



THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY  
WASHINGTON DC 20350-1000

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MEMORANDUM FOR DISTRIBUTION

SUBJECT: SECNAV VECTOR 16 AGILITY IN TIME OF CRISIS

“The most predictable thing we can say about the future is that it will be unpredictable.”  
- SECNAV VECTOR 7

During my recent testimony to Congress, and in various speeches and communications I have delivered over the past several years, I have tried to make the case for a more agile naval force, defined by more agile people, to address a future that would be predominantly defined by uncertainty. I believe this uncertain future will not see a narrowing of challenges to those presented by great powers, but rather an expansion of them along a broader range, from great to small, each with varying capacities to produce disproportionate levels of disruption and destruction on society if we are unprepared.

Today we are experiencing this phenomenon in real time. All the threats we have traditionally planned for, and engaged against, over the past several decades are not the ones that present the biggest current threat. Rather, today’s threat, as a testament to the unpredictable nature of our future security, is a microscopic particle that we can’t see, but whose impact is striking at the world’s economy with the ferocity of a full-scale kinetic war. As strongly as any surprise attack could, the specter of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has changed just about everything surrounding our daily lives. These will be trying times for all of us as naval family and as a nation. But it will also demonstrate how we must continue our focus on greater agility as we fight through this crisis, and learn more about how we should prepare for the next one.

This moment also underlines why agility matters so much for the future of our integrated American naval force. We must cultivate the qualities of agility to address challenges posed by known competitors/adversaries, but especially for those threats we cannot see or ever predict. I have developed a list of these qualities. I admit there may be more, but these are good ones to think about as you consider your role today and into the future. These qualities apply to organizations and platforms, but most importantly they are PERSONAL qualities that you should cultivate in yourself and the people whom you lead:

- Velocity/Speed: Ability to think, act, move, and make good decisions faster
- Visibility/Transparency: Ability to communicate with openness, clarity, and veracity
- Adaptability: Ability to change missions, functions, and tasks rapidly

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- Collaboration: Ability to work across organizational silos and structures
- Innovation: Ability to imagine, design, iterate, and implement new solutions
- Humility: Ability to be honest about deficiencies in order to correct them
- Trust: Ability to be reliable, dependable, and build confidence
- Skepticism: Ability to think beyond the obvious; not accept things at face value

As we prepare the USNS MERCY and USNS COMFORT to deploy to two major American cities, we can see how the agile qualities listed above have contributed to our ability to respond to the nation's call. Several weeks ago, we asked the question about whether these ships, designed for dealing with combat casualties, with one currently in extended maintenance, could be used to help in this crisis. Two to three weeks from now they will be in place providing surge hospital capacity in places no one imagined they would be when those initial questions were asked. Your Navy and Marine Corps team moved with **speed** to get the ships quickly through their maintenance programs, were **transparent** with local officials about timelines, showed **adaptability** in how these ships would be used, provided **collaboration** with state and federal officials and the shipyards, used **innovation** with respect to how to staff the ships to meet the healthcare needs they would expect to see, exhibited **humility** in understanding our broad role to respond to this crisis, showed **trust** across the broad teams of people who worked to mobilize and staff the ships, and had healthy **skepticism** about what some thought could NOT be done.

As we are all realizing, and every Marine and Sailor already knows, the front lines in our quest for security can be anywhere at any time. The protection of our nation demands that we may be called into service in ways that we did not imagine the day before. It is our job to do that imagining—to be agile enough to step up whenever and wherever we are required to do so. For 245 years, the Navy and Marine Corps team has done exactly that – demonstrating the creativity, resilience, and fortitude to adapt and overcome. The crisis we face today may be indeed just a warmup for what may come next. We cannot know what that MAY be, but we have a responsibility to imagine what it COULD be—and how we as a naval force might have to step-in to mitigate it. That's how we must approach this particular crisis. Not as an aberration, but as an opportunity to adapt to the new normal of a far more unpredictable future.

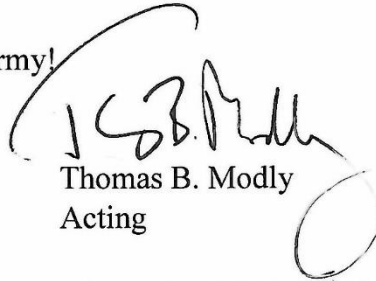
Much will be asked of us on behalf of our citizens and allies. This crisis centers around the issue of health and the economy; but it is also a military one. We must maintain our readiness. We must continue to serve with courage. We must continue to serve with honor. Our citizens hold the American Navy and Marine Corps in very high esteem. They expect great things from us. They expect our institution to perform with skill and compassion, perhaps more so than any other federal, state, or local entity engaged in this fight. This reputation is well-earned, and I know we will sustain and burnish that reputation through this crisis. Although history has thrown all of us a big curve ball, we must recognize that it always will. Just as in

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previous crises, we are being asked once again to change our individual ways of life in order to preserve the fullest potential of liberty for those around us, and those yet to come.

I know that each of you stands ready, willing, and more than capable to protect the American people. It is what we all signed up for, to serve a cause greater than ourselves, to protect our democracy and our very way of life. I could not be more proud to count myself among each of you: a Sailor, a Marine, a Department of the Navy Civilian, and an American Citizen. Together, we will get through this and emerge on the other side as a stronger and more agile Navy and Marine Corps team, and as a direct result of that, a more resilient nation.

Go Navy, and as always, Beat Army!



Thomas B. Modly  
Acting

SECNAV Vectors are released each Friday to the entire DON. Previous Vectors can be viewed <https://navylive.dodlive.mil/2020/01/02/secnav-vectors/>.

- SECNAV VECTOR 1: Priorities and Near-Term Objectives
- SECNAV VECTOR 2: Unified in Grief, Heroism, and Resolve
- SECNAV VECTOR 3: Make Ford Ready
- SECNAV VECTOR 4: December Honors and Remembrance
- SECNAV VECTOR 5: DON Business Operations Plan
- SECNAV VECTOR 6: Path to a 355 Plus Integrated Naval Force
- SECNAV VECTOR 7: Education for Seapower
- SECNAV VECTOR 8: Partners and Allies
- SECNAV VECTOR 9: Hypersonic Capabilities
- SECNAV VECTOR 10: Sexual Assault Prevention and Response
- SECNAV VECTOR 11: Naval Information Strategy
- SECNAV VECTOR 12: Future Naval Force
- SECNAV VECTOR 13: Naval Education Goals and Pillars
- SECNAV VECTOR 14: Financial Accountability
- SECNAV VECTOR 15: Force Health Protection Guidance for the Department of Navy

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