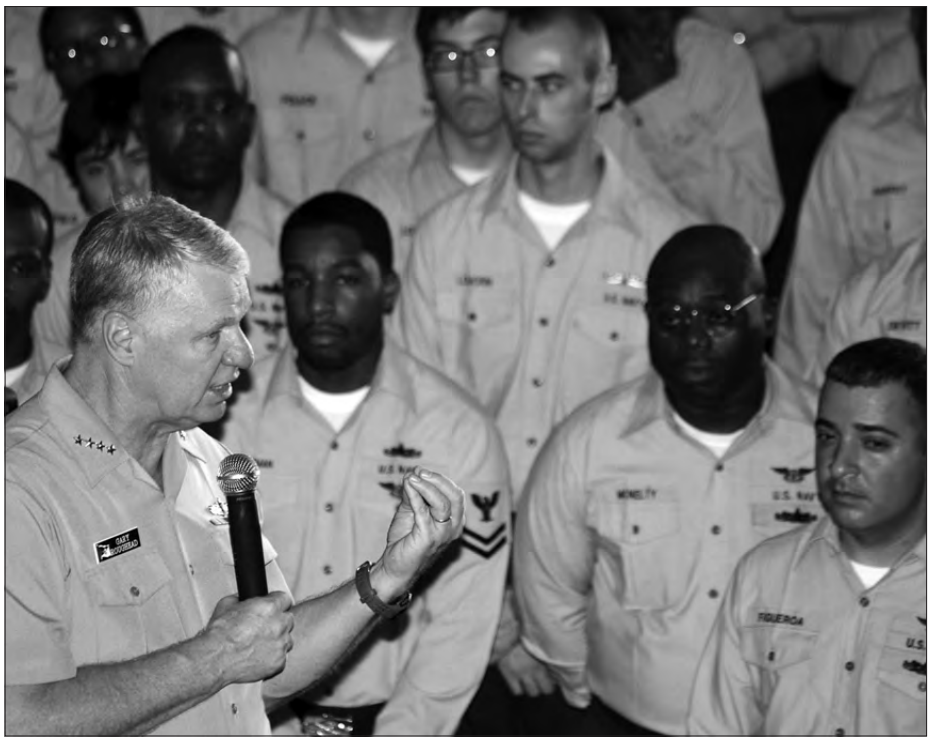
CNO meets with forward-deployed Sailors aboard *GW*

By MC2 Dave Reynolds, *USS George Washington* Public Affairs

George Washington Carrier Strike Group Sailors welcomed Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Gary Roughead aboard the Navy's only forward-deployed aircraft carrier Aug. 19.

Roughead, a former commander of the *George Washington* Carrier Strike Group toured the Nimitz class aircraft carrier meeting with individual and groups of Sailors along the way before addressing the assembled crew for an all hands call in the *USS George Washington* (*GW*) (CVN 73) hangar bay.

He spoke of the thousands of Sailors doing important work around the globe, from contingency operations in Iraq and Afghanistan to the forward-deployed naval forces of which *GW* is a part. He talked about how the *GW* forward-deployed status as an integral part of the Navy's maritime strategy.



"The most important goal that we as a Navy need to accomplish is to be ready for whatever the nation asks us to do," Roughead said. "What you do, day in and day out, is just confirmation that we as a Navy are ready for whatever comes our way. That's what the nation expects of us.

"You're doing incredible work, you're doing important work and it's making a difference – not just for our country but for this part of the world," he continued. "So many people look to you, to the Navy and to our country as a force for good everywhere we go."

Prior to the all hands call, one hard charging *GW* Sailor, Damage Controlman 2nd Class (SW/AW) Stephanie Jeffcoat of Engineering Department's DC Division, received the Navy-Marine Corps Medal for her heroism and selfless actions during a May 22, 2008 fire at sea aboard the ship.

Jeffcoat said she was surprised and honored to receive the award from the Navy's highest-ranking officer.

"He just congratulated me and said that not too many people get to wear the medal and that I should feel very honored," she said later. "I was proud to receive the medal, but to have the CNO come to the ship and personally present it was amazing."

The CNO was in the 7th Fleet area of responsibility to attend the Indonesia International Fleet Review, which commemorates the 64th anniversary of that country's independence. Later in the afternoon, *GW* led a parade of ships from 33 countries in a pass-in-review through Manado Bay while aircraft from embarked Carrier Air Wing 5 performed a formation flyover.

Other elements of the *George Washington* Carrier Strike Group, commanded by Rear Adm. Kevin M. Donegan, also participated in the fleet review including *USS Mustin* (DDG 89), *USS Fitzgerald* (DDG 62), *USS McCampbell* (DDG 85) and *USS Cowpens* (CG 63).

(Left) CNO Adm. Gary Roughead speaks to the crew of *USS George Washington* (CVN 73) in the hangar bay about the importance of their role as part of the forward-deployed naval forces during a visit Aug. 19. Roughead is in the 7th Fleet area of responsibility attending the Indonesian International Fleet Review, which commemorates the 64th anniversary of that country's independence.

U.S. Navy photo by MCSN Christopher S. Harte

Sailors' online service records key for Post 9/11 GI Bill transfer

By Pam Warnken, NPC Public Affairs

Since the gate opened Aug. 1 for eligible Sailors to transfer their GI Bill benefits to spouses or children, the Navy has processed about 7,500 applications with priority given to family members attending college this fall.

"We've taken care of approving the transferring of benefits for students attending classes right away so our doors are open to those attending in the near or distant future," said Kathy Wardlaw, GI Bill program manager at Navy Personnel Command (NPC). NPC added temporary staff for a few months to handle the influx.

Transferability requires an additional service obligation unless the Sailor is leaving due to a normal retirement or high year tenure limits, Wardlaw said, citing NAVADMIN 203/09. Otherwise, Sailors generally must have served at least six years in the armed forces and agree to an additional four years. See the NAVADMIN for exceptions. Those who retired on or before Aug. 1 of this year are not eligible for the transfer benefit.

"The transferability benefit was designed as a recruiting and retention tool," Wardlaw said. Another important requirement to note, is that Sailors who want to transfer must do so while they're still affiliated with the armed forces.

Before submitting their transferability requests, their obligation requirement must reflect in their electronic service record (ESR), according to Wardlaw, or the request will be rejected until corrected. Sailors can review their ESR at https://nsips.nmci.navy.mil/.

Qualified active and reserve Sailors may elect to transfer benefits to a spouse or children, with some or all benefits allocated to those named. In addition to the ESR, the Defense Eligibility Enrollment System (DEERS) is used to validate a Sailor's eligibility to transfer.

Family members must be in DEERS and eligible for benefits in DEERS before a Sailor can request transferability. This means those dual-military members whose children are reflecting under only one sponsor's record, must reflect under both sponsors. For example, to establish a child as a family member under both military parents, the children must be enrolled in DEERS under one parent for benefits and under the other parent as a child "drawing benefits from another military sponsor."

Wardlaw said the most common error is Sailors failing to choose the number of months to transfer to each family member or not annotating the dates the transfer entitlement is to be used.

"If you have young children and are just guessing at what you will want to transfer to each, it's okay to put one month for each. Registration is what's important here," said Wardlaw.

The months transferred to each person or the dates of use can be changed later. More importantly, a Sailor cannot add a new dependent after separation or retirement from the service. Distributing the benefit among the children enables the Sailor to move the months of entitlement between children after separation.

"Remember, if you did not transfer entitlement to that child while in the armed forces, you can't add the child when you get out," Wardlaw explained.

Information Systems Technician 1st Class Vicky Gallagher, a drilling Reservist with the Office of Naval Intelligence unit in Millington, Tenn., cracked the code and is drawing nearly $10,000 for her daughter.

"My daughter is attending Mississippi State University. Seventy percent of her entire tuition and fees of nearly $10,000 will be paid for by the VA (Department of Veterans Affairs)."

Gallagher advises people to pay close attention to the program rules and instructions as they fill out the forms.

"Once you get your notice of eligibility and transfer benefits using the Transferability of Education Benefits (TEB) Web site, your work isn't yet done," she said. "Make sure the student contacts the VA representative at the school and presents a copy of the TEB and their filled-out 'Application for Transfer of Entitlement,' VA Form 22-1990E, available at https://vabenefits.vba.va.gov/vonapp/main.asp."