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From the Chief of Naval Operations

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NAVAL WAR COLLEGE CHANGE OF COMMAND

From the Chief of Naval Operations, 9 July 2003

Admiral Rempt has acknowledged our VIPs, and I just want to say it's wonderful to be here in Newport. It's always fun to come up here and see great friends. If I started going through the honors and acknowledging all of them, it would take longer than [we have]. There are a lot of them here this morning. I'm here because I believe that this tradition, this event that we are here to observe is very important to our Navy, this thing called the change of command.

Admiral Rempt, Rod, I'm grateful for and I thank you for inviting me to be here. I wouldn't have missed it for anything. That's a fact. This ceremony is important to our institution. In our Navy, we have taken great care to preserve the principle that's embodied in this change of command ceremony. This Naval War College is now a joint war college, and each of the services does this event in its own unique way. For us, it highlights a sacred trust that we give to individuals in command in our Navy, to commanders, to leaders. In this case, we are here to acknowledge Admiral Rod Rempt and that sacred trust that he has held here for the last twenty-three months as the president of this institution.

Of course, trust is an important word, and with trust comes a trust in his abilities. We laid it on his shoulders. I never apologize for that. In fact, I'm proud of the fact that we give authority to individuals and assign them responsibility. Sometimes the other part of that leadership triangle that people like to shy away from is the accountability part of it. But we believe in it. Rod, we're very proud of the job that you have done up here in Newport. You have absolutely performed superbly.

By my calculations, I've been to this site more than any other in the Navy since I've been the CNO. I appreciate the history, the people. But most of all, when I come up here, I love seeing the powerful teamwork that occurs and exists here in Newport, Rhode Island, and that exists here in this world-class institution. I often speak about the asymmetric strength of the United States Navy. Too often we speak in terms of the capability of our enemies, but our asymmetric strength is the selective genius of our people. The Naval War College is the nucleus of that genius, a place where leaders stretch their minds to improve themselves and our Navy and other services. The College has formed leaders like Nimitz and Halsey.

But equally important, it has formed thousands of leaders around the world today who are fighting the global war on terrorism. I'm very proud of what the War College does, because it creates leaders and operational concepts needed to face the challenges that we all are confronted with in this twenty-first century.

Now, we birth future leaders of commands around the United States, places like Great Lakes Officer Candidate School, Naval ROTC—seventy-one universities around the United States, by my count—and, of course, the Naval Academy. These places create beginnings for our people, our bedrock. The Naval War College, on the other hand, is a place for our people to grow and mature and create the vision of who we will be, the future Navy. This place is very, very important to our Navy. I've come to believe that leaders serve an institution and that part of that service requires the establishment of a vibrant legacy. The Naval War College does exactly that. It educates. It inspires naval, joint, international leaders. It broadens their horizons and exposes them to new ideas. The students here of every service are the men and women who will lead our institution when people like me and these two individuals, the principals of this ceremony, are long gone, and I'm thankful for that.

Now, to the officers in our Navy, I frequently say things like, "If you're not growing, you're dead." The Naval War College brings life into the officer corps of this institution. It's vital to the intellectual health of our Navy. So this morning, I just want to be on record as saying: The importance of the Naval War College cannot be overstated. Our future leaders also need the tools, the warfighting capabilities. Let's see. I was here in June last, when I described a road map for the future Navy called Sea Power 21. Since then, I didn't know you were going to call it Team Newport, but Team Newport has worked nonstop to move that vision to reality. The synergy here in Newport between the War College and the Navy Warfare Development Command and the Strategic Studies Group is incredible, and it's unique within the Navy.

In summary, the Naval War College is a national treasure. The output of this institution is vital to our nation—not just to our Navy but to our nation. While we're very proud of your accomplishments here, I believe when we look back on your leadership, we'll talk about it as a time remembered for great team building marked by incredible spirit of enthusiasm. Under your leadership, this institution has taken its place as the center of strategic thinking. I like to say that as leaders we get to talk about policy and put structure and mechanisms in place. You've created mechanisms and forums to advance our visions, and you've stretched the minds of hundreds of young Americans and leaders of other nations of the world. These are the tools that our Navy must possess to remain the greatest Navy that has ever sailed the sea.

As is always the case, success brings with it a lot of responsibility, and there are a lot of rumors about Rod Rempt's future. When you're the object of one of these rumors, sometimes it puts you in a difficult spot. I remember one time when I was in such a position, and a salty retired admiral walked up to me and said, "Congratulations on the rumor," and walked on.

On Monday, the rumors were confirmed and the president of the United States nominated Admiral Rod Rempt to become the superintendent of the U.S. Naval Academy. When confirmed, Rod will have the high honor again of leading one of our most important organizations in the Navy, and I should say one of our most important developmental organizations in our Navy, instilling the spirit of naval service and the essence of naval leadership in our future leaders—again, building upon the legacy of that great institution and the United States Navy.

So my wish for you today is simply this: I wish you a speedy confirmation. Pam, a special thanks to you, a key player, and I know Rod's teammate in every single respect. You made everyone here feel like a part of the family. You're a wonderful friend and a real leader. Your spirit of service is legendary, donating your time and your enthusiasm to students and staff, volunteer organizations, and the like.

Admiral and Mrs. Route, welcome aboard to the Naval War College team. You didn't have to come too far, Ron. I know that you will be the first to say that you have issues and challenges. But I am absolutely confident that you will do an equally superb job here at this institution. Ron comes to this job very well prepared. He's a sailor, a surface warrior. He commanded the USS *Lake Erie* and the *George Washington* battle group. He's a scholar, holds a graduate degree from the Naval Postgraduate School, and is a member on the Council on Foreign Relations. He's an innovator, serving as commander of the Navy Warfare Development Command. He has demonstrated a knack for getting new ideas to the forefront, and more importantly, getting them out into the fleet. Ron, I know you're ready to take the reins. Now, I confess to you in front of this audience, as a matter of record, that when we assigned you to the NWDC last September, almost a year ago now, I had this day, this event, in mind. I know that you're ready to do this.

I'm grateful for the wonderful work that your tenure has produced. I'm a great believer in output. I'm very grateful for the work that your team has produced at NWDC, and I promise you that I will have a relief up here for you for that part of your assignment soon. My challenge to you and this great faculty and this staff is simply this: Challenge our young men and women. We need the creative thought of this place, and we need to keep this War College at the forefront of the Navy's intellectual lessons, and to create for our Navy a robust legacy at this vital institution, leading it to even greater heights.

Ron, help us see the future.