



[Acting Navy Secretary Resigns Following Controversial Remarks](#)

Acting Navy Secretary Thomas Modly resigned earlier this week after leaked audio uncovered his controversial remarks regarding Captain Brett Crozier, the now-ousted commander of the USS Theodore Roosevelt. Crozier sent a memo pleading for help with a coronavirus outbreak on his ship, which leaked to the media and prompted Modly to remove Crozier from his position. In a speech made to crewmembers aboard the USS Roosevelt, Modly controversially said that if Crozier didn't think his letter would leak, he was "too naive or too stupid to be a commanding officer of a ship like this." Ironically enough, the audio of Modly's address was leaked to media outlets as well and resulted in the backlash that subsequently led to his resignation. Following Modly's resignation, Secretary of Defense Mark Esper tapped James McPherson, undersecretary of the Army, to be the new acting Navy Secretary.

Crozier, who had taken command of the USS Theodore Roosevelt back in November, wrote a 4-page letter describing the dire situation on board his ship as multiple members of his crew began falling ill. In the letter, he urged the Navy to do more to halt the spread of the coronavirus on board the ship stating "We are not at war. Sailors do not need to die. If we do not act now, we are failing to properly take care of our most trusted asset – our sailors. The spread of the disease is ongoing and accelerating." Modly's decision to remove Crozier as commander of the aircraft carrier sparked intense criticism, as videos posted on social media showed sailors on board the vessel cheering Crozier as he left and an online petition was circulated which called for his reinstatement. Some crewmembers also hailed Crozier as a hero who defended his ship's crew, even at great cost to his own personal career. Crozier himself had started displaying symptoms of the coronavirus before he was removed from his post, and in fact later tested positive. Overall, nearly 175 on board the USS Theodore Roosevelt have tested positive for the coronavirus.

Following the leaked audio of Modly's comments, several high-profile officials called for his removal. In a statement, Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee Adam Smith said that "Acting Secretary Modly's decision to address the sailors on the Roosevelt and personally attack Captain Crozier shows a tone-deaf approach more focused on personal ego than one of the calm, steady leadership we so desperately need in this crisis." Former Vice President and frontrunner for the Democratic presidential nomination Joe Biden also criticized Modly for "shooting the messenger." Additionally, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi chimed in as well, stating that "Sadly, Acting Secretary Modly's actions and words demonstrate his failure to prioritize the force protection of our troops. He showed a serious lack of the sound judgement and strong leadership needed during this time. Acting Secretary Modly must be removed from his position or resign."

After this intense pressure from prominent leaders to step down, Modly did in fact do so on Tuesday. Secretary of Defense Mark Esper accepted Modly's resignation and announced his replacement, James McPherson.