



The Charge of Command



Congratulations on your selection to the most consequential and influential job in our Nation's military: Command. You have earned this position through proven performance and your future potential – and with it comes the responsibility to lead with integrity, courage, and humility. You now shoulder the burden and privilege of leading warfighters at a strategic inflection point – one that may define the future of American sea power. Your unit's combat readiness is not just preparation; it is homework for combat. Your ability to lead under pressure will determine victory if called upon. Build a warfighting culture rooted in trust, accountability, and ownership. Set a clear vision, build resilience, and ensure every Sailor understands the mission, their role in it, and the “why” behind every task.

“The excellence of our people has long been our heritage – it is my source of strength” – ADM Elmo Zumwalt. Our Navy's true asymmetric advantage is not technology – it's our Sailors. They are the lifeblood of the fleet and the decisive edge in any conflict. As Commanding Officer, you must resist the temptation of transactional leadership. Invest in your people with the same intensity you invest in operational readiness. Train them to the highest standard. Take care of their families. Hold the line on accountability. Culture isn't built overnight – it is forged through discipline, transparency, and consistency. Show ownership. Model humility. Learn fast and let your team see you doing it. Communicate clearly, often, and with purpose – so your Sailors know exactly what to do when no one is watching. Build systems that give you deep insight into how and why your unit executes its mission. A unified, high-performing command is built through trust earned in adversity and excellence demanded every day.

“It seems to be a law of nature, inflexible and inexorable, that those who will not risk cannot win” – CAPT John Paul Jones. Risk is Commander's business – and you are now an accountable risk owner. You must deliberately manage operational risk with judgment and resolve. Give clear, actionable Commander's Intent and empower your team under Mission Command principles to execute. You will face uncertainty; make balanced decisions that leverage reversibility, experience, teamwork and objectives. That's why you wear the command pin. Risk is rarely eliminated – it's transferred, and most often, downward to the deckplate. If you don't take ownership of it, someone else will – with less context and less clarity. Master your craft. Sharpen your decision-making cycles. Design repeatable processes that mitigate risk without erasing initiative. The greatest risk to any command is a zero-defect mindset – it breeds fear and paralysis. To win, you must foster a culture willing to take disciplined risk in order to execute with boldness and confidence.

“There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work, and learning from failure” – GEN Colin Powell. In combat, timing beats speed and precision beats power every time – therefore, your command must plan, execute, assess, and adapt faster than any adversary. Once you build a plan, stress it. Rehearse, test assumptions, and refine execution in

real time. When gaps are exposed, don't settle – fix them with urgency and ingenuity. Build a culture obsessed with excellence. Encourage initiative. Push curiosity and critical thinking at every level. Innovation is not a luxury; it is your competitive advantage – and in war, it's the fuel for overmatch. Build an environment where disciplined failure is a pathway to learning and growth. Challenge conventional wisdom. Our strategic competitors won't fight the way we prefer – neither should we. Hybrid warfare, asymmetric threats, and evolving technology demand leaders who contemplate and implement solutions differently. To seize the initiative in combat, you will have to hedge your advantages. Your command must be ready to out-think, out-fight, and out-adapt the enemy in complex and uncertain environments.

“When you're in command, command” – FADM Chester Nimitz. Never lose sight of the privilege and gravity of command – it is the highest honor the Navy can bestow. Command is not a position. It's an action. Therefore, wear command well. Command with purpose, with decisiveness, and with the full understanding that every success or failure rests with you. You are now the single accountable officer for everything in your unit. Own it. Lead it. Develop future leaders through mentorship, coaching, and empowerment. Pass on the values and warfighting mindset that have sustained our Navy for over 250 years. Be ready to Fight Tonight – because when the call comes, there are no second chances. You have my full trust and confidence. I am proud to serve alongside you.



D. L. CAUDLE

Admiral, U.S. Navy

34th Chief of Naval Operations

Date

I have read and understand the above letter.

Prospective Commanding Officer

Acknowledged:

Immediate Superior in Command