



Chief of Naval Operations

Next week, I hope to see you all at the Naval Flag Officer and Senior Executive Service symposium. There, we will have deeper discussions about our progress to date implementing *A Design for Maintaining Maritime Superiority*.

In preparation for that conversation, I want to spur additional reflection and introspection about what I consider to be the *Design's* most fundamental element: the core attributes. The challenges facing our Navy are growing in scope, scale, and pace. I firmly believe our continued success in meeting those challenges rests on bonds of trust and confidence – with the American people and within our own ranks.

Our Navy's core values of Honor, Courage and Commitment serve as the basis for this bond, and they define us as a profession. Our recruits are attracted to these values - they are a call to noble service to something bigger than any individual. Living in line with these values is essential to instilling trust and confidence, and to effective leadership. John Paul Jones recognized this in "The Qualifications of a Naval Officer," where he rightly noted that -- beyond seafaring and warfighting skills -- "...to be well obeyed, [an officer] must be perfectly esteemed."

My contemporary version of this truism is captured in the *Design* through four core attributes: Integrity, Accountability, Initiative and Toughness. These attributes serve as criteria by which to judge our decisions and ensure our choices reflect our values. I expect some of you will read the words above and say "I'm doing that." Others may recognize vulnerabilities in others but not themselves. If you fall into either of these camps, I urge you to step back and reconsider.


Words about values, no matter how eloquent, can only go so far. My experience is that, like so many parts of our language, these words have become overused, distorted, and diluted. Our *behavior*, as an organization and as individuals, must signal our commitment to the values we so often proclaim. As senior leaders, our personal conduct, and the example it sets, are essential to our credibility. To many inside and outside the service, the actual values of the Navy are those we senior leaders demonstrate through our behavior.

When we perform superbly, that is justifiably expected. When we misstep, it is a shocking disappointment that brings into question trust and confidence. Some of these missteps are front page news, and rightly so. Others are less visible, but no less harmful. Do we stay quiet when a peer harasses a staff member? Do we thoroughly scrub our travel plans? Do we lean forward to the full extent of our authority, even if it might generate some friction?

If we are not vigilant, the deep meaning of our values can become clouded by a sense of entitlement, personal ambition, frustration, anger, or selfishness. We may not always see the privilege of leading our Navy. We may miss the call to earn that privilege each and every day. What matters is that we live according to our values – always.

We share a professional and moral obligation to continuously examine our motivations and personal conduct, and, where required, adjust our behaviors back in line with our values. Achieving this alignment is best accomplished as a team sport. We cannot relegate this to our legal counselors. We need to help each other and hold each other accountable – this is leader business. Furthermore, we need to select future leaders who have demonstrated estimable character as well as strong operational skill.

We often look for new ways to describe our ethic; to find a more eloquent or poignant way to express our commitment to our values. But the answer is simple and active: what matters most is our behavior. It is not enough to assume we are behaving well; we must push ourselves to examine that assumption as part of our day-to-day routine. I'm interested in hearing your ideas on how to execute our duties with moral courage. And I look forward to making progress together.



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The Qualifications of a Naval Officer

"It is by no means enough that an officer of the Navy should be a capable mariner. He must be that, of course, but also a great deal more. He should be as well a gentleman of liberal education, refined manners, punctilious courtesy, and the nicest sense of personal honor.

He should be the soul of tact, patience, justice, firmness, kindness, and charity. No meritorious act of a subordinate should escape his attention or be left to pass without its reward, even if the reward is only a word of approval.

Conversely, he should not be blind to a single fault in any subordinate, though at the same time, he should be quick and unflinching to distinguish error from malice, thoughtlessness from incompetency, and well meant shortcomings from heedless or stupid blunder. In one word, every commander should keep constantly before him the great truth, that to be well obeyed, he must be perfectly esteemed."

--Compiled by Augustus C. Buell from letters written by John Paul Jones