COMMANDER'S INTENT 4.0

U.S. Submarine Force and Supporting Organizations



Warfighting, People, Safety







COMMANDER'S FORWARD

Our Undersea Force is the most lethal and capable Undersea Force in the world. We are unique within the Navy due to the unparalleled autonomy of our submarine Commanding Officers enabled by mission command and the Administrative Control (ADCON) and Operational Control (OPCON) Command and Control (C2) structure that facilitates agile, responsive, and lethal force employment across the spectrum of conflict. In our force, Commanding Officers are the center of gravity while our C2 structure enables our submarine Squadron staffs to generate highly trained, combatready submarines available to the Combatant Commander and the rapid deployment of the full Undersea Force in response to contingencies across the globe.

Within our Navy, the Undersea Force is again unique in that the administrative chain of command under Type Commanders and Submarine Group Commanders retain OPCON under either service authority or OPCON delegated to them by the Combatant Commander. Under the Theater Undersea Warfare Commander (TUSWC) construct, we lead our nation's Undersea Forces – the submarines, Unmanned Undersea Vehicles (UUV), and fixed and mobile undersea systems - in all operational aspects from force generation to high-end combat.

When the mission requires, we tactically control and employ ships and aircraft in order to conduct full spectrum, cross domain operations. Together with space, cyber, special operators, and fifth-generation aircraft, our Undersea Forces uniquely combine to provide a set of stealth options that expand the competitive battlespace and seize the initiative for commanders across the spectrum of conflict.

As introduced in SUBNOTE 1, Our Force Priorities are **Warfighting**, **People**, and **Safety** and will remain our focus.

Warfighting: Our strategic submarines are the most survivable portion of the nuclear triad and protect our nation through strategic deterrence. Our attack and guided missile submarines enable all domain maneuver warfare for the Joint Force by taking the fight to the enemy and denying them the ability to operate at sea. The Undersea Force has expanded to include undersea surveillance, unmanned vehicles (undersea and aerial), working with our brethren in maritime patrol aircraft and surface combat vessels. Maintaining undersea dominance requires our entire force to work together as one cohesive unit. Our force includes multiple organizations and agencies including operating bases, maintenance facilities, acquisition and engineering support elements all the way to Submarine Groups, Squadrons, and ultimately the submarine crews. Every day, we hold the line far away from the shores of the United States and if necessary, carry the fight to adversaries.

COMMANDER'S FORWARD

People: People are our most important asset and are the true source of our naval power. It is the people who design, repair, and operate our Undersea Force. We must foster a warfighting culture of excellence that enables every Sailor to reach his or her full potential. We count on you to remove barriers and execute to your full authority.

Safety: Safety is foundational to our culture and operations and is essential to both our warfighting and people priorities. Our proud heritage and profession of arms demands the highest of personal and professional standards. These standards allow us to operate in an unforgiving environment.

Commander's Intent 4.0 is designed to enable mission command and to coordinate subordinate and supporting commanders in achieving our desired results. In addition to this unclassified front-matter, there is a classified annex consisting of the Undersea Force campaign plan with five lines of effort providing near term direction to the Force over the next 18 months. We **must maintain a sense of urgency** in executing our plans, our adversaries are expending immense resources to erode the overmatch that we enjoy in the Undersea Domain. The five lines of effort below are aligned with the CNO's Navigation Plan (NAVPLAN) and Fleet Forces Command/ Commander, Pacific Fleet strategic plans and direct that we:

- 1. Modernize Our Strategic Deterrent
- 2. Prepare for the Fight in the "Decade of Maximum Danger"
- 3. Maintain Our Overmatch in the Undersea Domain
- 4. Evolve Our People Strategy to Sharpen Our Competitive Edge
- 5. Enhance U.S. Alliances and Partnerships

Commander's Intent 4.0 and the associated campaign plans are the foundation of how we will ensure we are ready to 'fight tonight' in the context of Strategic Competition. Together, we will remove barriers and position the force to remain the unparalleled masters of the undersea domain to deter in peace and dominate in war. This is who we are and what we must do.

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Situation

Strategic Competition

"We face a world of rising nationalism...[a] growing rivalry with China, Russia, and other authoritarian states." We are in a heated competition with adversaries who do not share our values, do not respect national sovereignty, and are actively working to undermine the international rule of law that we have safeguarded since 1945.

While conflict is not a foregone conclusion, we are preparing for war.

We view the probability of great power conflict as the highest it has been in several decades which requires a mindset shift from us all. Our Undersea Force must be ready to go to war at all times. This perspective should govern all we do from our submarines operating forward to those in long term maintenance availabilities fighting their way back to sea.





Our Strategic Competitors

China

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The People's Republic of China (PRC) leverages its military, conducts influence operations, and flexes its economic strength to coerce neighboring countries and to change the global order to its advantage. The PRC has invested heavily in developing modern conventional armed forces to alter the balance of military power with the United States. They now maintain the largest navy in the world while at the same time executing a strategic breakout with its expanding nuclear forces.



Russia

Russia continues to modernize its force with a focus on its nuclear and undersea capabilities. With these forces, Russia "seeks to weaken or subvert Western security structures in Europe and the Middle East to advance Moscow's strategic objectives at the expense of U.S. national interests, while avoiding direct confrontation with the United States. As the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review states, "Even more troubling has been Russia's adoption of military strategies and capabilities that rely on nuclear escalation for their success."



Undersea Force Mission

Our Undersea Force will remain the dominant force in the Undersea Domain, ready to conduct prompt and persistent combat operations. This includes strategic deterrence, Indications and Warning (I&W), Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW), Surface Warfare (SUW), precision strike, mining, Subsea and Seabed Warfare (SSW), and enabling Special Operations Forces (SOF). We leverage our asymmetric advantages to deter war and, if deterrence fails, to dominate the adversary. The nation depends on us to be ready, agile, and the embodiment of our warfighting ethos.



An MK 48 inert training torpedo is loaded aboard the Virginia-class submarine USS California (SSN 781).

Undersea Force Ethos

We are the Apex Predators.

We fear no force and no one. In the Maritime Domain, we reside at the top of the food chain in any conflict on or under the sea. We bring the fight to the enemy and will allow him no sanctuary.

We are Bold and Lethal.

Our unrelenting commitment to excellence as ardent, adaptable, and analytical mariners enables us to deliver unquestionable combat power to deter our adversaries or to swiftly defeat them, should deterrence fail.

We are Ready and Agile.

A dominant global Undersea Force, we are ready to "fight tonight" to defend freedom. Readiness at this level requires efficient and effective time phasing of precious resources to our prioritized missions and tasks.

We are Committed Professionals.

We are accountable to each other and selflessly embrace the responsibility to defend our Nation and our allies and partners. We are proud to be elite members of the profession of arms.

We are a Team.

Every Sailor is a vital part of a crew, team, or staff that supports our mission, without exception. Our strength comes from trust – trust in our leaders, trust in our shipmates and team, and trust in our own expertise, judgment, and skill.

We are Uncompromising in our Values and Mindful of our Heritage.

We uphold the Navy core values of honor, courage, and commitment through the integrity of our actions. We execute those values with grit, tenacity, and innovation.

Concept of Operations

To accomplish our mission, we will use the following concepts of operations to inform how we intend to fight as an Undersea Force.

Enhance Strategic Deterrence.

We will continue to maintain a credible nuclear deterrent through our SSBN force, which provides the most survivable leg of our strategic deterrent triad and carries about 70% of the nation's accountable nuclear warheads. Strategic deterrence, however, includes far more than nuclear deterrence. During periods of tension, we will utilize the unique capabilities of the Undersea Force, including precision strike, subsea seabed warfare, and SOF delivery, to provide flexible deterrent options to the Combatant Commander.

Integrate Combat Power with the Joint Force.

Major combat operations against a peer competitor will be a Joint fight. Our submarines will be expected to closely coordinate operations and integrate with Navy and Joint partners, which might include space, cyber, SOF, and air forces. While at the same time, we must be ready to operate alone far forward with little communications in the adversary's weapons engagement zone relying on our own organic sensors and weapons battery. In some cases, we will use the unique capabilities of the Undersea Force to enable other Joint Forces. Examples include delivering SOF ashore or destroying integrated air defense systems to enable air strikes. In other cases, we will catalyze and multiply Joint capabilities to enable effects uniquely delivered by the Undersea Force.

Enable All-Domain Maneuver Warfare.

We expect major combat operations to be an away game where we will enable maneuver of the Joint Force through the battlespace. Our adversaries understand this and are investing in weapons and platforms to deny us access and to inhibit our ability to maneuver in that battlespace. We expect the Submarine Force, with its unique combination of stealth and endurance, to operate inside of the adversary's defensive perimeter and to deliver effects – including precision strike, ASW, SUW, seabed warfare, mining, and SOF delivery – that will counter the adversary's anti-access operations and enable all domain maneuver warfare required by the Joint Force to achieve a winning strategy.



An MV-22B Osprey conducts a vertical replenishment at-sea with the Ohio-class ballistic-missle submarine USS Henry M. Jackson (SSBN 730)



The SEAL Delivery Vehicle (SDV) Mk 8 seen above is a "wet" swimmer delivery vehicle.

The Undersea Force Campaign Plan

To make the Force more lethal, persistent, and ready for high-end combat, we have developed a campaign plan with five lines of effort that direct operations, activities, and investments for the Force to execute over the next 18 months. These lines of effort are summarized below:

1. Modernize Our Strategic Deterrent.

Our SSBN Force is approaching a period of transition as we begin construction and introduction of COLUMBIA which will operate until 2084. The CNO's NAVPLAN states "Our ballistic missile submarines provide an assured response to any strategic nuclear attack on the United States. OHIO-class boats are nearing the end of four decades of service and must be replaced, making the COLUMBIA-class program our top acquisition priority" While this transition is in progress, we must continue to support operating OHIO to 2042, support efforts to reduce risk in COLUMBIA construction and incorporation in the fleet, invest in the infrastructure to enable operating COLUMBIA to 2084, and recapitalize our nuclear command, control, and communication capabilities to ensure our deterrent is resilient and credible.

2. Prepare for the Fight in the "Decade of Maximum Danger".

Strategists have converged on the recognition that we are in the "Decade of Maximum Danger" vis-à-vis China and the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLA(N)). In this period, the CNO has emphasized "Sea control and sea denial from beneath the seas is one of our core advantages – we will not yield any ground to our competitors." China has fielded the largest Navy in the world, guaranteeing its numerical advantage in the South China Sea and East China Sea. Its surface fleet and undersea force are rapidly improving their capability. We will intensify our efforts to posture our Undersea Force to deter the PLA(N) threat and if necessary defeat their efforts in the maritime domain through enhanced presence and demonstrations of credible combat power in and from the undersea domain.

3. Maintain Our Overmatch in the Undersea Domain.

The PLA(N) and the Russian Federation Navy recognize our advantages in the undersea domain and are diligently working to negate the advantage we currently enjoy. In the past three years, we have accelerated our tactical development, inaugurated the premier theater anti-submarine warfare exercise in BLACK WIDOW and introduced subsea seabed warfare (SSW) to the force. We will continue the momentum as we further experiment with anti-surface warfare from the undersea and SSW and lay the ground work for expanding our mining capability. We will support the continued evolution of the VIRGINA Class with the construction of Block V and the VIRGINIA Payload Module and the development of the SSN(X) Next-Generation Attack Submarine.



Sailors aboard the Los Angeles-class submarine USS Montpelier (SSN 765) conduct an expeditionary ordnance on-load in Souda Bay, Greece, exercising the capability to load the MK 67 submarine launched mobile mine.

4. Evolve Our People Strategy to Sharpen Our Competitive Edge.

We are endowed with the best that this nation has to offer. The CNO's NAVPLAN challenges us to be "a dominant naval force that can outthink and outfight any adversary. Our sailors will remain the best trained and educated force in the world. We will cultivate a culture of warfighting excellence rooted in our core values." We must evolve our People Strategy to continue to access, develop, train, and retain the talent within the Force. Our people are our biggest competitive edge against our strategic competitors.

5. Enhance U.S. Alliances and Partnerships.

Our Undersea Force relies on our allies and partners. The CNO states in the NAVPLAN that "our capacity expands when we sail in company with like-minded navies across the globe. America never fights alone, and we are far stronger when we stand alongside our allies and partners to uphold free and open conditions at sea." We will work to grow and mature these partnerships and improve our allies' capabilities in order to multiply our combined lethality across the spectrum of conflict. Our campaign is shaped by the overall Navy effort under Navy Guidance for Building Allies and Partners to prioritize engagement with the major undersea powers of the United Kingdom, France, Australia, Japan, and India while maintaining strong relationships with our other undersea partners across the globe.



Partner nation's flags fly over ice camp Queenfish during Ice Exercise 2022.

Desired End State

Our ships and crews are prepared for conflict.

Our ships and equipment are materially ready.

Our crews understand the adversary, the environment, their mission, and the tactics and operations necessary to carry it out.

Our crews are mentally ready for prompt and sustained combat operations.

We stand ready to integrate with the larger Joint Force, but are as equally comfortable going it alone in taking the fight to the enemy.

We are the most lethal Undersea Force in the world.

We are the APEX PREDATORS of the high seas!



Commander's Guidance to the Commanding Officer

As Commanding Officer, your primary responsibility is to win in combat. Your effectiveness will be judged through the lens of how well you prepare your submarine and your crew for combat, how well you develop your Officers and enlisted Sailors to become future Submarine Force leaders, and the manner in which you relentlessly achieve these objectives.

Prepare Yourself and Your Officers for War

Prioritize preparing your wardroom for major combat operations. This is the most important thing that you do. It encompasses the tactical development of yourself and your officers to fight your ship at sea today and the long-term development of your officers for command at sea. Relentlessly pursue a course of classroom and hands-on training and a schedule of realistic combat exercises to develop the foundational tactical skills to fight your ship, and to build the experience and sound judgment required to win. Foster a culture of warfighting leadership and excellence in your wardroom. Mentor your officers, challenge them with increasing levels of responsibility, and focus their efforts on readying the ship for combat. Instill a sense of pride to serve in the profession of arms.

Prepare Your Crew for War

Our ability to achieve success as an Undersea Force hinges on your ability to prepare your crew for the full spectrum of undersea operations up to and including major combat operations. Leverage your wardroom, Chief of the Boat, and Chief Petty Officer Quarters to develop and maintain the highest standards of individual mastery and team performance across the full spectrum of submarine operations. Train and exercise your crew in the ability to fight the ship in intensive, realistic combat scenarios, and to repair the ship without external assistance when required. Combat will likely look far different from what we expect – so train your crew to adapt, responsively plan, and execute with confidence in dynamic and degraded conditions. Winning at major combat operations is your primary objective, and you must take calculated risks and operate with a sense of urgency to be ready. Your crew must be tough.

Prepare Your Ship for War

We have the finest submarines in the world, but to compete and win against near peer adversaries and in high-end combat operations today, and to ensure these submarines are combat capable throughout their design life, you must continuously pursue the highest standards of cleanliness, preservation, and material readiness to ensure the highest level of reliability, redundancy, and full-combat capability. Establish and maintain operative programs and rigorous assessment practices in material management, preventive maintenance, supply management and cleanliness, preservation, and stowage to achieve these high standards. Finally, to develop a full understanding of your ship's combat capabilities, you are expected to regularly exercise the ship to the limits of the performance envelope.

Wear Command Well

Make the allure of serving as Commanding Officer so great that all of your officers strive to achieve the pinnacle of command themselves. Your development and retention of great officers is a direct representation of your leadership and a key contributor to the future success of the Submarine Force. This is best accomplished through demonstrating your consistent professionalism, treating your crew with dignity and respect, advancing your own level of knowledge to the highest state of mastery, developing sound and effective decision-making processes, and enjoying your job with passion and flair.

Lead, Fight, and Win

When we enter battle, we will very likely not have a superior number of ships, and the quality of our adversaries' platforms and capabilities will be daunting. We will maintain our combat overmatch and prevail in battle through your leadership of our officers and the warfighting mastery and teamwork of our Sailors. Lead your ship well, innovate, adapt, and make command decisions that exercise the full extent of the authority vested in you. You're in command – so, Command.



Commander's Guidance to the Chief of the Boat

You are the linchpin that enables your ship's success. Together with the Commanding Officer and Executive Officer, you must continually improve the readiness of your crew and families, as well as the ship's material condition. Many problems can be avoided by simply establishing the proper standards and culture at all levels. You set the standard for personal and professional conduct. Always remember you are the Chief of the Boat on a warship, and your mission is to prepare for and win wars. Ensure your Sailors realize the importance of their jobs and how critical they are to protecting our national interests. While there is an extensive Command Master Chief network to support you, never forget your only chain of command is through your Commanding Officer.

As the Commanding Officer's right hand, you must provide sage counsel, forceful backup, and when appropriate, a dissenting viewpoint. While collaborating with the Squadron Command Master Chief for best practices and advice, your actions must be in line to support your Commanding Officer's vision and policies.

Train, Mentor, and Develop Your Chief Petty Officers

Push your Chiefs beyond their comfort zone. Demand they track their Sailors personal and professional development and own planning, execution and risk mitigation in their area of expertise. Build capacity over time so it is available when you need it. As you train your Chiefs, you must constructively correct what is wrong, but also reinforce what is right. You must lead and empower your Chiefs to focus their cohesion as a Chief's Quarters outward throughout the command. Chiefs must be visible and audible force multipliers on the deck plates; Chiefs make the ship's routine run efficiently.



Work with the Department Heads

Along with the Executive Officer, you are in a unique position to guide the efficient and effective operations of the ship. Just as we rely on our Chiefs to train Junior Officers, we rely on your experience and leadership to help train and mentor the Department Heads.

Establish a Healthy Culture of Training

Given your submarine's primary purpose is to fight and win wars, incorporate warfighting in as many training venues as possible. Each member of the crew must instinctively know how to react to a multitude of situations. They only develop this reflex through continuing training and practice. Develop a healthy culture of training, and ensure your limited training time is used to maximum effectiveness. If an important event is occurring, involve yourself where you can best add value. The ship control and damage control teams are your personal responsibility.

Carry out Proactive Leadership

You have a small but highly trained and elite crew. Ensure you and your Chiefs know your Sailors intimately and understand their personal problems and what motivates them. Ensure your Sailors understand how critical they are to ship safety and mission accomplishment. Train your Sailors to be ready for combat. Make sure they understand everything they do, from basic sanitation to major maintenance contributes to our warfighting readiness. Our ability to operate and win hinges on every Sailor doing their job every day.

You are the Senior Deck Plate Leader

Be present on the deck plates, talk to Sailors, and answer their questions. Ensure Sailors' time is not being wasted. Ensure the crew understands the Command Vision and the overarching purpose driving the schedule and command activities.

Commander's Guidance to the Submarine Group and Squadron Commanders

As Commanders of Undersea Force Groups or Squadrons, your primary responsibility is to develop your subordinate commanders, generate combat readiness, and ensure your ships win in combat. All of your operational, material, personnel, training, and administrative efforts should build toward supporting our Force in order to destroy the enemy. I provide the guidance below to focus your efforts.

Prepare Your Commanding Officers for War

As your staffs and teams prepare the ships and crews, you must personally support and mentor their respective Commanding Officers. Guide the Commanding Officers, provide them feedback based on your expertise and experience, and make your standards known. Respect their authority and responsibility. Holding your Commanding Officers accountable without undercutting them will be one of the most challenging aspects of your duties. That respect is the cornerstone of their ability—and that of the entire Undersea Force—to prevail in highend conflict and challenging peacetime operations. It forms the basis of the trust we have in our decentralized, autonomous command at-sea structure, a decisive edge we hold over our adversaries. Work with your Commanding Officers to develop and retain their top officers and Sailors, realizing that our crews' superior training, professionalism, and passion are primary factors ensuring our combat overmatch.



Support the Warfighter

You are vitally important in preparing our teams for combat—arm them for the high-end fight with every ounce of your effort. You must support, challenge, and hold the standard as those crews prepare for war, remembering that you are the supporting command and they are the supported command. Know that their combat success is your success and their failure is your failure. Enable their preparations by reducing complexity, breaking down barriers and removing distractions—our teams are elite and rely heavily upon focused individual and team performance. Within our Force, only our various combat units can deliver lethal effects in support of the Joint Force; as the supporting commanders, you enable and empower that lethality. Therefore, where able, reduce cumbersome practices, eliminate inefficient policies, and shift administrative burdens to supporting commands.



Train to Win

As a Group or Squadron Commander, you will not directly engage the enemy in battle. However, your indirect and preparatory efforts, successes, and shortcomings today will directly affect the outcome of those battles tomorrow. Put your commands on a wartime footing and do everything possible to prepare our Force for the high-end fight. Challenge your Commanding Officers, teach them how to fight, and constantly remind them of our rich warfighting heritage and culture of excellence.

Commander's Guidance to the Theater Undersea Warfare Commander

Master Undersea Warfare (USW)

As a TUSWC, your Joint Force Maritime Component Commander (JFMCC) or Fleet Commander has charged you with the responsibility to command an integrated, cross domain, full spectrum set of forces designed to operate in and through the undersea domain. In support of Combatant Commander objectives, you are to be ready to dominate the undersea domain by denying our adversaries freedom of maneuver, providing flexible deterrent options to expand the competitive battlespace, and, if deterrence fails, to deliver violence to our adversaries with lethal fires using the full suite of non-kinetic and kinetic capabilities at your disposal to decisively seize the initiative and win.

Prepare for War

Plan for conflict with the following factors in mind:

- Command and Control (C2) structures and methods must evolve as a conflict evolves
- Understand, contribute, and seamlessly integrate into maritime and Joint Fires processes
- Demand and utilize a reliable and persistent undersea Common Operational Picture (COP) that enables your decisions and improves situational awareness for all supporting/supported Commanders
- Posture and optimize your USW force laydown and flow that anticipates and flanks the expected adversary courses of action
- Require supporting intelligence collection plans and priorities to enhance your operational and tactical decision-making and battle rhythm events
- Protect and sustain your force through efficient and risk managed logistics plans

• Provide clear commander's intent designed to enable and leverage Mission Command

- Operational excellence requires practice:
 - o Conduct realistic mission rehearsals
 - o Demand reality and friction in exercises
 - o Validate sustainment and C3 assumptions
 - o Include allies and partners
 - o Assess USW doctrine and tactics and provide feedback



Project Confidence

Reliably execute your day-to-day missions to ensure that there is no doubt in our adversaries' minds that we have the credibility, capability, and capacity to dominate the undersea domain. Boldly employ your team and assigned forces to:

• Execute consistent, timely, and risk-informed USW operations

• Study adversary forces to understand their patterns of life, capabilities, and tactics

• Build synergy and proficiency between your team and supporting/supported commanders to establish trust with relationships that can work effectively across seams in conflict

• Expand and improve interoperability with USW capable allies and partners

Advance the Art of USW

Wherever possible, seek opportunities to improve understanding of USW concepts across the Navy and the Joint Force. Advancing USW concepts will naturally generate competing priorities between immediate operational needs and more distant improvement goals. You must use your experience to choose the right times to take near term tactical risk in order to mitigate longer term operational or strategic risk. Focus on:

- Eliminate seams by leveraging and coordinating with peer Task Force/Group Commanders
- Enhance capacity, expertise, and alignment of your Reserve Component
- Develop the capability, expertise, and organizational understanding to improve mining doctrine, tactics, and procedures with Naval and Joint partners
- Build concepts of operations and employment to utilize Unmanned Undersea Vehicles more effectively across the spectrum of conflict
- Plug into, exploit, and contribute to all systems and networks designed to provide the undersea COP

• Champion the TUSWC concept by leading the education and training of senior leaders in the Navy and Joint Force





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