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THE HEART OF AN OFFICER

Joint, Interagency, and International Operations and Navy Career Development

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The attacks of 9/11 and the continuing conflicts with terrorists in Afghanistan, Iraq, and around the world stand as stark evidence that military commanders today face a changing world and an emerging set of challenges. Beyond the conflicts with extremist organizations, the broad security challenges of the twenty-first century are far more diverse—from counternarcotics to cyber warfare—all of which will unfold in an unforgiving 24/7 global news cycle. Because the extant challenges are transnational and nontraditional, the joint commander of today needs to be able to integrate the efforts of a wider and more disparate set of organizations than ever before—from national intelligence services to charitable giving organizations.

To develop this integrative capacity, the commander must be more knowledgeable in joint, interagency, and international operations. Additionally, in this age of globalization, an effective joint commander must be especially adept at strategic communications and ideally speaks at least one foreign language.

Producing such leaders with the requisite skills in the joint, interagency, and international arenas, however, will not be easy. Within the U.S. Navy, the segment of the officer corps responsible for mastering such duties—the Unrestricted Line community—is already, through sheer task saturation, approaching the limits of what current career patterns permit. Today, line officers must master platform operational skills, develop expertise in technical fields, and gain at least a nascent knowledge of joint operations.

If Navy line officers are expected to develop greater expertise in joint, inter-agency, and international operations, to include strategic communications and ideally skill in a foreign language, something in the career path must give. In light of the new requirements levied on today's commanders, it may be time for the Navy to reevaluate how it educates, assigns, selects, and promotes future leaders. A reevaluation of the officer education, assignment, and promotion system—from “midshipman to admiral”—is in order.

THE NEED

As 9/11 and the 2003 invasion of Iraq fade from our immediate memory, the deeper meaning of these events is coming into better focus. It appears that the nature and range of war and conflict has changed: it has become broader and even more complex. Older modes of war have not been dis-invented, but new modes are upon us. In scenarios now deemed the most likely to face our nation, our forces will operate in different ways and places: what has been termed “irregular warfare” is on the rise. At the same time, however, the possibility of traditional, high-end, state-on-state conflict cannot be discarded. This means that while our military leaders must still be able to operate and command sophisticated combat platforms in all dimensions of conflict, there is an increasing demand for leaders who can win in the unconventional and societal domains of action—where the people are.

Warfare is not an “on/off” proposition. It is more like a rheostat. Given the likely threats of the immediate future, the rheostat needs to be capable of dialing between high levels of traditional conflict and the more likely, lower-end, transnational and irregular threats.

Simply put, the geographical and dimensional locations of war and conflict have shifted in many scenarios. Much of war has moved to the “hearts and minds” of countries and areas we have long neglected. Consequently, American officers will be required to operate in geographical regions different from those for which they have traditionally prepared. For the Navy, the change in location of war has been particularly dramatic, as conflict has moved from the “blue water” into the coastal and littoral regions of Iraq, Afghanistan, the Horn of Africa, and other locations.

The challenge confronting the line community is more complicated yet. Naval officers are doing more than reporting to new, exotic naval commands or sailing in new and shallower waters. Evidence points to a future world wherein naval officers will find themselves in a wide range of significant joint assignments that have not traditionally been filled by the sea service. Naval officers and naval institutions played early and important roles in the establishment of Africa Command, with the assignment of Vice Admiral Bob Moeller as deputy for

military operations. In recent years naval officers have also been called upon to lead combatant commands that were once in the traditional purviews of different services—for example, Admiral Fox Fallon at Central Command and Admiral Jim Stavridis at Southern Command. The requirement for such geographical agility is not limited to just the senior commanders but has extended well down the ranks, to field-grade officers. The recent requirement for naval officers on the ground in landlocked countries (e.g., with Afghanistan provincial reconstruction teams) illustrates this point. The expanded geographical and mission sets naval officers are expected to fill require different skills of up-and-coming leaders.

SOCIAL/CULTURAL OPERATOR AND STRATEGIST

International, joint, and interagency assignments require an understanding of language, culture, and the deep social terrain and environment of an increasingly complex world. Additionally, some proportion of our officers should be capable of effective strategic-level communications in one of the dominant languages in a given area of focus.

The cultural and social terrains of some of the most challenging theaters are, however, decidedly non-Western. In such places the “normal” cultural and linguistic experience of most U.S. officers is of relatively little value. In addition, social, cultural, and linguistic skill requirements apply not just to the senior commanders but, as noted, to field-grade officers. Staff assignments across the spectrum of the joint world, as well as demanding interagency work—from sailing the hospital ship *Comfort* through the Caribbean and Latin America to manning the Africa Partnership Station in the Gulf of Guinea—have pointed to the need for social and cultural and linguistic knowledge.

Such a joint leader will also serve as a participant, even as a “change agent,” to ensure that the larger U.S. military and interagency realms can better work together. Today the unified combatant commands, for example, are parts of coalitions made up of nontraditional entities (e.g., interagency, international organizations, informal international coalitions, corporate). Central to success in this emerging environment is relationship-building leadership. The joint leader is expected to be part of the combined efforts of disparate organizations in conditions that could be characterized as highly demanding. These “mega-communities,” as one author has called them, have complex characteristics.¹

What kind of leader can best support the efforts of such a wide range of organizations? The answer seems obvious: an officer who understands and has served in or around these organizations, an officer who literally or figuratively speaks their languages. Most personnel managers would agree that a career path with more joint, interagency, and international experience makes an officer a

better joint leader. However, officers seeking such experience in their career paths have run into roadblock. The roadblock is an officer education and career model that has been slow to adapt to the new operational environment.

A ROADBLOCK ON THE PATH TO CHANGE?

The system of naval officer development we have today is fundamentally a product of the Cold War, with a very strong emphasis on technical education and a career pattern dominated by platform-related assignments. In a career chock-full of requirements, “wickets” to be hit, those officers who in the past have received rigorous preparation for joint or interagency command did so more by their own force of will than by the design of the Navy’s personnel system. The Navy’s current generation of joint leaders has risen to joint command despite an educational and career system that has seldom been conducive to their acquisition of joint and regional knowledge or development of strategic communication skills.

Competing demands on naval officers’ time, education, and career assignments have made it increasingly difficult to prepare these officers to be joint leaders in an international and interagency setting. To be sure, since the end of the Second World War the Navy has supported an expansion of several joint educational and assignment initiatives (attendance at the war college, completion of a joint tour, etc.). However, in parallel with the Navy’s acknowledgment of the need for more joint education has come an increased requirement for officers to gain technical education, earn technical subspecialties, and take platform-related duty assignments.

With the Navy career already packed in order to meet such demands, one may ask how a larger number of Navy officers can find time for more rigorous joint, interagency, and international preparation. It is doubtful that officers can attain additional joint, interagency, or international preparation without hazarding their technical and platform expertise. It is in that sense that the current Navy career model may have reached its limit. It is increasingly inefficient and stressed by attempts to accommodate the emerging joint, interagency, and international requirements. But to transform the career model from “roadblock” to a “bridge” that leads to a more adaptive officer corps will not be easy. A first step in the task is to understand where the roadblock came from, who built it, and why.

DEEP ROOTS IN THE UNIQUE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE COLD WAR

The naval service has long confronted the question of how to balance competing demands on its officer corps. At the root of the balancing act is the competing demand, on one hand, for specialized technical knowledge required for

platforms of high-tech weapons and, on the other, for an ability to integrate the larger whole in an increasingly joint, interagency, and international environment.

As early as 1944, seasoned aircraft carrier commanders argued that naval officers must begin to train early to understand and eventually command joint operations. Admiral William F. Halsey observed in that year, “From the beginning . . . there should be a broader education for the aspirants of all the services with a view of inculcating into the youngsters the general understanding of the uses and limitations of all weapons and services. This broader education in the maintenance of peace and prosecution of war should begin at the service academies.”² Halsey was not alone in his advocacy of joint and integrative education. As late as 1959, the Navy’s personnel manual made clear the importance of a wide understanding of joint operations and strategy: “Every experienced naval officer should possess . . . a thorough grounding in the principles and methods of naval strategy and tactics and of joint operations with other branches of the armed forces.”³

For almost two decades following the Second World War, Navy career policy and detailing practices more or less conformed to Halsey’s ideas, reflected in the guidance found in the personnel manuals of the day. For example, every midshipman of the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, was at one time educated in a foreign language, and large numbers of midshipmen participated in joint training exercises with Army cadets in the 1940s and ’50s. Perhaps most significantly, a

majority of officers who rose to flag rank had attended one or more war colleges.⁴

But attaining Halsey’s vision of a joint leader became increasingly difficult in the 1960s, due to the presumed implications of more technically complex platforms and their shore infrastructures. To ensure that the officer corps could support proliferating technical systems, the Bureau of Personnel endorsed a career path whereby most

FIGURE 1



Admiral William F. Halsey commanded one of the largest combined military forces the world has seen. His training and education were broad; they included service on surface ships, aviation training, and command of a carrier. Halsey attended both the Naval and Army war colleges, and he served in overseas naval attaché assignments before rising to high rank.

U.S. Navy

line officers were expected to gain a technical subspecialty. Even at the outset, however, Navy leaders realized the difficulty of a triple demand—that the combination of a technical subspecialty and traditional seagoing duty would make it all but impossible for an officer to meet a third requirement, gaining adequate joint operational knowledge. One solution may have been to produce more engineering specialists to fill the growing number of technical billets, but the Engineering Duty community was simultaneously facing major reductions.⁵ When the line community confronted this seemingly impossible triple task, influential leaders decided to emphasize the platform and technical subspecialties over the attainment of wider joint knowledge.

Admiral Hyman G. Rickover, the father of the nuclear navy, was perhaps the most influential leader in this period. A brilliant engineer and a long-serving, adroit bureaucratic operator with allies in Congress, Rickover remade more than the hardware of the submarine fleet. Rickover inspired changes to line-officer education and assignment patterns. More than any other single officer, he was responsible for the increased emphasis on technical education and technical specialization for line officers. Rickover pushed the line community to develop deeper, more specialized expertise on a singular platform—for example, the traditional practice of assigning submarine officers to surface ships was eventually discarded. Rickover also championed the cause of rigorous technical education at the expense of broader education that line officers had been receiving at Annapolis and the war colleges.⁶ In the depths of the Cold War, the emphasis on platform and technology was probably warranted. The nuclear reactor was “cutting edge” and dangerous, and it therefore required officers more focused on its safe operation. With regard to the operational environment, in many cases the Navy operated independently in this period, as evidenced by many covert submarine operations and the “blue water” scenarios envisioned with the Soviet fleet. Thus the low priority placed on joint knowledge did not unduly compromise the nation’s security.

THE COLD WAR CAREER MODEL BECOMES PERMANENT

But the Cold War’s influence on the officer career model persisted for over a generation, and patterns it mandated took hold and deeply embedded themselves into the system of officer development. For example, in the early 1960s the Annapolis curriculum became significantly more technical; the requirement that all academy graduates learn a foreign language was terminated. Career paths became increasingly technical and platform-specialized, with less time for war college education and joint training.⁷ This Cold War model did not incorporate the lessons of the Second World War (Halsey’s emphasis on joint and integrated knowledge) but instead placed greatest emphasis on producing expert

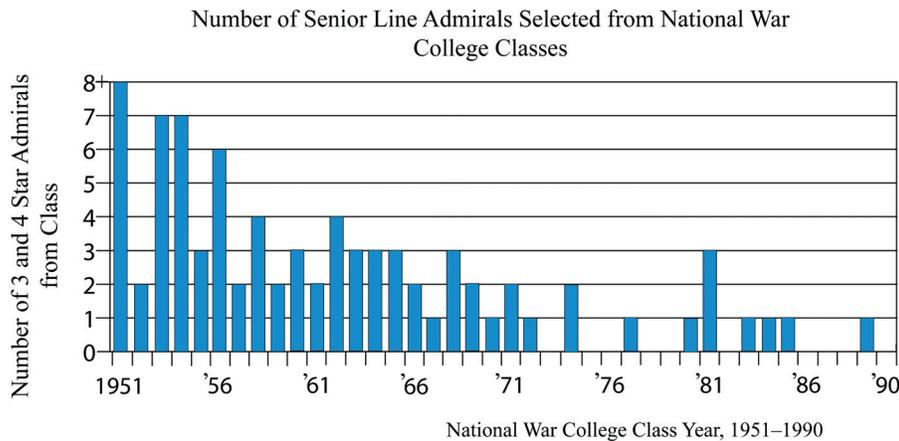
line officers who spent the vast majority of their time in either single-platform or technical assignments, or at best a combination of the two.

One cost was an officer corps with relatively little joint and international education or experience and almost no knowledge of interagency operations. To produce the few joint leaders it needed, the Navy relied on chance, the hope that a small number of officers would push themselves to gain proficiency in non-technical subspecialties and foreign languages. The Navy also relied on the likelihood that some of these officers would volunteer to serve in remote, non-career-enhancing joint and international billets overseas and interagency posts ashore.⁸

Also lost was a focus on the ability to perform effective strategic communications. In the Cold War model, foreign-language education for Unrestricted Line (URL) officers was dramatically reduced. In addition, fewer officers destined for higher rank followed the exhortation of Admirals Ernest J. King and Chester W. Nimitz, who were frequent contributors to U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*, to “think, read, and write” as naval professionals. The officer corps became more expert and skilled in particular technologies but in the process became less joint, international, linguistically agile, and professionally communicative across platform communities. One metric that illustrates this change was the generational decline in the numbers of high-ranking officers educated at a senior joint war college (see figure 2). Yet just as a platform-centric and techno-centric model was producing fewer joint-educated flag officers, American political leaders were coming to expect all the services to be joint and integrated. Congressional legislation, notably the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, increasingly compelled the services to produce more joint and integrative officers. The Navy’s career model was finding itself out of step with the new requirements, and for twenty-five years its leaders went repeatedly before Congress to attain waivers.

Today the Navy acknowledges the need for officers to be joint and integrative. However, it has by and large embraced “jointness” by simply *adding* to Cold War career requirements; little if anything substantive has been cut from the preexisting career path. For example, our academy leaders are told to prepare midshipmen to be experts in engineering but *also* to produce a core of linguistically capable officers. Our personnel managers are dual-tasked to make more officers joint and *at the same time* more technically expert, all the while ensuring that they are not too long away from their platform communities. The officer has insufficient time to master traditional Navy war-fighting skills (e.g., maritime operations), gain more technical expertise, and, at the same time, acquire the joint, interagency, and international experience necessary to

FIGURE 2
NUMBER OF THREE AND FOUR-STAR ADMIRALS WHO HAD GRADUATED
FROM THE NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE (CORRESPONDING TO YEAR OF WAR
COLLEGE GRADUATION)



Source: Data drawn from 2003 Alumni Register for National War College. The data from the alumni register were recorded in 2003. National War College alumni promoted to three or four stars after 2003 are thus not included in the data. The relative dearth of officers with war college education is not confined only to senior admirals. Data contained in the Navy's *Graduate Education Review Board Report* of May 2002 indicates that, when compared to the other military services, Navy officers at the grade of O-6 continued to lag significantly in their attainment of joint education. While between 65 and 95 percent of senior Army, Air Force, and Marine Corps officers attended a war college, the share of senior Navy officers who attended a war college approximated 30 percent. See page 7 of May 2002 report.

serve as a joint commander. We must face the fact: there just is not time in the URL career to “do it all.”

In simplest terms, we have arrived at the limits of the current system.

SO, WHAT DO WE DO FIRST?

We should consider changes in our officer career paths to further enhance joint, international, and interagency skills, while preserving traditional war-fighting skills and a core of officers with advanced technical expertise. Some reforms are already under way. The strategy adopted by the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Gary Roughead, for the enhancement of regional knowledge has pointed the Navy in the right direction. But additional steps should be taken.

Two possible courses of action might help. One would be to lengthen the career of line officers so that they have more time to master all three fields of knowledge: the technical arena, general maritime operations, and joint/interagency operations. With longer careers, officers might be able to master a foreign language at the same time they are educated to be an expert engineer; master the art of three-dimensional maritime operations while they master the technical complexities of their machines; and master the intricacies of the interagency and regional combatant commander while at the same time preserving time to serve in at least some of the Navy's technical divisions. However, this

approach has drawbacks. It is not altogether clear that an adequate number of officers can master all three fields, no matter how long they serve in uniform. Furthermore, allowing officers to serve longer on active duty will necessarily cause an aging of the line, which in turn will slow promotion for younger officers and may give rise to problems of the kind associated with slow promotions in the early twentieth century. In addition, it is possible that as the officer corps grows older it may lose some of its capacity for innovation and new thinking. The Navy has flourished with a relatively youthful officer corps and should adopt a longer career only after careful study and reflection.

An alternative would be to restructure the officer career in a way that does not “age” the officer corps in an attempt to become expert in all three fields. It is possible to structure the line community so as to accommodate new expertise we need now, make the line more adaptive to unexpected changes we know the future will hold, and at the same time preserve core competencies in the platform communities. Specifically, the line could be restructured into three career “tracks” that complement but cut across the existing platform communities; we call them the *Joint/Interagency Operations* track, the *Technical* track, and the *General Operations* track.

The three-track career construct for the Unrestricted Line explicitly acknowledges that its officers are currently expected to do too much in the time allotted. The three-track system recognizes that a growing number of officers need to develop expertise going beyond the platform. The three-track system would point line officers earlier in their careers to paths that would prepare some for joint/interagency operational careers (language, culture, regional knowledge, interagency activities), some for technically oriented careers, and some for more general and maritime operational careers. The modified system would, however, preserve both core platform competencies and the Navy’s culture of “command at sea.”

Joint/Interagency Operations. This career track would emphasize not only joint but also international and interagency operations. It would qualify an officer for command at sea but would also include education and assignments that prepare for increased responsibility in joint and interagency staffs, culminating ultimately in joint command and staff assignments at very senior levels. In preparation for command of complex international and interagency operations, for example, officers would receive several years of cultural and linguistic (and comparatively less technical) education at the undergraduate and graduate levels. This preparatory education would be followed by rigorous sea duty (including command), a majority of shore and staff assignments in their areas of interest, and a minimum of one joint assignment in the United States.

Technical. These officers could also attain command at sea but would receive rigorous technical and scientific educations early in their careers. This kind of officer would command our nuclear-powered ships and fill the ranks of our more technical corps (e.g., Information Professionals, Acquisition Professionals, Engineering Duty Officers, and Air Engineering Duty Officers), so necessary to the functioning of such a complex technical organization as the U.S. Navy. These officers would rise to command as “type” commanders and “system” commanders.⁹ If assigned in the joint world, they would seem well suited for billets in places like U.S. Strategic Command or Transportation Command, and some could rise to the command of functional (nongeographical) combatant commands like these.

General Operations. This career path harkens back to the pre–Cold War traditions of Halsey, King, and Nimitz, and it would help bridge the gap between the more technical and joint/interagency tracks. This type of officer would receive a more general education that included a substantial exposure to engineering and science, and perhaps foreign languages as well. To facilitate a more integrated knowledge of the maritime operational art, the General Operations–track officers would ideally serve in at least two platform communities (for instance, on a surface ship before going to flight school or nuclear-power school), though they would ultimately specialize in one of them (earning aviator’s wings, submariner’s dolphins, or a Surface Warfare designation). These officers would constitute the “surge volume” of Navy officers, who would command at sea but would retain more flexibility than those in the other tracks and so could be redirected to meet changing personnel needs of the officer corps. The General Operations track would typically fill key Navy staff and numbered-fleet commands.

The Chief of Naval Operations and Vice Chief of Naval Operations could be selected out of any of the three tracks, and a balance would ideally be maintained within senior Navy leadership.

Key questions would be: How many of each type of officer would be needed? When would such specialization begin in the career path? What, specifically, would the educational requirements be in each specialty? Determining the answers to these questions would obviously require much more thought and analysis, as part of an evaluation of this idea.

Undergraduate Education

Producing the three variants of line officers requires reform of officer commissioning programs. The Naval Academy, the most technically demanding of the undergraduate programs, currently graduates all midshipmen with a bachelor of science degree and places an especially heavy emphasis on

specialized, accredited technical credentials. However, an understanding of the origin of the academy's heavy emphasis on rigorous technical degrees may warrant reconsideration of this priority. The academy's core curriculum became more technically rigorous as a result of the unique conditions of the Cold War, in particular, the building of what many thought would be an all-nuclear fleet. In 1973, when the basic structure of the current curriculum was put in place, the Naval Academy's dean explained the heavy emphasis on technical subjects: "With the increased dependency on nuclear power plant systems, every major must include enough math, science, and engineering that *any midshipman, regardless of his academic major, qualifies for selection to the nuclear power program.*"¹⁰

The Joint/Interagency Operations undergraduate track would constitute a significant break from the techno-centric curriculum, and it would probably have a predominantly international humanities focus—history, language, culture, economics—with few courses in engineering. While a shift to a less technical undergraduate degree might produce marginally fewer midshipmen eligible for nuclear-power training, such a shift would not appear to hazard an officer's ability to command at sea. (A recent Navy-funded study found little or no correlation between officers' undergraduate degrees, either technical or nontechnical, and their performance in command.)¹¹ In addition to a less technical curriculum, midshipmen in the Joint/Interagency track would enjoy broader experiences outside the Navy, to include one semester of their four years in an academy exchange program (with the Military Academy at West Point, New York; the U.S. Air Force Academy, at Colorado Springs, Colorado; or the Coast Guard Academy, at New London, Connecticut). Moreover, one semester would be spent abroad in a foreign college corresponding with their chosen regional specialty languages.

Midshipmen in the Technical track would pursue degrees, accredited by the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology, that would prepare them for future assignments in highly technical billets, such as command of nuclear-powered ships or duty on technically focused shore staffs. These officers would also become the source of most lateral transfers to the various engineering specialized communities of the Navy officer corps. Typically, these midshipmen would not study languages, but they would still have a minimal core of courses in the humanities, as they do today.

The remaining, probably the majority, of midshipmen would be in the more flexible track—the General Operations track. This progression would prepare them to become the type of officer traditionally known as the "General Line Officer," reminiscent of what the Naval Academy produced until the mid-1960s. To create this type of officer, the more specialized requirements of some degree programs might be relaxed so as to allow midshipmen to broaden their

education, perhaps by taking additional language, humanities, or social science courses. The current academy programs for math/science and the social sciences/humanities might fit well into the General Operations track.

In this General Operations track, midshipmen would seek to establish their foundations of professional knowledge so important to their futures as operators of Navy platforms in the maritime domain. At the same time they would build the academic foundations that could facilitate later flexibility, perhaps a lateral transfer into a Joint/Interagency or Technical career progression.

Inevitably, changes to officer career tracks and education will involve a discussion of numbers. For instance, how many midshipmen would populate each career track? In-depth study would be needed, of course, to refine these percentages, but the general idea of proportionally more General Operations, fewer Technical and Joint/Interagency, would seem warranted. While the number of officers following the Joint/Interagency career path would be relatively modest, the need for such officers is real and growing.

In the post-9/11 period, the Navy's inventory of platforms (the number of ships, submarines, and manned aircraft) appears to have leveled out and is not expected to increase appreciably in the near future. At the same time nontraditional, irregular-warfare, interagency, and joint assignments have grown. An informal count reveals that in 2008 almost 350 general and flag officers held joint/interagency billets, of which 150 were in unified combatant commands and fifty on the Joint Staff.¹² Given such a large and growing demand for experienced joint officers, it would seem prudent to modify the educational experience of midshipmen to prepare more of them for these duties. While there would probably be more of the General Operations than of either the Technical or Joint/Interagency variety, the relative share could also be adjusted every several years to meet changing circumstances.

Of course, the commissioning programs based upon the Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps (NROTC, with units at some 160 colleges and universities) and the Officer Candidate School (OCS, in Newport, Rhode Island) would be part of the pool of analysis to determine the right mix of the three officer core specialties discussed above.

Graduate Education and Professional Military Education

The Navy is already taking steps to increase regional knowledge and professional education at the graduate level, and these improvements should be continued and enhanced. Officers on the Joint/Interagency Operations track would have first preference for overseas study and joint war colleges. Opportunities for graduate education at the nation's best internationally oriented universities should be expanded to serve better the cadre of officers seeking advanced

regional and cultural credentials. Naval officers pursuing the General Operations track would attend a war college, but more likely the Naval War College (in Newport, Rhode Island) than the National Defense University, in Washington, D.C.

A potential hurdle facing the Technical-track officers would be the congressional requirement that *all* line officers complete Joint Professional Military Education (JPME, a formal, phased program mandated by the Joint Staff) in order to be eligible for flag selection. Given the rigors of technical education and specialized nature of many technical assignments, personnel managers would need to study carefully how Technical-track officers would meet the joint requirements. However, one part of the solution might already be in place. Those officers in the Technical career path who attended the Naval Postgraduate School, in Monterey, California, would have the opportunity to earn at least JPME Phase I as part of their program (though waivers might be necessary in special cases).

These proposals for graduate education, like those for undergraduate reforms, constitute only a point of departure and would require more study. What seems clear, however, is the need for closer cooperation, coordination, and even integration of the efforts of the various levels of Navy education—the academy, NROTC, the Naval Postgraduate School, and the war colleges.

Assignment Policy

Sea duty can serve to reinforce either technical skills or operational and joint experience. Along with General Operations-track officers, the Joint/Interagency Operations officers would typically be assigned to “topside” (non-engineering) billets at sea—for instance, as the traditional “Ops Boss,” or equivalent, of ships and aviation squadrons. Given their exposure to general science and engineering as undergraduates, the General Operations group could also fill technical billets, thus providing additional flexibility for detailers. Technical-track officers, however, would fill most at-sea technical billets, such as engineering or combat-systems posts.

In the past, shore duty was an “unavoidable evil,” and one of the key aims in detailing was to keep officers’ shore assignments close to their platform communities. In our proposal, Joint/Interagency-track officers would be assigned early in their careers to joint or regional duty, as interns on the Joint Staff in Washington or in regional combatant commands, for example. Refresher tours in languages would be scheduled into their careers much as technical proficiency is maintained in the aviation and nuclear career paths today. The Technical-track officers would be assigned to rigorous technical assignments early in their careers, and during this first shore tour some would transition to one of the technical corps of the Navy. Again, General Operations officers would retain the flexibility to fill assignments in either of these broad categories.

Promotion and Selection and Assignment to Command

The reform of the Navy's officer corps along these lines will be effective only if the new vision is translated into positive results in promotion and selection boards. In the past few decades, since the demise of the "generalist" officer, however, the platform communities have largely determined who will be the Navy's leaders. Naturally, the platform communities advocate promotion of their best performers; such "platform-centrism" typically offers little support for officers who have spent much of their careers in joint/interagency assignments or education. To effect a lasting transformation, the Navy should change the center of gravity in promotion and selection boards.

THE NEW NAVAL OFFICER?

The current senior generation of officers has answered the nation's call. It has both staffed and commanded more operations involving joint and interagency activity than any other since the Second World War. But many of these officers were "self-made" or "trained on the job," gaining the necessary credentials, experience, and foreign-language skills through their own initiative. Just as the Navy formalized the creation of superb pilots and elite nuclear engineers, so should it enhance its formal mechanisms to create the new naval officer, with the ability to work in the joint, international, and interagency arenas.

One important point—at the end of the day, the heart of a naval officer is not defined by training tracts or career patterns, for these will eventually pass away and be replaced, as they always have.

What lies at the heart of this profession are the core beliefs of our lives: the courage, honor, and commitment to duty we must each find within ourselves. Yet beyond those vital and central elements, there lies the terrain of education, training, and experience. Those elements can and must be shaped to best advantage in this emerging and unruly twenty-first century.

A sense of historical perspective may inspire us to action. In 1919, Ernest J. King, then a captain, reflected on the events of the First World War. Though the U.S. officer corps appeared to have acquitted itself in battle and had emerged victorious against the German U-boat, King knew it could have done better. He recognized that though the Navy had helped "win" the war, the old officer development system and "prewar career patterns had been overtaken by events."¹³

King and his generation profoundly reformed the Navy officer corps in the years after 1919 and laid the foundation for the creation of the officer corps that would lead the Navy to victory in the Second World War. Today we face similar challenges; our officer corps model has been "overtaken by events" and is in need of reform.

NOTES

1. Mark Gerencser et al., *Megacommunities* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).
2. W. F. Halsey [Adm., USN], "Future National Policy for the Composition, Command, Training, and Maintenance of the US Armed Forces" (formerly TS), memorandum to Adm. J. O. Richardson, USN (Ret.), 10 December 1944, National Archives and Records Administration, record group 428-370-43-01, 2-3, box 4 (filed in Secretary of the Navy Sullivan personal papers).
3. U.S. Navy Dept., *Bureau of Personnel Manual* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1959) [hereafter *BUPERS Manual*].
4. B. J. Semmes, Jr. [Vice Adm., USN], "Policy on Education for Unrestricted Line Officers," memorandum from Chief of Naval Personnel to all Unrestricted Line flag officers, 9 February 1966. Semmes's memo indicates that in 1966 almost 88 percent of all URL flag officers had been educated at a war college.
5. W. B. Franke [Under Secretary of the Navy], *Report of the Committee on Organization of the Department of the Navy, 1958-59* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Navy Dept., 1959); R. T. S. Keith [Rear Adm., USNR], *Billet and Post-graduate Educational Requirements in the Specialty Areas in the Line of the Navy: Report of Board* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Navy Dept., 1 October 1959).
6. Hyman G. Rickover, *Education and Freedom* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1959), p. 19. See also Francis Duncan, *Rickover and the Nuclear Navy* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1990), pp. 84, 86. Interestingly, Rickover was himself broadly educated and experienced. He served on both surface ships and submarines, applied twice for flight school (though he was rejected), and read widely. He also translated the World War I German U-boat manual into English.
7. See Mark R. Hagerott, "Commanding Men and Machines: Admiralship, Technology, and Ideology in the 20th Century U.S. Navy" (dissertation, University of Maryland, College Park, 2008). The best evidence of the changing career patterns is found in successive editions of the *BUPERS Manual*, and *The Naval Officer's Guide*, 1951-83.
8. An example of the Navy's approach can be found in the relatively small number of line officers who have been educated in, and are experienced in, Middle East security studies. Based on December 2006 data provided in a Bureau of Personnel inventory of subspecialties, of the approximately nineteen thousand URL officers queried, fewer than fifty were considered qualified in the National Security-Middle East subspecialty (code 2101p). "Proven" subspecialists, officers who followed up their education with assignments in the region, were even fewer, numbering in the low teens.
9. That is, commanding organizations charged with the readiness (formal training and maintenance) of particular categories of ships, or other platforms, and their personnel, or for the development and support of various groupings of combat and engineering systems.
10. Bruce M. Davidson, "The Academic Dean Looks at the Academy," *Shipmate*, no. 3 (March 1973), p. 26 [emphasis supplied]. Davidson was the academic dean of the U.S. Naval Academy.
11. David M. Rodney et al., *Report: Developing an Education Strategy for URL Officers*, CRM D0017231.A2/Final (Alexandria, Va.: Center for Naval Analyses, March 2008).
12. Approximate count derived from unified combatant command and Joint Staff directories in fall 2008. These numbers are inexact and change on almost a daily basis, but they provide a general order of magnitude of the significant number of joint/interagency billets that are now required to be filled.
13. T. B. Buell, *Master of Sea Power: A Biography of Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1980), p. 55.