



C-Note #7



A MESSAGE TO THE FLEET FROM THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS

GOLDEN FLEET INITIATIVE AND OUR FUTURE FLEET DESIGN

In December 2025, the President announced the Golden Fleet Initiative (GFI) - an unmistakable statement of America's resolve and commitment to maritime superiority. GFI is our strategic approach to deliver greater combat capability and capacity to our warfighters at speed and scale. Built on three pillars: enhancing maritime dominance, revitalizing the industrial base, and reforming business practices - GFI becomes the foundation of our Future Fleet Design by strengthening how we build in the Foundry, generate readiness in the Fleet, and prevail in the Fight.

As outlined in the U.S. Navy Fighting Instructions, our differentiated value to the Nation is the ability to project sovereign combat power from the sea - globally, persistently, and on our terms. That advantage is being challenged. Adversaries are investing in long-range fires, sensing networks, and systems designed to hold us at risk. GFI ensures we retain the mass, lethality, and adaptability required to deter aggression and, if necessary, win decisively.

The Fiscal Year 2027 budget advances this effort by funding 34 ships and investing in the Future Fleet Design - from the new battleship BBG(X) and frigates FFG(X) to additional submarines and destroyers. We remain committed to carrier strike groups and stronger amphibious capabilities. This reflects a deliberate high-low mix of tailorable forces that enables both high-end combat and day-to-day global operations.



\\ Mass Matters

Mass matters - but only when it is lethal, ready, and sustainable. We are building a Navy that can generate decisive combat power, not merely compete. GFI requires a balanced mix of exquisite and attritable platforms, crewed and uncrewed systems, and a battle force that can distribute, reaggregate, and strike with precision. Distribution is not dispersion, it is synchronized combat power that complicates enemy decisions and imposes cost.

\\ Capability

Capability must arrive at the speed of war - readiness cannot be surged. The Foundry must deliver relevant ships, payloads, and networks faster. The Fleet must absorb and employ them with urgency and discipline. The Fight demands commanders who act decisively under the Enhanced Mission Command Framework and manage risk with clarity and confidence.

\\ Sailors First

For Sailors, this is tangible. You will receive capability faster. You will operate more reliable and lethal systems. You will integrate with unmanned platforms and advanced networks that extend your reach and awareness. Payloads will evolve faster than the platforms that carry them. And you will serve aboard ships built to win, protect your shipmates, and deliver overwhelming effects under fire.

\\ The Fight

In the next fight, expectations will rise. Communications will be contested and decision timelines compressed. You must be ready to think, decide, and act at speed. Competence and trust at every level will determine whether we seize and sustain the advantage. Above all, warfighting fundamentals built on sound maintenance, alert watchstanding, and tactical proficiency - remain non-negotiable.



As we build our future fleet, we must find the right mix of tailored forces and tailored offsets, coupled with the general-purpose force to match mission requirements and provide surge capability when required. It must deliver readiness today and enable decisive overmatch tomorrow. This balance is how we generate credible combat forces at scale and sustain advantage over time.

Working together with Congress and industry, the Navy's GFI will deliver a Future Fleet Design that is ready, resilient, and lethal - capable of sustaining operations in degraded and denied environments, absorbing losses, and striking the enemy hard and fast.

Our objective is clear: out-think, out-maneuver, and out-fight any adversary. GFI strengthens how we build, train, and fight as a naval force. This is how we deliver peace through strength. This is how we bring to bear our differentiated value to the Nation. This is how we win.

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

A blue ink signature of Daryl L. Caudle.

Daryl L. Caudle
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