

Destroyer Captain: Lessons of a First Command

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professional military education on this topic. The editors are to be commended.

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Stavridis, James. *Destroyer Captain: Lessons of a First Command*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2008. 224pp. \$22.95

The politically correct aspiration for all surface warfare officers is to attain to command at sea. Realistically, these officers cannot begin to comprehend all its ramifications, but they viscerally know it is the Holy Grail. Reading Admiral Jim Stavridis's *Destroyer Captain* is about as close as these officers will come to enjoying the ride until they actually receive their orders to command. It is our great fortune that then-commander Stavridis scrupulously kept a journal during his days aboard USS *Barry* (DDG 52) (1993–95) and has offered to share his experiences with us.

James Stavridis is prolific on this subject, having written extensively on life at sea for the naval professional. Such earlier works as *Watch Officer's Guide* (editor, 1999) and *Command at Sea* (with William Mack, 1999) now serve as textbooks. *Destroyer Captain*, however, is designed to be a good read for anyone fascinated with what life is like behind the doors of the captain's cabin. Fortunately, Stavridis is a writer who is not only good with the small details of daily life but shares a sense of history and awe of the sea. Simply, he is in love with command at sea, and you feel it throughout the entire book.

Stavridis does not purport to tell new destroyer skippers that there is one correct way to succeed at their job, but he has tried to keep to the basics. The “ends” are mandated: the ship should be ready for war. The “means” is where a captain's personality turns seemingly identical structures into radically different habitats. Stavridis adheres to simplicity. Serve good food. Walk around. Have a plan. Smile.

Stavridis, currently the regional combatant commander of Southern Command, was the second skipper of *Barry*. His predecessor, today Admiral Gary Roughead, is the Chief of Naval Operations.

A particularly poignant piece is his account of the tragic death of Admiral Jay Prout, a friend and mentor and always an ebullient companion. Prout had a trademark of passing to friends en route to command a paperback about the exploits of a Royal Navy destroyer skipper who had three ships shot out from under him during the Second World War. He called that book motivation for a successful command. We can place *Destroyer Captain* on the same list.

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Cliff, Roger, et al. *Entering the Dragon's Lair: Chinese Antiaccess Strategies and Their Implications for the United States*. Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 2007. 154pp. \$27.50

This study has already attracted widespread attention from the policy community and media, for good reason. The U.S. military appears poised to face challenges to its ability to maintain access to a variety of regional littoral