Commanders’ Guidance to All Members of the Submarine Force and Supporting Organizations

**Being a professional submariner is about trust** – many different kinds of trust. Trust in the knowledge and integrity of a Sailor who certifies a rig for dive, tagout, log reading, etc. Trust in those who build or repair submarines to go to test depth or into combat. Trust in the judgment of those who plan and coordinate an operation or deployment. Trust in our shipmates and leaders to never compromise our high standards, regardless of the impact. Trust in the submarine Captain to do the right thing when faced with a difficult situation and no ability to get advice from ashore. Trust by the Nation in our ability to safely and competently handle an incredibly complex machine doing critical work for national security.

It has been said, “trust cannot be surged.” As submariners you know this. Trust is earned over a long time of demonstrated performance. Trust creates a special bond and accumulates slowly on a foundation of confidence, expertise, and character. Manifest in you, it is upon this trust that we build our Force. You, the men and women of the Submarine Force and supporting organizations, are our foundation of strength. These are not just words. When leaders from other navies visit our submarines and meet our young Sailors, they marvel at their quality. Other navies do not have Sailors like you.

Where does this special need for trust come from? Submariners operate far forward, usually independently and “behind enemy lines” for long periods of time without external support – in both peacetime and wartime. Submarines have small crews where each person has multiple roles, where the safety of the ship depends on each individual’s performance and where we expect initiative and professionalism from everyone.

This emphasis on trust and this uniquely independent operating environment place special demands on submariners. Although these demands can seem numerous, your approach should be simple. **Do everything with honesty, integrity, and professionalism.** Incidents that violate the trust of the Navy or of a shipmate, damage the special bond upon which everything is built. We go to war together with confidence that we can rely on each other in all circumstances.

But young Sailors do not arrive as confident experts with all of the tools and experience to meet the high standards of moral character and personal behavior expected of submariners. Leaders and shipmates at all levels within the Submarine Force contribute to who they are, ensuring we develop leaders for now and to inherit the future. They are always teaching and learning. They set an example of confidence and character, demonstrating honesty and integrity in the moment of choice, the tireless pursuit of excellence, and constantly looking for ways to work better and smarter.

All of us, from Seaman to Master Chief, Ensign to Admiral, government civilian to Reservist, are at different times shaped by or contribute to this process. It makes us who we are; it makes us the greatest Submarine Force the world has ever known. An empty submarine sitting next to the pier is capable of only one thing: rusting. It is the men and women of the crew and the supporting organizations, with trust in each other, which brings that submarine to life. **Thank you for your service and your leadership—thanks for all you do!**