

SECRET

THE UNITED STATES NAVAL WAR COLLEGE
LEADERSHIP AND THE MILITARY COMMANDER

by

Vice Admiral Benedict J. Semmes, U.S. Navy



A lecture
presented at the
Naval War College
on
7 April 1965

SAFEGUARD IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THIS CLASSIFICATION SET FORTH IN THE
DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY SECURITY MANUAL FOR CLASSIFIED INFORMATION

SECRET

SECRET

LEADERSHIP AND THE MILITARY COMMANDER

VADM Benedict J. Semmes
Chief of Naval Personnel

April 7, 1965

As I arrived up here today and walked into the War College Admiral Melson said, "How's everything in Washington?" I had to answer in a pessimistic vein. It is my view that the matters that have gone on in the Western Pacific are not about to stop. It is further my view that they probably will rise the intensity a bit. I told Admiral Melson that so far there had been no raising of ceilings, people, of money--to meet the matters that are in WestPac. The word is--you will reprogram as necessary for the monies you need and the people who are sent out and this ties in all services--water the soup accordingly. Admiral Duncan came in and said, "How is the pay bill doing?" And, I had to tell him that I thought there would be a pay bill. The present commission has not yet brought it out but we believe that before the end of this month, there will be a report out and we probably should look forward to something between the 3% that needs to be in the budget and the 10% that our great friends in the Armed Services Committee of the House have put into the bill. Admiral Duncan then said, "Well, you know it takes 32 million dollars to give everybody in the armed services a pay raise of a dollar--a buck." That's a lot of dough that is not necessarily effective. I don't want to

SECRET

SECRET

say wasted. When I think of wasted, I think of that vestry man in Memphis, Tennessee, who was the treasurer. One day he turned up missing along with the funds of the church. About two months later, they found him in New Orleans and sure enough he was there looking a little worn. The funds were all gone. They asked him, "What did you do with that money?" He said, "Well, I spent some of it on whiskey and I spent some of it on women and the rest I just wasted."

For me, it is a treat to be here on this stage, gentlemen. I am delighted to come back to Newport and I am particularly delighted to address a select group of senior officers such as you, who will most certainly be determining the future course of the Navy and the other services as well. In this audience, without doubt, is at least one future Chief of Naval Operations and perhaps a Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. Although I am aware that there is representation in the audience from the sister services, I want to state at the very beginning that I do not intend to try to avoid being parochial. As you would expect, because of the nature of my billet, I will talk about Navy matters and personnel matters. However, many of the problems in the Navy are applicable to the other services and your key topic leadership affects our status in attacking these problems. I'll try to present a general personnel including a picture of the FY66 force levels and the projected naval

SECRET

SECRET

force structure highlighting significant personnel trends in the hardware program to which they relate. I will discuss several of our rather serious problem areas; some of the personnel items in the legislative package before the Congress. I intend to talk to you as officers who have the keenest continuing interest in an overview of the present situation and its problems. I am not going to go at length on the pure subject in specifics of leadership as such--acknowledging a clear need for many officers to develop their leadership capabilities, we must see that a proper provision is being made for this. So, before addressing the projected naval force structure perhaps it would be better to dwell briefly on changes affecting Navy organizations since 1962. The historic organization of fleets, squadrons, divisions, etc. is still in effect, but as you know a new overlay organization sorts out for cost effectiveness review into program elements. These are the order of the day. The Defense Department forces are divided into 7 general programs.

The first program is the strategic retaliatory force. In the Navy it consists primarily of the SSBN and supporting fleet ballistic missiles. The _____ for the last of the total of 41 SSBNs took place last February. All 41 should be commissioned by December 1966 and out of the 82 crews needed, only the equivalent of 12 crews remains to be assigned--all of whom are in final training. The development of the prosaic missile designated C3 is commencing this year in order to

SECRET

SECRET

achieve a capability of improved accuracy in increased payload over the present class. The general time frame for the introduction of this missile is in the early 1970s. Program II - comprises the continental air defense forces. The Navy's forces in this element consisting of the dew line extension and associated picket ships are phasing out. Starting now in the Pacific, the phase out will be completed by the end of the fiscal year '66. The general purpose forces constitute Program III. This encompasses the bulk of the Navy's operational forces because our forces are in the main multi-purposes. We have only one nuclear carrier for the time being and a total of 15 attack carriers. Attack carrier air groups are programmed to remain in at 15 waves and 2 crawls comprising 119 squadrons through 70. Antisubmarine carriers will probably remain constant at 9. Patrol aircraft squadrons are programmed for 3C planes and 27 land plane squadrons--^{(sea)?} with an additional training squadron on each coast. Although there is some decrease in the number of airplanes, the overall personnel requirements are increased with the introduction of complicated equipment and intricate aircraft. Mine warfare forces are relatively constant in force level. The trends in the amphibious assault forces show the phasing out of World War II troop carriers from 24 APAs in fiscal year 55 to 9 in 70--and an increasing emphasis on the concept of vertical envelopment--that the present total of 13 LPDs and LPHs is

SECRET

~~SECRET~~

growing to 29 in fiscal year 1970. The projected structure also reflects the retirement of older destroyers and a modest increase in DLGs and DDGs. Principal replacement for World War II DDs will be the new and large DEs. Older submarines are being replaced by SSNs and in addition to all SSN classes to date now in commission, 7 ASW submarines capable of using SubRoc and the Mark 48 torpedo. 23 more of this class are under construction or scheduled for construction. Logistic support force structure reflects the modernization of support forces through introduction of the dual-purpose ships and jumbo oiler.

Program IV - Air lift and sea lift. The 4VR squadrons and their people remain constant until FY70--but the last of the military manned MSTS troop transport will be phased out in FY66. Along with this, we now have two roll-on roll-off ships in the MSTS nuclear fleet. There will be an improved version of the roll-on roll-off ship in 66 and the Navy has asked to build 4 fast deployment logistic ships, scheduled to join the force structure in 69. These have a mission of forward mobile depots for handling equipment of an army division including helicopters. The SDL will have a roll-on roll-off capability and will be gas turbine powered but is not designed for assault landings.

Programs 5, 6 and 7 are all planned to continue at a relatively steady state for the next five years. These are

SECRET

the reserve and guard forces, research and development, and that catch-all Program 7 which contains everything that is not in the previous six; training, recruiting, medical facility, communications, etc.

The total Navy/^{projected} personnel requirement for FY64 was 667,000. For 65 they went up to 674,000--it goes to 685,000 in 66 and by 1968 it will be 696,000. As you can see, the trend is for a continual but gradual increase in projected personnel requirements and totals approximately 29,000. This increase is generated by the larger maintenance and operating factor for the more complex equipment. The number of aircrafts shows a decrease in future years, in the number of ships a nominal increase. There is also a steady uptrend in personnel levied against the Navy and the other services, the Joint Staffs and Defense Department agencies. All of the armed services have problem areas and the Navy's may be the deepest at the moment. One of them now is recruiting. We are not meeting our enlisted recruiting requirements this fiscal year. Through March the deficit on our plan is approximately 6200 enlistments. The spring months are notoriously poor recruiting months and the possibility of the attainment of our goal between now and June looks grim. There are several factors we believe had influence on the recruiting endeavor: the current concern about the possibility of eliminating the draft has produced a "wait and see" attitude in the young men, many of whom would have

~~SECRET~~

selected the Navy as a way of meeting their military obligation. Our recruiting service is in stiff competition with the other armed services; Army and the Air Force. Schools are becoming better known and the advantage we formerly enjoyed with regard to training as an inducement to enlistment is dwindling. We are also in competition with industry. Currently the civilian employment climate is quite good. One need only to compare the starting salaries for unskilled labor with the \$78 a month pay a seaman recruit receives and in this way we can recognize a part of the recruiting problem. With a steady rise in scholarship, tuition grants and other opportunities to finance higher education, more and more young men are turning, who turned to the armed services for education and training and to the Navy in particular to learn a trade are no longer finding this opportunity as attractive. To insure we meet our input requirement, we have most reluctantly lowered standards and are increasing the enlistments of those with a lower mental group. For example, we have taken in 26% of our totals in the group 4 in February, 20% in March and I just put the lid on no more than 12% for the remainder of the year. We have about decided that if the recruiting climate does not improve, we will go to the draft for a portion of our people next fiscal year, after the favorable summer months. Let's hope we don't have to. Generally speaking, the officer procurement situation although not entirely problem free, has not reached the gloomy proportion I have just told you. Input quotas for programs

~~SECRET~~

SECRET

leading to regular Navy commissions are being met with no difficulty--selectivity remains high. In our regular NROTC program for example, over 20,000 high school seniors participated in the aptitude test. About 1600 will ultimately be enrolled. Similar selectivity exists in the regular Navy commissioning program at the Naval Academy and in the Navy enlisted scientific education program NESCP. Naval Academy applications went down 9% this year from last. We still have a high selectivity of about 6 for 1. The Officer Candidate School input quota has been met this year and really this is the first time since the inception of the program in 1952 that the quota has been met. Input to the Aviation Pilots and Observer Program has been gratifying. We expect 95% by the time the year ends. The future reserve officer procurement picture is not quite as bright. Shortages continue to exist in the procurement of medical personnel and we allow the doctor draft to ensure us of adequate numbers of physicians. Unfortunately, applications for reserve officer program for next fiscal year, which should be coming in now, are lagging approximately 20%. If this application lag continues, there will be a shortage in active duty reserve officer ranks for next fiscal year. The lag in application for reserve officer program may also be traced to the nation wide discussion of elimination of the draft. Reserve programs, I am sure you realize, provide the bulk of the junior officers, 70% of the total of 12,000 new officers

SECRET

we must procure each year. However, the number one problem, that of greatest concern to SecNav, CNO and every high official of the Navy is the deepening crisis in fleet manning. We've simply not been able to hold sufficient numbers of first enlistment personnel especially in technical ratings. As a result fleet manning levels continue to decline. The re-enlistment picture at the moment looks grim. Our overall rates slipped from 50% in 62 to 37% in the first six months of this year, while the first term re-enlistment rate went from 25 to 20% in the same period. An added worrisome factor is the accelerated loss of the World War II generated cushion account. In 1956 through 59, we lost on the average of about 4100 senior petty officers annually. In 64 we lost about 10,000 of this group and this high loss will probably continue for two more years. We must find solutions to this dangerous retention situation. We are doing our best in the bureau to come up with new and fresh ideas and approaches. We have re-examined and amplified substantially our career/^{information}program Navy wide to insure that men are completely informed of all the positive aspects of a naval career. We are developing as many incentives as we can devise under existing law. We are expanding every effort to make full utilization of available manpower by improving distribution, techniques and our training forecast. We are developing career ^{force plans} (forecasts) for each rating so that we will know exactly what our requirements are.

SECRET

~~SECRET~~

We are instituting rating managers for all the technical ratings, a technique which proved quite successful in meeting missile system personnel problems. Also retention is a little better but still unsatisfactory particularly in the unrestricted line. We are able to maintain our overall strength at acceptable levels only by over procuring junior officers each year. Our experience level is lower than we would like. Increased retention is the only way to improve this experience level. As you can see, retention is a tremendous job and it involves all hands. We need your imagination, enthusiasm and your support in this fight.

When you leave here, we are banking on you to take with you to your new assignments an awareness of the problem and a determination to do everything within your leadership ability to create the most favorable atmosphere for increasing the retention rights. The subject is of such importance that the Secretary of the Navy has established a Policy Board to undertake comprehensive review and analysis of the factors affecting the retention of high quality officers and enlisted people and to develop a plan for attacking these retention problems. As you have read, the Board is chaired by SecNav himself and consists of the highest ranking officers of the Navy and Marine Corps, as well as important members from OSD. In connection with the Board a Task Force has been established with representatives from CNO, Headquarters Marine Corps and the bureaus. This is an action group and I stress the word action for the

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

group will remain to implement the Policy Board decisions, some of which will be made in June. Certain conclusions and recommendations expected from the Policy Board can be implemented within House authority. Other remedial action will require the concurrence of either the Secretary of the Defense or the Congress or both. It is for this reason that the Secretary quite wisely brought OSD members on to this Policy Board: Mr. Ignatius, Mr. Norman Paul, Dr. Entovyn, Mr. Joe Hoover out of Mr. H 's shop.

Certain conclusions and recommendations have already spear-headed several legislative proposals that is in the process of being presented to this Congress--all designed to prove the attractiveness of Naval service. As you know, Mr. River's and 24 other members of his committee submitted identical military pay bills which, in effect, would increase basic pay by about 10%. This certainly reflects a deep understanding, at least on the part of the House Armed Services Committee, as for the needs of the military. A Navy sponsored legislative proposal to authorize payment of hazardous duty pay to flight deck crews has passed the House on 29 March--hearing not yet scheduled in the Senate. The Comptroller General ruled in 1964 that payment of submarine pay to certain submarine staff officers was illegal. Discontinuation of these payments which have been in effect over 20 years, would have created, we think, severe morale implications. Therefore, legislation has gone forth and been passed by the House which would correct this matter for submarine

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

staff.

The Secretary of the Navy in the past particularly at the urging of Admiral Smedberg has gone forth with a scheme for a variable re-enlistment bonus to begin to take the place of proficiency pay. I am glad to report that this variable re-enlistment bonus, under a new name, because it did not sail in Congress the first time it went over has now been picked up SecNav, has been agreed, and is going with the enthusiastic support of all services to the Congress this year. The name of this one will be the Technical/^{Skill}Reenlistment Incentive (TSRI). Since the proficiency pay did not prove successful as some had hoped, this program provides that money would be paid in _____ pay to a man over the years of his enlistment is focused at the point of his decision to re-enlist. That is, a lump sum payment varying according to criticality and amounting to as much as \$5400, in addition to the regular enlistment bonus he now receives. The Secretary of the Navy had indicated his concern about our re-enlistment problems as requested and then had granted the highest priority for this proposal. The Office of the Secretary of Defense has sponsored legislation which lists dislocation allowance as non-taxable. Legislation is required because of a recent Internal Revenue Office ruling. OSD will renew efforts to get the recommendation of Boltay (?) Committee on officer career management in the law. In general the proposed Boltay (?)

~~SECRET~~

SECRET

legislation will prescribe common provisions for all services relating to procurement, promotion, forced attrition and retirement of officers. With greatly increased participation by naval officers and joint commands and Department of Defense agencies it has become increasingly important that the Officer Management Systems of all services be brought in to line. Boltay, in essence, adopts the present Navy and Marine Corps selection systems for promotion. There have been some recent actions with regard to officer shortage and is within the framework of the present law. SecNav announced the spot promotion plan. This is aimed at promoting officers who are satisfactorily serving at sea in billets calling for high grades. It is a way of acknowledging the heavy responsibility we are placing on many of our younger officers because of middle grade shortages. We are recognizing that they are earning the increased pay and prestige that promotion will provide. The Navy is attacking vigorously the problem of inadequate barracks, BOQ, and habitability furnishings which are deplorable. In addition to expanding military construction program in these areas, we have made an emergency diversion of considerable funds this past month to apply to some of our most needed stations. Numerous reports have come in to this retention task force which have pin pointed the deplorable living conditions in which we are forcing our bachelor enlisted ^{bachelor} and/officers to live. I think the Navy has made up its mind that it has starved this area

SECRET

~~SECRET~~

with a view to getting ships and airplanes for too long. The CNO is establishing minimum criteria for personnel support facilities and a deadline to achieve the ultimate high standards. At least 25% of military construction funds last year and in the future years will go to personnel support. An unfortunate characteristic of talks which the Chief of BuPers makes lately is that he intends to get terribly engrossed problems.

Just to be sure that I don't leave you with an overly pessimistic view of the Navy, I would like to point out a few items that we are now carrying on the profit side of the ledger. Our strategic studies along with the demanding analysts of OSD indicate that the attack aircraft carrier and its air, that's tactical air advantage and strong competition with equivalent wings ashore. The fast striking force provides a primary means of exploiting our control of the seas, to project offensive and defensive power deep into the interior land masses of the world. As you are aware, the inventory of air bases overseas has been declining and the future availability of such bases is subject to political uncertainty. Carriers provide insurance of air power in the event of reductions in our overseas air bases structures.

In South Vietnam we are witnessing an almost classic application of naval air power and we don't have to worry

SECRET

about these air strips being infiltrated by saboteurs or being attacked by ground forces.

Another thought I would like to leave with you is the increasing awareness throughout the Navy Department, the Department of Defense and Congress of the importance of service people. We, in BuPers, have always maintained that a weapon system is only as good as the man who operates it. We are now witnessing a growing of this awareness throughout the defense community. This is a most optimistic thought I have to leave with you.

SECRET