

# News Release



## Defense Threat Reduction Agency

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Media Contact: 1 (703) 767-5870

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### The Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy: 'We have to pivot and focus on combat at sea'

By: Melissa Tune, Defense Threat Reduction Agency Public Affairs



*Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy Russell Smith discusses upcoming changes to the Navy's policies during his visit to DTRA on March 7. (Sunghee Chon, Photographer/DTRA).*

FORT BELVOIR, VA – The U.S. Navy's top Enlisted Sailor is on a critical mission. As the fleet master chief to the Navy's top personnel officer, Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy (MCPON) Russell Smith, is on the road and at sea to find out what's happening within the naval forces. The MCPON visited the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) March 7, 2019, to find out what matters to the sailors assigned to DTRA.

The visits are a part of a larger plan in which the MCPON gathers critical input from the field and then shares that information with the Navy's top leadership to help shape, develop and even overhaul policies within the Department of the Navy. MCPON Russell's visit was welcomed by all.

"To hear the perspective of the most senior enlisted leader of the Navy in person is a great opportunity for our folks here at DTRA," said Air Force Chief Master Sgt Timothy B. Horn, DTRA's Command Senior Enlisted Leader. "To me, this is a trifecta win: we get to hear the MCPON's perspective in an All Hands environment, our Navy Chiefs get a chance to have a more candid conversation over a working lunch, and we get to share the DTRA mission with a senior leader in our military."

The MCPON shared critical information with DTRA's sailors, in a wide-ranging and no-question-is-off-limits session that ranged from how the Navy fits into the new National Defense Strategy down to changes with the physical training uniform. Many of the questions revolved around career and professional development issues that fall under the first of the NDS's three lines of effort: Build a More Lethal Force.



*During a working lunch, MCPON Russell emphasizes to DTRA's sailors the Navy's position on building a stronger naval force for the future. (Sunghee Chon, Photographer/DTRA)*

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"We have to pivot," the MCPON said, outlining the major changes already being made at boot camp to improve how the Navy fights, as well as the amount and intensity of training at sea. "[That combat fighting is] what we learned the hard way in World War II, in the first 18 months after Pearl Harbor. That's what we're trying to adjust without having to have a Pearl Harbor."

The MCPON said the changes being made to the rate system, evaluations, professional development and big-picture manning decisions are also instrumental to making the Navy more lethal.

The MCPON also took pride in the fact that, at the same time standards are getting tougher and training is getting more intense, the Navy's retention rate is almost 80 percent, especially in light of the fact that the unemployment rate for the population the Navy recruits from is at a 50-year low.

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### **Mission**

DTRA enables the Department of Defense, the U.S. Government, and international partners to counter and deter Weapons of Mass Destruction and Improvised Threat Networks.