

New Special Assistant to Navy Secretary Will Oversee Cybersecurity

ARLINGTON,

Va. – The U.S. Navy is creating a new high-level position in the office of the Navy secretary to oversee information management policy, including cybersecurity.

The position will be the special assistant for information management and will be given authorities on the level given to the four assistant secretaries of the Navy.

A person has been selected for the position and that person's name will be announced in coming weeks, Navy Undersecretary Thomas B. Modly said when he spoke to reporters Aug. 16 at the Pentagon.

Navy

Secretary Richard V. Spencer commissioned an independent cybersecurity study last year in the wake of some significant cyberbreaches in the industrial base. Spencer sought the assessment to see how the Navy was doing in cybersecurity and how it should be organized to combat such threats.

"No one at a senior level had responsibility for this," Modly said, noting that the CIO office was "more of a compliance shop, less for developing

strategy.”

Modly said

the Navy wanted to change the portfolio of one of its ASNs but that Congress did not like the idea. Like the other military branches, the Navy is limited by law to four assistant secretaries, three of whom must be an ASN for research, development and acquisition, an ASN for manpower and reserve affairs and one for financial management and comptroller. The fourth, an ASN for energy, installations and environment, is allowed by law but not prescribed.

Given the

limitation to four ASNs, the Navy elected instead to create the special assistant, who will report directly to Modly and Spencer.

Modly has

been acting as chief information officer for the Navy, a position which has been vacant for 20 months, to maintain “the elevation of the job.”

He said that

his meetings with the Defense Department’s CIO and the CIOs of the other services convinced him of the need for the Navy to have an official to set policy for information management, especially for cybersecurity. The CIO position exists in the law.

The new

special assistant, who also will be the Navy’s CIO, will not require confirmation by the Senate. The position will be co-located

with the department's chief management officer and will be at an echelon just below the ASNs. Modly said it would be an "E-ring office" in the Pentagon.

The special assistant will oversee two four directors: chief technology officer, chief data officer, chief of digital strategy, and chief information security officer. In addition, two officials, the deputy chief of naval operations for information warfare and the Marine Corps' deputy commandant for information, will be dual-hatted as deputies to the special assistant.

"We are intending to bring in people from the private sector to help us in this particular office, so we're scouring both internally and externally to find the right types of people to bring in, particularly in the digital strategy area and the data strategy area," Modly said. "There's a lot more expertise outside this building that inside this building and we need to rely on the lessons learned in the private sector to do that."

He said that a couple of functions of the chief management officer that would migrate to the special assistant's portfolio, including chief data officer.

Modly said the new office would not involve adding a huge staff at the headquarters, just "moving pieces

around the chessboard," and that he did not anticipate that additional funding would not be needed.