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Jason A. Vogt Captain
U.S. Navy

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REVISITING THE NAVY'S MORAL COMPASS

Has Commanding Officer Conduct Improved?

Captain Jason A. Vogt, U.S. Navy

Nobody trusts or has confidence in leaders who believe they cannot be held accountable for what they do.

ADMIRAL JOHN C. HARVEY, JR., U.S. NAVY

The U.S. Navy continues to suffer from poor decision making among a small number of commanding officers (COs), as demonstrated by continued headlines: “Squadron Commander Relieved of Duty after Alleged Drunk Driving Incident”;¹ “Amphib [amphibious force] CO Fired, Source Says Linked to Alleged Bribery Scheme”;² “Sub Commander Relieved of Duty after Woman Alleges He Faked Death to End Affair”;³ “Navy Investigates ex-Blue Angels Commander after Complaint He Allowed Sexual Harassment”;⁴ and “Navy Skipper Abdicated Command.”⁵ Since the publication in these pages in 2012 of Captain Mark F. Light’s “The Navy’s Moral Compass,” individual cases of Navy commanding officers making poor decisions of such kinds have continued to trouble Navy leadership.⁶ Considering that more than 2,350 Navy billets are designated as command positions, the infrequency of such events reflects the dedication of most commanding officers.⁷ In fact, as Vice Admiral Thomas Copeman, addressing the specifics of a misconduct event as Commander, Naval Surface Force, U.S.

Pacific Fleet, wrote in 2014, “In my experience [the violations] are beyond rare; they are . . . wholly unrepresentative of the supremely talented men and women filling positions of leadership.”⁸

While it involves overall a statistically low percentage of commanding officers, continued misbehavior reinforces Captain Light’s assessment that it is a potential integrity issue for the Navy. In the three years since the original article, substantial debate has occurred, and corrective actions have been taken by the Navy. Is it enough? Is it even

Captain Vogt is a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy and a career Surface Warfare Officer. An Anti-Submarine Warfare Specialty Career Path Officer, he was commanding officer of Naval Ocean Processing Facility, Whidbey Island, Washington. He is a graduate of the Naval Postgraduate School, in Monterey, California; the Naval War College (Command and Staff), in Newport, Rhode Island; and of the Army War College, in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. He currently serves on the staff of the U.S. Fifth Fleet at the headquarters, Commander, Naval Forces Central Command, in Bahrain.

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moving in the right direction? This article reviews Captain Light's findings and updates his analysis with subsequent data; explains and assesses actions taken by Navy leadership since 2011 to improve the quality of commanding officers; and explores additional variables in today's debate on commanding officer behavior. Finally, the article presents recommendations to reduce future personal indiscretions by commanding officers.

THE MORAL COMPASS AND INSPECTOR GENERAL'S REPORT 2010
"The Navy's Moral Compass" reviewed and analyzed data provided by the Career Progression Division of the Naval Personnel Command (NPC) on CO "detachments for cause" (DFCs) from 1999 through 2010.⁹ These data sorted firings into two broad categories (as resulting from professional or personal-conduct reasons), then broke down the latter by community (air, surface, submarine, etc.), rank, and duty type. Captain Light academically analyzed that material and concluded that the Navy had to accomplish three tasks to elevate the quality of the commanding officer corps and the character of naval leadership.¹⁰

First, Navy leadership had to establish a sense of urgency, not just to deal with issues quickly (and publicly, to maintain transparency), but also to effect change that would preclude unscrupulous actions in the first place. Second, he argued, the Navy needed to set an ethical and moral standard (preferably in writing, as the Army did in *Army: Profession of Arms* and the *Army Operating Concept* of 2010) to help create a shift in the Navy mind-set and culture as a whole.¹¹ Finally, the Navy had to improve the metrics, specifically the documentation, in periodic evaluations under the Bureau of Personnel's Fitness Report and Counseling Record, of potential moral shortcomings. Captain Light concluded with three recommendations, first that Navy leadership elevate the priority of ethical behavior, establishing a central database of reliefs of COs owing to personal or professional failures to facilitate tracking and analysis. Additionally, he urged them to undertake a campaign to set standards of integrity and honorable behavior. Lastly, he argued, the officer fitness report ought to be modified in format and concept to address character and integrity specifically.¹²

Concurrently with the original publication of "The Navy's Moral Compass," the Navy Inspector General (IG) released a study on reliefs of commanding officers for cause.¹³ Focusing on firings between 1 January 2005 and 30 June 2010, the report determined the Navy's overall commanding officer DFC firing rate to be low—approximately 1 percent per year, with a small variance from year to year. It saw no correlation between CO DFCs and career paths, personality traits, accession sources, time in command, or year groups; however, it noted a preponderance of Navy-wide CO reliefs for personal misconduct.¹⁴ In personal misconduct instances, it appears, fired COs either lacked the insight into their own motives

and weaknesses that might have prevented unacceptable behavior or felt they had the power to conceal the misconduct (the “Bathsheba Syndrome”).¹⁵ Furthermore, the study had found that implementation of four recommendations of a 2004 Navy Inspector General DFC study had had no discernible impact on the DFC rate (though the recommendations themselves were valid and represented a solid foundation for long-term reduction).¹⁶ The 2010 report concluded with three further recommendations. The first was to establish an officer leadership training continuum from accession through major command, a continuum under a single “owner,” to provide consistency in curriculum development and execution. Second, improved oversight by immediate superiors in command (ISICs) would better identify potential or ongoing issues earlier. Third, it recommended that the Navy enforce existing requirements for Command Climate Assessments and their executive summaries.¹⁷

ACTIONS AND REACTIONS

Whether in response to the two 2010 publications or, as a matter of coincidence, to continued (and sometimes very public) CO failures, Navy leadership began taking steps in early 2011 to address the trend. Admiral John C. Harvey, Jr., Commander, Fleet Forces Command, recognized that the majority of detachments for cause of COs during his tenure had been for personal misconduct, a fact that he confronted in a memorandum to his subordinates and through his official Navy blog.¹⁸ This public acknowledgment was the first of several initiatives by senior Navy officials to instill more honor and integrity in the position of commanding officer.

The “Charge of Command”

By June 2011 Admiral Gary Roughead, then Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), distributed a “Charge of Command”—a memorandum notifying current and prospective commanding officers of his expectation that each of them would meet the highest standards of personal and professional conduct while in command.¹⁹ Roughead’s memo addressed three essential principles he, as CNO, considered to constitute the heart and soul of command: authority, responsibility, and accountability. His document tied these principles both to the tradition of naval command and to Title 10 of the U.S. Code, which speaks to the standards of conduct by individuals in command.²⁰ His successor, Admiral Jonathan W. Greenert, reissued and reinforced the Charge of Command, requiring serving and prospective commanding officers not only to review the memorandum but to sign it with their immediate superiors as a compact between Navy leadership and Navy commanders and commanding officers.²¹ This step created not only a counseling opportunity and mentoring tool but also a contract between the Navy and its commanding officers regarding personal conduct.

The Command Qualification Program

Admiral Greenert further codified the process of setting standards and identifying future commanding officers by introducing a Command Qualification Program.²² Released in June 2012 with an implementation deadline of 1 September 2012, the governing instruction plainly set out policy, procedures, and basic, minimum standards for the qualifying and screening of naval officers for command. Until then individual communities had determined for themselves how to go about selecting their future commanding officers. This autonomy had resulted in sometimes widely varying criteria. Now, for the first time, the Navy applied minimum standards across all officer “designators” (e.g., unrestricted line, Supply Corps) and required, among other things, that potential commanding officers be screened by an administrative board. In support of the Command Qualification Program, the Command Leadership School’s Command Course, required for prospective commanding officers, instituted a written test covering tenets of leadership, duties and responsibilities of commanding officers, and authorities as laid down in U.S. Navy Regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice.²³

Admiral Greenert further approved a Navy Leader Development Strategy, to promote leader character development, emphasize ethics, and reinforce the service’s “core values.” The strategy called for a career-long continuum to develop leaders and for a focus on character development to help young officers prepare for command.²⁴ The strategy led to the evolution of the Command Leadership School into the Naval Leadership and Ethics Center (NLEC).²⁵ Aligned with the Naval War College, in Newport, Rhode Island, NLEC now develops curriculum and performs assessment to instill the tenets of ethical leadership throughout the Navy; to develop and guide leaders with a strong sense of responsibility, authority, and accountability; and to impart commitment to the Navy’s core values and ethos to sailors.²⁶ Vice Admiral Walter E. “Ted” Carter, Jr., now superintendent of the U.S. Naval Academy but at the time a rear admiral and President of the Naval War College, described the establishment of NLEC as “an opportunity to take a more proactive approach in improving a culture of character development in conjunction with continued command leader education” with a goal of “improved leader development.”²⁷ With a consistent qualification program and a focus at NLEC on ethical and character expectations, clear standards and expectations are now set for current and future commanding officers.

Command Climate Assessments

Recent events have brought renewed rigor to the Defense and Navy Departments’ Equal Opportunity programs, specifically regarding race, gender, and sexual orientation and addressing issues ranging from hazing to harassment, assault, and fraternization. One measure of the program’s effectiveness is the Command Climate Assessment, a survey that should occur within ninety days after a new

CO assumes command, with annual follow-up assessments during the command tour.²⁸ The Navy's use of the Command Climate Assessment to support its equal opportunity program goes back many years, with little change in responsibilities defined for the ISIC and commanding officer.²⁹ Unfortunately, over the years many commands did not fully execute the program, typically using the results largely for "internal consumption" and not making a priority to forward results to ISICs. This resulted in inconsistent application of lessons learned. Two developments have refocused the Equal Opportunity program and renewed interest in the Command Climate Assessment: the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" and increased scrutiny on the military's Sexual Assault Prevention & Response program. These issues have made the Command Climate Assessment a useful tool both within the unit and as a measure of that unit up the chain of command.

While the Command Climate Assessment cannot alone identify CO wrongdoing or personal misconduct, it can warn the ISIC to pay close attention to individual commanding officers who may need assistance, guidance, or stricter oversight. Such thoroughness by the ISIC would match the 2010 Navy Inspector General's recommendation that existing requirements for Command Climate Assessments be enforced.³⁰ Unfortunately, for a period after publication of the report there were no assessments at all; contractual issues with the company responsible for maintaining the servers involved prevented surveys for approximately six months in late 2012 and early 2013.³¹ With the resumption of surveys has come renewed Navy leadership emphasis: commands now must use a "triangulation" method, utilizing multiple sources of information (e.g., the surveys themselves, records reviews, and focus groups, interviews, and observations by command assessment teams).³² Renewed emphasis on ISIC involvement, to include follow-up reports on actions taken in response to assessments, should make the Command Climate Assessment a more useful tool in the future.

Reactions and Response

A consequence of the increasing importance of social media and "viral" networks is nearly immediate discussion of changes or potential changes in the way business is conducted. This was the case with the Charge of Command; feedback varied from strong support to outright aversion. The Association of the United States Navy was quick to announce support: "Admiral Gary Roughead's legacy to the nation will be an inspiration to the officers and leaders that will follow him."³³ Some blogs condemned the document, one calling the Charge of Command "a pathetic response to the real problem we have with COs being fired. Only a fonctionnaire [*sic*] thinks that a bit of paper can substitute for solid leadership and a culture of honor and integrity—but that is the decision that has been made."³⁴ Military-interest publications such as *Navy Times* were quick to note each step to improve leadership, with requisite editorial comment. Meanwhile, each CO firing

has continued to be a “front page” headline. Websites like SailorBob.com, a U.S. Naval Institute–sponsored professional forum for Surface Warfare Officers, now offer informal environments where members can discuss and argue about the directions taken by Navy leadership, debate the conclusions of various studies, and dissect each firing event.³⁵ In this and other, similar forums hosted by naval warfare communities, virtual peer pressure offers an additional deterrent to misconduct while individual events and issues are deliberated. However, debate and opinion pieces do not sufficiently measure success. Continued analysis of commanding officer firings will be necessary to determine whether the adjustments that have been made are meaningful.

2011–2013 DATA AND TREND ANALYSIS

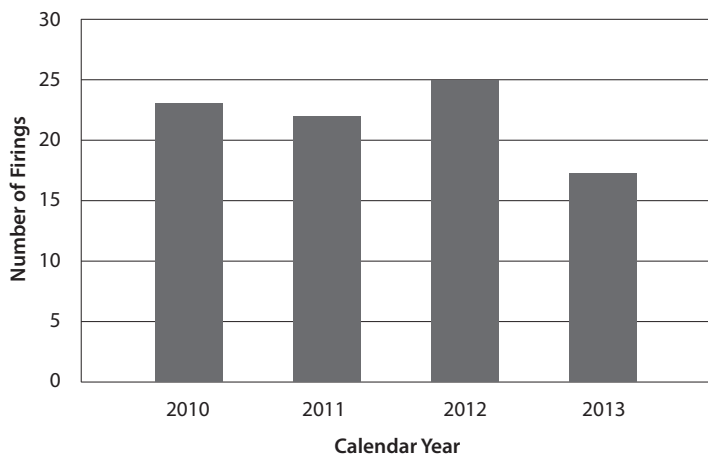
The intention for this article was to update Captain Light’s data directly, by requesting DFC data for 2011 through 2013 from the source he used, the Career Progression Division of the Naval Personnel Command. However, owing to ongoing official investigations and the ever-increasing scrutiny of CO firings, the data were not forthcoming. But comparable statistics can be collected from other sources, including the Freedom of Information Act. Moreover, as the topic of COs being removed from command has high visibility, firing events have been documented by not only *Navy Times* but numerous websites, chat rooms, and blogs.³⁶

However, because not all firings result in formal detachments for cause, these data would be likely to identify more firings than are officially documented by the Navy, to which Captain Light’s work confined itself.³⁷ It being understood that this difference in data sources leaves room for challenge, this research attempted to maintain consistency by retaining previously determined definitions and by considering all firings as potential DFCs. A list of fired commanding officers published by *Navy Times*, the most public data for 2011–13, was used as the baseline.³⁸ A known disparity exists in data sets (for example, *Navy Times* reports seventeen firings for 2010, NPC three), but to lessen its impact the analysis focused less on statistical specifics than on apparent trends potentially linked to Navy actions.³⁹

Figure 1 presents the total number of firings from 2010 through 2013. Firings occurring in 2010 were addressed in Captain Light’s article; the 2010 data are provided here only as a starting point. This analysis focuses on firings occurring after the publication of the Charge of Command.

Using the definition of personal misconduct in the 2010 Inspector General report and previously established categories, removals were sorted by cause as “personal,” “professional,” or “unknown.”⁴⁰ To make more specific the general caveats noted above, when NPC officially determines whether each removal in this

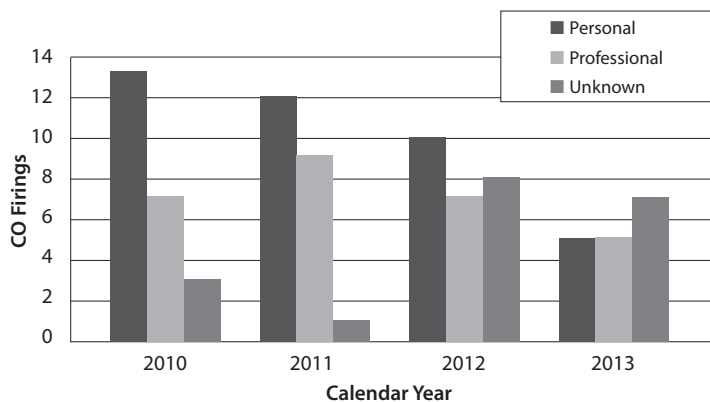
FIGURE 1
TOTAL COMMANDING OFFICERS FIRED



data set is a detachment for cause, several, those not found to be DFCs, may be removed. Additionally, when all now-pending Freedom of Information Act requests are resolved, a number will likely move from “unknown” to another category. Figure 2 breaks down firings for personal, professional, and unknown (or unpublished) reasons. It can be seen that the number of “unknowns” has increased in recent years. This is the result of a lack of detail provided in reasons for firing, often simply “loss of confidence [i.e., on the part of a superior] in ability to command.” It might be assumed that many firings categorized as “unknown” for lack of published circumstances were actually for professional reasons, for which the “sensational” personal failings that might produce detailed media accounts would be absent. However, for this analysis, cases without those details remain “unknown.”

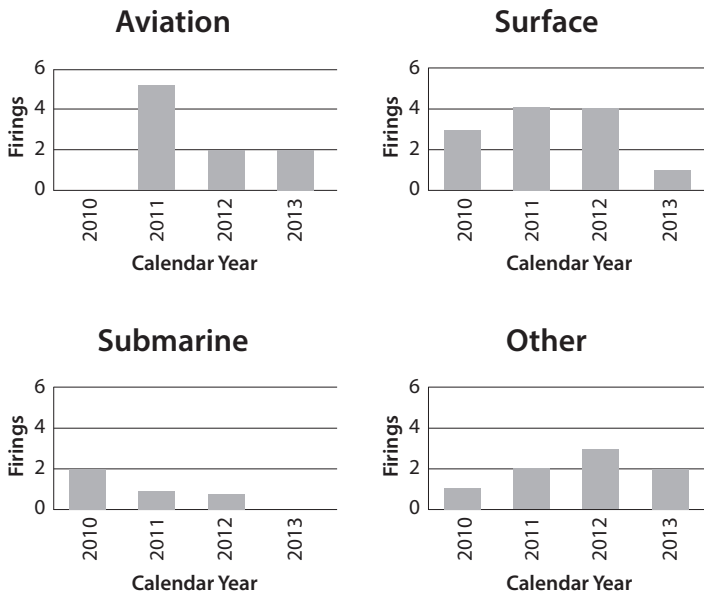
Concentrating only on the firings for reasons identified as personal, the data trend downward from a high of thirteen in 2010 to only five in 2013. Six of the twelve firings during 2011 occurred after Admiral Roughead’s Charge of Command memorandum was published. Three of the six firings occurred within a month of publication, leaving room for debate whether offending actions had

FIGURE 2
FIHING BY TYPE: PERSONAL, PROFESSIONAL, UNKNOWN



occurred before the Charge of Command was circulated. Breaking the data down by community (figure 3) does not reveal any trends or patterns, presumably because of the decreasing number of cases. As both Captain Light and the IG report found, no trends or patterns are apparent

**FIGURE 3
FIRINGS BY COMMUNITY (POST-CHARGE OF COMMAND) FOR
PERSONAL REASONS**



in occurrences after the Charge of Command with respect to rank of the individual or whether an operational (at-sea) or shore command is involved. In every case involving personal failings, the transgression (misconduct, inappropriate behavior, alcohol-related incident, etc.) was independent of professional requirements. Given the shrinking data set, therefore, it is necessary to investigate

beyond community groups and explore individual cases for trends and linkages.

Since the Navy initiated steps to improve commanding officer accountability, the trend lines have appeared favorable in terms of the goal of reducing firings for personal misconduct. Though only a few years into the enterprise, the result is indicative of the effectiveness of giving prospective commanding officers the message regarding expectations of them while in command. Nevertheless, more than thirty Navy COs have been fired for personal misconduct since the Charge of Command was implemented. Why? This is a small number, considering the number of commands and commanding officers in the Navy, but the reasons why some individuals still do not “get it” merit further scrutiny.

Previous reports asserted that organizational culture plays no role in CO misconduct.⁴¹ Both the 2004 and 2010 Inspector General reports found no discernible correlations between career paths, personality traits, accession sources, time in command, or year groups (i.e., year of commissioning).⁴² However, in contrast to the shrinking overall number of firings per year and generally even distribution of firings across communities, one peak in recent data is worth noting as an outlier—the aviation electronic-warfare community, comprising Electronic Attack (VAQ) and Fleet Air Reconnaissance (VQ) squadrons. The VAQ and VQ subcommunities account for approximately 10 percent of the Navy’s aviation squadrons.⁴³ Since implementation of the Charge of Command this subculture has been responsible for half the aviation COs fired for misconduct (five of ten),

17 percent of all misconduct CO reliefs between 2011 and 2013, and the first Navy CO fired for misconduct in 2014.⁴⁴

This anomaly could exist for any number of reasons. Given the relatively short time and small numbers involved Navy-wide, it may simply be an unfortunate coincidence. Or there may be a cultural divergence that either was not present or went unrecognized during previous studies, some tendency that has developed out of the culture, training, and ethos of a group that is stationed, when not deployed, at one location (the Navy's VAQ subcommunity and the VQ squadron where a firing occurred during the period reviewed are both based at Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, in Washington). Or possibly this is a niche that simply has not had enough time pass to absorb the new standards for commanding officers into its system. On the basis of standard patterns of rotations and promotions, the department heads who in 2011 witnessed their commanding officers signing (among the first to do so) the Charge of Command have not yet returned to be COs themselves. To know absolutely that every year group of every community understands and executes the Charge of Command may take between four and seven years—a period the Navy is just now entering.

An instance that more obviously counters previous reports that organizational culture plays no role is that of the Blue Angels. Although the officer recently investigated for misconduct had already completed his tour in the squadron and was in a subsequent noncommand billet when his reassignment occurred, the causal events, described as his promoting a hostile work environment and tolerating sexual harassment, had occurred during his tenure as CO.⁴⁵ The investigation determined that while the CO was responsible, the organizational culture had devolved into something from a bygone era. Pornography, lewd comments, and raunchy pranks were widely condoned and tolerated, just “boys being boys,” all under the direct observation of the commanding officer.⁴⁶ The inquiry resulted in not only the firing of the CO but a restructuring of the Blue Angels organization.⁴⁷

Nevertheless, neither organizational culture nor rationalization by individual members can excuse actions that are clearly and plainly labeled inappropriate by the Navy. With the implementation of the Charge of Command, misconduct by a commanding officer comes down to a conscious decision. None of those fired were in any doubt about what was right and wrong, not only in terms of Navy regulations but also, in the vast majority of cases, according to law, a moral code, or both. Mechanisms are in place—training for prospective COs by the Naval Leadership and Ethics Center, the Command Qualification Program, the Charge of Command, clear statements of the expectations for commanding officers and their immediate superiors, and routine and standard Command Climate Assessments—to minimize commanding officer misconduct. But more can be done.

A TRUE, LONG-TERM, AND SUSTAINABLE SOLUTION

To have no commanding officers relieved for cause would not be an achievable goal; professional mishaps will occur that warrant holding a CO accountable. But it is not unrealistic to strive to eliminate reliefs due to misconduct or individual ethical failure. The positive actions described here are good first steps. But consistent enforcement of these topics and follow-up initiatives are necessary to avoid a long-term appearance that the Navy's response was simply reactive, a "Band-Aid," not a true, long-term, and sustainable solution. To continue to build on the gains already achieved, the following recommendations are offered.

Be Transparent and Consistent, Navy

When the Navy attempts to move forward, it often proves its own worst enemy. Two consecutive CNOs have placed the integrity of commanding officers high on their priority lists and set standards of performance. Yet the public assumption is that "Big Navy" has something to hide—because commanding officers are relieved without official statement about whether the reasons were professional or personal. The ubiquitous "loss of confidence" leaves much to the imagination, particularly in a social-media and blog environment where the allegation of hiding details results in overall loss of confidence in the broader establishment. This lack of transparency is compounded each time a firing is not publicly acknowledged or officially tracked because it did not fit an administrative criterion (i.e., the financial parameters of a formal detachment for cause).

The 2010 Inspector General report acknowledged several cases of commanding officers relieved early that it could have considered but did not because the DFC process had not been initiated.⁴⁸ The IG investigation had no reliable way to determine how often COs had been detached early but quietly, as if their tours had been successful, when a DFC might have been more appropriate.⁴⁹ Most conspicuously, in 2003 when a reported twenty-six commanding officers were relieved, only seven were listed by the Naval Personnel Command as DFCs.⁵⁰ The combination of potentially inconsistent Navy data with Navy Personnel Command unwillingness to release a comprehensive list makes evident a lack of transparency concerning CO misconduct.

The way to rise above what does or does not constitute a DFC is to call it what it is—a firing is a firing. Restricting official concern to reliefs that cost the Navy money will, in the long run, erode trust in the service and bring its integrity into question. The removal of commanding officers prior to projected rotation dates should be addressed by ISICs whether they occur for operational reasons or not.⁵¹ If a "no-cost DFC" category is created, future studies will have a more comprehensive data set to analyze. The importance of dealing with all commanding officer firings was addressed in the 2004 IG report, though not in 2010. Such

a complete listing might challenge the analysis of this article, but thereafter there would be a consistent basis for future analysis, discussion, and debate.

Compounding the appearance of a lack of transparency was the Navy's acceptance of the unavailability of Command Assessments for six months. Contractual and budget issues were allowed to disable a leadership tool. The 2010 Inspector General's report had stated, "Command climate assessments would be a better tool for commands if there was a broader understanding throughout the fleet" of what assessments were and how to use them;⁵² not using them at all depreciated them in the eyes of the fleet. Additionally, the IG had found that in almost all the CO detachments for cause correct use of the assessments, especially accurate executive summaries, would have highlighted early for ISICs the behavior and command-climate problems.⁵³ To have been denied the assessment process so soon after it had been identified as necessary was a mixed signal.

Progress toward transparency would also be achieved by a more thorough tracking system. In an age where baseball sabermetrics can track the actual (and even predict potential) performance of individual players in specific situations, the Navy ought to be able to track more closely the development of potential commanding officers and performance of current ones. Correlating data not only of firings but also leading to and during command tours—such as who had worked for whom over the years and what had been said by and about individuals in "360-degree" evaluations—might uncover linkages or trends not yet considered. No record now follows how subordinates of COs relieved for misconduct fare in future positions or suggests whether there is any correlation to their own future misconduct. While developing such a capability would be a herculean task, it would be within the mission of the Navy's Human Resources community, specifically its Core Competencies of management and development.⁵⁴ Until such analysis is established and employed, public speculation, suspicion, and scrutiny will continue.

Reexamine the Data

The Inspector General reports completed in 2004 and 2010 each took an objective look at the DFC process and came up with recommendations to address future commanding officer failings. For the reasons explained above, however, the picture the reports presented was incomplete. While it provided enough clarity for the CNO to determine that the Charge of Command, Command Qualification Program, and Command Climate Assessments were necessary, incompleteness of data may have the Navy chasing symptoms rather than a cure. It is time for another official Navy review of not just the DFC process but any and all removals of COs prior to their original rotation dates. A harder look at COs will produce a more complete understanding of the effectiveness of current and future initiatives to eliminate personal misconduct that results in firings.

Establish and Enforce Dissuasive (Monetary) Measures

Despite any amount of training, formal setting of personal and professional expectations, or examples of colleagues who are relieved for their own misconduct, the risks may not be high enough to deter those on the edge. When a commanding officer is relieved for individual failures, the topic quickly appears in articles, comment sections of periodicals, blogs, and chat rooms. In almost every case someone offers a variation on the statement “Commander X may no longer be the commanding officer, but he will still get to retire with his twenty years, receive his full pension, get a lucrative position outside the Navy, and other than some fleeting embarrassment he will receive no real punishment.”

Command is the pinnacle of the military profession, and it is not a part-time job. It is not conducted only during business hours. As Admiral Roughead once said, commanders are duty bound to uphold strict behavioral standards, even when off duty.⁵⁵ Whether a commanding officer’s misconduct is deliberate (driving under the influence of alcohol, bribery, fraternization, etc.) or results from failure to fulfill duties assigned or abdication of them (as occurred twice recently, with the Blue Angels and the guided-missile cruiser USS *Cowpens*), the commanding officer remains responsible.⁵⁶ As in other professions, a leader must be held accountable when performance results in failure. In most professions failure often results in removal of professional position and credentials, pecuniary penalties, or both. Doctors who do not perform adequately risk the loss of their licenses and punitive judgments for malpractice. Lawyers can be disbarred or sanctioned for demonstrated inability. Even midshipmen are held accountable for failure once midway through their training; they owe time in service or, if they cannot complete their training, must reimburse the Navy for the education received.⁵⁷ So what is the cost of the inability of a commanding officer to live up to the commitment he or she accepted by signing the Charge of Command? The Navy has often removed faltering leaders from authority but has not pursued financial compensation for the time, training, and trust invested in them.

It is time to debate the question. The Navy should create a postcommand screening board, charged with reviewing the details of individual firings. This board would be independent of the relieved individual’s chain of command and unrelated to any pending action under the Uniform Code of Military Justice resulting from misconduct. This board should have the power to recoup bonuses from or impose other financial penalties on those who have made poor personal decisions while in command. This does not mean that every failed commanding officer would or should owe a financial debt to the Navy. For a purely professional failure, the balance might be restored by removal of the individual from the command; an objective review by this panel might find no further action necessary. But a personal failure, specifically misconduct, can be viewed as a breach of

contract, an inability of the individual to abide by the Charge of Command. Many commanding officer positions are designated as meriting additional pay or bonuses; the financial penalty could be simply requiring the failed commander to return them.⁵⁸ Bonuses received in command (e.g., training or specialty bonuses or flight, sea, nuclear, medical specialty, command-responsibility, or other critical-skills pay) could be considered insurance against poor decisions—refundable security deposits by the Navy. Each firing would have to be reviewed individually, as each commanding officer represents a different level of investment by the Navy in getting him or her to and through command. And just as the Navy holds a midshipman responsible for failing to complete the course of instruction leading to commission, so should the Navy hold responsible its commanding officers who fail to complete their command tours. For the more than 99 percent of commanding officers who live within the Charge of Command and successfully complete their command tours the hazard is nonexistent. Individuals considering accepting the risk of misconduct may find in financial penalties the necessary motivation to choose better—motivation that previous initiatives have not supplied. And even by preventing one firing, this option would take the Navy a step closer to eliminating misconduct among commanding officers.

Since publication of “The Navy’s Moral Compass” the Navy has made progress to reduce commanding officer misconduct. Progress has been achieved not only by implementing new initiatives but also by ensuring that previously established guidelines are properly executed, resulting in a solid basis for further reducing commanding officer firings for misconduct in the future. Holding commanding officers to a consistent and higher standard is necessary if they are to achieve long-term success in the position, and until the number of misconduct cases is zero, the pressure must be sustained. The Navy must continue to strive for a high standard, improve transparency regarding its standards, continuously review data trends, and scrutinize those entrusted with command. And it must improve the process that identifies and tracks allegations when they arise—and then hold individuals accountable.

NOTES

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4. Craig Whitlock, “Navy Investigates ex-Blue Angels Commander after Complaint He Allowed Sexual Harassment,” *Washington Post*, 23 April 2014.
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 10. Ibid.
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 12. Light, “Navy’s Moral Compass.”
 13. U.S. Navy Dept., *Commanding Officer Detach for Cause Study 2010* (Washington, D.C.: Navy Inspector General) [hereafter Naval IG 2010], executive summary.
 14. Ibid. For the purposes of Naval IG 2010, “Personal Misconduct” included five subcategories: “Orders Violations,” “Computer Pornography,” “Falsifying Documents,” “Adultery/Inappropriate Relationships/Harassment/Sexual Assault,” and “Alcohol/DUI [driving under the influence of alcohol]” (executive summary).
 15. Ibid., p. 15. For the biblical Bathsheba reference, see 2 Samuel 11–12. See also Dean C. Ludwig and Clinton O. Longenecker, “The Bathsheba Syndrome: The Ethical Failure of Successful Leaders,” *Journal of Business Ethics* 12, no. 4 (April 1993).
 16. Naval IG 2010, p. 20.
 17. Ibid., pp. 20–21.
 18. McMichael, “Leadership Memo Cites San Antonio Fatality”; Adm. J. C. Harvey, Jr., “USS PONCE (LPD 15) CO/XO Relief,” *Archived U.S. Fleet Forces Command Blog (2009–2012)*, 26 April 2011, usfleetforces.blogspot.com/.
 19. Adm. G. Roughead, Chief of Naval Operations, “The Charge of Command,” Memorandum for All Prospective Commanding Officers, 5370 ser. N00/100050, 9 June 2011, Washington, D.C., available at www.public.navy.mil/. See also Sam Fellman, “CNO Underlines Command Conduct Standards,” *Navy Times*, 18 July 2011.
 20. “All commanding officers and others in authority in the naval service are required to show in themselves a good example of virtue, honor, patriotism, and subordination; to be vigilant in inspecting the conduct of all persons who are placed under their command; to guard against and suppress all dissolute and immoral practices, and to correct, according to the laws and regulations of the Navy, all persons who are guilty of them; and to take all necessary and proper measures, under the laws, regulations, and customs of the naval service, to promote and safeguard the morale, the physical well-being, and the general welfare of the officers and enlisted persons under their command or charge.” Requirement of Exemplary Conduct, 10 USC 5947.
 21. Adm. Jonathan W. Greenert, Chief of Naval Operations, “The Charge of Command,” Memorandum for All Prospective Commanding Officers, 5370 ser. N00/100107, 8 November 2011, Washington, D.C., available at www.public.navy.mil/.
 22. U.S. Navy Dept., “Command Qualification Program,” OPNAVINST 1412.14, Washington, D.C., 4 June 2012.
 23. Ibid., p. 2.

24. Adm. Jonathan Greenert, Chief of Naval Operations, *Statement before the House Armed Services Committee on FY 2015 Department of the Navy Posture*, 113th Cong., 2nd sess., 12 March 2014, p. 30.
25. "New Center Imparts Ethical Command Leader Development," NNS140506-13, *America's Navy*, 6 May 2014, www.navy.mil/.
26. *Ibid.* For the Navy's core values and ethos, see *America's Navy*, www.navy.mil.
27. "New Center Imparts Ethical Command Leader Development."
28. U.S. Navy Dept., "Navy Equal Opportunity Policy," OPNAVINST 5354.1F CH-1, Washington, D.C., 20 September 2011.
29. *Ibid.*, pp. 7–10.
30. Naval IG 2010.
31. "Questions and Answers Concerning DEOMI's Website and DEOCS Communications Outage," *U.S. Navy*, n.d., www.public.navy.mil/.
32. U.S. Navy Dept., Navy Personnel Command, "Guidance on Command Climate Assessments," NAVADMIN 336/13, Washington, D.C., 30 December 2013, available at www.public.navy.mil/.
33. Aaron Bresnahan, "The Charge of Command," *AUSN: Association of the United States Navy*, 1 September 2011, www.ausn.org/.
34. Commander Salamander, "Skipper, Come Sign Your Page 13," *Cdr Salamander* (blog), 20 July 2011, cdrsalamander.blogspot.com/.
35. *SailorBob 2.0: The Real SWO Gouge*, www.sailorbob.com.
36. There are several Internet locations where the Navy community has created opportunities online to discuss events or post opinions. Examples include *SailorBob 2.0: The Real SWO Gouge*, www.sailorbob.com; *Information Dissemination*, www.informationdissemination.net; *Cdr Salamander*, cdrsalamander.blogspot.com; *I Like the Cut of His Jib!!*, navycaptain-therealnavy.blogspot.com; and *The Stupid Shall Be Punished*, bubbleheads.blogspot.com.
37. As explained in "The Navy's Moral Compass," detachments for cause are administrative actions that release funding to move personnel subsequent to the removal for cause of naval officers from their current duty assignments; DFCs may not be required if suitable officers are immediately available to relieve the officers who have been fired, and such instances may not be documented. See U.S. Navy Dept., "MILPERSMAN 1611-020 CH-18: Officer Detachment for Cause," in *Military Personnel Manual* (Washington, D.C.: 30 March 2007), sec. 1.
38. "Commanding Officer, XO and Senior Enlisted Firings," *Navy Times*, 5 February 2013.
39. "2010 Navy Commanding Officer Firings," *Navy Times*, 15 December 2010.
40. Naval IG 2010.
41. Light, "Navy's Moral Compass."
42. Naval IG 2010.
43. "Owners and Operators," *All Hands: For Sailors by Sailors*, [2014], www.navy.mil/.
44. Janis Reid, "NAS Whidbey Squadron Commanding Officer Fired for Racism, Other Misdeeds," *Whidbey News-Times*, 13 January 2014; "Whidbey Commander Relieved," *Whidbey News-Times*, 28 February 2012; Sam Fellman, "Report: Fling in Italy Sank Flagship CO's Career," *Navy Times*, 13 January 2014; "NAS Whidbey Squadron Commander Relieved of Duty"; "Growler Squadron CO Fired on Deployment," *Navy Times*, 19 July 2011.
45. Whitlock, "Navy Investigates ex-Blue Angels Commander"; Meghann Myers, "Report: Blue Angels Boss Tolerated Porn, Lewdness," *Navy Times*, 3 June 2014.
46. Meghann Myers, "Blue Angels Report Calls Out Fighter Pilot Culture," *Navy Times*, 25 June 2014.
47. Mark Faram and Meghann Myers, "Blue Angels Add XO, Screening after Misconduct Report," *Navy Times*, 22 July 2014.
48. Naval IG 2010.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
50. Craig Whitlock, "Navy Has Spike in Commanding-Officer Firings," *Washington Post*, 17 June 2011; U.S. Navy Dept., *Commanding Officer Detach for Cause Study 2004* (Washington, D.C.: Navy Inspector General, 15 November 2004), executive summary; Light, "Navy's Moral Compass."
51. Changes of command may occur before the incumbent's projected rotation date for such reasons as changing operational

commitments or to accommodate an officer's career requirements and improve promotion eligibility. Such events should be well documented by the ISIC.

52. Naval IG 2010, p. 19.

53. Ibid.

54. "Navy Personnel Command, Human Resources Officer Homepage," *U.S. Navy*, www.public.navy.mil/.

55. Whitlock, "Navy Has Spike in Commanding-Officer Firings."

56. Copeman, "Final Endorsement on Command Investigation . . . ICO USS COWPENS (CG 63)"; Adm. Harry B. Harris, Jr., Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet, "Final Endorsement on Command Investigation into the Facts and

Circumstances Surrounding Possible Violations of the Department of the Navy Policies on Equal Opportunity and Sexual Harassment by the Former Commanding Officer of the U.S. Navy Flight Demonstration Squadron between July 2010 and November 2012" [redacted], Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, 16 May 2014.

57. Tony Spiker, "Naval Academy Class of 2015 Commits to Five Years of Military Service," NNS130829-02, *America's Navy*, 29 August 2013, www.navy.mil/.

58. U.S. Navy Dept., "MILPERSMAN 7220-100 CH-25: Command Responsibility Pay," *Military Personnel Manual* (Washington, D.C.: 2 December 2008).