



10 January 2022

CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS

The Charge of Command

*I wish to have no connection with any ship that does not sail fast; for I intend to go in harm's way.
It seems to be a law of nature, inflexible and inexorable, that those who will not risk cannot win.
John Paul Jones, 1778.*

Congratulations on achieving the highest honor in the Navy... the opportunity to Command. Your selection is based on proven performance and the Navy's trust and confidence in your ability to develop and contribute to a winning team in accomplishing your command's mission.

Above all, Command, whether at sea or ashore, is fundamentally about preparing for and leading in combat. Never lose sight of this – seize absolute ownership of your assigned mission and all that goes into its accomplishment. When called upon to sail into harm's way, you and your team must be ready. Your command's mission is absolutely essential to the Navy's ability to fight and win. Imbue this belief in your team.

Command at times will be challenging. The challenges facing our nation and our Navy are expansive in their complexity and scale. Success demands that you hold true to the timeless elements of Command, while you continuously learn and adapt to keep pace with a rapidly changing world. You must remain accountable for both action and inaction as well as the outcomes and learning that make your team better. You are ultimately responsible for every aspect of your command.

Be relentless in building a culture of the highest character... a tough, resilient team that wins. Our nation needs and expects their Navy to remain above reproach, as a force they can admire and rely upon. Take fierce pride in this obligation. As the Commander, you are the example your team reflects. Embody humility, selflessness, and complete transparency. Acknowledge the value of every Sailor and civilian. Take care of them and their families. Embrace diversity of thought and background. Foster inclusion and connectedness. Always do the right thing, especially when it is hard. In doing these things, keep close watch on your own mental, physical, and emotional health, and the health of those you lead.

Your integrity and that of your command is the foundation of your warfighting effectiveness. Generate trust through action, both internal and external to your command, and continually assess the level of trust given to you and that you give to others. In the same way, measure the quality and transparency of your communications over these paths. Seek clarity and understanding. Trust and effective communications—absolute necessities in combat—must be developed and perfected in times of peace.

Upon this foundation, keep professional competency as the starting point of every day. We have no room for complacency. Your command must be ready, from basic fundamentals to the most challenging high-end warfighting maneuvers. Provide our adversaries no vulnerability to exploit.

Lead your team in *Get Real, Get Better* behavior and problem solving – our self-assessing, self-correcting and learning culture. Strategic competition requires every organization to improve, to thoughtfully experiment, to learn and get better every day. Do not be content with the status quo performance you inherit. Know precisely where you and your team are, identify where you need to be, and then develop and execute a plan and learning path to get there. Identify specific barriers constraining performance improvement or mission accomplishment. Elevate to your chain of command, without undue delay, the barriers you cannot resolve internally or through collaboration with your peers. Clear communication about these barriers is a critical exercise of integrity.

To those receiving requests for assistance from subordinate commands, embrace your duty to remove barriers for them. Measure yourself on creating these opportunities.

Although we are a zero-tolerance Navy on key issues, we are not a zero-defect Navy. My expectation is that you will spend your time in Command doing your absolute best and inspiring others to do the same. Be disciplined in execution and deliberate in assessing and managing risk. Embrace thoughtful risk-taking and experimentation to learn and improve. Value effort-based mistakes as an opportunity to improve, providing both subordinates and subordinate Commanders the latitude to make and learn from their decisions. All Commanders must be ready to think and lead with boldness when the communications cord is cut and they have nothing to rely on but Commander's Intent, themselves, their equipment, and their team.

You represent our very best and have earned my full faith and confidence. Embrace and enjoy the opportunity before you. Press forward with great passion and conviction. Our collective leadership and actions will set the maritime balance of power for the rest of the century.


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