



**COMMANDER, NAVY REGION HAWAII/  
NAVAL SURFACE GROUP  
MIDDLE PACIFIC**

**COVID-19 AWARENESS  
July 8, 2020**



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Region Hawaii and MIDPAC Ohana,

Late last week, SecNav Braithwaite shared some of his observations following his first thirty days at the helm of the Department of the Navy. He expressed his admiration and appreciation for the superb performance of the uniformed and civilian members in carrying out the mission in the face of unprecedented challenges, consistently placing Service above Self. The Secretary shared that, even though we continue to confront the COVID-19 pandemic, our naval force must also be mindful of the continuing struggle for racial equality. He shared how during his recent visit to an East Coast naval air station, he was asked by a young E-3 about racial disparities in the force. Secretary Braithwaite stressed the importance of addressing this challenge: “We need to talk about equality and justice if we are going to create the One Team approach we strive to attain. And we must act on those hard conversations, throughout the ranks and across the force, right up to the desk of the Secretary of the Navy.”

The SecNav’s message aligns with the CNO’s call for frank and open discussions, outlined in his message to the Fleet in late June, and tracks with the standing up of Task Force One Navy to address the issues of racism, sexism and other destructive biases and their impact on naval readiness. Navy leadership at the highest levels is moving out to identify and remove racial barriers and improve inclusion within our Navy. We must make the same commitment at our level. I encourage you to have those essential discussions to bring challenges to light and find the right solutions.

Earlier this week, I met via webinar with some leaders of the local community and strong supporters of the Navy as part of the Honolulu Chapter of the Navy League’s “The Bridge” community networking program. The group asked me to update them on Region Hawaii and MIDPAC. I discussed future homeport changes for some of our ships, the status of RIMPAC as an at-sea only exercise, recent developments on community outreach connected to Red Hill, and a look at recent and upcoming historical observances.

The group was interested in how we have navigated the challenges of COVID-19, and I was pleased to share with them what I view as the “bumper sticker” that characterizes these difficult times – “The Mission Continued.” I explained how you have been able to develop creative solutions to protect our people on our ships, in the work place and on the installations. I pointed out that any early challenges were more with computer system bandwidth, not with the talent of our team.

I explained that we have worked closely with local authorities on implementing or relaxing health protection measures. I added that in my opinion, the strongest reason for the maintenance of infection rates far below the national average is “choice management,” the manner in which each of you has taken personal responsibility to make the right choices to help us fight the pandemic. You have truly made a difference up to this point, and I am confident that you will continue to do so.

As we move forward, our success in meeting the mission is dependent on continuing to make the right choices: about combating COVID, in getting the job done, and in combating destructive biases. I am confident we will move forward together.

As always, please continue to take care of yourselves, your shipmates and coworkers, and your families.

V/r, Robb

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