

May 14, 2004

Dear TARAWA Spouses,

On behalf of the U.S. Navy and our TARAWA crew, I would like to express our sincere appreciation for the exceptional support you have given to your spouse during their military service and tour on the *Eagle of the Sea*.

Your unfailing support has made it possible for your spouses' lasting contribution to our Navy. We understand the hardships you must often endure, forgoing personal and professional aspirations, enduring long periods of separation, and solely shouldering the extra burdens left behind by a sea-going spouse. Your continued support ensures the success of our readiness and operations around the world. You are an integral part of the patriotic fabric of our nation, and are truly our "heroes behind the scenes."

You have earned my grateful appreciation, and deserve the heartfelt thanks and admiration of a grateful nation.

JOHN W. RILEY III  
Captain  
United States Navy