



Rear Admiral James "Phil" Wisecup became the fifty-second President of the U.S. Naval War College on 6 November 2008. He most recently served as Commander, Carrier Strike Group 7 (Ronald Reagan Strike Group), returning from deployment in October 2008.

A 1977 graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, Rear Admiral Wisecup earned his master's degree in international relations from the University of Southern California, graduated from the Naval War College in 1998, and also earned a degree from the University of Strasbourg, France, as an Olmsted Scholar, in 1982.

At sea, he served as executive officer of USS Valley Forge (CG 50) during Operation DESERT STORM. As Commanding Officer, USS Callaghan (DDG 994), he was awarded the Vice Admiral James Stockdale Award for Inspirational Leadership. He served as Commander, Destroyer Squadron 21 during Operation ENDURING FREEDOM after 9/11.

Ashore, he was assigned to NATO Headquarters in Brussels, Belgium; served as Force Planner and Ship Scheduler for Commander, U.S. Naval Surface Forces, Pacific; and served as action officer for Navy Headquarters Plans/Policy Staff. He served as a fellow on the Chief of Naval Operations Strategic Studies Group; as Director, White House Situation Room; and as Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Korea.

Rear Admiral Wisecup's awards include the Defense Superior Service Medal, Legion of Merit, Bronze Star, and various unit, service, and campaign awards.

PRESIDENT'S FORUM



Challenge!

THIS IS MY FIRST APPEARANCE in the pages of the *Review* as the fifty-second President of the Naval War College, and I'm writing this at the ninetieth day of my service to this fine institution, so I intend to keep this brief and simply devote my remarks to the personal sense of mission and commitment I bring to this challenging new position.

Each of the professional military education schools has a purpose and a relationship with its parent service and officer corps. Some focus on producing capable staff officers, others on creating effective advocates for their services' capabilities. The Naval War College has—historically—been a catalyst for new thinking within the Navy. Its ability to perform this role today is absolutely vital. No great institution can afford to become static. In an era of growing responsibilities and diminishing resources, I consider it imperative for the Naval War College to be a dynamic, responsive, innovative center of creative scholarship and thought.¹ If this sounds familiar, it was Admiral Stansfield Turner's opening paragraph to his first column (in a department that later became the "President's Forum") in the fall of 1972, which has certainly stood the test of time and provides a pretty good "true north" for the compass of the Naval War College.

When he wrote these words, there were 188 students in the College of Naval Warfare (Senior Course) and 232 in the College of Command and Staff (Junior Course), as well as forty-six international officers, representing thirty-five navies—a total of 466 students. There are today 609 students on campus, which includes eighty international officers from forty-eight different countries, and there are many more in our extensive fleet seminars and distance education programs.

In 1972 family housing had just been built on Fort Adams, and Spruance Hall was nearing completion. The student body that year was hand selected, rigorously screened, and smaller than normal. Most important, Admiral Turner made radical improvements in the curriculum, based on his experience at Oxford. In fact, this change, with its emphasis on academic freedom and, above all, excellence in scholarship, placed high demands on the faculty and students. He told the students that “if you are inclined to shy away from a challenge, you are not the kind of officer we want here.” Admiral Turner also said that these changes actually represented a “return to our great traditions.” He was right on both counts.

If you look at the early days of the Naval War College and the rising U.S. Navy of the early twentieth century, you will find that some of our greatest officers were also prolific writers. Not content to stand on the sidelines, some—like Alfred Thayer Mahan—made significant contributions to the analysis of naval history and advanced the strategic thinking of the day. There were also the tactical and operational studies of men like William Sims, Raymond Spruance, and Kelly Turner.² These men were no courtiers—for example, Bradley Fiske’s writings about vulnerabilities of the battleship years before Pearl Harbor was to cost him eventually; their common thread was a deep sense of integrity, purpose, and caring about their navy and their country, placing these considerations above their personal prospects.

We are well into the twenty-first century now and are fast approaching the 125th anniversary of the Naval War College. The tapestry of issues arrayed before us is vast and complex, and all the questions are hard ones, with no “school solutions.” It’s now about how adaptable we are and how much brainpower we can bring to bear on behalf of the Navy and the nation, here at the U.S. Navy’s “home of thought.”

Think about some of the challenges facing a new U.S. administration and the U.S. Navy. In no particular order, off the top of my head: the Arctic, piracy, levels of warfare, future naval forces, naval warfare, the global economic slump, environmental and energy security and open sea lines of communication, joint and interagency issues, avian flu, officer career development, significant domestic and international legal issues, regional tensions (and in some cases open conflict), command and control, cyber issues, the changing character of war, diplomacy, ballistic-missile defense, terrorism, nuclear deterrence, and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction—all on top of two wars in progress. This list sounds exactly like the kinds of challenges the Naval War College is designed for, and for which it stands ready to prepare its students and future leaders to tackle. The leadership of the Navy and the nation awaits your recommendations.³

This issue of the *Naval War College Review* deals with some of these issues, and I would like to thank the authors for their timely contributions.

Every generation thinks its situation is unique and that its problems are the most insurmountable; ours is probably no exception. That said, the dizzying speed with which information flows around the world today gives a sense of acceleration of change, and our ability as leaders to cut through the chaff to the really important issues becomes more and more critical, and more difficult. What the teaching and research faculty do here in Newport is serious scholarship—but not for its own sake. They are working to stay ahead of the trends, anticipating the nation's concerns, and providing a context to our students (and, we hope, to the Navy and the nation for issues like these)—as well as the tools for analyzing and critically thinking about them. So it is time to roll up your sleeves and get at it. If anyone thinks that we have it especially difficult now, take a look at life in the fourteenth century—I recommend Barbara Tuchman's *A Distant Mirror*.⁴

Soon, many members of our senior class will most likely be thrust into major staff positions and forced to analyze these complex issues and provide recommendations to people in a position actually to *do* something about them. The War College is a place where officers can come to think deeply about the issues of the day. The College provides in Newport a unique opportunity to read broadly, to ask questions of expert faculty, nationally known guest speakers, and officers just returning from combat in your seminars; to listen to the views of officers from many countries; and also to take some time looking out the window on the Narragansett Bay to think about all of this—then write. In plain English. I promised the CNO when I took charge here that we would try to help the Navy speak the truth to itself. This is my challenge to the naval officers in the student body. I have urged them to just do it.

Shortly after my arrival here, someone asked me how many of our students have what it would have taken to carry on a serious strategic conversation with Ernest King or Chester Nimitz. I told them I was too new here to know but that I would make it my business to find out—and there is not a moment to lose. I hope that our students will let me know when they feel ready for that assignment.

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President, Naval War College

NOTES

1. Stansfield Turner, "Challenge!" *Naval War College Review* 25, no. 1 (September–October 1972), pp. 1–2.
2. William Sims won the Pulitzer Prize for his book *Victory in Europe*, an account of his operations in the First World War. He had previously published frequently in the U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*, but most interesting was a pamphlet entitled *The Practical Nature of the Naval War College*, which he published in 1912 and distributed to all officers in the U.S. Navy at his own expense—you can read it online at www.usnwc.edu/about/documents/SimsDoc.pdf. Rear Adm. Albert Gleaves, for example, was the biographer of James Lawrence as well as of Stephen Luce, among other books. Commodore William Ledyard Rogers (President, Naval War College, 1911–13) was the recognized historian of ancient naval warfare under oars.
3. I would commend to your reading two articles: first, Secretary Gates's article "A Balanced Strategy," *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 1 (January/February 2009); and Dr. Patrick Cronin (of National Defense University), "Barack Obama Faces 8 Global National Security Challenges," *U.S. News & World Report*, 15 December 2008.
4. Barbara W. Tuchman, *A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous 14th Century* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1978).