

SECNAV Innovation Advisors Examine Potential for a DON Chief Data Officer

By Mr. Dan Green and LtCol Rush Filson **

Increasingly, both in the private sector and in many federal agencies, organizations are looking to establish a Chief Data Officer (CDO) to tackle their emerging data challenges. From a Department of the Navy (DON) perspective, information concepts such as Big Data, Predictive Analytics, Artificial Intelligence, and the emerging “Internet of Things” represent a complex information ecosystem that did not exist a decade ago when many DON policies were written into effect. New Office of Management & Budget (OMB) guidance (OMB Circular A-130) reflects a need, in both private and public sectors, to review assumptions about information management and evaluate the roles and responsibilities needed to tackle the growing challenges of digital asset management. In several federal agencies and some of the military Services, the CDO and Data Science Communities of Practice have already emerged to help address these strategic, operational, and tactical implementation challenges.

In response to these developments, a team of SECNAV Innovation Advisors has initiated a broad analysis of CDO functions, how they are evolving across the Federal Government, and how these functions and capabilities might be implemented within the DON. Over the next few months, this team of SECNAV Innovation Advisors will sketch out baseline criteria of CDO functions and conduct interviews of CDOs who are currently working in the DoD, federal government, and private industry. Their analysis will be mapped to baseline changes in six functional information categories – scale, scope, level of risk, degree of trust, valuation, and transformation – to determine how roles and responsibilities are currently aligned and how new approaches to digital asset management might support operational readiness, improve affordability, and facilitate better decision making.

The team of SECNAV Innovation Advisors is also investigating experimentation venues that will use test-cases to generate evidence to support any future policy revisions or organizational changes that might be recommended. The team is working with and being advised by members of the International Society of Chief Data Officers and the Federal Data Cabinet under Dr. DJ Patil, the Federal CDO. In December 2016, as part of the Center for Large Scale Data Systems “Data West” summit, at the University of California San Diego, the SECNAV Innovation Advisors team will participate with senior decision makers and thought leaders across industry, academia, and the public sector to address organizational change, business opportunities, and risks associated with the emerging information ecosystem.

For this project, the SECNAV Innovation Advisor team will work closely with the DON Chief Information Office (CIO) and Navy and Marine Corps Service component offices. Final recommendations will be submitted to SECNAV in the spring of 2017.

** = Mr. Dan Green and LtCol Rush Filson are members of the FY17 SECNAV Naval Innovation Advisory Council (NIAC), a dynamic forum for advisors to conduct research, advance problem-solving projects, and advise the Secretary of the Navy on innovation opportunities within the DON. The DON Office of Strategy and Innovation coordinates support and oversight of the NIAC. The opinions expressed here are solely those of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of the Navy, Department of Defense or the United States government. For more information, please contact DON_Innovation@navy.mil.