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## President's Forum

Rodney P. Rempt

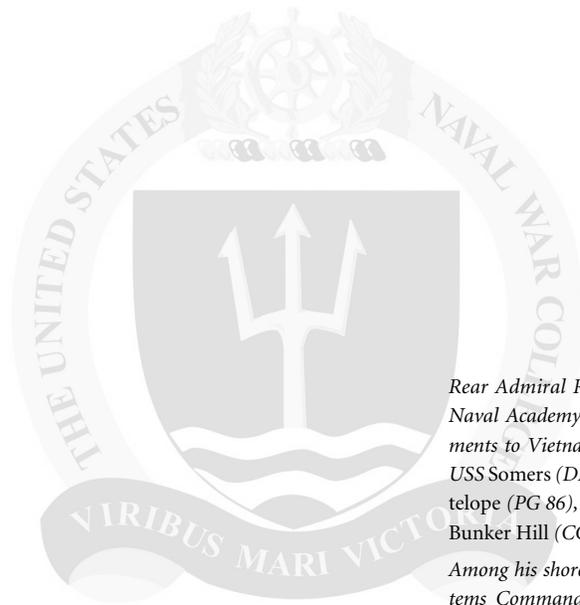
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*Rear Admiral Rempt is a 1966 graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy. Initial assignments included deployments to Vietnam aboard USS Coontz (DLG 9) and USS Somers (DDG 34). He later commanded USS Antelope (PG 86), USS Callaghan (DDG 994), and USS Bunker 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

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*Today, our purpose is to eliminate terrorists of global reach and to deter their state sponsors. But we need effective strategies that will allow us to find and destroy such organizations, stop other states from harboring them, and encourage allied governments to support our essential and common interests. It is no easy task.*

AS WE READ THE DAILY HEADLINES and follow the ongoing action to see the progress we have made in the Terror War, we may find it useful to compare this war with those in our immediate past. The lessons of history, applied to today's situation, best help us understand the nature of the war in which we are engaged. In particular, they suggest which policy objectives can be achieved by military force, and which cannot.

The Vietnam War was difficult militarily, and it deeply divided our nation politically and socially. DESERT STORM, by contrast, was a post-Cold War rallying point. The armed forces enjoyed widespread public support, and the American people were quite unified during that war. How does the Terror War stack up to these two recent experiences?

***Policy and Strategy Match or Mismatch?*** In Vietnam, we never executed effective strategies that could achieve our dual objectives of creating a strong South Vietnam and containing North Vietnam. In the Persian Gulf, our goal was simple—the liberation of Kuwait—and we formed a coalition and developed a strategy to achieve it. Today, our purpose is to eliminate terrorists of global reach and to deter their state sponsors. But we need effective strategies that will allow us to find and destroy such organizations, stop other states from harboring them, and encourage allied governments to support our essential and common interests. It is no easy task.

Unlike in Vietnam or the Gulf, however, the threat is not far from our own shores. We do not have the luxury of, nor would we be successful in pursuing, a

purely defensive or “Fortress America” strategy. If we are to achieve our objectives of ridding ourselves and the world of terrorism, we will have to stay on the attack.

*Suitability of Military Power.* In Vietnam, the terrain and nature of the war worked against our tactical and operational doctrine. In the Gulf, the terrain favored the use of American military power, and U.S. forces were supported and assisted by nearby states. In Afghanistan, there is again support from the larger world community for action, but we will need to develop a military strategy based on airpower and small-unit operations, with only limited local support.

The sheer asymmetry of power between the United States and its enemies means that any violence will have to be applied with an eye to ensuring a just sense of proportionality. But we must also beware of appearing to be an ineffectual giant, possessing an immense amount of force but stopping short of eliminating foes—who then survive and grow more powerful, bolstered, perhaps one day soon, by more formidable weapons of mass destruction.

*Coalitions.* In Vietnam, our major allies viewed the war with feelings ranging from shared commitment (in the case of Australia and the Republic of Korea) to profound misgiving. North Vietnam, by comparison, continued to receive vital backing from the Soviet Union and China. In the Gulf, our coalition was so broad—including our major allies and the leading regional powers—that Iraq was almost completely isolated. In the war on terror, the great and varied sweep of our operations will require us to maintain a worldwide coalition. Initial signs of the world’s support have been encouraging, but we must consider ways of conducting this ongoing war even in the face of increased skepticism or opposition from other nations.

Our own coalitional challenge is undeniable, but at the same time it is important to remember that our enemies too are part of a large and unstable coalition. Our strategy must look to weaken that coalition.

*Prewar Plans and Wartime Realities.* In Vietnam, our prewar plans—based on a concept of unlimited war against North Vietnam and, if necessary, China—could not be realized, given the Cold War political situation that existed at the time. In the Gulf War, even though we had time to study our enemy and the theater, and though we executed our operational plans well, the end state was not very satisfying. In planning for contingencies during the Terror War, we must take into account what has changed and understand that much is still changing; this war promises to be a highly fluid and dramatic one. Still, we must bear in mind that the challenges we faced around the world before 11 September have not evaporated. Many national interests and military realities remain the same. As

we plan for the future we should not ignore sensible plans that have been crafted to deal with other ongoing and imminent concerns.

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### GOING TO WAR IN AMERICA

Recently, the Congress of the United States voted overwhelmingly to authorize the use of force in the Terror War. Congress passed the Patriot Act in the Senate 98–1, and in the House 357–66. United Nations Security Council Resolution 1373 confirmed an unequivocal condemnation of the terrorist attacks. The UN General Assembly agreed, in Resolution 56/1.

Nato took immediate steps for the invocation of article 5 of the Washington Treaty. This article states that an armed attack against one or more of the allies in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all. Finally, the European Union issued a statement in which it declared that the United States “and the EU would work in partnership to combat the evil of terrorism.” This degree of support is unprecedented.

Let us go back thirty-seven years. Congress authorized U.S. intervention in Vietnam by the Tonkin Gulf Resolution. This was passed in the Senate by a vote of 88–2 and in the House 416–0, votes even more overwhelming than the recent ones. The United States took its case to the United Nations, but after much talk, no action was taken in support of the United States, mostly due to the opposition of the Soviet Union.

Prior to the start of offensive operations in the Gulf War, the joint resolution of Congress authorizing use of force to oust Iraq from Kuwait passed 250–183 in the House of Representatives and only squeaked by (52–47) in the Senate—the smallest margins by which Congress ever voted for war. DESERT STORM, however, was backed by a unanimous UN Security Council Resolution (678) authorizing military force.

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The attacks of 11 September have not somehow eliminated other threats to our security and to that of our friends and allies. For instance, in Asia the scale of terrorism in the new century should make it plain that the threat of ballistic missile technology is no longer an academic matter. We should expect enemies who have ballistic missiles to be more willing to use them.

*Social Dimensions of Strategy.* In Vietnam, a lengthy and inconclusive war aroused unprecedented opposition and dissent within American society. In the Gulf, the American people rewarded clear goals and a successful strategy with almost unqualified support. Today the nation is united behind the efforts of its government far more than in Vietnam or even the Gulf. As the war against terror becomes longer and its campaigns more numerous, however, the continuance of that support will depend on tangible results, both at home and overseas.

This is all the more troublesome because there is now a genuine sense of personal risk among ordinary Americans; they understandably wish to see progress against an enemy who has struck a very personal blow against them and their families.

*War Termination and Postwar Settlements.* In Vietnam, we consistently refused to scale back our objectives despite evident lack of success, paving the way for an eventual and complete defeat. In the Gulf, we rapidly terminated the war on the basis of our original, limited objectives. The American government and the international community are already addressing the difficult problem of how best to govern postwar Afghanistan. But restoring Afghanistan will be only one part of restructuring international life in the Terror War. It is difficult to say with any confidence what the world, once rid of the threat of large-scale terrorist violence, will look like, but it is a question we must keep in mind as we move forward.

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### **CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS GUIDANCE FOR THE TERROR WAR**

*To All Commanders, Commanding Officers, and Officers in Charge,  
19 September 2001*

*Mission Comes First.* Together with our sister services, other government agencies, and allies and friends around the world, we will employ our capabilities where they will be most needed, when they will be most effective. The mobility and agility of naval power will be called upon to hunt transnational terrorists. Be prepared to act swiftly and accurately.

*Wartime Footing.* The president has stated we are at war with terrorism. We leaders must draw upon our manpower and current readiness to accomplish that mission. Thanks to your collective efforts, manpower levels in the fleet are better than they have been in years. That remarkable achievement occurred because we made it a priority. We are winning the battle to retain the right people and fight attrition. Current readiness is also solid, and resources coming from Congress in [fiscal year 2002] will be the best we've seen in over a decade. My guidance here is simple: draw upon these strengths to be ready!

The war against terrorism will not be short or easy. It will involve all commands, ashore and afloat. Each of us is now on the front lines. Enhanced force-protection measures are here to stay. We must all learn to implement higher and more stringent measures in an effective way: be part of the solution. We must also ensure that all our people, including our families, know what is expected of them.

Our nation will call upon the full might of the active and reserve force, acting together. In addition to providing fleet augmentation, naval reserves have many invaluable skills not resident in the active forces. We will be relying on these skills in the months ahead.

Total unity of effort is needed to combat global terrorism. All Americans will serve together in this struggle, including our shipmates of Arabic descent and of the Islamic faith. Loyalty to fellow citizens must be stronger than the suspicion that our enemies wish to instill.

ADMIRAL VERN CLARK, U.S. NAVY, *Chief of Naval Operations*

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One thing is certain—with each successive piece of the terror network that we destroy, we run the risk of great instability in the Middle East and South Asia. On one hand, the eventual return to peace must reflect the achievement of our immediate goal of destroying the terrorist infrastructure. On the other, we must

look to the situation that will arise in the wake of a series of campaigns against terror groups and their state sponsors, and ensure that we do not proliferate long-term threats by the way in which we resolve near-term problems.

*Civil-Military Relations.* In Vietnam, our civilian and military leaders never resolved the basic contradiction in their respective approaches to the war—that is, of pursuing a limited war with immense military means. In the Gulf, there was a conscious and generally more successful attempt by military and political leaders to ensure a greater harmony between military strategy and policy goals. The Terror War, with its promise of a series of campaigns in various parts of the world, demands especially close civil and military coordination. Civilian leaders will have to be kept cognizant of what the armed forces are, and are not, capable of doing; senior military commanders will have to strive to ensure that proposed strategies are accurately directed at the achievement of the government's political objectives. Both communities will have to strive to make sure that these issues are properly understood by the American public.

The added challenge in the Terror War is secrecy. In Vietnam and the Gulf, operational plans were kept secret; now entire operations must be conducted without informing the public. This will require a new level of trust between the government, the people, and the military; each will be required to make decisions and evaluate results in an environment where information is, by design, limited.

RODNEY P. REMPT  
*Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy*  
*President, Naval War College*