



THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY
WASHINGTON DC 20350-1000

March 27, 2020

MEMORANDUM FOR DISTRIBUTION

SUBJECT: SECNAV VECTOR 17

Although the news continues to be dominated by the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) crisis, it is important that we still engage in some of life's normal diversions. In this spirit, last week we learned that Tom Brady would be leaving the New England Patriots after two decades as their quarterback. The news did not come as a complete surprise, but it did cause a major realignment of longstanding perceptions of power in the NFL. For those of us who follow the league, it is hard to imagine the Patriots without Tom Brady. Love him or hate him, Brady has become synonymous with the brand of the team itself. When he entered the league, however, this was not the case. Brady was the 199th pick in the 6th round of the 2000 NFL draft and came to the Patriots to serve as a backup behind Drew Bledsoe, a 1st round draft pick and 3-time Pro Bowl-quality quarterback. In the second game of the 2001 season, Bledsoe sustained a concussion along with serious internal bleeding, and the Patriots fans' hopes for a playoff run and a return to the Super Bowl were seemingly dashed. Nonetheless, despite the unexpected and devastating loss of their Pro-Bowl quarterback, the team never lost sight of its ultimate purpose: WINNING.

Although Tom Brady only got his opportunity due to an unfortunate circumstance, he seized it and proceeded to lead the Patriots in that season to the first of six Super Bowl victories that the Patriots would amass over the next 20 years. He never lost the starting job. The Patriots never looked back. What we can learn from this story is that misfortune happens, even to the very best of us. Crises occur, and will continue to occur. But high performing teams are resilient and they figure out how to adjust, maintain focus on their mission, and ultimately succeed. Sometimes even the most unlikely person steps up with an idea, with inspiration, with confidence, and leads when they are needed most. In this time of national crisis, that person may be YOU.

By the time you read this message, the USNS MERCY will be nearing Los Angeles, CA, and next week, the USNS COMFORT will sail into the harbor of New York City. In coordination with the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Vice President's Coronavirus Task Force, both of these hospital ships and their medical teams will soon provide critical, compassionate care to our fellow citizens in need. Additionally, I've asked the Chief of Naval Operations and the Commandant of the Marine Corps to think creatively about how the entire Department of the Navy can further assist our civilian sisters and brothers, directly and indirectly. They (and we) need to hear your ideas, too. We have set up an email address to capture all of them – and every one of them will matter, because good ideas have no rank: DontGiveUpTheShip@navy.mil. It is time to harness the creativity and initiative of our entire Navy and Marine Corps team to help our nation through this crisis.

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Beyond your ideas, I know each of you are already acting now, in many different and important ways, whether it be leading our Sailors and Marines safely through their vital missions or attending to our school-age children now learning from home. Both are essential to our overall readiness. But it is also during trying times like these that we as an institution are sometimes tempted to place enormous energy into the tactics of the day, so much so that we might lose focus and energy in driving towards our strategic imperatives for tomorrow.

When Drew Bledsoe was injured on September 23, 2001 (the first week the NFL returned to action after the attacks of 9/11), the Patriots immediate objective was to win the next game, but their ultimate priority was to win the Super Bowl. For us today, our immediate objective must be to assist the nation, through whatever means necessary and appropriate, to defeat this virus and return to a sense of normalcy, economic growth, and prosperity. Through all this, I assure you I will continue to drive our focus on the broad institutional priorities as set forth in my first Vector to the Navy and Marine Corps team:

- Designing a Future Integrated Naval Force Structure
- Advancing Our Intellectual Capacity and Ethical Excellence
- Accelerating Digital Modernization Across the Force

These priorities were developed over the space and experience of years, not days, and build upon the activities of our entire Navy and Marine Corps team to accomplish the tenets of our National Defense Strategy. In fact, the importance of those priorities is the main reason why I named these weekly messages as “Vectors” — implying a future course and speed towards an intended objective, rather than taking a “bearing” to fix our current location, or gazing “astern” at the wake we create— a wake that only leads in the direction from where we came.

Indeed, as we protect our people, our families, and ourselves from the unusual challenges of COVID-19, we must also “keep a weather eye” on the horizon, where just ahead of us lies what can be both a bright, and unpredictable, future. There is much we can do, even when sheltered in place, to apply our personal and collective agility towards preparing for that future.

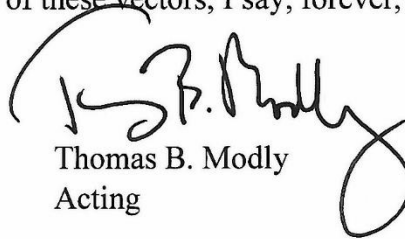
Our sacred calling is to defend our nation. Let our adversaries beware and our allies take heed: We are ready for anything. There is no doubt that America will, as we always have done, emerge stronger when this crisis finally passes. We in the naval profession have a special obligation to think around the corner of COVID-19 towards the broader challenges that we may face as this century evolves, while at the same time doing our utmost to operate safely, train effectively, and learn continuously.

I could not be more grateful to have the opportunity to serve alongside each of you, right here, right now, in the midst of a crisis that we have the opportunity, and power, to help mitigate. When the MERCY and COMFORT pull into Los Angeles and New York harbors in the coming

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days, our citizens will see YOU, their Navy and Marine Corps team, doing what it is meant to do. The COMFORT and MERCY are just a start. We can do more, and we will. For that is our ultimate purpose: to defend the nation today, and to be prepared to do so well into the future.

Go Navy and Marine Corps! Never, ever give up the ship! And to those who say I should stop saying “Beat Army” at the close of these vectors, I say, forever, 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
- SECNAV VECTOR 16: Agility in a Time of Crisis

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