



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on July 14, 2021

## Report: Navy Unprepared to Fight. Too Focused on Bureaucracy, Diversity, Non-essential Tasks

The U.S. Navy says the service is unprepared for battle because training to fight wars is secondary to bureaucratic and politically correct diversity nonsense, a 23-page report says.

[Ordered by](#) Senator Tom Cotton (R-Ark.) and Representatives Jim Banks (R-Ind.), Dan Crenshaw (R-Texas), and Mike Gallagher (R-Wis.), the report is the result of more than six dozen interviews with current and former sailors and officers.

The overwhelming majority said the Navy is in trouble because its leaders are terrified of the media and too preoccupied with checking boxes and keeping superiors happy.

Those interviewed “do not believe the Navy prioritizes fighting and winning because Navy leaders do not talk about fighting and winning.”



The findings of this investigation into the Navy’s culture are concerning. I intend to work with veterans, Navy leaders, and my colleagues to implement the report’s recommendations. <https://t.co/9U0pVSZd6z>

— Tom Cotton (@SenTomCotton) [July 12, 2021](#)

### Major Findings

To prepare their [Report on the Fighting Culture of the United States Navy Surface Fleet](#), retired Marine Lieutenant General Robert E. Schmidle and retired Rear Admiral Mark Montgomery conducted lengthy, narrative interviews with 77 active-duty and retired officers and enlisted personnel.

The four Republican legislators, all veterans, commissioned the report because of four major incidents:

- the [catastrophic fire on](#) the USS Bonhomme Richard pier-side in San Diego;
- the collisions of the [USS McCain in](#) the South China Sea and [USS Fitzgerald near](#) Japan; and
- the [embarrassing surrender](#) of two small U.S. Navy craft to Iran.

“The results of this project are unambiguous,” the report says:

There was a broad consensus across interviewees on numerous cultural and structural issues that impact the morale and readiness of the Navy’s surface force. These include: an insufficient focus on warfighting skills, the perception of a zero-defect mentality accompanied by a culture of micromanagement, and over-sensitivity and responsiveness to



modern media culture.

As well, 94 percent of the interview subjects believe the four major disasters exposed major leadership problems. “This sentiment, that the Navy is dangerously off course, was overwhelming,” the report says.

Those interviewed said the Navy “does not promote or advance surface ship warfighting in a meaningful way.”

“Finding and sinking enemy fleets should be the principal purpose of a Navy,” the [report says](#):

But many sailors found their leadership distracted, captive to bureaucratic excess, and rewarded for the successful execution of administrative functions rather than their skills as a warfighter. There was considerable apprehension that the surface warfare community in particular lost its fighting edge in the years following the end of the Cold War. With China building and operating a competitive fleet, the lack of proper attention on warfighting was of deep concern to many interviewees.

“Where someone puts their time shows what their priorities are,” a [destroyer captain said](#). “And we’ve got so many messages about X, Y, Z appreciation month, or sexual assault prevention, or you name it. We don’t even have close to that same level of emphasis on actual warfighting.”

“Non-essential training” is affecting officers and sailors alike, the report continued:

While programs to encourage diversity, human sex trafficking prevention, suicide prevention, sexual assault prevention, and others are appropriate, they come with a cost. The non-combat curricula consume Navy resources, clog inboxes, create administrative quagmires, and monopolize precious training time. By weighing down sailors with non-combat related training and administrative burdens, both Congress and Navy leaders risk sending them into battle less prepared and less focused than their opponents.

Sailors increasingly see administrative and non-combat related training as the mission, rather than the mission itself.

“Sometimes I think we care more about whether we have enough diversity officers than if we’ll survive a fight with the Chinese navy,” a black woman lieutenant said. “It’s criminal. They think my only value is as a black woman. But you cut our ship open with a missile and we’ll all bleed the same color.”

An active-duty surface warfare officer believes surface Navy personnel “don’t see themselves as people who are engaged in a fight.”

Said a retired senior enlisted man, “I guarantee you every unit in the Navy is up to speed on their diversity training. I’m sorry that I can’t say the same of their ship handling training.”

No wonder ships are colliding.

### **“Reporters Are in Charge”**

Fear of the media, the report says, results in the loss of valuable personnel when stories of putative wrongdoing go viral.



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“[Admirals] are supposed to lead us into battle but they hide in foxholes at the first sight of Military.com and the *Military Times*,” an intelligence officer said. “The reporters are in charge, not us.”

Such is the “undercurrent of fear” at the slightest infraction that officers fear even talking. A commanding officer “was unwilling to have routine and essential leadership conversations with sailors about their port calls and off-duty experiences, in case any incriminating stories or UCMJ violations arose.” The UCMJ is the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

[The report described](#) how the Navy needlessly lost a valuable master chief:

The Navy has forgotten how to differentiate between stories that are ignorable and stories that demand corrective measures.

To wit, 30 years ago the newsworthiness of a Master Chief telling sailors to “clap like you’re at a strip club” during a distinguished visitor tour would be questionable. But a reporter overheard those exact comments from the USS Harry Truman’s Command Master Chief during a press availability last year. Despite there being no apparent news value in an NCO using mildly “salty” language with sailors, multiple media outlets disagreed. The comments ran across several national news services and a 30-year veteran of the Navy, who would have been an invaluable asset in a conflict at sea, resigned. In what would have normally been discipline via stern conversation from a higher officer, three decades of honorable service were instead ignobly ended.

The inability of senior Navy leaders to recognize that such a story was fleeting and trivial reinforced the perception that the Navy will not stand behind their own sailors when unfair or unfounded or, in this case, farcical stories make it to print.

## **Solutions**

The Navy must “prioritize warfighting,” the report concluded, “get politics and media out of the wardroom” and stay out of politics itself.

Leaders must also “limit social media accounts and activities by Navy officials, discourage use of toxic platforms by sailors, remove all political and sociological topics from Professional Military Education and replace them with essential warfighting courseware.”

That means less focus on subjects such as [Pride Month](#) and more focus building a fleet that can fight.

**H/T:** [Ace of Spades](#)



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