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President's Forum

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Rear Admiral Rempt is a 1966 graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy. Initial assignments included deployments to Vietnam aboard USS Coontz (DLG 9) and USS Somers (DDG 34). He later commanded USS Antelope (PG 86), USS Callaghan (DDG 994), and USS Bunker Hill (CG 52). Among his shore assignments were the Naval Sea Systems Command as the initial project officer for the Mark 41 Vertical Launch System; Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) staff as the Aegis Weapon System program coordinator; director of the Prospective Commanding Officer/Executive Officer Department, Surface Warfare Officers Schools Command; and Director, Anti-Air Warfare Requirements Division (OP-75) on the CNO's staff. Rear Admiral Rempt also served in the Ballistic Missile Defense Organization, where he initiated development of Naval Theater Ballistic Missile Defense, continuing those efforts as Director, Theater Air Defense on the CNO's staff. More recently, he was Program Executive Officer, Theater Air Defense, the first Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Theater Combat Systems, the first Assistant Chief of Naval Operations for Missile Defense, and Director, Surface Warfare (N76), on the CNO's staff. Rear Admiral Rempt assumed duties as the forty-eighth President of the Naval War College on 22 August 2001.

He holds master's degrees in systems analysis from Stanford University and in national security and strategic studies from the Naval War College.

PRESIDENT'S FORUM



The goal is to develop a vision that facilitates our adaptation to a rapidly changing strategic and operational environment. The focus is naval; both Navy and Marine Corps operations are integral parts of future plans. A guiding principle has been to emphasize uniquely naval characteristics that will, now and in the future, contribute to overall national strategy.

The Naval War College has two main missions: to educate future leaders and to help define the future Navy. These are, remarkably, the basic missions for which the College was established over a century ago. The times have certainly changed, the technology of maritime warfare has improved, and the geopolitical landscape would hardly be recognizable to our founder, Stephen B. Luce. But the mission has remained constant—to be a force for change and to serve as the intellectual center of the Navy.

Over the past six months, a team of scholars from the Center for Naval Warfare Studies and the Navy Warfare Development Command has been working to provide a vision for the use of maritime forces in the twenty-first century. Because at the College we are far removed from the all-encompassing day-to-day demands of leading operating forces and the day-to-day politics of Washington, D.C., we are able to step back and extend our focus beyond today's problems to consider tomorrow's challenges. This vision is still a work in progress. However, I would like to share its general outlines as they have been identified to this point.

The Vision. Several analytical parameters were established early on to refine the focus of the endeavor. Since the product is intended to be of practical use in the near term, the team limited itself to consideration of today's Navy as it might evolve over the next fifteen years. By design, this approach fits nicely with work being done by other groups, such as the Chief of Naval Operations staff's work on a nearer-term vision, and the Strategic Studies Group, which is taking a much longer perspective. The goal is to develop a vision that facilitates our adaptation to a rapidly changing strategic and operational environment. The focus is naval;

both Navy and Marine Corps operations are integral parts of future plans. A guiding principle has been to emphasize uniquely naval characteristics that will, now and in the future, contribute to overall national strategy.

An early step in the process was to identify and analyze future scenarios that the nation may be forced to confront within the next decade and a half. Those selected for consideration were known as:

- *Peer competitor.* This scenario postulates the emergence of an expansionist power with global reach.
- *Regionalization of the world.* In this possible future the world is fragmented into competing and potentially hostile economic blocs.
- *Transnational threats.* In this scenario, the United States and our allies are likely to face the spread and intensification of terrorism and cross-border crime.
- *“Arc of instability.”* This projection envisions chronic hostility and warfare in Southwest and South Asia.

Of course, the future can rarely be predicted with any degree of accuracy. In fact, our crystal ball seems to be getting cloudier. It is likely that the future will comprise some combination of the four scenarios above.

The team identified the enduring characteristics of naval forces. In conflict after conflict, we have seen our Navy and Marine Corps used as the nation’s “force of choice,” because they provide a high degree of political deterrence, independence from overseas bases, and means to facilitate bringing other U.S. and allied forces into an overseas theater. Further, naval forces are:

- Rapidly deployable
- Sustainable in-theater
- Operationally flexible
- Tactically agile
- Able to project combat power overseas.

While these are enduring and well-understood qualities, there are also other enduring characteristics of naval forces that account for their increasing contributions to meeting national security objectives as we enter the twenty-first century in the midst of the Terror War:

- *National freedom of action.* Naval forces offer national freedom of action for the application of military power in an increasingly uncertain and complex world. They provide a commander with the greatest operational flexibility and tactical agility, and offer more options than do forces that require

overflight permission or authorization to use ports or airfields in foreign lands. By using a combination of the *right* of freedom of the seas and the *might* of U.S. forces to keep these sea-lanes open, naval forces enable the nation to take the fight to the enemy overseas.

- *Transformation.* Naval transformation is beginning to emerge as the catalyst for the transformation of how the nation applies military power. The ongoing transformation in the sea services is not solely technical, nor is it dependent on new ships, aircraft, weapon systems, or networks. Nor is this transformation radically altering the missions or essential characteristics of naval forces. Instead, the sea services are recognizing that the nation will increasingly project power from “afloat bases” constituted by battle groups, expeditionary forces, specific-mission action groups, and prepositioned ships.

In addition to the vision outlined above, two themes come up time and again: the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps team provides unique maritime contributions to national security; and naval forces best promote increased international cooperation and coalition building around the world.

The Next Steps. The next step of the Center for Naval Warfare Studies team is to identify a number of options that senior leaders can consider in order to position the Navy and the nation to meet the challenges anticipated over the next fifteen years.

In future issues of the *Naval War College Review*, I will update you on our progress in this important study. I hope our efforts will contribute usefully to discussions about the employment of naval forces in the future and will help our leaders focus on the most critical priorities.

This is an exciting project and one that plays to the College's strengths. We have a strong cadre of active-duty officers, seasoned scholars, and talented researchers who are ready, willing, and able to tackle the toughest questions. We also have the freedom to spend the time necessary to analyze these important issues from many different perspectives, with the intent of providing Navy leadership with well-reasoned recommendations that can assist them in making sound judgments. It is an important task that is in keeping with the College's long-term missions, as defined by our founder so many years ago.

RODNEY P. REMPT
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