Three-Star Vice Adm. Gilday is Choice for CNO Following Moran's Sudden Retirement



Vice Adm. Michael Gilday, then commander of U.S. Fleet Cyber Command and the U.S. 10th Fleet, delivers remarks during a change-of-command ceremony. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Somers Steelman

Editor's Note: This story has been updated as of July 18, 2019, to reflect Gilday's formal nomination.

ARLINGTON, Va. — For the first time since the 1970s, a three-star admiral is the nominee for chief of naval operations.

Vice Adm. Michael Gilday, who earlier this year became director of the Joint Staff, has been nominated by President Trump for promotion to admiral and to become CNO, according to a July 18 announcement from Acting Defense Secretary Richard. V. Spencer.

Gilday was selected to succeed Adm. John M. Richardson after Adm. Bill Moran's announcement that he would retire amid questions about his ongoing professional relationship with a disgraced former aide, sources confirmed.

Richardson had been scheduled to leave Aug. 1 and retire in September but will stay on until the U.S. Senate confirmation process for Gilday is complete.

The

nominee for the Navy's next chief typically comes from a small pool of four-star commanders. Gilday is the first three-star admiral to be chosen since Vice Adm. Elmo Zumwalt was nominated by President Nixon in April 1970.

In a statement, Moran said he made the decision to retire "based on an open investigation into the nature of some of my personal email correspondence over the past couple of years and for continuing to maintain a professional relationship with a former staff officer, now retired, who had while in uniform been investigated and held accountable over allegations of inappropriate behavior."

Adm. Bill Moran speaks to members of the New York Police Department, service members, veterans and civilians during a Memorial Day cookout in May hosted by the NYPD as part of Fleet Week. Instead of becoming the 32nd chief of naval operations, Moran has abruptly decided to retire. U.S. Marine Corps/Cpl. Adrian A. Delgado

Press reports identified the staff officer as Chris Servello, former public affairs officer for Richardson.

Moran added that he did not condone the staff officer's conduct, but said he understands how "toxic it can be to any team when inappropriate behavior goes unrecognized and unchecked."

"Every Sailor is entitled to serve in an environment free of harassment or intimidation," Moran said. "As painful as it is to submit my request to retire, I will not be an impediment whatsoever to the important service that you and your families continue to render the nation every day."

Spencer said he admired Moran's Navy service, but his decision to maintain the relationship with the staff officer "has caused me to call his judgment into question."

Moran called his 38 years of Navy service a "high honor and privilege" and said he deeply regrets "any inconvenience" his decision causes Trump and Spencer.

Gilday, a native of Lowell, Massachusetts, is the son of a Navy Sailor, according to his official biography. He is a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy and holds master's degrees from the Harvard Kennedy School and the National War College.

As a surface warfare officer, Gilday deployed on two cruisers and a destroyer before rising to command two more destroyers. Subsequently, he commanded Destroyer Squadron 7, serving as sea combat commander for the Ronald Reagan Carrier Strike Group.

As a flag officer, he served as commander, Carrier Strike Group 8, embarked aboard USS Dwight D. Eisenhower, and as commander, U.S. Fleet Cyber Command and U.S 10th Fleet. Ashore, as a flag officer, he served in joint positions as director of operations for NATO's Joint Force Command Lisbon; as chief of

staff for Naval
Striking and Support Forces NATO; director of operations for U.S. Cyber
Command; and as director of operations for the Joint Staff.

His earlier staff assignments include the Bureau of Naval Personnel, the staff of the chief of naval operations, and the staff of the vice chief of naval operations. Joint assignments include executive assistant to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and naval aide to the president.

Additional reporting by Megan Scully.