

Remarks by  
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Secretary Middendorf, Admiral Shuford, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, I am very pleased to have this opportunity to speak to you.

It is appropriate that we are here today discussing strategic questions, given the role of Newport and the Naval War College in our history.

The nation's leadership has often turned to the scholars and strategists in Newport for counsel.

Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Theodore Roosevelt, having been powerfully influenced by the ideas of Alfred Mahan, challenged your predecessors to look at options to address difficult issues in the years that preceded World War II.

The Naval War College rose to the occasion.

This institution played the key role in developing the RAINBOW Plans, thus establishing its reputation as a center of strategic thought in the United States.

Admiral Nimitz, writing the new president of the War College shortly after World War II, made this candid observation about his experience in Newport:

“The war with Japan had been enacted in the game rooms at the War College by so many people and in so many different ways that nothing that happened during the war was a surprise—absolutely nothing except the kamikaze tactics toward the end of the war. We had not visualized these.”

It is noteworthy to consider that the use of suicide bombers, so surprising and so nettlesome to Nimitz and the World War II generation, has re-emerged again today as an issue that has assumed strategic dimensions.

The Nimitz quote, no stranger to most of you in this audience, actually points to a missed opportunity for this institution—a missed opportunity to foresee a significant tactic that the enemy would adopt.

We cannot afford to make the same mistake again.

We need to broaden our perspective to ensure that we are not surprised again.

9/11 was a seminal event in our history, but the terrorist tactics that were used were not new in many important ways.

There were numerous suicide bomb attacks against US interests leading up to the attack on USS COLE in October 2000.

And in other parts of the world, as we know, suicide bombers have been a tactic of choice for decades.

This experience suggests that we need to think the way our enemies think—not as we think.

Critics have pointed to the problem of “mirror imaging” for decades.

And yet we still seem to suffer from this intellectual pitfall, projecting our own ideas about the way the rest of the world thinks.

Differing concepts of freedom, of honor, and of what loyalty requires often results in failing to understand the enemy, and failing to understand the cultures in which adversaries operate.

We must do better, and I know RADM Shuford and many here at the Naval War College are diligently working this and other critical issues relating to our Nation’s security.

With that in mind, I would like to use this morning to pose four questions for your consideration over the next two days.

These are some of the very issues that preoccupy my thinking, and which merit an extended discussion within the halls of this outstanding institution.

One, how should we prepare for the emergence of near-peer competitors, while simultaneously motivating them in the direction of desired behaviors?

Two, how should we evolve Naval Expeditionary Warfare capability?

Three, how do we assist coalition partners in organizing, training, and equipping the 1,000-ship Navy?

Four, to what extent should Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief become recognized as a mission of the United States Navy and Marine Corps?

These questions flow naturally from the Quadrennial Defense Review that was issued earlier this year, and they touch on some of the very important implementation challenges raised by the QDR.

Let us take each of these questions in turn.

First, there is the critical issue of emerging near-peer competitors, notably China.

The QDR addresses this issue directly and forthrightly.

On one hand, we want to encourage China to develop in a friendly and cooperative manner.

On the other hand, we must be prepared if our engagement efforts do not succeed.

It is hard to predict how rising powers will behave—and imprudent to assume that they will represent a cooperative force in a future world.

In the case of China, our understanding of their intentions is significantly complicated by their lack of transparency.

With the uncertainty at this high end of the spectrum of conflict, it is clear that the Navy's blue water operations and strategic deterrence responsibilities will remain enduring missions.

Our challenge then is to hedge against an emerging power that may not be friendly while simultaneously encouraging the friendly behavior we desire.

What does this say about the balance of our Naval forces in the Pacific? Are they properly positioned? Are they the right forces?

. . . And do we have the right balance between defensive systems such as missile defense systems and our offensive capabilities, like Carrier and Expeditionary Strike Groups?

The second of my four questions for you today concerns our Maritime Expeditionary Warfare capability.

Our experience in Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom leads us to conclude that expeditionary warfare is changing in important ways.

Operations are being conducted not only near the coasts, but far inland—in excess of 800 miles in the case of Afghanistan.

In such areas, we are also finding a need to conduct sustained, long-term expeditionary warfare operations.

It is no longer enough to storm a beach, rebuild an airport, and then leave.

Going in and getting the job done is traditionally what we do—but the definition of “the job” may encompass a much broader mandate and a much longer time horizon today.

Expeditionary warfare is changing in another way as well—we can no longer depend on access to foreign bases, as we have learned to our disappointment in recent operations.

This is resulting in a trend toward greater reliance on sea-based capabilities, given the flexibility of Naval forces, and the low profile such forces provide.

The ability to conduct operations with a minimal footprint is critical, especially when the battle in which we are engaged is largely about winning hearts and minds—not capturing territory.

We need to ask: what is the right balance between our forced entry capability and our sustainable logistical support capability . . . from the Sea Base?

. . . And what is the best way to pre-position, deploy, surge, and operate these assets?

The answers to these questions will help us shape our developing expeditionary warfare capabilities in order to accommodate the changing requirements of Maritime Expeditionary Warfare.

The third question I am asking you to consider pertains to the 1,000-ship Navy that Admiral Mullen and other Chiefs of Navy have been championing for some time now.

Nations that share a common interest in maritime security ought to work together to increase the security of the increasingly important maritime domain.

As nations discover more vulnerability in their economic lifelines, they will likely have a greater interest in participating in an initiative like this, that lets nations and navies assist each other in areas that are in each nation’s self-interest.

Indeed, many nations are already cooperating locally, regionally, and, in the case of some, globally.

Additionally, the vulnerability to terrorism or criminal exploitation of critical assets in the maritime domain has been exposed in Iraq, in the Gulf of Guinea, and in straits around the world.

And we, the global maritime community, must step forward and arrest this growing trend toward insecurity in the maritime domain.

Local stability serves not only a given country's interests, such as protection of fisheries, control of commerce, and enforcement against drug trafficking, but it also supports regional and global interests as well.

The United States supports this initiative because improving security in the maritime domain is in our interest, and, candidly, it allows us to use our assets in other critical locations around the world.

The question then arises as to how we, and other like-minded nations, ought to work with, train with, and equip partner nations of the 1000-ship Navy.

A one-size-fits-all solution will not work, given the diverse set of nations that participate in this initiative.

Finding a way to work with navies at every end of the development spectrum will be a complex and evolving endeavor.

Training with partner nations is also a significant challenge, given widely divergent capabilities and interests.

But it is something every navy in the world can and should do to the extent their national interests allow.

One specific aspect of the 1,000-ship Navy we need to re-think is how we provide equipment to other navies.

If we are challenged to maintain aged equipment ourselves, we should not expect other nations to be more successful in maintaining it.

The question for us then, is: what equipment is most suitable to the receiving nation's missions and structure, and how do we properly support what is provided?

Additionally, we need to explore mechanisms to ensure that we can effectively and efficiently assist partner nations increase their capability to provide for the own maritime security.

In this regard, key questions include: what is the right balance between embedded training teams and expeditionary training teams, how much capacity do we need to accomplish this training in multiple parts of the world simultaneously, and are there other high-payoff capabilities in which we need to invest?

Turning to my fourth and final question, the role of Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief in Navy and Marine Corps planning has been the subject of much discussion.

If GWOT has as much to do with winning hearts and minds as is generally believed, Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief is a key tool in our toolbox.

We have seen significantly positive impact in Indonesia, in Pakistan, and in the Horn of Africa as a direct result of our, and other nations', Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief efforts.

The experience of USNS Mercy, which is currently doing superb work in the Philippines, suggests that we ought to study the potential of this humanitarian component of GWOT with great care.

The recent performance of the Navy and Marine Corps in responding to Hurricane Katrina here in the United States reinforces the idea that support from a self-contained city at sea is an extremely valuable resource in times of crisis.

Does that suggest that we should re-evaluate the priority it is given?

If so, what are the implications of that?

Should we continue to rely on the use of large hospital ships such as the Mercy and the Comfort, with 1000-bed, full surgical medical support?

Or would smaller and more widely dispersed ships be more effective, and make more sense from a financial point of view?

Or alternatively, should amphibious ships or pre-configured assets on Joint High Speed Vessels and Littoral Combat Ships be used?

. . . And lastly, should humanitarian missions be subsumed under current budget and mission requirements, or are there some high payoff capabilities that would allow us to more effectively expand our reach?

Let me throw in one more wrinkle as you consider each of these four questions.

The Department of the Navy, indeed our entire Department of Defense, is under enormous financial pressure.

It is tough now and it is likely to get worse.

It is easy to consider the capabilities required for each of the questions I pose.

And it is too easy to recommend new capabilities in an unconstrained budget environment.

As you consider your recommendations for new, modified, or expanded capabilities that will give us increased effectiveness and efficiency in each of the areas I mentioned above, I also ask that you identify where you think we might have excess capacity so that, in broad terms, we take a balanced fiscal view of the emerging security environment.

This is not going to be easy.

We grapple with these questions everyday in the Pentagon and I can tell you that there are no easy answers.

But this is work that must be done.

And the more smart minds that we involve in this endeavor, the greater the probability that we won't let a strategic vulnerability develop.

Let's never forget Admiral Nimitz' admonition on the kamikaze threat – lest we repeat it again.

I thank you for the honor of addressing you.

I thank you for your time.

And I thank you for your willingness to assist us in this nationally vital endeavor as we collaborate with our partners around the globe to build a better world for us, our families, and generations to come.

Thank you.