

# James Honea Takes the Helm as the Next MCPON



Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Mike Gilday hands the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy cutlass to MCPON James Honea during the Change of Office ceremony held at Mahan Hall, United States Naval Academy, Sept. 8. *U.S. NAVY / Senior Chief Mass Communication Specialist Anastasia McCarroll*

ANNAPOLIS, Md. – Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy Russell Smith passed the ceremonial cutlass, via the Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Michael Gilday, to James Honea during a change of office and retirement ceremony Sept. 8, the Office of the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy said Sept. 10.

The ceremony held at the U.S. Naval Academy's Mahan Hall marked the end of more than three decades of Naval service for MCPON Smith.

Smith has served as the 15th MCPON since Aug. 29, 2018. During his term, he instituted Laying the Keel, an updated leadership development career path, revised the command master chief instruction, and the Sailor of the Year program. More importantly, he tirelessly advocated policy and program improvements for the Navy's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response program as well as increased Sailor access for mental health care to congressional members during his annual testimonies before the House Armed Services Committee.

Gilday presided over the ceremony and highlighted Smith's accomplishments during his naval career while thanking him for his leadership.

"Your tireless efforts to provide Sailors with mental, morale, and spiritual support has helped make our fleet more resilient and much more effective," said Gilday. "Your leadership

ensured that our most important resource, our people, are ready to serve and defend the nation we love. Having conducted more than 200 fleet visits all over the world, your outreach and willingness to be there for Sailors and their families is what truly made your service so remarkable. Thank you for everything you have done over these past four years. Our Navy and our Navy family are much stronger than it was four years ago.”

After the ceremonial passing of the MCPON cutlass, Honea took the helm of the enlisted force as the Navy’s 16th MCPON. During the ceremony, he spoke about his top priorities: warfighting competency, professional and character development, and quality of life.

“When I was selected for MCPON, I thought heavily on what my tenure means and what I could bring to you all,” said Honea. “I’m glad I chose to be challenged by this adventure and I’m proud of what it has brought me. I thank you all for accepting the same challenge and being on this journey with me. I have always been proud to be your Shipmate, and I’m privileged to be your MCPON.”

The MCPON serves as an adviser to the CNO and to the chief of naval personnel in matters dealing with enlisted personnel and their families. The MCPON is also an adviser to boards dealing with enlisted personnel issues; is the enlisted representative of the Department of the Navy at special events; may be called upon to testify on enlisted personnel issues before Congress; and maintains a liaison with enlisted spouse organizations.