

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

April 3, 2020

The Honorable Glenn A. Fine
Acting Inspector General
Department of Defense Office of Inspector General
4800 Mark Center Drive
Alexandria, VA 22350-1500

Dear Acting Inspector General Fine:

We write to request that your office immediately conduct a formal investigation into the Navy's response to reports of the outbreak of COVID-19 aboard the USS Theodore Roosevelt and the decision to relieve CAPT Brett Crozier of his command. It is essential that your office conduct a comprehensive investigation to avoid any potential conflicts of interest within the Navy chain of command, and we encourage you to evaluate all relevant matters associated with the dismissal and the outbreak on the ship.

CAPT Crozier's memo to Navy leadership indicated that the crew was unable to comply with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) protocols or NAVADMIN guidance. Additionally, CAPT Crozier emphasized an inappropriate focus on testing as well as inappropriate quarantine and isolation capability. Given the concerns for the health and safety of the sailors on the USS Theodore Roosevelt, in addition to the potential for future COVID-19 outbreaks on other ships and submarines, we urge you to investigate the Navy's response to this outbreak to evaluate whether the Navy is implementing all appropriate precautionary measures and best-practices to protect the safety of our fleet.

We are particularly alarmed by the stark reversal from the Navy regarding CAPT Crozier's leadership during this crisis. One day before CAPT Crozier was relieved of command, the Acting Secretary of the Navy stated in reference to the Captain's 30 March request for assistance that "the fact that he wrote the letter to his chain of command to express his concerns would absolutely not result in any kind of retaliation." It is also difficult to understand how CAPT Crozier's decision to copy "20 or 30 people" on an email to his chain of command necessarily constitutes a breach warranting relief of command. This reversal sends a mixed message to sailors aboard the USS Theodore Roosevelt and given the remarkable show of support for CAPT Crozier by members of his crew, we are additionally worried about the impact of this decision on morale and readiness.

While we understand and respect the importance of maintaining operational security, given the extraordinary circumstances under which these events took place, we believe a closer examination by a neutral third party is warranted. We are especially concerned about Navy readiness to support current and future deployments without all necessary precautionary measures and resources, such as for the USS Ronald Reagan and upcoming deployment of the USS Nimitz. Your conclusions and recommendations could be crucial in ensuring that the Navy and other services to respond appropriately to the COVID-19 threat and protect our servicemembers.

Sincerely,



RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senate

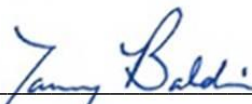
/s/ CHRIS VAN HOLLEN
United States Senate

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/s/ PATRICK LEAHY
United States Senate



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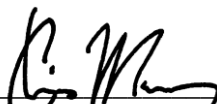
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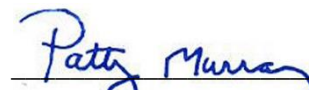
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/s/ BRIAN SCHATZ
United States Senate