



C-NOTE #8



A MESSAGE TO THE FLEET FROM THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT AS WARFIGHTING ADVANTAGE

This C-NOTE builds on The Way We Fight (C-NOTE #4), in which I described how we ensure naval combat power remains credible, resilient, and lethal. We do that through disciplined execution, deliberate reflection, and intentional improvement. A Navy that learns slower than it fights will lose. A Navy that learns during the fight and adapts faster than the adversary wins. Learning is how we generate decision advantage, close kill chains faster, and increase survivability under pressure. We must learn faster than the threat. That is not an aspiration – it's a requirement.

\\ Decisive Maritime Advantage

History is clear – decisive maritime advantage belongs to the force that adapts fastest. Platforms, weapons, and technology matter, but our enduring advantage is our ability to learn continuously, honestly, and at scale. In an era defined by a pacing threat, compressed timelines, and contested environments, learning cannot be episodic or isolated. It must be institutional, operational, and Fleet-wide.

\\ Tiered Learning System

We are building a Navy that learns from operations, exercises, maintenance, experimentation, training, and near misses – continuously and across communities. Our objective is clear: identify problems early, determine root causes, assess and elevate risk appropriately, solve decisively, and scale solutions across the Force with speed. This reduces the time from observation to fleet-wide correction from months to days – directly improving mission success and combat effectiveness. This is foundational to warfighting advantage across the Foundry, the Fleet, and the Fight.

To institutionalize this, we are implementing the Tiered Learning System (TLS) – a structured architecture led by the Office of Warfighting Advantage (OWA) that links commands, warfare communities, and echelons into a single learning ecosystem. TLS is not a process – it's a warfighting system that accelerates adaptation across our maritime kill webs. It ensures insights are analyzed, elevated, and shared at the level required to prevent recurrence across the Force.

\\ Fleet, Force and SYSCOM Improvement Offices (FIOs)

Fleet, Force, and SYSCOM Improvement Offices (FIOs) form the backbone of TLS. Embedded across Echelon II and III organizations, they provide the structure and continuity to translate lessons into sustained improvement. Commanders own learning. FIOs enable it. Accountability remains in the command. FIOs drive disciplined problem solving, integrate lessons learned, track corrective actions, and reinforce a culture of intellectual honesty and transparency that rewards early identification of risk.

At the enterprise level, OWA serves as the Echelon I FIO, integrating and directing the Navy's learning ecosystem. OWA aligns governance, education, analytics, and accountability to ensure Fleet insights translate into enterprise action. It develops problem-solving capability, ensures execution and closure, and improves decision visibility across the Force – shifting us from stove-piped lessons to continuous warfighting learning.

\\ Learn as a Single Force

This system enables a globally deployed Navy to learn as a single force. Through TLS, we will learn from near misses before failure, conduct root cause analysis, not treat symptoms, solve at the lowest capable level, elevate systemic barriers, identify trends across the Force, and rapidly disseminate leading practices. A force that learns faster can be trusted to operate at higher levels of delegated autonomy under degraded communications. This is Enhanced Mission Command in practice – autonomy pushed down, visibility pushed up, accountability throughout.

We have historically excelled at documenting lessons but not always institutionalizing them. TLS closes that gap by enforcing disciplined problem solving from observation to root cause through sustained correction across the Force. TLS operationalizes the Warfighting Learning Loop: Observe. Analyze. Fix. Verify. Scale. We will not treat symptoms but will determine and eliminate root causes, validate solutions, and ensure they are institutionalized so problems do not recur elsewhere in the Fleet.

\\ Institutional Learning

Institutional learning requires modern tools that allow leaders to see across the Force. We are expanding systems such as the Single Reporting Critique Program (SRCP) and advanced analytics to capture critiques, near-miss data, and performance trends. These capabilities enable us to identify root causes, detect systemic risk, recognize emerging trends early, and support decision-making with data-driven insight and artificial

intelligence. This is how we move from reactive reporting to predictive warfighting – anticipating failure and acting before the adversary. We will measure effectiveness through clear MOPS and MOEs, including speed of correction, reduction in repeat failures, increased near-miss reporting, and improved mission success rates.

Organizational learning is not a staff function – it is a warfighting capability. If we are not learning faster than our adversaries, we are giving them the advantage. A learning Fleet gains a decision advantage, resilience, and adaptability under pressure. In competition, crisis, and conflict, learning at speed reduces risk, increases readiness, and wins battles. The Navy Warfighting Concept demands agility and imposes dilemmas on adversaries – learning makes those advantages enduring.

\\ Pursuit of Excellence

Our goal is not perfection – it is relentless improvement in pursuit of excellence. Every member of the Navy will contribute by surfacing problems early, reporting hazards and near misses, participating in root cause analysis, sharing leading practices, executing corrective actions, and driving improvement in their area of responsibility. This effort integrates with the Fleet Learning Continuum – linking exercises, experimentation, wargaming, and operations into a single learning enterprise. TLS strengthens the Foundry, sharpens the Fleet, and increases our lethality in the Fight.



BUILT IN THE FOUNDRY - TEMPERED IN THE FLEET - FORGED TO FIGHT.

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