

CNO Franchetti: Navy Has a Lot to Offer Young People



WASHINGTON (April 16, 2024) Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Lisa Franchetti delivers testimony at the Senate Appropriations Committee's Subcommittee on Defense hearing on the fiscal year 2025 defense budget request in Washington D.C., April 16, 2024. (U.S. Navy photo by MCC Michael B. Zingaro)

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Recruiters across the military are challenged every day to bring young people into service. But the chief of naval operations said she thinks the Navy has what young people are looking for – if only they knew more about it.

“All the services are facing some challenges in recruiting, and it’s really broader than that,” said Navy Adm. Lisa Franchetti, who spoke yesterday at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. “It’s probably challenges in just propensity to serve, in general.”

One challenge the Navy has in recruiting, Franchetti said, is that so many young people are simply unaware of what it does.

“If you don’t live near a coast or you don’t live near a base, you may not really know what your Navy does every day,” she said. “So, talking a little bit about ... operations in the Red Sea, keeping commerce flowing having your Amazon box get to your doorstep, there’s a lot of stuff that people don’t even recognize every day that your Navy is out there doing.”

Young people, part of Generation Z, are now of age to consider military service, and Franchetti said the Navy must consider what that generation values if they’re going to be convinced to enlist in military service.

“Thinking about what they value, what they’re looking for ... in terms of wanting to understand why, wanting to understand the values of the organization, I think we have a really good story to tell, because we’re all about honor, courage, commitment, democracy ... and the pursuit of all who threaten it,” she said. “But also, it’s about helping them become the best version of themselves ... we offer a lot of opportunity, we have 150 different career specialties that they can go into.”

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The Navy offers careers in nuclear engineering, cyber and medical, for instance. And most recently, a new career field in robotics has opened up, she said. And every career field is available to both men and women.

“You can really work in any field that you want to, so you can get some of your own skills, test out your own leadership abilities because we’re all leaders in the Navy,” Franchetti said. “I think those are good things for them to think about ... I’d really like to have our sailors sell themselves. That’s the best way to do it.”

If the Navy can convince young people to enlist, Franchetti said, it’s equally important to ensure the Navy remains a place they want to stay, that they aren’t going to be disappointed with their choice to enlist. The admiral said the Navy is doing a lot to retain service members.

“We are also focusing on a lot of things that we know some of the younger people are interested in: making sure that folks have access to internet, making sure they have access to the gym, making sure they have access to health care, good-paying compensation, making sure they have a place to live that isn’t on the ship,” she said. “... A good quality barracks room, good quality food ... that’s some of the work that we’re doing to make sure that we can be that world-class employer.”