
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

News Release #25-14

March 4, 2014

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Navy's newest ministry team members complete training

COLUMBIA, S.C. – The Navy's newest group of Religious Program Specialists (RPs) graduated from the Naval Chaplaincy School and Center (NCSC) at Fort Jackson Mar. 3.

These Sailors provide chaplains with the administrative, technical and logistical support needed to carry out religious programs and services. They are also charged with safeguarding chaplains - who are noncombatants and not authorized to bear arms. Trained as combatants, one of the RP's essential duties is to ensure chaplains are safe wherever they are assigned or deployed.

Religious Program Specialist Seaman Falon Jones, one of the 28 members of the latest RP class, said the training has readied her for the fleet.

"We covered a broad variety of topics that were relevant to the RP rating," said Jones. "For example, we learned in-depth about various faith groups and details about the Religious Offering Fund."

According to the class honor graduate, Religious Program Specialist Seaman Jason Hunt, the training offered an opportunity to learn about the history of the RP rating and provided an understanding of why the rating is important.

"What I learned from our RP history is the various faith groups served by religious ministry teams," said Hunt. "I also learned the duties of an RP and the duties of a chaplain. Because of my training I am better prepared to take my place in the fleet."

Guest speaker for the graduation ceremony was Master Chief Religious Program Specialist Dino Medler, the RP community's senior enlisted leader.

"I'm optimistic that this is only the beginning of a highly successful endeavor for all of you" said Medler. "Your commands are ready for you to arrive. Our fleet Religious Ministry Teams need you."

Medler also explained the importance of RPs having an understanding of what it means to be a Sailor.

"It is true that you are a Religious Program Specialist. But lest you forget, I'll remind you that you are a Sailor first and foremost," added Medler. "So along with your professional responsibilities, you must be about the command participating in Sailor kinds of things. This includes watch standing, quarters, Personnel Qualification Standards, warfare qualifications, and collateral duties. As Sailors you are evaluated by Navy standards and your contribution to the command's mission in addition to your RP duties."

Chaplain Capt. Kyle Fauntleroy, the center's commanding officer, said NCSC is committed to strengthening the nation's future by training, developing and inspiring Religious Program Specialists.

"At NCSC we cultivate the character of our students to be ethically, intellectually, professionally and physically prepared to serve their country

and humanity," said Fauntleroy. "Our RPs must be strong in their resolve to build on the long maritime heritage and proud of the accomplishments of the United States Navy."

For more news from the Chaplain Corps, visit

<http://www.navy.mil/local/crb/> .

For information about the Naval Chaplaincy School and Center, visit

<https://www.netc.navy.mil/centers/chaplain/> .

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