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## DECISION MAKING AND THE SCHOOL OF NAVAL COMMAND AND STAFF

by **Commander Albert J. Ashurst,**  
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Faculty, School of Naval Command and Staff

It is the job of all of us—a group of men working together with one purpose in mind—to devise the best course of instruction possible . . . to improve our judgment, our thinking and reasoning processes and our ability to present our views to others.<sup>1</sup>

With these words Capt. E. F. McDaniel, U.S. Navy, Head of Department, officially inaugurated the first Naval War College Naval Command and Staff Course on 11 August 1950. His words, however, marked not only an official beginning but an end—the end of the many years of planning and work that culminated on that auspicious August day.

The actual beginning was in 1919. A board comprised of Admirals Knox, King, and Pye made a study of officer education in the Navy which recommended that a Junior Course be established at the Naval War College for officers with 10 to 20 years service with the objective of providing the necessary education to prospective commanding officers of single units. However, it wasn't until 1923 that such a Junior Course was established with the mission of preparing junior officers for staff duties dealing in tactical problems and minor strategies. The course was designed for the education of lieuten-

ant commanders and lieutenants with over 6 years' service, with a proviso that permitted the attendance of Army and Coast Guard officers.<sup>2</sup> From 1924 through 1932 an average of 33 officers graduated each year from a 6-month course, and by 1933 the length of the term had been increased to 1 year. The curriculum at this time covered naval operations, both in peace and war, minor naval strategy, conduct of naval campaigns, logistics, and international law.<sup>3</sup>

From 1934 to 1941 the average number of graduates dropped to 22 a year, although in August of 1940 General Order 133 was issued which officially established the Junior Course and set its length at 11 months.<sup>4</sup> The actual implementation of the order was overtaken by events that forced the disestablishment of the Junior Course on 15 May 1941 by the Chief of the Bureau of Navigation.<sup>5</sup> In its place a short-term Staff Preparatory Course was initiated for approximately 50 Naval Reserve lieutenants and lieutenant commanders.

With the successful conclusion of World War II the need for the Junior Course was again realized, and on 1 July 1946 the Junior Class was reinstated. Barracks C at the Newport Naval Base was redesignated Sims Hall, and the center and west wings were allocated to the newly formed course.<sup>7</sup> This building still houses the School of Naval Command and Staff. Also in 1946 the logistics course was integrated into the junior program, and from 1947 to 1950 an average of 42 officers was graduated annually.<sup>8</sup>

In 1950 the name of the course was changed to the "Command and Staff Course," and the size of classes increased steadily from 33 in 1951 to 190 by 1966.<sup>9</sup> Recent increasing Vietnam commitments have resulted in an enrollment decrease to 146 for the Class of 1967 with a further decrease to 117

## BIOGRAPHIC SUMMARY



Commander Albert J. Ashurst, U.S. Navy, holds a B.S. in Economics from the Illinois Institute of Technology and is a graduate of the School of Naval Command and Staff, Naval War College. He has served aboard the U.S.S. *Lenawes* (APA-195), U.S.S. *Ran-kin* (AKA-103), U.S.S. *Fletcher* (DDE-445), commanded U.S.S. *Munsee* (ATF-107), and was Executive Officer of U.S.S. *Rupertus* (DD-851). He also served on the Staffs of Commander First Fleet and Commander in Chief, U.S. Southern Command.

Commander Ashurst is presently assigned to the faculty of the School of Naval Command and Staff, Naval War College.

for the present Class of 1968. The 117 enrollment includes 84 naval officers, of which 65 are unrestricted line, and 33 officers representing the Marine Corps, Army, Air Force, and Coast Guard.

The present mission of the School of Naval Command and Staff is to instruct and develop officers of the middle grades in the employment of naval forces and operational and administrative techniques of staff planning in order to prepare them for command and for duty at the group and force levels in fleet operations.<sup>10</sup> Inherent within this mission is the improvement of the decision-making capability of each student for, whether he is assigned to command or is to serve on a staff in future tours, it will be his ability to make or to recommend sound decisions that will determine his effectiveness as a naval officer. As stated in a recent Naval War College study, "Education for Unrestricted Line Officers," with reference to the career importance of the School of Naval Command and Staff: "The course of instruction, there-

fore, is designed to fill an urgent need to broaden the student officer's understanding of the importance of sea power, of the Navy and of its roles and functions, *and of the decision-making process and the influences which bear upon it.*"<sup>11</sup> It is apparent that such a philosophy is also applicable to both restricted and unrestricted line officers. The curriculum as currently presented at the School of Naval Command and Staff is particularly tailored to meet the specifications of that philosophy.

This overall educational objective of providing the student with a more effective decision-making capability in order to prepare him as a naval commander and military staff planner is further divided into two educational subobjectives: (a) that the student is able to apply the scientific method in military problem solving, i.e., the decision-making process; and (b) that the student be able to define the major factors which influence military planning and to analyze their interactions. In order to make these subobjectives meaningful, the curriculum is also designed to ensure their achievement and, further, to measure to what degree each of them is achieved. This system permits a continual reevaluation and, if required, modification of the curriculum to meet the needs of the Navy and the student. A discussion of each subobjective and its supporting curriculum items follows.

### **Decision-Making Process.**

*Military Planning Process.* This study is designed to teach the student the elements of operational planning and the techniques employed by a commander in arriving at a decision by the application of the military planning process in order to examine the role logical thought processes play in decision making and the principles of military problem solving.

*Military Management.* Approximately one-half of this course is devoted to the study of economic and quantitative analysis concepts that are directly related to the decision-making process.

*Research Program.* One of the major objectives of this program, which includes one major individual or group research project and the writing of staff studies and briefs, is to improve the student's ability to conduct research, analyze data objectively, present formal arguments, and derive logical conclusions. All of these factors are inherent within the decision-making process.

*Concepts of Strategy and Organization for National Security.* A significant portion of this study is devoted to decision making at high governmental levels.

**Factors for Consideration.** The attainment of this subobjective is the more complex of the two, and, therefore, a much greater proportion of the curriculum is devoted to it. There are, in actuality, two types of factors which are considered. The first of these are those general factors that affect the environment of the decision maker or staff planner and are psychological, political, or economic in nature. The second category is those factors which are functional and are (primarily) militarily oriented.

**General Factors.** These studies will be described in some detail since they represent those factors that are not purely military in nature.

*International Law.* The purpose and scope of this study is to examine the principles of international law in order that the student may gain an understanding of the application of international law to military planning and decision making; to introduce basic concepts of international law and the

varying influences of international law upon national policy planning and execution.

*International Relations.* This study is designed to develop the student's understanding of the general nature of international relations; the conduct and instruments of foreign affairs; the influence of power and power patterns; the dynamic forces which affect relations among states; and the foreign policies of selected nations, so that he will become cognizant of the forces, factors, and situations which are of current and continuing interest to the United States.

*Threat.* The function of this study is to further student understanding of the military threats posed by the Soviet Union and Communist China through the provision of a current intelligence base, identification of major strengths and weaknesses, differentiation between capabilities and intentions, and identification of the major associated strategic concepts.

*Economics.* The purpose of this study is to examine the fundamental concepts of national and international economics in order to increase the student's appreciation of the relationship of economics to national strategy and military planning.

*Concepts of Strategy and Organization for National Security.* With the exception of that portion devoted to decision making, the remainder of this study provides the student with an understanding of the roles, missions, organization, and concepts of those agencies of the Federal Government which have responsibility for the planning and conduct of national security affairs. A secondary purpose is to familiarize the student with strategic concepts.

*Counterinsurgency.* This 7-day study is designed to familiarize the student with the political, economic, social, and military factors involved in

insurgency and counterinsurgency programs; to describe the contributions of the various governmental agencies involved in counterinsurgency activities; and to study actual insurgency movements and successful counterinsurgency actions.

*Global Strategy Discussions.* During a 4-day period leaders in industry, business, and the academic world and senior naval and marine officers are brought together with the students and faculty of the Naval War College to further an understanding of the problems confronting the United States in formulating global strategy to attain our national objectives; to review the current world situation; to examine the major forces and trends affecting the formulation of global strategy; to consider U.S. national objectives; and to discuss global strategy, including supporting measures, which will further the attainment of U.S. national objectives.

**Functional Factors.** These studies are (primarily) militarily oriented.

*Strike Delivery Systems.* The study of conventional/nuclear delivery systems available to the United States.

*Mine Warfare.* The study of strategic and tactical mine warfare considerations.

*Antiair Warfare.* The study of basic AAW weapon systems, techniques, and doctrine.

*Antisubmarine Warfare.* The study of Navy doctrine, forces, and equipment for antisubmarine warfare.

*Amphibious Warfare.* The study of basic amphibious doctrine, forces, equipment, and planning procedures.

*Inshore Warfare.* The study of the various facets of inshore warfare with emphasis on tactics employed, derivation of doctrine, and current and future equipment.

*Military Management.* The first half of the course is oriented toward

the decision-making process. The remainder is devoted to procedures employed in the Department of Defense planning, programming, budgeting, and resource management systems.

*Public Affairs.* The study of public affairs as a command responsibility and planning consideration.

The following factors are not purely functional in nature because they involve planning which inherently contains the essential elements of the decision-making process. However, they are categorized as functional herein because they are generally suboptimizations of overall military decision making.

*Communications Planning.* The purpose of this 3-day study is to increase the student's knowledge of naval and defense communications systems and their procedures and principles, and elements of electronic warfare in order to enhance ability in communications planning.

*Logistics Planning.* This study is designed to familiarize the student with the nature of logistics, logistic planning procedures, and current logistic problems facing the military establishment.

*Intelligence Planning.* This study acquaints the student with the techniques of intelligence collection and dissemination as they affect the operational commander.

It can be seen, then, that the curriculum of the School of Naval Command and Staff is designed to provide the opportunity for the student to become a more effective commander or military planner by enhancing his decision-making capability through the teaching of the thought process as well as by exposure to those factors that influence the process. The student "needs a broadened understanding of the whole Navy and how it operates together and in support of the overall military effort, how to make command decisions and how to plan and do efficient staff

work. Command and Staff level education is directed toward the preparation of officers for these important mid-career responsibilities."<sup>12</sup>

As noted earlier, not only does the curriculum provide a method of achievement of objectives, but also methods of measuring the extent of achievement are included. One of the most frequently used measurements, and certainly one of the most important, is student evaluations. At the end of each course, part, or study, each student is asked to submit a postinstruction questionnaire which provides the faculty with indices of curriculum effectiveness.

The research program provides another significant method of evaluation. The written efforts of the students in their research projects, staff studies, and briefs provide benchmarks indicating the progress toward achieving objectives. Since each research effort involves problem solving and is also generally oriented toward one of the factors of consideration, either general or functional, essentially both subobjectives are put to test.

Planning exercises provide a third means of evaluation. Three planning exercises are scheduled during the academic year. Their purposes and scopes are as follows:

**Slamex.** To exercise the student in the planning of naval operations with emphasis on defense against a submarine-launched missile attack; to exercise the student in the application of the military planning process, and to familiarize the student with an area of strategic importance.

**Planex I.** To exercise the student in the planning of naval operations with emphasis on an attack carrier strike force against an undersea threat; to exercise the student in the application of the military planning process;

through war gaming, to provide the student with an analysis of his plans and to gain experiences in the supervision of planned action; and to familiarize the student with an area of strategic importance.

**Planex II.** To exercise the student in the planning of naval operations with particular emphasis on amphibious warfare and logistics; to exercise the student in the application of the military planning process and to emphasize the need for concurrent and parallel planning; through war gaming, to provide the student with an analysis of his plans and to gain experience in the supervision of planned action; and to familiarize the student with areas of strategic importance.

Although these planning exercises are primarily oriented toward the functional or military factors of consideration, there is continued emphasis on the decision-making process as an inherent feature of the military planning process.

Other means of evaluation exist on a continuing basis throughout the academic year. These include solution of specific problems related to a particular course; case studies; problem oriented seminars; and, of course, observation by faculty members. The evaluation process is indeed continuous as it must be if the curriculum is to continue to be the best one available.

In addition to the basic curriculum as described previously, there are some special programs that support the curriculum in general and cannot be directly related to one of the specific subobjectives. These are:

**Introduction to the Navy.** A 4-day program that provides background information concerning the U.S. Navy in

order to aid the student from other services and agencies of the Government in his studies at the Naval War College; an introduction to naval terms, organization, and practices, including the purposes and functions of such naval organizations as type commands, task force commands, and task fleet commands; an introduction to the mission and composition of the Navy as a whole in terms of numbers and general disposition of ships, aircraft, and personnel; and an introduction to representative types of modern ships and aircraft in the Navy.

**Elective Courses.** These are selected courses that run throughout most of the study year which cover military and academic subjects. They require the student to investigate the subject in greater detail and depth than would be possible in the basic course. Courses in the fields of international affairs, military management, economics, oceanography, and communication skills are offered.

**Field Trip.** A 5-day trip provides an opportunity for first hand observation of military installations, equipment, and operations in the field and to develop a better understanding of Government and international organizations by trips to selected Government agencies and international organizations.

The School of Naval Command and Staff is indeed a school for decision making. The curriculum, as described herein, represents a rigorous 10-month course of study which requires a concentrated effort from both the resident student and the faculty. The end product — a more effective commander and military planner — makes that effort more than worthwhile.

## FOOTNOTES

1. E. F. McDaniel, "Command and Staff Class Curriculum," Lecture given to Class of Command and Staff Course, Naval War College, Newport, R.I.: 11 August 1950.
2. *History of the United States Naval War College 1884-1963 and Succeeding Annual Command Historical Report Supplements*, (Newport, R.I.: Naval War College, 1963), p. 12.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 59-61.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*, p. 17
8. *Ibid.*, p. 59-61.
9. *Ibid.*, 1966 Supplement, p. 15.
10. *Curriculum of the School of Naval Command and Staff*, 1967-68.
11. President, Naval War College letter serial 758 of 12 April 1966, Enclosure (2), p. B-1.
12. *Ibid.*, Enclosure (1), p. 3.



Congratulations are extended to Captain Richard N. Moss, U.S. Navy; Lieutenant Colonel Earl E. Odal, U.S. Army Reserve; Commander Frederick K. Feagin, U.S. Navy; and Commander Ralph M. Ghormley, U.S. Navy, who graduated recently from the Naval War College Correspondence Course of Naval Command and Staff.



