions.

"This is an installation where a great deal of innovation and collaboration take place," said Sen. Mark Warner, D-Va., describing Dahlgren's development of technologies revolutionizing military capabilities over the past 100 years. "We're going to need that same level of collaboration, cutting edge experimentation as we move forward for the next 100 years, not only to protect our country but to make sure that we're able to match the innovation and have the kind of protections that will keep this nation strong, safe and free. So, for all you've done for the last 100 years, I say thank you."

Warner cited Dahlgren's role in the development of long guns for World War II followed by the development of Naval warfare systems, the super computer (Naval Ordnance Research Calculator) during the 1950s, the Naval Space Surveillance Center in the wake of Sputnik, GPS technology, and technological advancements impacting ballistic missile systems.

"How are we going to do more with the resources that we have than our adversaries do with the resources that they have?" U.S. Rep. Rob Wittman, R-Va., asked the audience. "How are we going to do more with our unit of currency than they do with their unit of currency?"

The congressman – focusing on technological solutions required to meet complex threats to U.S. national security – answered his questions.

“We’re not going to have the ability to out-resource people anymore,” said Wittman. “Today, it’s about the creation and innovation that goes into doing more with what we have than anybody around the world. We have done that, we can do that, and we will continue to do that to make sure that our nation’s Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Army and indeed our Coast Guard, continue to be the greatest the world has ever known because we have the best and brightest men and women serving our nation both in uniform and here at the base in making sure that we have what we need to defend our nation’s interest. And you will do it better than anybody else in more creative and innovative ways than anybody else, that’s what has made Dahlgren great in the first 100 years and that’s what will make it great in the next century.”

At one point in the ceremony, Virginia State Sen. Richard Stuart and Virginia Delegate Margaret Ransone read and presented the Virginia General Assembly Resolution proclaiming Oct. 16 as Dahlgren Day.

“NSWC Dahlgren Division is the largest employer in central Virginia and the Northern Neck with over 8,000 civilian and military and contract personnel,” said Stuart. “The workforce – composed of 14 counties in Virginia and five counties in Maryland – contributes more than \$6.5 billion to the local economy. That is incredible to a boy who grew up in the small town of Montross and understands how important Dahlgren is to this entire region. For your economic activity, for your amazing technological advancements, and for your invaluable contributions to modern warfare systems, we thank you.”

As the U.S. Navy band played “Stars and Stripes Forever” to conclude the ceremony, people from the audience began making their way up for a closer look at the time capsule. They took pictures and in response to the invitation to share their thoughts with future generations – wrote letters to be placed in the capsule.

JFD Completes Sea Trials for First Deep Search and Rescue Vehicle for the Indian Navy

OLDMELDRUM, Scotland – JFD, part of James Fisher and Sons plc, has successfully completed the sea trials of the deep search and rescue vehicle (DSRV) for the first of two third-generation submarine rescue systems being delivered to the Indian Navy, the company announced in an Oct. 22 release.

The Deep Search and Rescue Vehicle (DSRV) carried out underwater mating with a bottomed submarine at a depth of over 300 feet, followed by a target mating and hatch opening at 45 degrees. On successful mating with the bottomed submarine, JFD and the Indian Navy then carried out a safe transfer of personnel from the submarine to the DSRV.

The sea trials have proven the newly inducted DSRV's ability to undertake rescue operations from a disabled submarine at sea, providing the Indian Navy with a critical submarine rescue capability. In addition to the mating and transfer of personnel exercises, the DSRV conducted a record dive which represents the deepest submergence by a "manned vessel" in Indian waters, as well as remotely operated vehicle operations at a depth of over 750 meters and side-scan sonar operations at a depth of over 650 meters, all of which represent significant 'firsts' for the Indian Navy.

In a statement on social media, the Indian Navy said it now "joins a select league of nations with the capability to search, locate and provide rescue to distressed submarines by induction of our first DSRV and associated kit, which in a fly

away configuration can be rapidly mobilized. The DSRV can be mobilized from the naval base at Mumbai to the nearest mounting port by air, land or sea, ready to provide rapid rescue to the submarine in distress.”

Having already successfully completed harbor trials earlier this year, the DSRV has now completed a full launch deployment, dive and recovery in open sea as well as an underwater mating exercise, replicating the operating conditions of a real submarine rescue operation. The completion of open sea trials represents a significant milestone in the ongoing delivery and acceptance of the 3rd Generation Submarine Rescue System, which is grounded in a rigorous trials and testing process that ensures the highest safety standards are upheld.

“JFD is pleased to have successfully completed a period of rigorous sea trials, working in close partnership with the Indian Navy who provided the commercial mothership and associated trials consort vessels,” said Ben Sharples, India DSRV project director. “The Indian Navy west coast-based rescue team, who will operate the system when in service, were active participants throughout this phase of the trials, ensuring they are equipped with the skills and expertise to conduct safe and efficient submarine rescue operations, should the need ever arise.

“The sea trials of the DSRV has ushered in a niche capability into the Indian Navy,” he said. “The DSRV, which is operated by a crew of three, can rescue 14 personnel from a disabled submarine at one time. These sea trials have proven the newly inducted DSRV’s ability to undertake rescue operations from disabled submarines at sea and has provided the Indian Navy with a critical capability.”

JFD is delivering two complete third-generation submarine rescue systems, including launch and recovery systems equipment, Transfer Under Pressure systems, logistics and

support equipment, and a 25-year all-inclusive annual maintenance contract.

Davidson is Navy's Newest 'Old Salt'

WASHINGTON – Adm. Philip S. Davidson, commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM), became the Navy's newest "Old Salt" during an award presentation Oct. 22 at the Pentagon, the Navy News Service reported.

The "Old Salt" award is given to the active-duty officer who has held the Surface Warfare Officer (SWO) qualification for the longest amount of time.

"It is a tremendous honor to receive this award. I have been fortunate to be part of this organization for more than 35 years, serving alongside a number of amazing men and women. This award honors them, those who have come before, and those still yet to serve," said Davidson, who became the 20th recipient of the award, which is sponsored by the Surface Navy Association (SNA).

A 1982 graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, Davidson is the 25th commander of USINDOPACOM, America's oldest and largest military combatant command located in Hawaii. As a surface warfare officer, he has deployed across the globe in frigates, destroyers, cruisers and aircraft carriers.

Davidson received the award from Adm. Kurt W. Tidd, commander of the U.S. Southern Command.

Initiated in 1988, the "Old Salt" award is accompanied by a

bronze statue depicting a naval officer on the pitching deck of a ship. The statue is cast from metal salvaged from historic U.S. naval ships, most notably the battleship USS Maine, which exploded and sank in Havana Harbor in 1898, precipitating the Spanish-American War.

Holding the award since 2015, Tidd said, “From its very earliest days, our Navy has been before all else a profession of Sailors – that closely knit team of men and women who have made it their life’s work to ‘go down to the sea in ships.’ It’s been an honor and a privilege to play a small part in the history of this organization and to have held the title of ‘Old Salt.’ As I pass this distinction on to Adm. Davidson, I also pass along my very best wishes to him, our Navy’s newest ‘Old Salt’.”

“Old Salts” have their names engraved on brass plates attached to the base of the “Old Salt” statue. The statue is then held in the custody of the current “Old Salt” during the recipient’s active duty tenure. The “Old Salt” trophy may be kept in possession of the recipient or displayed by the command to which the Old Salt is assigned.

The issuance of the Old Salt Award is a tribute to the Navy’s customs and traditions which call the respected, experienced, knowledgeable and senior surface warfare officer with the designation as “old salt.”

At the ceremony, Davidson and Tidd took a photo with Taylor Randall, the youngest SWO in the room, who received her service warfare qualification in 2016.

Upon Davidson’s retirement, the statue will be passed on to the next officer, who will be determined by a search of records, a recommendation by director of surface warfare, and approval by the Board of the SNA, which is a professional organization composed of both military and civilian members dedicated to enhance awareness and support of the U.S. Navy

and the surface forces.

The Surface Warfare director of the Department of the Navy determines which officers meet the award criteria which include being in continuous active duty and surface warfare qualification letters.

Navy Holds Ceremony to Mark First Dedicated UAS Test Squadron

PATUXENT RIVER, Md. – The U.S. Navy commissioned its first Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) test and evaluation squadron during a ceremony Oct. 18 at Naval Air Station Patuxent River's Webster Outlying Field.

The new unit, Air Test and Evaluation Squadron (UX) 24, flies more than 23 fixed- and rotary-wing UASs including the MQ-8 Fire Scout, RQ-20 Puma, RQ-21 Blackjack, RQ-26 Aerostar and a number of commercial systems.

During the ceremony, Cmdr. Matthew Densing officially assumed leadership of UX-24.

"This squadron centralizes the Navy's technical excellence in unmanned aviation," said Densing. "As the Navy continues to require the broad range of capability offered by UAS, UX-24 will always challenge the status quo."

In April, Chief of Naval Operations Adm. John Richardson approved establishment of UX-24 to provide research, development, test and evaluation support for Navy and Marine Corps UAS as growth in the field required establishment of a

command dedicated solely to that mission. The ceremony marked the squadron's official transition from what was formerly known as NAWCAD's UAS Test Directorate.

Densing previously oversaw the former UAS Test Directorate. Under his leadership, the directorate executed more than 2,200 flight hours and 2,000 ground test hours in support of UAS developmental test.

Navy Orders Material for 13th EPF

MOBILE, Ala. – The U.S. Navy has awarded Austal an undefinitized contract action (UCA), valued at \$57.8 million, to fund the acquisition of long lead-time material (LLTM) and production engineering associated with the construction of a 103-meter expeditionary fast transport (EPF) to be designated EPF 13, the company said in an Oct. 18 release.

Austal was awarded the initial contract to design and build the first 103-meter EPF in November 2008. Since then, nine Spearhead-class EPFs have been delivered and are serving as an affordable solution to fulfilling the Military Sealift Command's requirements worldwide. Three more EPFs are under construction.

Long lead-time material for the additional vessel will include diesel engines, water jets and reduction gears.

Navy Issues NGEN Re-Compete Service Management, Integration and Transport RfP

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Navy issued the Next Generation Enterprise Network Re-Complete (NGEN-R) Service Management, Integration and Transport (SMIT) request for proposals (RfP) on Oct. 18, the Navy's Program Executive Office-Enterprise Information Systems said in a release. Responses are due to the Navy on Jan. 10.

"Today's successful release of the NGEN-R SMIT RFP is a major achievement in implementing the Navy's IT [information technology] acquisition strategy to segment network services for the Navy Marine Corps Intranet and the Marine Corps Enterprise Network into multiple contracts," said Capt. Ben McNeal, Naval Enterprise Networks program manager. "Separating IT services into multiple contract segments makes management, financial and competitive sense for the Navy."

NGEN-R is the follow-on procurement to the current NGEN and the Outside of the Continental United States (OCONUS) Navy Enterprise Network (ONE-Net) contracts. These contracts provide IT and support services to the Navy Marine Corps Intranet (NMCI), the Marine Corps Enterprise Network (MCEN) and the ONE-Net. The networks support CONUS and OCONUS Navy and Marine Corps users.

NGEN-R will provide IT and support services to NMCI, MCEN, and ONE-Net.

SMIT is one of two NGEN-R contracts. The SMIT contract will provide network services, including print services, service integration, software core build services, service desk and computer network defense.

The RFP for the End User Hardware (EUHW) contract, which provides end user hardware-as-a-service and hardware for purchase, was issued on Sept. 17, 2018. Proposals for the EUHW RFP are due Nov. 19.

Navy to Christen Submarines Vermont, Delaware

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Navy will christen two new attack submarines during ceremonies Oct. 20, the Department of Defense announced. The future USS Vermont (SSN 792) will be christened at General Dynamics Electric Boat in Groton, Connecticut. The future USS Delaware (SSN 791) will be christened at Newport News Shipbuilding, a division of Huntington Ingalls Industries, in Newport News, Virginia.

The principal speaker for the Vermont christening will be Vermont Gov. Phil Scott. Gloria Valdez, former deputy assistant secretary of the Navy (Ships), will serve as the ship's sponsor. In a time-honored Navy tradition, she will christen the ship by breaking a bottle of sparkling wine across the bow and state, "In the name of the United States, I christen thee."

For the Delaware ceremony, the principal speaker will be U.S. Sen. Tom Carper, D-Del. Dr. Jill Biden, former second lady of the United States, will serve as the ship's sponsor.

"The future USS Vermont honors the contributions and support that the state of Vermont has given to our Navy and Marine Corps team throughout the years," said Navy Secretary Richard V. Spencer. "For decades to come, this boat and the Sailors who will serve on it will stand as a tribute to the patriotic

people of Vermont and a testament to the value of the partnership between the Department of the Navy and our industry teammates.”

The future USS Vermont is the third U.S. Navy ship to bear the name of the “Green Mountain State.” The future USS Vermont is the 19th Virginia-class attack submarine and the first of 10 Virginia-class Block IV submarines. The ship’s construction began in May 2014 and it will deliver in the fall of 2019. Vermont will provide the Navy with the capabilities required to maintain the nation’s undersea superiority well into the 21st century.

The future USS Delaware is the seventh ship to bear the name of “The First State.” The future USS Delaware is the 18th Virginia-class attack submarine and the eighth and final Virginia-class Block III submarine. The ship’s construction began in September 2013 and will deliver in 2019.

“Today’s christening marks an important milestone in the life of the future USS Delaware, moving the submarine from a mere hull number to a boat with a name and spirit,” said Spencer. “This submarine honors the contributions and support the state of Delaware has given to our military and will stand as a testament to the increased capabilities made possible through a true partnership between the Department of the Navy and our industry teammates.”

**Navy Awards NASSCO Contract
for Materials for**

Expeditionary Base Ship

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Navy has awarded a contract to NASSCO for long-lead materials and other support to build the fourth Lewis B. Puller-class expeditionary mobile base ship (T-ESB 6).

Naval Sea Systems Command awarded to NASSCO – a General Dynamics company – a \$136.8 million contract “for the procurement of long lead time material, pre-production and engineering support for the Expeditionary Sea Base 6. This action allows the procurement of ship sets of the purchase specifications supporting integrated propulsion, main diesel generator engines, propeller and shafting, integrated bridge electronics, centrifugal pumps, fuel and lube oil purifiers and steering gear components,” the Oct. 16 Defense Department contract announcement said.

The work is expected to be completed by May.

The Lewis B. Puller class T-ESB is a modification of the Montford Point class of expeditionary transfer dock ships, of which two were built. The T-ESBs are configured with a 52,000-square-foot flight deck, fuel and equipment storage, repair spaces, magazines, mission planning spaces and accommodations for up to 250 personnel. The ships are capable of supporting multiple missions including airborne mine countermeasures, counterpiracy operations, maritime security operations, humanitarian-aid and disaster-relief missions and U.S. Marine Corps crisis response. They also support MH-53 and MH-60 helicopters.

Two T-ESBs are in service: USS Lewis B. Puller and USNS Hershel “Woody” Williams. Under construction is T-ESB 5, USNS Miguel Keith.

PEO USC Program Office Wins Two Navy Acquisition Awards

WASHINGTON – The Unmanned Maritime Systems Program Office within Program Executive Office for Unmanned and Small Combatants (PEO USC) received two 2018 Department of the Navy Acquisition Excellence Awards during a ceremony Oct. 16 at the Pentagon, Naval Sea Systems Command said in a release.

The Acquisition Excellence Awards recognize individuals and organizations that have demonstrated excellence in the acquisition of products and services for the Navy and Marine Corps. This year, 14 awards were given. Award winners represent the very best of professionalism, ingenuity and accomplishment among their peers – the more than 63,000 members of the acquisition workforce.

“These awards reflect a great team effort across the PEO, system command and industry to accelerate, innovate, and deliver new capabilities to the fleet,” said Rear Adm. John Neagley, PEO USC commander.

The Dr. Al Somoroff Acquisition Award was given to the program office for outstanding acquisition achievement in the accomplishment of its mission to include creative/effective acquisition management practices, outstanding resource management and personnel growth and retention.

The Competition Excellence Acquisition Team of the Year award recognizes the Orca Extra-Large Unmanned Underwater Vehicle acquisition and contracting team. The team included not only program office members, but also Naval Sea Systems Command’s leadership, cost engineering and industrial analysis division, contracts directorate, legal, and submarine/submersible design

and systems engineering; Naval Surface Warfare Center's Carderock Division; and Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command's Systems Center Pacific. The award recognizes an acquisition team whose outstanding achievement brings increased competition in contracting resulting in cost savings or avoidance, a better product and a lasting positive impact on the organization and Department of Navy mission.

"These awards reflect the dedicated efforts of a great team of professionals focused on delivering unmanned capability and discovering acquisition best practices," said Capt. Peter Small, Unmanned Maritime Systems Program Office program manager. "Continuous dialogue among stakeholders, early and frequent coordination with industry, and effective and ongoing planning were essential to our success."

PEO USC, part of Naval Sea Systems Command, provides the fleet with a package of warfighting capabilities within two variants of the littoral combat ship (LCS). With LCSs based on the East and West coasts, each ship is dedicated to one of three missions – antisubmarine warfare, surface warfare and mine countermeasures.

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."