The Navy’s strategic direction remains clear. We are engaged in a long-term competition that threatens our security and way of life. As part of the Joint Force, we will meet this challenge by deploying forward—alongside our allies and partners—to deter aggression and preserve freedom of the seas. This Navigation Plan charts the course for how we will execute the Tri-Service Maritime Strategy. It supersedes Design 2.0 and informs my annual guidance for the Program Objective Memorandum and an internal implementation framework. It outlines the challenges we face, our unique role in meeting those challenges, and four priorities to focus our efforts: readiness, capabilities, capacity, and our Sailors. There is no time to waste – our actions in this decade will set the maritime balance of power for the rest of the century.

A larger, more lethal, more ready fleet manned by the world’s greatest Sailors is required to maintain our advantage at sea and protect America for years to come. We will deliver, operate, and maintain that Navy with a focus on our core roles of sea control and power projection.
For 245 years, our Navy has operated forward to protect commerce and keep fights far from our shores. Since the end of World War II, we have sailed with like-minded navies to uphold the rules-based order at sea. Together, we have provided stability, deterred great power war, preserved peace, and ushered in prosperity for billions of people across the world.

Now our collective security—and way of life—are under threat.

Today, China and Russia are undermining the free and open conditions at sea that have benefited so many for so long. Optimism that they might become responsible partners has given way to recognition that they are determined rivals. Both nations are attempting to unfairly control access to valuable sea-based resources outside their home waters. Both intimidate their neighbors and enforce unlawful claims with the threat of force. Both have constructed sophisticated networks of sensors and long-range missiles to hold important waterways at risk. And both are turning incremental gains into long-term advantages—such as militarizing contested features in the South China Sea.

To achieve its strategic goals, China is aggressively building a navy to rival our own. Already possessing the world’s largest fleet, China continues to build modern surface combatants, submarines, aircraft carriers, amphibious assault ships, and next-generation fighters. Operating under the cover of the world’s largest missile force, the People’s Liberation Army – Navy (PLAN) deploys alongside the Chinese Coast Guard and Maritime Militia to harass global shipping and exert pressure on regional countries below the level of traditional armed conflict. They have strengthened all dimensions of their military power to challenge us and our allies and partners from the seabed to space and in the information domain. Now, they are extending their infrastructure across the globe to control access to critical waterways. Their concerted efforts to challenge our advantages make China our most pressing long-term strategic threat.

Russia is also modernizing its forces. In addition to modernizing its strategic nuclear forces, Russia is developing modern missile frigates, fighter and bomber aircraft, hypersonic missiles, tactical nuclear weapons, and modern submarines. The Russian Navy is expanding its operations globally and deploying closer to our shores. Meanwhile, they continue to attack our computer networks. In a conflict, we expect they will threaten cyber or kinetic strikes against the homeland. Left unchecked, Russia will continue to undermine the rules-based order and threaten our homeland.

America is a maritime nation—our security and prosperity depend on the seas. Failing to maintain our advantage at sea will leave America vulnerable. We have to move decisively—and do it now.
For America to retain control of the seas, we must maintain a clear-eyed resolve to compete, deter, and win today while accelerating the development of a larger, more lethal future fleet. We must do so while integrating more closely with the Marine Corps and Coast Guard to generate Integrated All-Domain Naval Power.

The U.S. Navy—operating within the Joint Force—plays a vital part in addressing the challenges posed by long-term competition with China and Russia. Deployed forward, we provide U.S. leaders quick response options for nearly any challenge – from confronting rivals to helping local populations recover from natural disasters. Our combat-credible presence creates and maintains influence abroad, and ensures critical waterways remain open for commerce. Our ballistic missile submarines provide an assured strategic deterrent that protects the homeland from nuclear attack. Our special operations teams are poised for early phase operations to keep our competitors off guard. When conflicts unfold, our forces are often first on the scene, and we can quickly scale forces to control the seas and project power ashore. After hostilities cease, we persist forward to preserve long-term U.S. interests through sustained forward engagement. We are a flexible, forward-postured force that competes and wins in the day-to-day, in crisis, and—if need be—in conflict.
American security rests upon our ability to control the seas and project power ashore. For decades, our forces enjoyed the luxury of operating in permissive environments across the world. That is no longer the case. For the first time in a generation, the seas are contested. We must stand ready to control them at the time and place of our choosing. Sea control provides the Joint Force freedom to maneuver and strike, protects friendly shipping, and denies use of the sea to our adversaries. In our digital age, it also means fighting our adversaries in space, cyberspace, and along the electromagnetic (EM) spectrum. Successful modern sea control demands the all-domain power of our Navy and the Joint Force.

Our Navy must also be able to influence events ashore. This starts with deterring a nuclear attack against our nation with our ballistic missile submarines – the most survivable leg of the nuclear triad. Projecting power and influence from the seas is vital to deterring aggression and resolving crises on acceptable terms. Projecting power and influence ranges from launching strikes against adversary forces to shaping the battle “well left of launch” and demonstrating to a competitor they have no viable means of achieving their objectives. Naval forces field capabilities in all-domains to deter aggression - employing information warfare, cyber capabilities and special operations to a host of conventional weapons launched from under, on, and above the sea. Our power projection capabilities alongside our strategic deterrent provide the surest guarantee of security for America and our allies and partners.

While America’s need for sea control and power projection hasn’t changed, how we compete and what we fight with has. Emerging technologies have expanded the modern fight at sea into all domains and made contested spaces more lethal. Ubiquitous and persistent sensors, advanced battle networks, and weapons of increasing range and speed have driven us to a more dispersed type of fight. Advances in artificial intelligence and machine learning (AI/ML) have increased the importance of achieving decision superiority in combat. Additionally, advances in autonomous systems have shown promise for an effective and affordable way for the Navy to fight and win in contested spaces. We will modernize the fleet to harness these technologies and maintain our advantage at sea.

To protect the homeland, preserve freedom of the seas, and deter aggression, our Navy will remain ready to control the seas and project power ashore. We will master new technologies and adapt the way we fight.
However, we have to do more than simply employ new capabilities – we must compete in new ways. This includes countering our rivals’ malign activities through effective day-to-day competition. To prevail in day-to-day competition, we will operate forward and take a more assertive posture in daily operations. We will challenge excessive maritime claims by sailing and flying wherever international law allows. We will also expand our information and decision advantage by persistently monitoring activities at sea in order to confront and expose malign actors. If necessary, we will continue to gain and hold competitor warfighting capabilities at risk before conventional conflict occurs. Finally, we will continue to dynamically deploy combat-credible forces to deter our rivals from making incremental gains and to demonstrate to our allies and partners our consistent commitment to a rules-based order.

Should deterrence fail we stand ready to confront aggression and decisively win the fight. Using concepts such as Distributed Maritime Operations (DMO), Littoral Operations in a Contested Environment (LOCE), and Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations (EABO), our forces will mass sea and shore-based fires from distributed platforms. By maneuvering across all domains, we will create operational dilemmas, exploit uncertainty and overwhelm our adversaries. Controlling the seas by constraining or destroying the adversaries’ fleets will enable freedom of movement at sea and the projection of power ashore. Working within the Joint Force and with allies and partners, Navy submarines, aircraft, and surface ships will launch massed volleys of networked weapons to overwhelm adversary defenses and compel a termination of conflict on favorable terms.

Our naval power is amplified by sailing and integrating with like-minded navies. We must continue to strengthen our alliances and partnerships to ensure our success across the continuum of day-to-day competition, crisis, and conflict. We must continue operating interchangeably with key allies to expand the reach and lethality of our collective forces across the globe. Our robust constellation of allies and partners remains a critical strategic advantage over our competitors.
Delivering a Navy ready to control the seas and project power across all domains now and into the future requires us to balance current operational demands, the urgent need for modernization, and the imperative of future readiness. This fiscal challenge is not new; however, the scale of the threat and the explosive rate of technological change we face is new. To preserve our readiness and modernization efforts, we must sensibly manage global force demands and focus our investments on improving our advantages over China before addressing other challenges.

Objective analysis confirms that America needs a larger, more lethal fleet. The Navy requires greater numbers of submarines, smaller and more numerous surface combatants, more lethal offensive capabilities, a host of integrated unmanned platforms—under, on, and above the sea—and a modern strategic deterrent. We also need a robust and secure network infrastructure to link distributed forces together and resilient logistics to sustain them. Balancing the requirement to field the future fleet, while maintaining the sustainable forward posture that keeps Americans safe and prosperous, is our central challenge.

We will hold these principles to guide us as we focus on four priorities: **readiness**, **capabilities**, **capacity**, and our **Sailors**:

- We will responsibly fund our readiness as we grow the fleet. We will never field a hollow force.
- Lethality and readiness are two sides of the same coin. We cannot deter our competitors with raw capabilities alone. We must field a force that has demonstrated the skill and will to win.
- Expertly maintaining our platforms and systems is in our DNA. We will own this.
- Keeping ahead of our competitors requires us to rapidly field state-of-the-art systems. Speed matters.
- While we need a larger fleet, the composition and capabilities of the fleet matter most.
- Our Sailors must be able to out think and outfight any adversary. They will remain the best trained and finest educated naval force in the world.
- Our relentless approach to warfighting excellence will remain grounded in our core values.
Readiness touches all elements of our Navy – from our shipyards and aviation depots to the steaming and flying hours our Sailors use to hone their skills. Over the last several years, the Navy has improved its readiness through sustained funding and a relentless focus on reform. We will sustain these gains and increase the speed of our recovery to field a more ready, lethal force.

Expertly taking care of our platforms is in our DNA – everyone will own this. Nearly 70% of the fleet we will have in 2030 is in service today. Sustaining our ships and aircraft is absolutely critical to meeting future demands. We will accelerate our momentum in improving on-time delivery of ships, submarines, and aircraft out of maintenance availabilities. Better planning our maintenance availabilities, improving operational level maintenance practices, and providing stable, predictable requirements to industry will accelerate our improvements. Leveraging a data-driven, Performance-to-Plan (P2P) approach has been crucial to the gains we have made to date. We will scale P2P across the force to ensure all echelons can improve readiness.

We are also prioritizing investments in our critical readiness infrastructure. Our public shipyards, dry docks, maintenance facilities, and aviation depots are vital national assets that are overdue for upgrades. We are refurbishing these facilities over the next two decades to ensure we can build and sustain our ships, submarines, and aircraft for the years ahead. Additionally, we are investing in our fleet support infrastructure, the global network of bases and stations, which generates naval power from the shore. Our installations command is preparing a long-term strategic investment plan that focuses our resources on the locations that best support our future force.
In this era of long-term competition, we must better understand our competitors’ behavior while concealing our own. All planning—strategic, operational, and tactical—will be completed with a deeper understanding of our competitors’ capabilities and mindsets. We cannot afford to simply observe and react. Instead, we must understand them so well that we instinctively act inside their decision cycles. We will align our exercises, experiments, and education to better understand requirements to defeat the adversary. Our Naval Education Enterprise will incorporate more instruction about our adversaries into our professional military education curriculum. Additionally, we will become more deliberate in our own planning, exercises, and operations to lessen our vulnerabilities and prevent information from being exploited by our competitors.

Winning in contested seas also means fielding and equipping teams that are masters of all-domain fleet operations. Future fights against near-peer competitors require us to integrate the all-domain power of the fleet with the Joint Force and our allies and partners. Our fleet staffs are already fully integrating information warfare, space, cyber, and special operators, both active and reserve, into their teams to leverage the full power of our Navy. We will continue to experiment through fleet battle problems, wargames, and exercises—like Large Scale Exercise 2021—to refine our concepts and capabilities.

We will continue to exercise with like-minded navies across the globe from the High North to the Western Pacific to demonstrate our collective readiness and resolve. This trains our Sailors for high-end warfighting and drives updated Joint and combined naval concepts, fleet requirements, and future naval capabilities.

**Capabilities**

**Deliver a More Lethal, Better-Connected Fleet**

**Objective:** A Navy capable of projecting synchronized lethal and non-lethal effects across all domains. We will deploy the Naval Operational Architecture by the middle of this decade; an array of counter-C5ISR capabilities; weapons of increasing range and speed; and a directed-energy system capable of defeating anti-ship cruise missiles.

Delivering emerging capabilities at speed and scale requires every member of our Navy team, including our industry, academic, and research partners, to embrace the urgency of the moment: our maritime supremacy is being challenged. This means developing innovative systems, modernizing legacy ones, and rigorously aligning our acquisition enterprise with operational requirements. It also requires coordinating capabilities with our robust network of allies and partners.

In a near-peer fight, our adversaries will seek to contest all domains and deny us a safe haven. The contest for control of the seas will also take place in the information and space domains and across the EM spectrum. Maintaining resilient command and control, communications, computers, cyber, intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, and targeting (C5ISR) architecture has never been more vital. **We must close the kill chain faster than our rivals with a resilient web of persistent sensors, command and control nodes, platforms, and weapons.** We must be able to operate effectively if our systems are degraded. We will continue fielding non-kinetic means such as subsea, seabed, and cyber weapons to disable our rivals’ war machines altogether and win the fight before it starts.
Characteristics of premium value in a fight for contested seas are distributed weapons of increasing range and speed, volume and tempo of fires, magazine depth, mobility of forces, stealth, deception, and sustainability. In this fight, the number and type of munitions matters. We are developing and fielding more options to deliver lethal and non-lethal effects on maritime, air, space, and shore-based targets. These include missiles, torpedoes, mines, cyber weapons, and devices that target the EM spectrum as well as seabed and subsea systems. We are also leveraging current platforms and designing future ones to deliver longer-range, higher-speed weapons such as hypersonic missiles.

Furthermore, our operating concepts require platforms, weapons, and sensors connected in a robust **Naval Operational Architecture (NOA)** that integrates with Joint All-Domain Command and Control (JADC2). The NOA is a collection of networks, infrastructure, data, and analytic tools that connects our distributed forces and provides decision advantage. Beyond recapitalizing our undersea nuclear deterrent, there is no higher development priority than fielding this capability. We will operate and defend the NOA as a warfighting platform to protect the flow of data and gain a decision advantage for the Joint Force. **Task Force Overmatch** will align resources and expertise from across our force to field the NOA in this decade. We can accept no delay.

Meanwhile, we will effectively apply modern digital and information technology to allow us to make better and faster decisions in combat and ashore, improve our readiness and sustainability, and drive affordability. This has traditionally been the responsibility of our Information Warfare Community, but it must be an all-hands effort since it touches almost everything we do. Digital technologies, coupled with process improvement and an innovative mindset of continual learning, are critical to winning a future fight.
Our rivals are relying on their ability to overwhelm our defenses with a massive number of missiles. Therefore, we need fixed and mobile sensors as well as submarines and unmanned platforms to operate inside of an adversary’s missile defense zone. We also need inexhaustible defensive systems aboard our warships and aircraft. We are allocating more resources to systems that improve defensive strength of the fleet and deliver more offensive firepower. This includes capabilities such as directed energy and electronic warfare systems. We will complete fielding of the high-power directed energy weapons systems our fleet needs to prevail in a near-peer fight before our adversaries achieve the same capability.

While significant progress has been made in advancing our combat logistics force, there is still work to do. Effective DMO relies on our ability to repair, rearm, resupply, refuel, revive, and rebuild our distributed forces. We must field a logistics enterprise that is ready to operate in contested spaces. This includes modernizing, protecting, and sustaining our logistics information technology systems, while revitalizing our strategic sealift capacity. We are working now to repurpose commercial vessels to affordably fulfill this critical national requirement.

Our industrial base plays a key role in maintaining our current Fleet as well as developing and building platforms and capabilities for the future fight. We will seek opportunities to accelerate the development and fielding of needed capabilities ahead of our rivals. As demanding customers and solid partners, we will solidify business relationships and leverage industry’s design, production, and sustainment talents to deliver more lethal warfighting capability and capacity.

We are accelerating innovative initiatives to bridge the gap between our current forces and the future fleet. We launched Novel Task Force to bring some of the brightest minds together from our warfare centers and laboratories to generate ideas about how to use our current capabilities in new ways to meet emerging warfighting needs. We are also taking lessons learned from two decades of counter-terrorism and apply them to long-term competition. We have improved our targeting and engagement processes, our ability to thrive in the littorals, and our ability to position our forces to keep the enemy disrupted. We will apply this same approach to all challengers.

To remain ahead of our competitors, we will divest ourselves of legacy capabilities that no longer bring sufficient lethality to the fight. This includes divestment of experimental Littoral Combat Ship hulls, legacy Cruisers, and older Dock Landing Ships. It also includes divesting non-core Navy missions like Aegis-ashore. Transferring shore-based Ballistic Missile Defense sites to ground forces enables Sailors to focus on their core missions at sea and frees up resources to increase our lethality.
Objective: A larger, hybrid fleet of manned and unmanned platforms – under, on, and above the sea – that meets the strategic and operational demands of our force. We will deliver the Columbia-class program on time; incorporate unmanned systems into the fleet; expand our undersea advantage; and field the platforms necessary for Distributed Maritime Operations.

In order to maintain control of the seas and project power in a future fight, our Navy must grow. Yet, numbers are not the only important factor – the composition of the fleet matters more.

As we build a larger, hybrid fleet, we are determined to deliver the Columbia-class submarines on time. Our ballistic missile submarines provide an assured response to any strategic nuclear attack on the United States. Ohio-class boats are nearing the end of four decades of service and must be replaced, making the Columbia-class program our top acquisition priority.

Our future fleet design places a premium on expanding our undersea advantage. We will continue to build Virginia-class submarines at a sustainable rate, while developing a follow-on attack submarine program and equipping them with conventional prompt strike capability. Sea control and sea denial from beneath the seas is one of our core advantages – we will not yield any ground to our competitors.

Unmanned platforms play a vital role in our future fleet. Successfully integrating unmanned platforms—under, on, and above the sea—gives our commanders better options to fight and win in contested spaces. They will expand our intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance advantage, add depth to our missile magazines, and provide additional means to keep our distributed force provisioned. Furthermore, moving toward smaller platforms improves our offensive punch while also providing affordable solutions to grow the Navy. Through analysis, simulations, prototyping, and demonstrations, we will systematically field and operate systems that possess the endurance and resilience to operate with infrequent human interaction. By the end of this decade, our Sailors must have a high degree of confidence and skill operating alongside proven unmanned platforms at sea.
Our future fleet design also places an emphasis on a larger number of smaller surface combatants like the new Constellation-class frigates. Fielding greater numbers of more affordable, smaller surface combatants allows us to operate in a more distributed manner – both in day-to-day competition and in high-end combat. This does not diminish the need for carriers or large surface combatants in the future. Our nuclear-powered aircraft carriers remain the most survivable and versatile airfields in the world, and provide our national leaders valuable options across the entire competition continuum. Gerald R. Ford-class carriers equipped with a longer-range carrier air wing of and a family of next-generation systems will deliver overwhelming firepower in contested spaces. Additionally, the future large surface combatant—or DDG Next—will bring more magazine depth and room for future capabilities than the Arleigh Burke-class destroyers.

The Marine Corps’ focus on fielding a naval expeditionary force to support the fleet is yet another method to control the seas and project power. By delivering mission-critical capabilities from expeditionary advanced bases, the Marines provide more vectors of attack to deter and ultimately defeat adversary aggression. Meanwhile the Coast Guard provides a necessary law-enforcement and security capability that makes them a critical partner across the spectrum of competition. As stated in the Tri-service Maritime Strategy, we will more closely align to maintain our advantage at sea. Integration provides the right naval power in the right place at the right time.

Our capacity expands when we sail in company with like-minded navies across the globe. America never fights alone, and we are far stronger when we stand alongside our allies and partners to uphold free and open conditions at sea. We will build on these strong foundations as we continue to confront and expose malign behavior and ensure fair access to seas. We will seek to operate interchangeably with key allies and partners to control the seas and project power in contested spaces. Every partner nation has a role to play from upholding international maritime governance and providing disaster relief to deterring and confronting our rivals in the high-end fight. Together, we will continue to deter great power war, preserve the peace, and keep the seas free and open for all.
Our Sailors—active and reserve, and the civilians who enable them—are the true source of our naval power. Controlling the seas and projecting power requires our Sailors to operate seamlessly in all domains and across the competition continuum. We recognize the strength we gain from a diverse force and actively pursue combat-minded Sailors with varied sets of knowledge, skills, and experiences to operate, sustain and maintain the fighting power of the Navy. We will accelerate their development and harness their talents to keep America safe and prosperous.

To do this, we will continue to cultivate a Culture of Excellence across the fleet. America expects us to be the best at what we do and to carry our values into combat. This means living up to our signature behaviors, putting the team and Nation above ourselves, and never forgetting the values that define us. As professionals, we will hold ourselves and our shipmates to the highest standards. We take ownership of our mission and constantly seek improvement.

As a Navy, we will live up to our core values of Honor, Courage, and Commitment. This requires listening to and learning from each other and removing bias and prejudice from our Navy. Eliminating discrimination from our ranks is a moral imperative that aligns with our oath to the Constitution and our special professional ethic to protect and defend all Americans. We have a shared responsibility to own our culture and shape a more inclusive future.

Respect underpins everything we do. Respect for the dignity and worth of every member of our Navy team is the bedrock for building trust up, down, and across the chain-of-command. Respect is also key to leveraging the talents of our diverse team to grow our advantage at sea. Respect is both given and earned. We all dedicate ourselves to the same oath. We will respect each other’s commitment, value, and personal worth.

We will reinforce our culture of mission command across our Navy. The current security environment demands our Sailors be prepared at all levels for decentralized operations guided by commander’s intent. This operating style provides us a tactical edge in combat. It is underpinned by a culture of trust and confidence based on proven character and competence. We trust our Commanding Officers’ creativity and initiative to operate as part of an integrated battle network and rapidly shift mindsets to take independent action when needed. Every leader must foster initiative, flexibility, adaptability and trust in their respective chains-of-command.

Our Sailors must continue to be the best trained in the world. We will continue to invest in Ready Relevant Learning (RRL) and live, virtual, constructive (LVC) training. RRL provides timely, relevant training using an agile, multi-path approach to ensure our operators have the knowledge they need on the deck plates to succeed in combat. LVC leverages improved computational power and network technology to blend the intensity of underway operations with high-fidelity synthetic training. This allows our Sailors to master high-end tactics in secure, controllable conditions. We will always fall back to our baseline under the stress of combat – RRL and LVC will raise our baseline.
We must also leverage learning for warfighting advantage. The intellectual investments we make in each Sailor provide a key advantage over our competitors. The Navy’s education enterprise must align its curriculum and research to deliver warfighting advantage. Student and faculty research will focus on warfighting concepts and capabilities our fleet needs to compete and win. The Naval Community College will provide our Sailors opportunities for education in fields that strengthen the service. Maintaining educational relationships with our international partners through exchanges and scholarships remains a priority for us to deepen enduring relationships and broaden understanding.

Our Navy Reserve team repeatedly demonstrates its critical contributions providing strategic depth to our forces. Reserve Sailors provide vital support to our Nation and keep our fleet ready to win – from providing medical care ashore to supporting our critical shipyards. We will build on these contributions as we focus the reserves on the challenges of long-term strategic competition. This means using our reserve component in critical roles at sea and ashore rather than as individual augmentees in the fight against violent extremist organizations. We will drive our individual augmentee requirements to zero.

We also recognize that the Navy is a family. Our families serve with us and demonstrate their incredible resilience every single day. They hold our lives together while we are underway, and balance the responsibilities of work, raising children, and managing finances. We are committed to strengthening programs that support our families. This includes providing quality housing and ensuring access to childcare and spouse career development opportunities. We will assess our current Navy Family Framework and quality of life programs to ensure our families are given the support they deserve.
Conclusion

America is a maritime nation – our security and prosperity are inextricably linked to the seas. For 245 years, in both calm and rough waters – our Navy has stood the watch to protect the homeland, preserve freedom of the seas, and defend our way of life.

The long-term global maritime contest we face today requires us to adopt competitive and sustainable approaches to deliver the Integrated All-Domain Naval Power America needs to win. The decisions and investments we make this decade will set the maritime balance of power for the rest of this century. We can accept nothing less than success.

This is an important voyage to navigate together. While this Navigation Plan charts the course, our core values of Honor, Courage, and Commitment and our attributes of Integrity, Accountability, Initiative, and Toughness will always guide our path. This guidance will be updated as necessary to keep our Navy on course to maintain our advantage at sea.

I am counting on you to take in all lines and get us where we need to go – and to do so at a flank bell.

M. M. Gilday
Admiral, U.S. Navy
Chief of Naval Operations