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In My View

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IN MY VIEW

ANTHROPOGENIC WARMING

Sir:

In their article “Arctic Security Considerations and the U.S. Navy’s Roadmap for the Arctic” (Spring 2010, pp. 35–48), Rear Admiral David W. Titley and Courtney C. St. John make the claim that “the prevailing and well established scientific view attributes this [Earth] temperature change to anthropogenic emissions of ‘greenhouse’ gases” (page 35), based on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report AR4, 2007. This claim has been challenged by numerous scientists to the extent that no “prevailing scientific view” exists. Moreover, the only authority in science is that of empirical evidence. All of the existing such evidence supports the opposing scientific view. Indeed the only “evidence” for anthropogenic warming is the output of atmospheric general-circulation computer models. While useful for studies of atmospheric dynamics, they are useless as prediction devices; they cannot even predict the current atmospheric thermal properties. The computed atmospheric temperature increase that is attributed to anthropogenic greenhouse gas (e.g., carbon dioxide) emissions results from assumed amplification of the heating effect of the main greenhouse gas, water vapor. This positive feedback effect is a priori built into the models; no physical justification for it exists. Indeed, all of the existing physical evidence supports the opposite, that the feedback is negative. Can models be improved sufficiently to become realistic predictive devices? Such is extremely doubtful, because of the enormous complexity of the atmosphere-ocean system as well as the complexity of cloud formation and distribution.

The dubious character of the claims of global warming as a result of anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases has been quite well established by the leaked or hacked e-mails from the Climate Research Unit at East Anglia University in England. The former director of the CRU, Dr. Phil Jones, has admitted their authenticity and further admitted that measured atmospheric

temperatures since 1995 show no warming. The current attorney general of Virginia is investigating the University of Virginia for possible commission of fraud by one of its former climatologists. In any case, these e-mails show that even the proponents of global warming have serious doubts and in some cases have “gun-decked” the temperature data.

Do my objections to Admiral Titley’s article mean that melting of Arctic ice and the freeing up of the Arctic Ocean for transportation and exploitation of natural resources is futile? Of course not. The Navy and other agencies of the national government should, however, be aware for planning purposes that the cause of the vanishing ice is poorly understood, the thaw may very well be of short duration, and it may be due entirely to natural resonances in the atmosphere-ocean system.

Admiral Thomas B. Hayward, together with Captain D. K. Forbes and myself, published two articles opposing the “prevailing view” in the January 2010 issue of *Navy*, the journal of the Association of the United States Navy (AUSN). (See my “Climate Change and National Security,” pp. 28–29, and Hayward and Forbes’s “Response to Guest Column [*Navy*, November 2009],” pp. 7 and 20.) In addition, the AUSN published my letter on “Climategate” in the March 2010 issue of *Navy* (page 11).

The writer holds a Ph.D. in physics from Duke University and an M.S. in meteorology from San Jose State University. He is a research scientist, NASA-retired, author or editor of five books, and author or coauthor of 120 papers in the archival literature on various aspects of atmospheric science.

CDR. ROBERT C. WHITTEN, USNR (RET.)

Rear Admiral Titley replies:

Commander Whitten rightly points out that scientific inquiry is evolutionary in nature and relies on empirical evidence to verify theories. This is specifically why Task Force Climate Change (TFCC) has engaged over four hundred experts across 120 organizations spanning fifteen countries to ensure that the Navy has access to the best, and most current, scientific information.

While Commander Whitten is correct that several scientists have challenged the claim that human activity is contributing to climate change through greenhouse gas emissions, this indeed is the overwhelming scientific view. While no

single organization provides authoritative statements on what is accepted science, it is important to note that, based on extensive observational evidence, the National Academy of Sciences, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the American Meteorology Society, the U.S. Global Change Research Program, and virtually every U.S. university with an environmental science program have all independently come to the same general conclusion as the IPCC report that human activity is the most likely cause of climatic changes.

Commander Whitten raises a number of technical points that are currently the subject of debate in technical journals and of continued research in the science community. The main point, which Commander Whitten agrees with, is that the Navy must be prepared to operate in any future environment. Prudent military planning requires anticipating risks to prevent strategic surprise and monitoring trends to adjust planning as required. TFCC is exploring climate futures for the Navy, developing the required policy and planning framework, and monitoring the developing science of climate change to ensure the Navy is prepared to meet all future mission requirements.

REAR ADM. DAVE TITLEY, USN

Oceanographer of the Navy

Director, Task Force Climate Change

PEDESTAL AS WE SAW IT

Sir:

I'm puzzled by Milan Vego's *ex cathedra* comment in the conclusions of his otherwise excellent article ["Major Convoy Operation to Malta, 10–15 August 1942 (Operation PEDESTAL),” Winter 2010, pp. 107–53] that “one of the major errors on the Allied side was the decision, based on false assumptions, to turn Force Z westward. That decision resulted in heavy Allied losses.”

He doesn't explain what the false assumptions were, but let me clarify the situation as we saw it at the time—I was there as a midshipman on board the battleship *Rodney*, with an action station with the “Commander,” or executive officer.

The reason Force Z included two battleships was to provide cover against the Italian surface fleet, based in the Naples area. Hindsight tells us that their battleships were empty of fuel—but at the time we saw them as a “fleet in being,” which could create havoc if they got in amongst a merchant convoy, protected by destroyers and light cruisers. However, as the Italian battleships still hadn’t left port by 1800, we knew we could safely turn back and head for Gibraltar.

The original plan allowed that Force Z would turn back at about 1900 because it would have been foolhardy to have taken *Rodney* and *Nelson* (two 1920s battleships with very primitive anti-air and anti-E-boat capabilities) and the carriers *Indomitable* and *Victorious* (who did not have a night-fighter capability) into the relatively narrow waters of the Tunisian Straits, which were heavily mined and infested with Italian submarines and Italian and German E-boats, with shore-based enemy aircraft to the northeast and the west. Everyone was aware that there would be heavy casualties transiting the Straits on the final leg to Malta, but we were not inclined to offer up a couple of carriers and two battleships for the slaughter.

And as it happened, the carrier *Indomitable* was hit with two or more bombs at about 1845. As an aircraft carrier, she was effectively out of action. She could recover aircraft but as soon as the pilot was clear of the plane it was pushed over the side to allow another one to land. Smoke was billowing out of her and we all thought she was a goner. It was at this stage that Force Z turned 180 degrees and headed back for Gib, along with its anti-submarine escort; don’t forget that just thirty hours earlier, the carrier *Eagle* had been sunk by submarine torpedoes, despite the combined anti-submarine screen.

This left the merchant convoy and its surface escort (cruisers and destroyers) to head south, with minefields and Pantelleria to the east and Axis-occupied Tunisia to the west, making their way to Malta as best they could under cover of darkness. Despite heavy casualties, PEDESTAL achieved its objective, which was to ensure that Malta would be available to us when we came to invade North Africa in November. In the circumstances (and with the forces available) what would one have done differently?

MICHAEL MCCGWIRE
Swanage, Dorset, U.K.

Professor Vego replies:

Let me first say that I appreciate Dr. MccGwire's comments in regard to my article. We apparently have different views on whether Vice Admiral E. N. Syfret made a sound decision when he ordered the entire Force Z to turn westward. In the main body of the article it was explained that the main elements of Syfret's decision to turn westward were that (1) "it was unlikely that the enemy would carry out any further major attack before dark," and (2) "reaching Skerki Bank would eliminate the danger from enemy submarines" (see p. 140). This part of the narrative was based on Syfret's report to the Admiralty on 25 August 1942 (cited in the article), where he stated: "In view of the magnitude of the enemy's air attacks at 1830 to 1850 it seemed improbable that further attack on Force 'X' on any great scale would be forthcoming before dark, and having reached the Skerki Banks, it was hoped that submarine menace was mostly over." Certainly, the state of damaged *Indomitable* was another major consideration for Syfret in making his decision. He was also under Admiralty orders (which are debatable) that all efforts should be made to preserve damaged warships and not damaged merchant vessels (see p. 114).

I still believe that Syfret's decision was unsound based on the facts of the situation known to him at the time (and not in hindsight). First, there was at least about one hour of good visibility (sundown that day was at 1917 and end of civil twilight at 1945; plus, there would be some visibility during the nautical twilight) remaining after 1855 that would allow the enemy aircraft to operate against the Allied ships. Syfret made an error in judgment in making his decision by relying on the enemy's intentions rather than what the enemy was physically capable of doing—that is, his capabilities. He lacked any intelligence indicating that the enemy would not continue with his air attacks against the convoy or that submarines did not pose a threat in the Skerki Channel (in fact Enigma reports on 11 August indicated that the Italian submarines operated in a sixty-by-forty-mile square north of Bizerte—see p. 137). Also, the Italian cruiser/destroyer forces based in Cagliari, Naples, and Messina remained a serious threat to the convoy. In fact, Syfret had precise information from Enigma intercepts on 11 and 12 August about the movements of the Italian surface forces from Cagliari, Naples, and Messina (plus one heavy cruiser from a northern Tyrrhenian port) toward Pantelleria (see pp. 137, 140). He had no way of knowing whether that force would concentrate as planned or be ordered (as it actually happened) to return to its bases.

Yes, despite heavy losses the operation PEDESTAL saved Malta and made a major contribution to the Allied victory at El Alamein. However, this does not justify Syfret's decision to leave the Force X and the convoy. He did not have any way

of knowing how many ships would be sunk or whether the tanker *Ohio* would survive. It was pure luck that a sufficient number of the Allied merchant ships reached Malta. A commander's decision can be properly assessed only by taking fully into account the information he has at the time, not the situation in retrospect.

DR. MILAN VEGO
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