

**NOT FOR PUBLICATION
UNTIL RELEASED BY THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
MILITARY PERSONNEL SUBCOMMITTEE**

**STATEMENT OF
RICK D. WEST
MASTER CHIEF PETTY OFFICER OF THE NAVY
(SUBMARINE WARFARE/SURFACE WARFARE)
BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
MILITARY PERSONNEL SUBCOMMITTEE
ON
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Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy

MCPON (SS/SW) Rick D. West



Master Chief Rick West became the 12th Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy on Dec. 12, 2008.

West was born in Rising Fawn, Ga. He graduated from Northwest Georgia High School in 1981 and immediately entered the U.S. Navy.

West received recruit training and Quartermaster training at Orlando, Fla., followed by Enlisted Submarine School at Groton, Conn. His first duty assignment was aboard *USS Ethan Allen* (SSN 608) where he completed Submarine Qualifications. Other assignments include *USS Thomas Edison* (SSN 610), *USS Sea Devil* (SSN 664), Commander Naval Activities United Kingdom (COMNAVACTUK), *USS Tecumseh* (SSBN 628)(Blue), and COMSUBPAC Staff (TRE Team).

West was assigned as Chief of the Boat aboard the San Diego based Fast Attack Submarine, *USS Portsmouth* (SSN 707), completing two Western Pacific deployments and earning two Battle Efficiency “E” awards.

West served as Command Master Chief in Submarine Squadron ELEVEN. Upon completion of his tour at COMSUBRON ELEVEN, he was selected as Force Master Chief (FORCM), attended the Senior Enlisted Academy in Newport, R.I., and served as Force Master Chief, Submarine Force U.S. Pacific Fleet (COMSUBPAC) from Jan. 2001 to Jan. 2004.

West then reported to *USS Preble* (DDG 88) in San Diego, Calif., where he completed a deployment to the Arabian Gulf and qualified as Enlisted Surface Warfare Specialist.

West was then selected to serve as Pacific Fleet, Fleet Master Chief from Feb. 2005 to June 2007.

Prior to being selected to be MCPON, he served as the 14th Fleet Master Chief for Commander, U.S. Fleet Forces Command from June 2007 to Dec. 2008.

West's personal awards include the Legion of Merit (two awards), Meritorious Service Medal (three awards), Navy Commendation Medal (four awards), Navy Achievement Medal (two awards), Enlisted Surface Warfare Insignia, Enlisted Submarine Insignia, and SSBN Deterrent Patrol Pin.

Chairman Wilson, Ranking Member Davis, and distinguished members of this subcommittee, as the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy, I am honored and humbled to have the privilege of representing more than 427,000 active and reserve Sailors who comprise the finest Total Force in the history of the United States Navy.

Our men and women are tremendously dedicated to our Nation and our Navy: They make many sacrifices. No matter where they are in the world, or what they do for our great Navy, their contributions to the country's Maritime Strategy are impressive. Today's Sailors are the best ever, performing their missions with distinction and integrity. I am very proud to be their shipmate. We owe them a positive environment that fosters equitable opportunity for success based on proven merit, professionalism, and mutual respect.

It is the responsibility of every Sailor, and leadership in particular, to ensure that we are creating a climate of inclusion, where every member of the team believes his or her views, skills and dedication are valued. Consequently, every man and woman serving in our Navy, from the most junior seaman to the most senior admiral, has an obligation to abide by regulations and to make the appropriate authorities aware of any conduct that runs counter to organizational excellence and the fair treatment of all: This unequivocally includes hazing. No commander, no Chief Petty Officer, no Sailor may condone or ignore hazing in his or her unit.

Navy takes a comprehensive approach to prevent and respond to hazing, utilizing the Secretary of the Navy's instruction, Department of the Navy Policy on Hazing, as the cornerstone of our approach to education, execution, enforcement and accountability. The instruction states, "Hazing degrades and diminishes the ability of victims to function within their unit. It destroys our members' confidence and trust in their shipmates." Therefore, hazing will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

The Navy takes immense pride in its myriad customs and traditions celebrating the unique achievements of individual Sailors, their units, and our service. We believe these practices, when conducted with diligent regard for their true origins and the professional welfare of Sailors, are valuable reminders of the celebrated history recorded by those who have gone before us. Because we feel so strongly about preserving the right traditions with positive messages, Navy has worked tirelessly to eradicate any and all practices that might be considered hazing regardless of their perceived heritage. Commanders along with our enlisted leaders are charged with ensuring all ceremonies and rites are conducted in accordance with Navy policies and formally reporting every suspected incident of hazing to the Chain of Command as soon as possible. Our commitment to the elimination of hazing is unwavering.

Navy and command leadership are vigilantly committed to the elimination of hazing. Deterrence and accountability stand as integral components in that process. If an incident of hazing is substantiated, appropriate accountability actions are taken to include, where warranted, disciplinary action under the Uniform Code of Military Justice. We are ever mindful of the safety and well-being of our Sailors.

The Navy takes every allegation of hazing very seriously, by expeditiously investigating reports of hazing and holding violators accountable. Hazing is contrary to the Navy Core Values of Honor, Courage, and Commitment, and is detrimental to unit cohesion and combat readiness.

The Navy continues to develop Fleet awareness by educating Sailors about the harmful effects hazing has on our well-being as an organization. Fleet awareness is our most effective tool in preventing the problem. We achieve this awareness through fundamental education that occurs initially at basic training, is reiterated at secondary schools, and reinforced through General Military Training and Professional Military Education at regular intervals during a Sailor's tenure in the Navy. It's not just a formal process, either - relegated to the classroom, but part of leadership's daily conversations with Sailors about readiness, respect and professionalism.

Additionally, hazing is addressed through interactive group case studies at the Navy's Command Leadership School courses for Commanding Officers, Executive Officers and Command Master Chiefs. Individual units also regularly review the hazing policy with all-hands in conjunction with events that include, but are not limited to, promotion ceremonies, shipboard Crossing-the-Equator rituals, and warfare designation events. This continual training further educates Sailors on the difference between acceptable acts that contribute to esprit de corps and those that violate regulations.

Maintaining a positive organizational posture that actively prevents, and decisively responds, to hazing incidents remains a top priority for the Chief of Naval Operations and for me. Our Sailors are the Navy's most precious asset. Their individual success and our collective mission accomplishment lie in our ability to provide the resources and environment that promote professional growth, inclusiveness and a validated sense of value to the team. Hazing indisputably destroys these elements and is systematically addressed as detrimental to the organization and our warriors. Adherence to our Navy core values by our Sailors is central to the Navy's ability to meet its global mission. These values are our guiding principles for treating every Sailor with dignity and respect, and as an esteemed member of the Navy team.