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President's Forum

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PRESIDENT'S FORUM



Newport: Where the Navy Connects to the World

THE EPIGRAPH ABOVE is what the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Gary Roughead, told me within a month or so of my arrival as President of the Naval War College. Frankly, I had very little idea of how true this statement is until I witnessed the Nineteenth International Sea Power Symposium (ISS), which took place in Newport from 6 to 9 October. This conference was the brainchild of Vice Admiral Richard G. Colbert, who was President of the Naval War College at the time the first one occurred, in 1969. Admiral Arleigh Burke was in attendance and spoke at this inaugural event, now forty years ago. After World War II, Admiral Burke had been convinced that many tough issues could be worked out among serving naval officers if they had developed personal relationships. It was this idea that led him to create the international course, known as the Naval Command College, back in 1956, with Colbert as its first director. In 1969, Burke said, “When an old sailor looks back, he finds that the majority of his friends are other naval officers, from his own country and from other countries. People he relies on, people he trusts absolutely, people he likes, and has fun with—whom he knows, respects, and admires—and above all, people he trusts.”

The ISS occurs every two years. It has no mandate, it has no authority to propose action as a body, and it derives no authorities from international law or the UN Charter. It is simply a gathering of naval professionals who get together every two years to discuss issues of common interest and, above all, to get to know each other. Normally, about sixty or so navies show up at these events; however, the publication of the *Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower* (CS21) changed all that dramatically. In 2007, knowing that the strategy would be rolled out at the ISS, almost a hundred navies attended to hear Admiral Roughead, General James Conway, and Admiral Thad Allen announce it. The subsequent response to the strategy has been dramatic. This year, with 104 nations represented (Vietnam and

the Russian Federation attended for the first time), including ninety-four heads of service, the ISS constituted the largest single gathering of senior international naval leadership in history, and what these leaders had to say was equally dramatic. There was a common theme for this gathering—"Connecting Navies, Building Partnerships"—and much of the discussion of speakers, panels, and "breakouts" centered on the participation of maritime forces in voluntary networks to increase security in the maritime domain. Such networks increase maritime domain awareness (MDA) and maritime security, and often these regional networks are a shared responsibility, including interagency and often intergovernmental cooperation. Chiefs of navies from every continent and others were on stage in the newly refurbished Spruance Auditorium describing how actively their services were involved in MDA. Not so many years ago, MDA was a term viewed with skepticism by many of them. At this ISS, not only was there a common use of the term but many were pointing with pride to the strides they and their regional partners had made in trying to achieve it, while working to overcome national "sea-blindness." You might even say that at ISS XIX we were witnesses to the beginning of a global maritime security partnership. The CNO suggested to the chiefs that the Naval War College gaming center be used to work through scenarios and solutions in the year between ISSs—a suggestion that was well received.

For the first time, addresses to the assembled group by the Secretary of the Navy, the Honorable Ray Mabus, and the CNO, Admiral Roughead, were streamed live on the Internet (see www.usnwc.edu/ISS2009). Since the conference was conducted using interpreters in about ten languages, it will take some time for the transcript of the proceedings to be produced, but conference participants should have their copies in the next several months. Beyond the conference panels and keynote speakers, there was much substantive business conducted at ISS in the "white space" in the corridors and during one-on-one meetings between chiefs. More than one told me, "I just took over recently, and imagine, this is where I met all the chiefs of my region for the first time—in Newport." A senior U.S. naval leader indicated that he was able to meet with all the navy chiefs in his region with one single trip—"It would cost the taxpayers much more for me to fly to each individual nation to conduct this type of business." Normally the Naval War College in Newport has between 80 and 120 officers from over 50 countries in attendance, and many of these officers were able to meet with their chiefs of navy during the recent symposium. ISS and its connection with CS21 is a huge good-news story for everyone in the world. From where I sit, maritime security is improving, with a view to obstructing terrorists and criminals, and perhaps even making war less likely. The faculty here at the Naval War College is pleased and proud to have played a part in all this, and we enjoy a very close working relationship with the Navy Staff; it's an exceptional team effort. I think Arleigh Burke is smiling today.

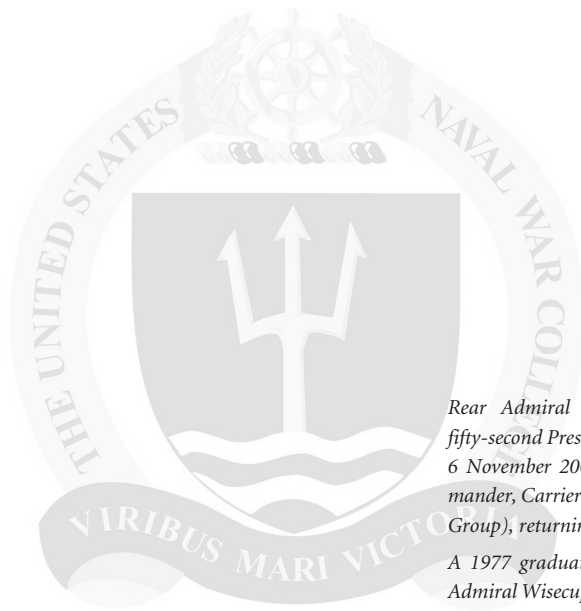
Of course, ISS, while of global importance, is not the only event that occurs here in Newport. It's another example of the rich and varied activities that go on at the Naval War College, as we enter the 125th anniversary of the founding of this professional graduate institution. Recently we co-sponsored a conference on the Arctic with the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute, sponsored a conference on irregular warfare, hosted the editor of *Fortune* magazine (who spoke to our students and supporters), and co-sponsored a conference with the Atlantic Council centering on maritime domain awareness. As I write this, our international students are heading out to visit the western part of the United States, and we have a delegation of Mexican Navy officers observing our Joint Military Operations planning exercise to learn how we use joint war gaming to support our teaching curriculum.

As we did with our participants in the International Sea Power Symposium, I would like to encourage our readers as well as our students to speak up, to speak their minds, to talk about some of these issues that are central to the future of our navy and our nation. It is not enough to be interested; I would go farther, to say you must *engage*. I say this especially to naval professionals—especially our students, in residence and in our distance education programs, American and international, any service or agency. For you naval officers, it will soon be your navy, and the U.S. Navy does not have all the answers. We must absolutely learn from the experiences of others, and we must learn to collaborate with other navies at national and regional levels, to reach out to others working on things of interest to us. Contribute a paper, write an article together—I have told the students they should show me their published articles or rejection slips by the end of the school year.

By the time you read this, we should have up and running our new website “look” and a moderated blog (discussion group) sponsored by the Naval War College, as well as the “President’s Book Club.” (As I pointed out in my “President’s Journal” blog, the first book we’ll discuss is *World War Z*, by Max Brooks; it’s science fiction, but those whom I’ve talked to who have read it, get it.) Let’s get the discussion going about things that matter to us as naval professionals and to the nation. Read, Think, Discover, and Engage. The stakes are too high not to.

JAMES P. WISECUP

Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy
President, Naval War College



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.