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MC2 Tom Tonthat | December 17, 2021



NPS Distinguished Alumnus retired U.S. Army Lt. Gen. Eric Wendt offers the commencement address to the 2021 Fall Quarter class during the graduation ceremony, Dec. 17. Wendt encouraged the class of 331 graduates to use their knowledge, remember their classmates, and to tell their colleagues about the educational opportunities waiting for them at NPS.

Recognizing the achievements of the latest graduating class, the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) celebrated its Fall Quarter 2021 graduates on Dec. 17 during a graduation ceremony held inside King Auditorium, and broadcast live on the web around the world.

NPS President retired Vice Adm. Ann E. Rondeau welcomed the graduating class and the family members who joined them for the in-person ceremony.

“I'd like for us to approach this graduation with a heart of celebration for our nation and for ourselves and what we've been able to do to serve that nation,” said Rondeau. “You will make your mark upon the service and the organization that you serve. It is not about this

Friday. It's about next Monday when you go now and embark upon the work that is expected of you and of us as we continue on our lifelong journey of knowledge.”

The commencement speaker was NPS alumnus and retired U.S. Army Lt. Gen. Eric P. Wendt, who most recently commanded NATO Special Operations Headquarters before retiring in early 2021. Wendt highlighted how valuable NPS is for education while congratulating the 331 graduates, including two doctoral degree recipients, and nine international students from seven countries.

“I will tell you what you all know – NPS is simply a national treasure with cutting-edge research and brilliant motivated students from a variety of backgrounds,” said Wendt. “There’s joint interagency with combined multinational thought that pushes forward, integrating technologies with human experiences.”

Wendt, who earned his Master of Arts degree in National Security Affairs at NPS, shared his experience studying on campus and applying his skills for the Army, and how this graduating class can now do the same.

“As you depart back to your commands, you leave with a great deal of new knowledge – including, most importantly, the ability to think through and solve problems and improvements needed to execute our national security strategy,” said Wendt.

Reflecting on how he used his NPS education, Wendt talked about his experience with Operation Enduring Freedom-Philippines in 2002, where he used models from NPS professors to develop a holistic assessment tool that in turn informed the campaign plan used against the Abu Sayyaf terrorist group in Basilan.

“The key takeaway is that all of you will receive this world-class education, gather a significant amount of useful knowledge, and learn not just what to think, but how to think,” Wendt noted. “Don’t leave that process with you when you go back to your unit. Don’t leave it in your thesis.”

In addition to the wealth of knowledge and critical thinking taken in during their time at NPS, Wendt encouraged the graduating class to remember how valuable their peers and faculty are.

“Remember your classmates and stay connected,” Wendt said. “You've got a remarkable network available to you. When you go out and are conducting operational combat missions, it's very rare that you'll find that it is a single country or branch involved. You're going to meet each other again and again all around the world, and you're going to have to solve problems ... You're also going to have to integrate work with a lot of irregular forces to accomplish the mission. So look to your left and right today and stay connected.”

Wendt ended his address encouraging his fellow new alumni to spread the word about NPS to their peers back in their units.

“When you go back out to your units and organizations, don’t keep this a secret,” concluded Wendt. “From the Joint Services team members, civilians, to the interagency, let them know about NPS and let them know about the world class education that’s waiting for them out here in Monterey if they throw their hat in the ring and apply for a term. Congratulations to all of you and your families!”

To watch the ceremony, an interview with award-winning graduates and read to more about the class, visit the NPS [Graduation website](#).