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President's Notes

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PRESIDENT'S NOTES

Changes in tactics have not only taken place after changes in weapons which necessarily is the case, but the interval between such changes has been unduly long. An improvement of weapons is due to the energy of one or two men, while changes in tactics have to overcome the inertia of a conservative class.

Mahan, 1840-1914

Throughout society we have witnessed those improvements in technology that have outstripped our conceptual progress. The Naval War College, long identified as a seedbed for the development of naval and maritime strategy, policy, and tactics, attempts to close this gap.

Our academic program is designed to produce graduates with an effective blend of intellectual perspective and technological awareness and skills—with the former never surrendering to the latter. This is a particular challenge with regard to sound tactical decisionmaking. Detailed training in specific tactics, hardware and doctrine is the proper business of the various fleet training groups and other specialized schools. Education in principles and concepts is the business of the Naval War College. However, neither can be done in isolation from the other if we are to have a common understanding of the effective application of seapower throughout the Navy. In recent years, a great deal has been accomplished in

At Newport, the course in Naval Operations concentrates on the principles, historical analysis and logic of naval operational decisions. A central objective must be an improved understanding of how to optimize the use of naval forces in situations ranging from peacetime presence to nuclear war. The course must consider the capabilities and limitations of both U.S. and potential aggressor navies, and the military significance of these factors in strategic and tactical situations. All these requirements are capably fulfilled by our Naval Operations Department.

Separate curricula are structured for the senior and intermediate students. The course for the seniors develops an understanding of the strategic as well as the tactical dimensions of naval planning and operations, with emphasis on the selection, coordination and application of naval forces at the theater and fleet commander level. Intermediate students start with an examination of the historical, scientific and empirical bases for tactics, and then put their logic and experience to work in making decisions on the employment of naval forces at the Battle Group level in many scenarios.

The pervasive theme of the courses is decisionmaking; to make optimum use of assets in developing tactics and to

choose optimum tactics to achieve a strategy. Four component courses develop this theme. An Introduction and Perspective component explores the philosophical and historical roots of warfare, demonstrates the importance of naval history in understanding the value of modern naval forces, considers the application of the principles of war to naval operations, and provides a first look at the capabilities and limitations of our principal adversary.

Naval Missions and Functions familiarizes students with the relationships between policy, strategy and tactics and the functions of naval power that may be used to implement national military or diplomatic policies. The uses and implications of sea control in conventional and nuclear war are analyzed, as are the roles of air strike warfare, amphibious assault, shore bombardment and missile strikes in power projection. The mutually supportive nature of sea control and power projection is stressed. Additionally, the significance of geography and the vital role of strategic mobility in modern naval warfare are highlighted.

Elements of Tactics is a fundamental survey of the interrelationships between platforms, systems and tactics. The capabilities and limitations of weapons systems and sensors are compared and analyzed through case studies and tactical simulations or engagement analyses. Using current intelligence and command and control ideas, students examine the ways that enable commanders to combine numbers and types of platforms more effectively. Rules of engagement and the aspects of international law that influence the tactical commander are also studied.

In the 4th century B.C., Sun Tzu described the need for what we now call a "Commander's Estimate of the Situation." He realized the vital and direct link between proper study and planning before a military engagement

and success in the battle itself. In Naval Operational Planning and Gaming, the fourth component, students explore the logical thought process of sound planning, and then practice it in student staffs and multiple scenarios. The culmination of this section, and of the whole Naval Operations curricula, is the realistic play of computer-assisted war games at the Battle Group and Theater Command levels. Total Force and the full range of weaponry, conventional and nuclear, are stressed.

Woven through these four course components are the considerations and requirements of peacetime naval operations, surveillance, crisis action and deterrence. Each of these is considered in terms of its attributes as a part of national policy and as a tactical or strategic instrument. These lead to a clear understanding of the political and legal institutions and governmental framework through which naval forces are controlled.

In addition to the core curricula, the Naval Operations Department administers Total Force Week and the Tactical Symposium. Total Force Week initiates the college's academic year and has as its objective the examination of all U.S. armed forces and their reserves, allied forces, and elements of the national economy that contribute to a "total force" capable of supporting U.S. interests abroad. This outlook focuses the students' attention on the broad array and mutually supportive nature of U.S. and friendly military assets, and the necessity of such a view in getting a sufficient military force active immediately in the face of limited-size individual Services and austere defense budgets.

The Tactical Symposium (established this year) aims at improving and promoting tactical development and professionalism through group discussion by students and faculty of the War College, fleet officers, and selected persons from other activities involved

in the development, use and evaluation of naval tactics. The group reviews and evaluates ideas and concepts with a view to recommending some for fleet trial, some for other Service implementation, and others for research and discussion by the Naval War College students over the next year. We can do a great deal more in this area, but we have made a start.

In summary, the Naval Operations courses draw upon historical experience where needed, are strongly flavored with science, logic and example and are increasingly meshed with the tactical thinking throughout the fleet.

The teaching is enriched by a faculty that is strong in operational experience and competence and of proved intellectual ability. The ultimate purpose of this blend of structure and content is to increase the tactical awareness of our future operational commanders, and to develop the judgmental and imaginative bases for sound tactical decisionmaking.



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