

**NOT FOR PUBLICATION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

**STATEMENT OF
VICE ADMIRAL SCOTT GRAY, U.S. NAVY
COMMANDER, NAVY INSTALLATIONS COMMAND
BEFORE THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY PERSONNEL
ON
A REVIEW OF MILITARY FOOD PROGRAMS
APRIL 9, 2025**

**NOT FOR PUBLICATION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

Introduction

Chairman Fallon, Ranking Member Houlahan, and distinguished Members of the Military Personnel Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss the Navy's food services.

Warfighting Navy

The Secretary of Defense stated in his initial message to the force that improving lethality, warfighting, and readiness are the main lines of effort for the Department and stressed that this would be accomplished in three ways: restoring the warrior ethos, rebuilding our military, and reestablishing deterrence. Restoring the warrior ethos is a key component to strengthening our military. In an era of great power competition and growing global unrest, it is imperative that we build, maintain, train, and equip combat-ready, lethal Naval forces. America's Warfighting Navy relies on the shore installations as warfighting platforms that are vital to national security. Our Navy installations are key enablers of global naval operations. The shore is where Sailors train; ships and aircraft launch; operation centers command and control naval forces; and Sailors improve their mental, physical, and spiritual well-being. While our forward-deployed forces remain unmatched in their ability to sustain combat operations at sea and prevail in all domains, our shore installations are the springboard for all naval readiness, and all operations are enabled and enhanced by the critical infrastructure and resources of the Navy's shore enterprise.

However, the Navy's greatest assets are not its bases, ships or aircraft. It is our people. The next war will be fought differently from those of the past, and America will prevail because we attract and retain the best people, the best ideas, an unparalleled warrior spirit, and first-rate execution. The U.S. Navy relies on its highly trained and skilled personnel, leaders, and teams to innovate, to solve the hard problems, and most importantly, to dominate in combat. That is why

recruitment and talent retention are a top Navy priority and providing our Service members with the highest quality food enables this desired end state.

Strengthening the Warrior Foundation

Strengthening the foundation upon which the Navy's Service members live and work is fundamental to enhancing force readiness by attracting top talent and fostering long-term retention. Sailors are more likely to remain in service when they and their families are well-supported and cared for. A strong warrior foundation not only boosts morale but also creates an environment where Sailors feel valued and better equipped to perform at their best, ensuring a resilient and capable force. We have a covenant with our warriors and their families, they dedicate themselves to this difficult life and for that sacrifice; we commit to taking care of them. When our ships sail into harm's way, each of our Sailors must know we have given them the best training, equipment, and warfighting skills to succeed, and that we will take care of their families no matter what. This covenant bolsters our warfighting spirit and ensures we will prevail in any future conflict! When our Service members' needs are met, both personally and professionally, they are more committed to the Navy and its mission, ultimately strengthening the overall readiness and effectiveness of the fleet.

In the last several years, the Navy has recognized that we can improve the level of service that our Sailors and families deserve. Since mid-2023, the Navy has embarked on an aggressive initiative to strengthen warrior readiness through improved warrior and family durability and has moved forward with urgency. I am honored to have been selected for this responsibility and consider it a privilege to contribute to efforts that directly enhance the lives of our Warriors and their families. Delivering tangible results that positively impact their well-being is not just a duty, but my solemn commitment to ensuring that our force remains strong, supported, and ready to meet the challenges that lie ahead.

The Navy has made significant strides in addressing Sailor quality of life concerns through sustained engagement with Congress, resulting in tangible legislative victories in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 that directly improve compensation, housing, and access to essential support services such as medical care and childcare. The FY25 NDAA has provided the Navy with additional authorities to enter into partnerships that the Navy plans to take advantage of to improve unaccompanied housing (UH). Where warranted due to difficult conditions, the Navy has also authorized Basic Allowance for Subsistence (BAS) II for Sailors working at Huntington Ingalls and other shipyards. The Navy has implemented impactful improvements across eight key areas, including improved food accessibility and, with the help of Congress, is using the more than \$2.5M from the FY24 Appropriations Act to highlight and raise awareness of nutritional readiness. By doing so, we are demonstrating our tangible commitment to warrior well-being. This funding is focused on:

- Embedding health educators in child/youth and military treatment facilities to provide nutrition assistance program information and related resources to Service members and families.
- Hosting a training symposium and developing an accompanying food security curriculum for Navy service providers, such as Personal Financial Managers.

We have achieved much – but we have only begun to scratch the surface and have much more to do.

As the Navy's designated leader for overseeing and advancing Warrior and Family Readiness, Sailor nutrition and access to high-quality food are among my top priorities. This hearing provided a valuable opportunity for me to conduct a comprehensive review of galley nutrition programs, funding, and allocation, and I am pleased with the work we've been doing in this area. The Navy consistently executes 99.9% or more of the BAS it receives, directing those funds solely towards purchasing top-tier, nutritious food for our Service members.

Basic Allowance for Subsistence 101

Funds for meals in mess collected from Enlisted members are used exclusively for the feeding of Sailors. Junior Sailors in station feeding status and all enlisted Sailors assigned to ships are subject to mandatory prepayment for available meals per the DoD Directive 1418.05. These Sailors are entitled to three meals per day in a ship or shore galley and are charged for all meals to which they are entitled, whether they choose to eat in the galley or not. For those occasions when meals are not available, members subject to mandatory pay account collection can receive credit for those meals. The cost of food for galleys is budgeted and appropriated based on historical usage rates. My review of budgetary records revealed that no BAS funds have ever been moved from food purchase to other uses when meals are not consumed. In fact, the Navy supplements food purchases for appropriated galleys to improve food quantity and quality in its dining facilities above what is collected, for meals eaten.

BAS and Subsistence in Kind (SIK) makeup the majority of the Budget Activity (BA) 4 account within the Military Personnel, Navy budget. The BAS account is used to pay a monthly allowance to Enlisted Sailors so they can procure their own meals. All Sailors, with the exception of trainees at Recruit Training Command (RTC) Great Lakes, receive a monthly entitlement for BAS. As discussed above, Sailors in station messing status at a servicing galley have payments for available meals collected in advance and these collections are returned to the BA 4 subsistence account. The purchases of food for all ships, shore facilities, the RTC Great Lakes training facility come from this subsistence account. Currently, Enlisted Sailors have \$399 (out of the total \$465.77 BAS allowance) per month collected for prepaid meals via an allotment. There are currently 103,006 Sailors receiving Rations in Kind.

Status of Galleys (Afloat and Ashore)

The United States Navy manages an extensive network of dining facilities, known as galleys, across its installations ashore and provides essential meal services to Sailors afloat. As of

July 2024, the Navy operates 80 ashore galleys and 16 Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) Essential Station Messing operations, collectively serving approximately 28 million meals annually. Navy galleys ashore are not just crucial logistical assets; they also play a vital role in recruitment and retention efforts. By offering high-quality, nutritious meals, these dining facilities enhance warrior readiness and ensure our sailors are ready to execute any number of the challenging missions we ask of them every day. This commitment to excellence in sustenance is an integral part of maintaining the readiness and well-being of our fighting force.

The Navy conducts quarterly menu review panels which are open to all Sailors subsisting in the galley and the program is in the process of launching an ongoing, automated galley customer satisfaction survey, inviting Sailors to anonymously share feedback about the quality of galley food and operations. The survey will produce real time results available at every layer within the program and will provide email alerts to local managers when feedback is received, ensuring those comments can be addressed immediately.

The United States Navy operates a comprehensive system of afloat galleys across 249 active ships, ensuring Sailors receive essential meal services while at sea or when attached to a ship. Serving over 20 million meals annually, these galleys are critical logistical assets that boost Sailor morale, support retention, and foster a positive shipboard environment. By providing high-quality, nutritious meals, culinary specialists contribute to the readiness required to accomplish fleet warfighting requirements. To foster continuous improvement and satisfaction, these ships hold quarterly review boards where Sailors offer feedback on food quality and operations. This commitment to exceptional nourishment is key to maintaining the readiness and well-being of our fighting force.

Access to Quality Food

All galley menu ingredients are vetted and approved by Navy dietitians to ensure Sailors receive nutrient-dense food options. The DoD Manual 1338.10 “DoD Food Service Program”

specifies requirements in each food category (vegetables, fruit, etc.,) and Office of the Chief of Naval Operations Instruction 10110.1 “Nutrition and Menu Standards for Human Performance Optimization” outlines energy requirements (calories, macro-nutrients and micronutrients). Annually, Navy subsistence subject matter experts submit menus, informed by Sailor feedback, to the dietitian for evaluation. This collaborative process aims to incorporate ‘bottom-up’ feedback, promoting the inclusion of desired items and the gradual elimination of unpopular choices. Additionally, the ‘Go For Green’ Program aims to make the performance choice clear through using choice architecture at the serving line placing green items first, followed by yellow and then red. It prioritizes nutrient dense foods so Sailors have the choice of a nutritionally balanced meal. Currently, 38.76% of our menu items are coded as green and 39.41% are coded to yellow. Furthermore, ashore galleys have added food truck options, expanded “grab and go” offerings, and relaxed galley attire policy to make galleys a more comfortable and inviting environment.

In addition to galleys, Navy installations offer varied dining options such as increasing access to “Better For You” food products through the Navy Exchange (NEX) Program’s ‘Fleatery’ food truck and ‘Outpost’ entity. The NEX is also working to enhance access to healthy snacks and fresh food products through Micro Markets, and exploring “hybrid” mini marts which allow continuous 24/7 access to prepared food offerings. Additionally, installations offer access to branded food chains operated or contracted by Navy Exchange Services Command. There are nearly 400 MWR restaurants across the shore offering a variety of dining experiences ranging from fast-casual to fine dining, as well as catering and special event services. Additionally, Commander, Navy Installations Command has expanded cooking capabilities in UH by permitting Sailors to use small appliances in their rooms if they feature automatic shut-off mechanisms and unexposed heating elements. This initiative allows our Service members to utilize appliances such as crockpots, electric hot pots, electric pressure cookers, rice makers, and

more, offering them greater flexibility in preparing healthy, home-cooked meals. By empowering Sailors with the ability to cook nutritious meals on their own terms, we are supporting their health, well-being and comfort, improving their overall warrior readiness.

The Navy is committed to enhancing warrior readiness for its Sailors by proactively identifying and evaluating opportunities for improvement. For UH, we are exploring innovative ways to elevate livability by integrating essential services – including dining facilities, grocery stores, and key personal services – in closer proximity to where Sailors reside. This strategic initiative, being piloted in Hampton Roads, aims to streamline daily life, providing Sailors with greater convenience and improving their overall well-being and quality of life while stationed away from home. Finally, the Navy has undertaken an initiative to install Wi-Fi in all ashore galleys with a target completion date of December 2025.

Poor and Failing Galley Infrastructure

Though subsistence funds go exclusively to providing food for our Service members, I would be remiss if I didn't address the physical state of the galleys themselves. Degradation of our facilities and infrastructure is accelerating at a time when a solid foundation is key to winning against global competitors. In contrast, the galley at Naval Air Station Meridian underwent a significant renovation, culminating in the opening of a new state-of-the-art facility in July 2016. This \$10.1 million project replaced the original galley and added a new 21,500-square-foot building. As a result, it is often recognized as the best galley in Navy Region Southeast and has received multiple 5-Star Accreditations – recently being named the 2025 Captain Edward F. Ney Award winner for Best Ashore Galley on the East Coast.

In order to meet the growing demands, we will need to be innovative in our approach.

For galleys and food services, that means:

- Of the 59 galley buildings under my purview, 33 (56%) are in poor or failing condition.

- Furnishings, fixtures, and equipment (FF&E) replacement often occurs at the point of failure and not based on life cycle requirements.
- These conditions are not conducive to the creation of a welcoming and comfortable environment desired in our galleys.

We are addressing the challenges by:

- Completing smaller projects, as funds allow, to maintain an acceptable appearance and to meet minimum sanitation requirements.
- Replacing FF&E in advance of failure with any surplus end-of-year funds to the extent those funds are available.

Conclusion

I remain confident in our Navy team's collective efforts to take care of our warriors and their families. We are focused on building great people, great leaders, and great teams and are doing so by strengthening our commitment to the warrior covenant. This preserves our competitive advantage and superiority as the world's preeminent naval force. We will continue to challenge ourselves to be better, fix what matters, and commit to further improving our warfighting foundation. I look forward to continuing to partner with this committee and others as we work to maintain strong warfighting teams in defense of our country and to maintain high, uncompromising, and clear standards. On behalf of the men and women of the United States Navy and their families, thank you for your sustained commitment and unwavering support.