

Naval Aviation Warriors,

Thank you all for the overwhelming and historic response rate to our recent aviation retention survey. I hear you LC, and leadership owes you continued feedback and action.

Bottom line: Due to the expeditionary nature of our naval forces and the associated family separation that your duty requires, significant personal sacrifice is required by all who choose this profession, this way of life. We are our nation's 911 force, and the critical and irreplaceable role you fill should be a great source of pride for you and your families.

As we sifted through the data, I would like to address first those issues raised that we have already resolved, or are working on near-term as well as those that are inaccurate scuttlebutt.

Retirement. There is no planned reduction in retirement benefits for those currently on active duty. The recent controversy over retirement COLA benefits has been resolved in Congress and was signed by the President on 14 Feb ensuring full benefits are restored.

Pay and Benefits. While fiscal realities are causing difficult budget decisions around the DOD, we continue to value our people and compensate them appropriately.

I want to reassure you that Continuous Aviation Career Incentive Pay (ACIP) is NOT going to change. Although the authorities for flight pay have been restructured, flight pay is not going away and the outcome of any changes being worked should be transparent to every aviator who has earned flight pay. We are working closely with DOD to issue new implementing regulations. We expect the new regulations to permit the Navy to continue the current gate system while giving us added flexibility to structure flight pay differently in the future, if we choose, to better respond to future needs.

The Department Head bonus (ACCP), an essential reinvestment tool that enables us to incentivize the best and brightest JOs to stay Navy and grow into the squadron commanders of tomorrow, is here to stay. Additionally, I am putting my full support for a second consecutive year behind the restoration of the Command Bonus as I recognize that Commanding Officers are the cornerstone of our success as a fighting force and we value their continued service at more senior leadership positions.

OPTEMPO. Following the CNO's tenets of "Warfighting First, Operate Forward and Be Ready," deployments and family separation are simply a fact of Navy life. It is what makes us unique and highly valued among our fellow countrymen. Your sacrifices do not go unnoticed. While these requirements will remain, we continue with our implementation of the Optimized Fleet Response Plan (O-FRP) with a goal of decreasing overall time at sea and increasing home port tempo. Results will be a predictable FRP cycle, improved quality of work, and enhanced quality of life through more predictable schedules.

Additional issues raised in the survey that we are addressing include: retaining our Naval Aviation culture; how we evaluate, promote, and screen our officers; continuing to reduce administrative

burdens that detract from warfighting; the real or perceived zero-defect mentality among our leadership, and continuing to recapitalize our Naval Air force in this budget constrained environment.

As we work together on solutions to the concerns you have raised, I will provide you feedback on how we are progressing. I encourage you to continue to provide your feedback and ideas through all means, including www.dodretention.org. I look forward to keeping you apprised of our progress, improving Naval Aviation's warfighting legacy, and continuing to recruit and retain the finest officers and aviators. Thank you for your continued extraordinary leadership during challenging times. Fly, Fight, Win!

Air Boss sends.