

Shipmates,

Recently, I was in San Diego and attended a retirement ceremony honoring our shipmate Rear Adm. Garry Bonelli for his 45 years of dedicated Naval service. One of our longest serving Navy SEALs, Bonelli enlisted in the Navy in 1968 and served as a Frogman in Vietnam. After transitioning to the Navy Reserve, he was commissioned and rose through the ranks serving as the only selected Reserve officer to command an active-duty SEAL team. Selected for Flag rank in 2007, Bonelli served as Deputy Commander and Commander of Naval Special Warfare Command, leading more than 8,500 men and women during a period of unprecedented operational tempo. During the past few years, he and his wife Marti have had an incredible impact on Sailors and their families. On behalf of the Force, I want to thank Garry and Marti for their incredible dedication and service. We wish them fair winds and following seas.

While in San Diego I was able to visit several commands and hear about the important work our Sailors are doing around the globe. At Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 85, I enjoyed meeting with the chief's mess, and later recognized the Sailors of the year Naval Aircrewman 1st Class Evin McDonel (Senior Sailor), Naval Aircrewman 2nd Class Kiernan Beresford (Junior Sailor), and Information Systems Technician 3rd Class Marissa Hupe (Blue Jacket). We also toured the Fleet Logistics Support Squadron 57 spaces and met with Sailors, the chief's mess and officers. At Coastal Riverine Squadron 1, and we saw first-hand the exciting mission their Sailors execute. During a familiarization ride on their 34-foot Patrol boat, we re-enlisted Senior Chief Electrician's Mate Johnnie Meyer and Chief Engineman Guillermo Montes in San Diego Harbor with the USS Midway as a backdrop. Montes, Meyer, Lt. Cmdr. Sean Fisher, Information Systems Technician 1st Class Thomas Hunter and Master-at-Arms 1st Class Christopher Jordan provided a fantastic overview of the patrol boat and mission. The day included a visit to Naval Special Warfare Group 11 and SEAL Team 17 where we also received operational briefs from commanders in the field. Additionally, we recognized Sailors of the year Yeoman 1st Class Christina Dipaola and Personnel Specialist 2nd Class Kimberly Sedlak. I am continually impressed by the professionalism and hard work of our Sailors on the water front.

My husband Mike and I also recently attended a Returning Warrior Workshop (RWW) in Atlanta hosted by Capt. Greg Smith, commander, Reserve Component Command Southeast, his former Deputy, Capt. Tom Marotta and Warrior Family Support Program Specialist Matt Davis. A total of 160 Sailors and guests attended the weekend event. The workshop was highly motivating, and gave attendees the opportunity to be recognized for the sacrifices made by both deploying Sailors and their loved ones left behind. Facilitators presented examples of challenges, successes and inspirational experiences that put the Sailors at ease and allowed them to relate and share their own experiences. The uplifting weekend was focused on recognition and reintegration for both Sailors and their guests. Many Sailors and significant others approached me after the event and were appreciative of the opportunity to reconnect and discuss challenges that had developed as a result of being deployed. I encourage all Sailors who mobilize individually or as a unit to take advantage of the fantastic opportunity to attend an RWW. It was a truly inspiring event.

Vice Adm. Robin R. Braun
Chief of Navy Reserve