

PRESIDENT'S FORUM



Greetings from Newport

HARD AS IT IS TO BELIEVE, we're halfway through our 125th anniversary year here at the Naval War College (NWC). This coming June, the six hundred or so graduates of the class of 2010 will be taking their places in the long line of Newport graduates who have gone on to serve their nations and their services with distinction. As the weather blows a gale here in Rhode Island, I'd like to take a moment to reflect about the College's mission of helping the Chief of Naval Operations define the future Navy. The College has been doing this for all 125 years of its history. To do this effectively, we have to think about the strategic environment that is over the horizon, and this is something that has been getting considerable attention here in Newport. In mid-December we hosted a small group of eminent scientists and historians to talk about emerging trends and phenomena, along with the lessons of history, as we proceed into a complex and uncertain future. The discussion was fascinating and helpful as we discussed subjects from the health of the oceans to climate change, causes of societal collapse in ancient history and their relevance for today and the future, and finally what might be asked of the Navy in the future. I tell you this so you will know the U.S. Navy is paying attention to the future, as you will see with Rear Admiral David Titley's article in this issue. Over a period of the past few months, the Navy commissioned a science-based "Task Force Climate Change," which Admiral Titley, Oceanographer of the Navy, heads up. He spoke at the recent United Nations summit in Copenhagen.¹

Another example is "Task Force Energy," which is headed up by Rear Admiral Phil Cullom. During the "Naval Energy Forum" in October 2009, the Secretary of the Navy, the Honorable Ray Mabus, expressed five ambitious energy goals, which he reaffirmed as recently as 21 January, when he signed an agreement with

the Department of Agriculture. In case you missed some of this, here are his broad goals:

- When awarding contracts, appropriately consider energy efficiency and the energy footprint as additional factors in acquisition decisions.
- By 2012, demonstrate a Green Strike Group, composed of nuclear vessels and ships powered by biofuel. By 2016, sail the Strike Group as a Great Green Fleet, composed of nuclear ships, surface combatants equipped with hybrid electric alternative-power systems running on biofuel, and aircraft running on biofuel.
- By 2015, cut petroleum use in the Navy's fifty thousand-vehicle nontactical commercial fleet in half, by phasing in hybrid, flex fuel, and electric vehicles.
- By 2020, produce at least half of shore-based installations' energy requirements from alternative sources. Also 50 percent of all shore installations will be net zero-energy consumers.
- By 2020, half of the Department of the Navy's total energy consumption for ships, aircraft, tanks, vehicles, and shore installations will come from alternative sources.²

What else could come into play as we look ahead? Food distribution/security? The health of the oceans/rising ocean levels? Pandemic? Global economic meltdown? Some combination of these things? As I travel around, I feel there is a sense of anxiety in the country, and you can't help but feel it if you watch some of the recent disaster movies. My message is this: the Navy, with the help of the NWC, is watching and looking ahead at a wide range of possible futures, with a view to anticipating future requirements.

I've recently talked with Mr. Tomas Ries, director of the Swedish Institute of International Affairs, who provides a very interesting, overarching framework that situates not only the developed world but the rest of the world as well, providing a framework for viewing potential sources of conflict. From where I sit, the most interesting thing he highlights is that almost two-thirds of the world's population lives in what he calls "the zone of misery"—and today's drama playing out in Haiti is only the latest example. Though the United States is engaged in wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the response to the agony and humanitarian disaster in Haiti shows how rapidly and effectively things can move into action when this nation decides to do so. The military support of our government departments and agencies as I write this (a week after the quake) has been impressive. For most of the Navy readers, however, we know these operations happen routinely, though normally on a much smaller scale. For example, during my time in *Ronald Reagan* Strike Group, we provided emergency aid to typhoon

victims in the Philippines, and we executed plans we had all discussed and planned well before deploying—all part of normal preparations, though we know each operation, each tragic disaster, will bring its own terrible, unique challenges and complexities. This is all set out in the “Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower”—it’s simply part of the deal today, at least the backdrop.

Getting a useful grip on where the Navy should be headed is hard and continuous work. It requires a robust institution if it is to occur. The Naval War College is such an institution—advancing knowledge in “all matters relating to war, statesmanship connected to war, and the prevention of war,” as its founder, Rear Admiral Stephen B. Luce, said. A quick scan of current NWC activities reveals the scope and intensity of the effort. The China Maritime Studies Institute has expanded and improved its library, our faculty is in demand, and we are working on a wide variety of gaming activities as a matter of priority.³ The student/faculty research going on (Halsey, Stockdale, Mahan groups) is cutting-edge, very interesting, and helpful. Another development, which has come about over the past few years, is the solid connection developing with our fleet commanders as the Navy improves its focus on the operational level of war—this is the goal of our College of Operational and Strategic Leadership. To paraphrase Churchill, we want to develop captains of war, not just captains of ships. The result is that we are having a good bit of “saltwater pumped into Newport” directly from fleet operations worldwide, and there is a nice balance in place.

The natural focus of the incoming students is today’s fight (one in three or four is returning directly from Iraq or Afghanistan). This is where the wonderful adaptability of our faculty comes into play—relating today’s fight to classroom discussions and to our curriculum; however, we know here in Newport that our task is also to provide frameworks to our students based on enduring principles studied over long years. This has always been one of the primary, practical tasks here at the Naval War College. I refer you to Admiral William Sims’s pamphlet that he circulated in 1912 at his own expense to all the officers of the Navy; it can be found online at www.usnwc.edu/presidentsjournal. We also chartered a “center for irregular warfare and armed groups” in November 2008, designed to capture the lessons of this fight for the future, with particular emphasis on the maritime domain.

James Fallows quotes the president of Princeton, Shirley Tilghman: “U.S. higher education has essentially been our innovation engine . . . even with all its challenges at the moment.”⁴ That certainly includes the Naval War College, even knowing that not every student officer will become a flag or general officer or Chief of Naval Operations, and that not every paper, conference, or operational

game will produce “game changing” ideas. As one of my faculty members put it, investing in the Naval War College is almost like venture capital.

The lesson of the history of the College, at least as best I can decipher it from my own reading, is that the value is in the persistence of study and insights gained over time, the capability to sustain them being a function of a robust institution. The other lesson made clear to me during my first year here is that frustration in problem solving leads to innovation—naval officers are nothing if not problem solvers, and this would seem logically to lead to adaptation. A recent report from Britain’s Defence Academy indicates frustration with British institutions, going as far as to call them “incapable of fighting modern wars . . . and suggest[ing that] the Western education system was designed for a previous age and [can]not adapt to future challenges.”⁵ Worth a look for sure. The research and gaming effort at Newport is only half of the equation. The College works to help the Navy adapt to the future by providing a first-class, graduate-level education to future military and civilian leaders, an investment in our ability to outthink our adversaries in future wars, and to adapt to changing circumstances. When I was a student here in 1998, my professors helped me understand the lessons of insurgencies, including El Salvador and the American Revolution. NWC graduates like Generals Odierno and McChrystal are applying those lessons in today’s conflicts. Clausewitz said that war is “more than a chameleon”;⁶ no two wars are the same. However, by providing students with a framework and the intellectual tools we can equip them to think creatively about how to deal with the unanticipated curveballs that are hurled their way. Along with original research, these are the cornerstones of what we’re doing today, what we’ve done here at the Naval War College for 125 years.

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NOTES

1. Bob Freeman, "Oceanographer of the Navy Speaks at U.N. Climate Change Summit," NNS091217-09, 17 January 2010, Office of the Oceanographer of the Navy, www.navy.mil/search/display.asp?story_id=50245.
2. Navy Office of Information, "USDA, Navy Sign Agreement to Encourage the Development, Use of Renewable Energy," NNS100121-05, 21 January 2010, www.navy.mil/search/display.asp?story_id=50710.
3. Tyler Will, "China Maritime Studies Institute Opens Unique Research Library," 14 January 2010, Naval War College Public Affairs Office, www.usnwc.edu/About/News-And-Events/January-2010/China-Maritime-Studies-Institute-Opens-Unique-Rese.aspx.
4. James Fallows, "How America Can Rise Again," *Atlantic Monthly* 305, no. 1 (January/February 2010), p. 46, available at www.theatlantic.com/doc/201001/american-decline.
5. Andre Mackay and Steve Tatham, *Behavioural Conflict, from General to Strategic Corporal: Complexity, Adaptation and Influence*, Shrivenham Paper 9 (Shrivenham, U.K.: Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, December 2009), available at www.da.mod.uk/colleges/arag/document-listings/monographs/091216%20FINAL.pdf/view?searchterm=Steve%20Tatham.
6. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1984), p. 89.



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.