

2002

President's Forum

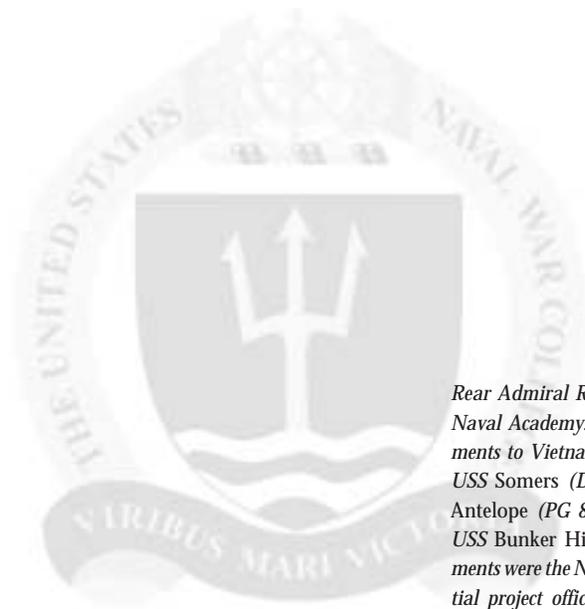
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Rear Admiral Rempt is a 1966 graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy. Initial assignments included deployments to Vietnam aboard USS Coontz (DLG 9) and USS Somers (DDG 34). He later commanded USS Antelope (PG 86), USS Callaghan (DDG 994), and USS Bunker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



I believe the carnage at “ground zero” and the Pentagon has aroused the people, but I do not yet see the commitment necessary to carry the war to its ultimate conclusion. This commitment will not materialize until it is widely recognized that the terrorists have made a frontal assault on the very freedoms we hold so dear.

WHEN THE HISTORY OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY is finally written, scholars may judge that its last decade was among the most dangerous periods that America ever faced. The danger came not from the arsenal of a dedicated enemy but rather from within our own nature. The American people, the media, and even members of the uniformed services were lulled into a sense of security and invulnerability that blinded them to the very real and growing dangers at hand.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall and the ensuing collapse of communism around the globe, Americans reluctantly accepted the mantle as the world's only superpower. We naively believed that this was a shield that would protect us from evils around the globe. Our attention was turned to the growth of “dot-coms,” the Dow's climb to the ten-thousand mark, and our seeming infatuation with material possessions. U.S. military forces declined precipitously during this period—naval ships down by 40 percent, land and air forces cut by more than one-third. Even more alarming was that within the lifelines of the Navy, the sense of urgency that had always motivated shipmates to train hard and be ready to face combat, perhaps as soon as the next watch, was replaced with a sense (and an unrealistic hope) that we might never again smell the cordite and feel the heat of combat.

AMERICA AT WAR

The horrific events of 11 September were the latest in a series of national “wake-up calls.” The warning signs had been clear: Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, the Marine barracks in Lebanon, Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia, U.S. embassies in Africa, and USS *Cole* in Yemen. We simply failed to take

adequate action. We treated these attacks as single events rather than as a series of battles in a new kind of war.

We know that this war is different in nature from any we have fought in the past. Clausewitz has taught us that “no one starts a war—or rather, no one in his senses ought to do so—without first being clear in his mind what he intends to achieve by that war and how he intends to conduct it.” Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld helped define how we will know we have won: “The ultimate victory in this war is when everyone who wants to can . . . get up, let your children go to school, go out of the house and not in fear, stand here on a sidewalk and not worry about a truck bomb driving into us.”

I fear that the true gravity of the situation has even yet to be recognized and embraced within the national psyche. I am concerned when I see evidence that the reality of the new Terror War is being underestimated or forgotten and that the initial sense of urgency that arose in the days and weeks after the attack is being replaced with a feeling that “as soon as this Afghanistan thing is over we can go back to the good old days of the nineties.” We must argue against the logic that says that the lack of a second major attack on America means we either have subdued our enemy or have secured our borders (and our skies) so well that another incursion is impossible.

We dare not underestimate our enemy’s cunning, viciousness, or resolve. We must guard against the false comfort of a quick, easy, and partial solution that fails to achieve our objectives and the total victory that we must, as a nation, rally to support. For we are fighting for our basic beliefs and freedoms as Americans, the freedoms guaranteed to us by the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the democratic rule of law. These freedoms were violently taken away from those who died in lower Manhattan, at the Pentagon, and in that field in Pennsylvania. That is why we must act. It turns out that there *are* some things worth fighting for.

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**ON BOARD USS JOHN F. KENNEDY (CV 67),
preparing to launch a combat strike in support
of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM:**

Good evening onboard *John F. Kennedy* and Carrier Air Wing Seven.

We are currently proceeding at best speed to our launch point for tonight’s strikes, off the coast of Pakistan, nearly 700 miles south of our targets in Afghanistan. At midnight, CVW-7 will launch into the dark night and strike their first blows of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, the war on terrorism. For us this is a culminating point in space, a culminating point in time, and a culminating point in history.

Our enemy is a group of fanatics, who pervert the peace of Islam and twist its meaning to justify the murder of thousands of innocents at the twin towers of New York, at the Pentagon, and in a field in Pennsylvania.

They hate us and attack us because they oppose all that is good about America. They hate us because we are prosperous. They hate us because we are tolerant. They hate us because we are happy. Mostly, they hate us because we are

free and because we will "pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend or oppose any foe to assure the survival and success of liberty." Make no mistake—this is a fight for Western civilization. If these monsters are not destroyed they will destroy us, and our children and children's children will live in fear forever.

America is the only nation that can stop them and destroy them. Only America has the strength of character and the vast resources to hunt these fanatics down anywhere in the world. We have friends and allies but we are the leaders of the world our forefathers made and died for. Our naval power has been the principal weapon of our resolve. Great ships and great crews have gone before us—*Enterprise*, *Carl Vinson*, *Kitty Hawk*, *Theodore Roosevelt*, *John C. Stennis*. Tonight, our enemies will feel the power of USS *John F. Kennedy*. It is now our turn to strike for justice and we will strike hard.

Millions of Americans wish they could be here tonight with us. They saw the twin towers fall, and watched helplessly, wanting to do something to defend America and our way of life. For us tonight, that wait and that helplessness are over. We have reached the point where we are all part of something so much greater than ourselves. For the rest of our lives, no matter whether we stay in the Navy or move on to civilian life, no matter what we do or where we go, we will remember that on 10 March 2002 we came together and struck a blow for freedom. All of us are volunteers. Most of us joined the Navy to serve our country and better ourselves. Tonight and in the nights to follow we are given the opportunity of a lifetime, a chance to truly make a difference in the world. Our namesake, John F. Kennedy, wrote that "a single person can make a difference, and every person should try." Tonight, we can make a difference!

We represent America in all its power and diversity. We are men and women, rich and poor, black and white, and all colors of the human rainbow. We are Christian, Jew, and yes, Muslim. *We are America*.

This war will not be short, pleasant, or easy. It has already required the sacrifice of our firefighters, our policemen, our soldiers, our sailors, our airmen, and our Marines. More sacrifices will be made. In the end we will win, precisely because we are those things that the terrorists hate—prosperous, happy, tolerant, and most of all, free.

Those Americans who wish they could be here with us are, in fact, here with us in spirit. Never before in American history has our nation been so completely unified and resolute in purpose. They are cheering us on, praying for our safety and our success. Our families are behind us 100 percent. We will not let them down. We are, and will be, men and women of honor, courage and commitment. As Abraham Lincoln said, America is "the last, best hope" of the world. Tonight we hold a shining beacon of that hope. We shall keep it burning brightly.

Stay sharp. Stay focused. Stay safe. Use the training that has made you the best sailors in the world. Trust in your faith, and in your shipmates. God bless us all, and God bless America.

CAPTAIN RON HENDERSON, U.S. Navy, *Commanding Officer*

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Scholars at the Naval War College have studied war for all of the College's 118-year history. These studies have revealed that the American people are slow to anger and accept war as an instrument of national policy only when national interests are clearly at stake. Once aroused and fully committed to the cause, however, America and her people cannot be defeated. I believe the carnage at "ground zero" and the Pentagon has *aroused* the people, but I do not yet see the commitment necessary to carry the war to its ultimate conclusion. This commitment will not materialize until it is widely recognized that the terrorists have made a frontal assault on the very freedoms we hold so dear.

- We value *life*—but they have callously stolen the futures of thousands of our citizens, while threatening the safety of millions of others.
- We value *liberty*—but they seek to destroy the political and economic systems that ensure that every American can choose his or her own profession, religion, and lifestyle.
- We value the *pursuit of happiness*—but the shadowy soldiers of terrorism seek to replace the hard-earned sense of happiness enjoyed by our citizens with uncertainty, fear, and despair.

We have fought before in defense of these values. We must do so again, and with a degree of commitment even stronger than before.

WHAT PRICE WILL WE PAY?

The American way of life was created, and has been maintained, through the expenditure of “blood and treasure.” The time, regrettably, has come again when we must invest these precious resources to ensure that future generations can share in the American dream. You have read the words, above, of one American warrior, the commanding officer of an aircraft carrier serving on the front lines in our war on terrorism. He has described in eloquent terms what the war is all about. Stay alert, stay committed, and stay free!

RODNEY P. REMPT

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