

Fleet Master Chief April Beldo Retirement Speech

January 18, 2017, 11:00 am

**Good morning everyone.....and Chief Williams
thank you for that kind introduction.**

**It is truly a privilege to serve as the Presiding
Officer for Fleet Master Chief April Beldo's
retirement ceremony. April, Thank you for asking me
to be part of a very important day for you and your
family.**

**I'd like to personally welcome all of the
distinguished guests ... and most importantly, April's
family and friends who've come a long way to be here
today:**

- **April's Father, Ronald Beldo and his wife, Mrs. Elizabeth Hernandez-Beldo**
- **Mother, Mrs. Lila Beldo**
- **Brother, Mr. Gerald Beldo**
- **And Nephews, Mr. Ronald Beldo & Mr. Aaron Garcia-Taylor**

Each of you has played a special role in her life.

Thank you for sharing her with us... and for helping mold her into the great person she's become. You should all be very proud... because we certainly are.

So before we go any further, how many of you know that it is April's birthday today? How awesome is that?! Truth be told, she selected today for her

retirement so she could get two parties for the price of one! But I know it will be a great one!

And while it wouldn't be polite to disclose your age of course, they say that 60 is the new 20... so you're still squarely in your teens! OK, maybe I only say that. Happy birthday my friend! (Lead round of applause)...

We're also here today to celebrate another important milestone for April... her nearly 34 years of service to the U.S. Navy and this country.

You should be extremely proud of what you've accomplished and the impact you've made on Sailors throughout your career. Just look around the room... Look at the number of lives you've touched, and those who would do anything for you in return.

You are someone who invests in the lives of those around you, and have that rare ability to put folks at ease, especially our Sailors, and to make friends in all walks of life.

I have to be honest though... this is a hard day for the ENTIRE Navy as we say goodbye.... You are a

true shipmate, an incredible role model, a great leader and faithful friend. I will miss you – as will thousands of our Sailors.

Those of you who have spent any time with Fleet know that she is a charismatic, selfless and passionate leader who positively impacts each and every person she meets... and above all she loves the Navy.

All you have to do is look at her Facebook Feed to know what I'm talking about. From the number of selfies she takes with Sailors, to posting Navy.Mil stories at all hours of the day or night, or seeing the number of "Likes" she has on her Facebook status updates, she is beloved. In fact, she's the only person I

know who routinely receives more than 1,000 likes on any post... Hooyah Fleet!

She is also the kind of person who puts the good of the institution ahead of her own interests and is unafraid to speak truth to power.

You can't teach that ... And as a leader, you can't put a price tag on what that means.

And while it's hard leaving something you truly love and have spent 30+ years doing... All I can say is that I take solace in knowing that you have helped blaze a trail for many young men and women who will come behind you... and the impact you've made on people throughout your career will manifest itself for years to

come as you see those you've mentored, succeed

because you led them... me included.

You learn a lot about people when stuff starts to hit the fan, flying at you from all directions like it frequently does in my job. You learn what people are made of. And Fleet is made of the best.

April, it has truly been my honor to work alongside you these past 18 months...To see you interact with Sailors... your love for the Navy... and above all, to learn from you...

On behalf of the thousands of Sailors you have influenced, loved and led, thank you for the past three plus decades of putting on the cloth of our nation

every single day, for the pride you have brought to the finest Navy on the planet and for being the definition of a servant leader that many will emulate for decades to come.

We owe you our thanks and gratitude, my friend.

Fair winds and following seas.