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## President's Notes

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*We all live in this hemisphere; that can't be changed. Although some of us live in the North and some in the South, we are all Americans.*

## President's Notes

**T**HIS WILL BE MY LAST OPPORTUNITY to communicate with you via the President's Notes. By the time you read this issue of the *Naval War College Review*, I will have departed the College, following a wonderful five-year tour that was one of the true highpoints of my career. Barbara and I are off to DuBois, Pennsylvania, where I will serve as the Campus Executive Officer (CEO) of the Penn State University campus in that city.

In one of the first President's Notes, which appeared shortly after my arrival in Newport, I wrote of the great importance of Latin America to the United States and pointed to the fact that policies and restrictions adopted by this country on providing equipment and training had caused the once close military-to-military ties between our nations to erode. During the last five years I have travelled to several South American countries, hosted scores of visitors from the southern part of this hemisphere and participated in four meetings of the

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Admiral Strasser holds a B.S. from the Naval Academy, two master's degrees from The Fletcher School, Tufts University, and from the same school a Ph.D. in political science. He graduated from the command and staff course at the Naval War College in 1972. He commanded the USS *O'Callahan* (FF 1051), Destroyer Squadron 35, Cruiser-Destroyer Group Three, and Battle Group Foxtrot. His seven years in Washington included two years in the office of the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff.

presidents and directors of the war colleges of the Americas. All of these experiences served to reinforce my original judgments.

I am convinced that the nations of South and Central America want to strengthen our friendship. This is particularly true of their navies. Senior officers from the navies throughout this region—and I have spoken to representatives of all the South American navies and most of those in Central America—speak unreservedly of the need for closer ties between our services.

When I first travelled to Chile, in the summer of 1962, I embarked for short periods at sea on a cruiser and a submarine, both of which had been purchased from the United States. This was true of much of the Chilean fleet. All the senior officers I encountered had been trained in our country, and spare parts to keep their ships and aircraft operating came from the United States. The relationship between our navies was warm and friendly, and the benefit of close ties was acknowledged by all. The same feeling was very much in evidence the following year when I travelled to Argentina to join that country's sail training ship, *ARA Libertad*. The officers I met during that six-month exchange tour had been trained in the United States and were proud of it. They spoke warmly of the time they had spent in our country and of the friendships they had developed here.

Last year, some three decades later, I returned to Chile to attend a conference hosted at the Chilean Naval War College in Valparaiso. As I stood in the Director's office looking out at the Chilean fleet, I was deeply saddened by the changes that had occurred during the intervening years. Not a single ship before me had been constructed in the United States; most were of European origin, while some had been built in Chile. Training on the ships and their systems was done not in this country but in the nations where they had been built.

The day prior to writing this essay, I bade farewell to an Argentine commander who was completing a two-year tour here at the College. He said how pleased he was to have had this experience, not having been in the United States previously—his duty overseas had all been in Europe. Years ago it would have been unheard of for a senior officer in a major South American navy not to have been trained in this country; today it is commonplace.

How did this happen? It occurred due to misguided policies that sought to limit the ships and other military equipment that could be sold to countries in the southern part of this hemisphere, in the erroneous belief that this would prevent such weapons from being acquired at all. As we have seen, it did not, and we are today paying the price in terms of diminished relationships.

There is now, however, a window of opportunity to rectify our errors of the past. With one exception (Cuba), all the countries of this hemisphere have democratically elected governments—some of them fledgling democracies to be sure, but democracies nonetheless. We have pushed hard to assist in this

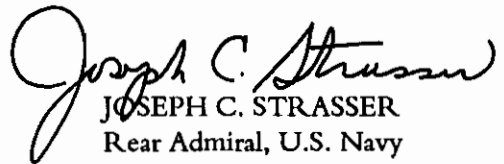
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process. The time is right to cement our political, economic, social, *and military* ties with the countries of greatest importance to us . . . those in our own hemisphere.

Most of our friends to the south would be very receptive to a change in United States policy. Senior military officers throughout the region would welcome, and in many cases are themselves actively seeking, closer ties with the United States. They are looking for a hemispheric leader who will pursue a consistent and reliable policy of friendship and cooperation, not one who turns the spigot of camaraderie on and off.

We all live in this hemisphere; that can't be changed. Although some of us live in the North and some in the South, *we are all Americans*. Let's work together to strengthen our ties and strive to restore the close military-to-military bonds we once had.

I appreciate very much your support of the Naval War College and the *Review* during my tenure as President. Good luck and God bless you all.

  
JOSEPH C. STRASSER  
Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy  
President, Naval War College

