

# Change of Command Ceremony

ADM Colbert to ADM Semmes, 1971 Aug 17

NWC Archvies, VC0010

## Transcript

00:00:04 Emcee

Bandmaster, sound attention.

Alright.

00:00:58 Emcee

Will the guests please remain standing for the invocation by Chaplain Duncan?

00:01:09 Chaplain Duncan

Let us pray.

Our father, without His blessing no undertaking of ours can be expected to succeed. Grant to us the gift of your presence on this occasion.

When, once again, the ancient and solemn ceremony of the passing of the flag marked the fence first of the dreadful responsibility of command and authority from one to another.

We pause to give you thanks for past blessings, to ask your continued guidance in favor, and to rededicate ourselves to the service of God in our country. We thank you for the contribution of Admiral Colbert. For his singleness of purpose, for his seemingly inexhaustible energy and industry, for his great wisdom and experience and his capacity for analysis of the problem. For his boldness to advance when others would take an easier course than for his inspiration of courage and patriotic service to the students who have studied in this school.

Grand Father, your continued blessing, guidance and protection to him as he moves on to new duties and new challenges. Then grant to Admiral Semmes as he undertakes the guidance of this institution, an awareness of your presence, wisdom, and patience. The capacity to persevere in the right as he sees it, and boldness to speak to a nation that seems to want to hide his face and stop its ears when facts are unpleasant.

Use him and his great talents and experience, that this nation, Our Navy, and the ideals which we cherish may be strengthened and endure.

Grant that we may have a Navy worthy of our nation, and a nation worthy of its great Navy. May the ideals of our founding fathers be continued. May the enemies of freedom be thwarted and may peace come. Because we are spiritually sensitive enough to know what true peace is, wise enough to want it, and strong enough to have it.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

00:03:27 Emcee

Will the guests please be seated?

Battalion commander place the battalion at parade rest.

Ladies and gentlemen, Vice Admiral Frank W Vannoy, Deputy Chief of Naval Operations, Plans and Policy.

00:03:53 Frank W. Vannoy

Admiral Semmes, Admiral Colbert, distinguished guests, and ladies and gentlemen:

It's a real pleasure for me to be back at the college. As Admiral Zumwalt representative -- and this -- and to participate in this changing of the guard. I was here in the college when then-Captain Colbert established the Naval Command course.

I was sent here by then-Captain Semmes, who was the commander detailer. Admiral Semmes, I want to thank you very much for the very rewarding tour here. Although I would like to point out that you failed to provide adequate housing, I was one of the original occupants of Brenton Village. [laughter] Three years of it.

I'd like now to read a message that Admiral Zumwalt has sent. A personal for Vice Admiral Colbert and Vice Admiral Semmes from Zumwalt.

Most regrettably -- and most regrettably Mouza and I are unable to attend your change of command ceremony. For Vice Admiral Colbert, as you haul down your flag as President, Naval War College, and proceed to report as Chief of Staff, Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic, I extend to you and most deserved well done for the three years of tireless and imaginative leadership you've given our Navy's educational system. The Navy leadership of all the free world navies have benefited materially from the inspirational leadership which you have given to all who have visited Sims Hall. May the future continue to be marked with great accomplishments for you and your family.

For Vice Admiral Semmes. Having witnessed your many accomplishments here in the Pentagon, I can think of no one better qualified to assume this important and great responsibility. I'm confident that the tasks and challenges of the future will be met with the same proficiency and dedication that have long been your hallmark. Warm regards to you both.

As indicated by Admiral Zumwalt, Admiral Colbert has had three challenging and highly productive years here at the War College. And I'm sure that he departs with real regret. However, that regret should be tempered with a great pride. For the college has made major strides under his stewardship. One of the most significant of these has been the increased participation by the college and interchanges with our Navy friends and allies.

Building on the fine experience of the Naval Command course, the college has become the meeting place where major international policy seminars in which there is a free exchange of views between the Allied navies.

And I'm sure that Admiral Colbert will desire to cover this aspect in greater detail in his remarks. I mention it here because of the vital necessity that we and our allies work increasingly together to maximize our capabilities against the threat to our free use of the ocean.

All of you here are aware of the severe budget problems which we in this United States face. Our own Navy is being reduced sharply at a time when the Soviet Navy is undergoing a great expansion. We must, as never before, have our allies assistance in doing the job that needs to be done at sea.

This means more and closer coordination of efforts, better commonality of equipment, more combined training, and generally an enhanced understanding of our joint resources and capabilities. The Naval War College must continue to lead the way in innovative thinking in this most important area as they have led the way in the past.

Now, it's gratifying indeed to note the significant increase in the student body which has occurred during the period of Admiral Colbert's command. Our Navy has never had enough graduates of our senior service colleges. And this is something that I am very much aware of as I try to find personnel with qualifications to go to joint duties. I'm happy that that this situation is in the process of being remedied to some degree. However, sheer numbers is not an answer in itself. Quality of educational opportunity must be matched to the numbers.

And in this area, Admiral Colbert has established military chairs to complement the academic chairs, has actively encouraged and been instrumental in the establishment of

the Naval War College Foundation, and has initiated a highly worthwhile program wherein the best study efforts of the student body are presented to the Chief of Naval Operations and to our civilian secretariat.

As our Navy shrinks and as the threat grows, it becomes increasingly important that our officers have the benefits of the broadened horizons which the War College provides. And in this connection, it's important to note that this includes not only consideration of the many complex international problems facing today as naval officer, but it also includes consideration of the many people-oriented programs which are so important in today's society.

Now, it may feel contradictory to hold that we need more Naval War College graduates in a smaller Navy. Admiral Colbert has argued the case that we do need more with great effect, and I join with him in this view, which I am sure is shared by Admiral Semmes. It's noted that the forward-looking War College expansion program will provide the necessary resources for significantly increasing the size of the student body.

I would say, parenthetically here, I wish I could report that we had managed to find the funding for an instrument that's coming down the road a bit, but unfortunately we haven't been able to do that.

Now ladies and gentlemen, the Naval War College is going to be even more important to the security of the United States for the future than in the past.

I congratulate Admiral Colbert for the tremendous forward strides that have been taken under his leadership. And I look forward to continued close relations with him in his new assignment.

I envy Admiral Semmes the challenges ahead. The challenges of ensuring that our naval officers are attuned to the changing nature of our world, and to the contribution that all of our services, in particular the Navy, have to make in that world. There is no officer in the Navy better equipped to meet these challenges.

To Admiral Semmes, Admiral Colbert, and their lovely ladies: Godspeed.

00:11:33

I have now an additional pleasant duty. Will Admiral Colbert please step forward? The Secretary of the Navy has asked that I act for him today in presenting a richly deserved award to Admiral Colbert.

The President of the United States takes pleasure, takes pleasure in presenting the Distinguished Service Medal to Vice Admiral Richard G. Colbert, United States Navy for

service, as set forth in the following citation. For exceptionally meritorious service to the government of the United States in a duty of great responsibility as President of the Naval War College from August 1968 to July 1971.

During this period, Vice Admiral Colbert contributed significantly to advanced professional education in the United States Navy. Students from the United States Armed Service and from civilian departments, as well as naval officers from 30 nations of the free world, have been influenced by the professionalism, acumen, and sound appreciation of international affairs.

Under Vice Admiral Colbert's guidance, the students and staff enriched their knowledge and broadened their perspective to become better prepared for higher responsibilities. Because of his interest, the research programs at the Naval War College have reached a new standard of excellence.

The housing master plan, which he conceived and developed, will complement and enhance the local historical heritage. In his contacts with foreign leaders during their visit to the Naval War College, during his own travels, and particularly during the Sea Power Symposium and two War College of the Americas Conferences, Vice Admiral Colbert strengthened the bonds between the nations of the free world.

His outstanding and distinguished service reflected great credit upon himself and was in keeping with the highest tradition in the United States Naval Service. For the President, John H. Chaffey, Secretary of the Navy.

Dick, I found out that we that...you were likely to get a Purple Heart. [laughter] This one doesn't have a hook on it...[muffled talking]...but it's not hooked.

Admiral Colbert came very close to getting Purple Heart. [laughter]

00:14:37 Emcee

Well, ladies and gentlemen Vice Admiral Richard G. Colbert, President, Naval War College.

00:14:51 Richard G. Colbert

Secretary Brown, Admiral Semmes, Admiral Vannoy, distinguished guests, friends of the Naval War College and of our Navy, the members of our staff and faculty here at the War College:

I'm reminded of a similar setting almost three years ago to the day. The podium was the same, the occasion was the same, but the circumstances were somewhat different. On that day, I relieved Vice Admiral Hayward as President of the of the Naval War College and was looking forward to the challenges and the opportunities ahead.

Today my assignment comes to an end. It's my turn to pass on the watch to Vice Admiral Semmes. In doing so, I realize on the one hand, how some of my fondest dreams have come true in these last three years.

And on the other hand, I'm well aware that so very much more remains to be done. And so I appreciate the challenges and the opportunities which my successor faces in his new assignment. I hope that he will be as fortunate during this tenure as I was to have the warm support of so many of you, you here today – has made my task so much easier and more rewarding. And I'm sure he will.

In my change of command remarks in 1968, I remember expressing my hope that the Naval War College would once again become the fountainhead of new ideas and thinking, as it was particularly back in the 1920s and the 1930s. I recall also emphasizing the importance for enlarging our physical plant and our student body in accordance with the master plan that that Vice Admiral Hayward had developed -- my predecessor. A plan which will give our next generation of naval leaders the same opportunity that Nimitz, and King, and Halsey, and Spruance had.

Looking back over the three years that have passed, I'm happy in the small way we -- the faculty, the staff and I -- have been able to contribute to the realization of that dream.

To the north of here Spruance Hall is now well underway, due to be completed next fall. This will mean that the class entering the Naval War College next summer this time will be the first class in some 40 years that will have a new building in which to pursue the heritage of Stephen B. Luce and Alfred Thayer Mahan.

Conolly Hall, our second building, will be underway in the next three or four months. The contract was awarded last week, and I am confident the remaining buildings in our plan will be underway in the immediate years ahead.

As I look across that bay, that beautiful bay before me, I visualize in the distance what not too long ago seemed truly an almost impossible dream. Brenton Village has been a problem. Been an eyesore among local residents since the early 50s and has been an object, I might say of pungent and continuing criticism, by our students who served there, lived there in these many years, including my friend Admiral Vannoy.

It has hopefully seen its day. Ground was broken in June, late June, for the first installment of the early Newport-type village, which we have designed for our students in the years ahead.

And I'm confident that in only a few years, the inadequate and ugly housing that we have over there at Brenton Village now will be replaced by houses which are not only our

students will be proud of, but there will be houses as the local community will be proud of. Along with the state's renovation of Fort Adams, our plan should make that particular part of this area most attractive and consistent with the local -- all the local efforts -- on behalf of the preservation and the restoration of old Newport.

As I suggested earlier, my contributions in this regard have been small, particularly when seen against the wider horizon of tasks which remained to be done. And it's here that Admiral Semmes, I believe, will face perhaps his most difficult, and hopefully his most rewarding challenge. And this will be to ensure that the authorization and funding for the remainder of the program continues. This will mean that not only the plans for student housing at Brenton Village, Fort Adams be fully developed and carried out, but also our plans to build two additional academic buildings and refurbish the old ones here are in fact carried out.

I wish him every bit of luck. It's a rough battle.

They're looking back over these three years. I'm particularly delighted that they provided the opportunity to move closer towards the private goals, the personal goals, that I had here when I served with the Free World Officers course in 1956 through 1958. As the first Director of that course, I had high hopes, which have in large part been realized here during my second tour in Newport. Always remember telling that that first class, when it assembled in August of 1956 -- some 23 countries represented -- but I couldn't help but feel and wonder if maybe we weren't initiating a very unique, elite fraternity of naval officers that would be all over the world some day. That thought has proven so true.

Today, the United States Naval War College is recognized as not only the oldest Naval War College in the world, which is also looked at as the Center for the exchange of new ideas and thinking among leaders of many free world navies -- all of the countries represented in these flags. In short, it has become a kind of center for allied international naval cooperation.

Witnessed the first World Seapower Symposium which we held here in November of 1969. At which the leaders of some 38 free world navies gathered in Newport to promote mutual understanding among our respective maritime nations. Witnessed the 6th Conference of the War Colleges, the Naval War Colleges of the Americas, held here in October of 1970. At which the heads of the Naval War Colleges of the hemisphere met here to discuss our goals, our problems, and new ideas and methods of senior naval education. And finally witnessed the 6<sup>th</sup> Inter-American Naval Conference held here in April, hosted by Admiral Zumwalt, our Chief of Naval Operations, at which time the Chiefs of Navy of some 15

nations of North, Central, and South America joined here to try to achieve greater mutual understanding and respect and cooperation.

Yes the Naval War College, I believe, has come a long way. Has been particularly thrilling for me to share in its progress in this regard, and I envy Admiral Semmes his opportunities in the days and months ahead to carry on and further develop this rich tradition.

The second Seapower Symposium is now scheduled for early November, and I know he is looking forward to hosting an exciting and a meaningful assembly of free world naval leaders here in Newport, with some 47 nations represented.

Over the years since its establishment in 1884, the Naval War College has gone through many trials and many tribulations. Many days of glory and acclaim and many days of non-recognition, insignificance. All in a background of widely varying support from within the Navy.

Commodore Luce, the founder and the 1st President of the Naval War College, faced almost impossible odds in trying to persuade a skeptical naval leadership that a war college was in the interests of the Navy. Alfred Thayer Mahan, who followed him as the 2nd president, had equally difficult problems.

At one point, Navy funding was so low for the War College that Admiral Mahan had to collect the building materials that were left over from the construction of Luce Hall, take them out in Newport, sell them on the open market to get enough money to buy the coal to heat the building and carry on his classes.

The tradition of vacillating support, which the Naval War College has received and suffered throughout many years has at times made progress most difficult, if not impossible. Today, I'm delighted to report that our support is strong.

Secretary of the Navy, John Chaffee and Admiral Zumwalt, our Chief of Naval Operations, have given their unqualified backing to our cause here. Never before has the higher education of career naval officers been considered more important by our top naval leadership.

This is not to discount the fact that there's still a few, just a few, that still believe in the school of the ship -- believe that any war college education is an unnecessary luxury and would give low priority to continuing support of this college.

It's Under Secretary of the Navy John Warner told an audience here at Global Strategy some 14 months ago, "the challenge for the Navy today and for tomorrow is to do more with less." Funding is being cut as our country reassesses its national priorities. Troops are



being withdrawn, and bases closed worldwide as the United States reviews its international defense posture.

Yet at the same time that our national leadership seeks to lower our profile abroad, it has reaffirmed our commitments to some 42 nations. Obviously, the only way that we're going to be able to honor those commitments in the face of our withdrawal of ground forces and land-based air forces is to rely increasingly on sea power. And the challenge is that much greater in the face of the burgeoning Soviet maritime threat.

The demands on our Navy have never been or never will be greater, but at the same time the cutbacks, the reductions have never been more drastic, both in ships and in personnel.

Obviously, we're having to tighten our belts with respect to the numbers of expensive ships and aircraft that we can have. So, as we move to this smaller high-quality Navy that we talk of, we must ensure the highest quality officer possible and one crucial way that this can be done is by relying increasingly on better education. And it is here that the Naval War College I believe is so important.

And let us hope that the modest funds in dollars will be made available to continue provide that education. Particularly when our total master plan for our construction here at the Naval War College prices out at substantially less than 1/3 of the cost of one of our new destroyers and our annual budget -- operating budget of the college -- equates to much less than 1/4 of the cost of one of our newest fighter aircraft.

It's my sincere hope that in these last three years, we, my team, offices of faculty and staff, my whole team, having some small way contributed to increasing the potential of the War College for the tasks of the future. Some innovations have, I hope, done just that.

By stressing military professionalism in our education, we tried to instill within our students the realization that first of all he is a naval officer whose profession is the defense and the security of our nation. It must be remembered that the Naval War College is the only place within the Navy where the science of naval warfare is studied. Accordingly, we have increasingly emphasized the tactical and strategic aspects of naval warfare in our student research. Likewise, we have established, as Admiral Vinoy mentioned, a series of military chairs occupied by highly selected naval officers who are recognized within the Navy as operational experts and scholars in their fields.

It has been our objective that these military chairs added to our illustrious civilian faculty will balance out our overall educational capability, particularly in the areas of functional naval warfare, logistics, and strategy.

We have [tape skips] are also taking steps to ensure that our students keep abreast of the changing social trends in motion within our society. This is most important obviously today for our commanding officers and our executive officers, in fact, with our low retention rates in the Navy, the future of the Navy may well depend on how well our middle grade naval leaders understand, appreciate and respond to the needs and the thinking of the junior officers and men in our ships and in our squadrons.

Accordingly, we have initiated a series of Current Attitudes Seminars here, which students from local colleges and universities meet with our students to discuss the various political and social issues that seem to be dividing the nation. From these meetings, our students emerge with a better understanding and appreciation of the ways in which our young people think. And hopefully the young civilian student leaves us realizing that the career military man is not the warmonger. So many of today's youth think he is.

In closing these remarks, let me reiterate to my successor my everyone wish for success and smooth sailing. In these exciting times for the Navy, for Navy education, and for the Naval War College there remains so much to be done. And the expansion program and the fostering of greater allied naval cooperation under the Nixon doctrine, which Admiral Vinoy mentioned, and an increasingly professionalism in our in our curriculum here.

We, on my watch, have only scratched the surface.

I'm encouraged that our naval leadership places so much importance on what we have been trying to do here that they have picked one of the most outstanding naval officers of my time, the senior Vice Admiral in the United States Navy to assume the position as President of the of the Naval War College.

Before turning over to my good friend BJ Semmes, there are so many people I want to thank for all they have done for the college and for me on my watch. In addition to the great staff and faculty, which you've supported me so well these last three years, there are many, many others of you here in the local community -- I'm not going to read off the list. All of you know so well, your own contributions. And yet I must single out John Nicholas Brown for his special contribution, as friend, advisor, and as the founding president of our Naval War College Foundation. He and the other incorporators and trustees of the foundation, including Greg Bates, Jack Bergen, Charles Adams, Pick Sheffield and many others who are not here today. It made one of my my fondest dreams come true.

And two, I have to recognize my superb board of advisors who have been so helpful over these last three years. Their names read like Who's Who in America and deservedly so. And finally, there is one special person who is more than anyone else, contributed to any accomplishments that I've made personally over these last three years. As we all know,

many jobs in the Navy require an officer/wife team in varying degrees. And I can think of no job in the Navy where an officer/wife team approach was more needed than here at the Naval War College.

And Prue, as everyone here knows or will agree, is the ultimate in that regard. She is indefatigable, inexhaustible, and all those other adjectives that Navy wives are supposed to be. She's a wonderful example of a Navy wife. [applause]

And Prue would join me, I know, in one final accolade to someone who must be recognized. As my predecessor Chick Hayward mentioned from this platform just three years ago, no President of the War College could survive without her. Mrs. Colbert and I are so overwhelmingly grateful for all she has done for both of us, but I would just like to say once again: Thank you very much, Mary Murphy. [applause]

And again, thanks to all of you. All of you who've made our last three years here in Newport so meaningful and so worthwhile. And now I will read my orders.

00:32:46

BuPers Order 142329.

When relieved in August, detach from duty as President, Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island. Proceed to report Supreme Allied Commander, Atlantic Norfolk, Virginia for duty as Chief of Staff.

Captain Semmes, please haul down my flag.

00:33:06 Emcee

Battalion commander, call the battalion to attention.

Will the guest please rise?

Orderly, haul down Vice Admiral Colbert's flag.

[Aye aye, Sir.]

Bandmaster, sound off.

[music and a 15-gun salute]

Admiral Colbert, your flag has been hauled down, Sir.

Will the guests please be seated?

Battalion commander, place battalion parade rest.

Vice Admiral Benedict J. Semmes, Jr. will read his orders.

00:36:18

BuPers Order 126414

To Vice Admiral Benedict J. Semmes, Jr. When directed in July, detached duty as Deputy Chief of Naval Operations, Surface. Proceed and report to the President, Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island for duty as his relief.

Reporting by a letter to the Chief of Naval Personnel. Reports to command of Naval Base Newport, Rhode Island for area coordination. Signed, B.H. Gwyn, Chief of Naval Personnel.

First endorsement from the Chief of Naval Operations to Vice Admiral Semmes.

On 8 July 1971, consider yourself detached from duty as Deputy Chief of Naval Operations, Surface. Carry out the remainder of your orders. Signed Harry Hardy, Assistant Vice Chief of Naval Operations.

Admiral Colbert, I relieve you.

Captain Sims, would you please break my flag?

00:37:36 Emcee

Battalion commander, call the battalion to attention.

Will the guests please rise?

Orderly, break Vice Admiral Semmes flag.

[Aye aye, Sir.]

Bandmaster, sound off.

[music and a 15-gun salute]

Admiral Semmes, your flag is unbroken, Sir.

Will the guests please be seated?

Battalion commander placed the battalion parade rest.

00:40:05 Benedict J Semmes, Jr.

To the faculty and students of the War College: all orders and instructions of my predecessor remain in effect.

Ladies and gentlemen, friends of the Navy, and the Naval War College:

I view my assignment here as the highest honor. My wife and I are delighted to return to Newport. And we regard this duty as a high challenge. For these are crucial times in the history of our country. The United States Navy is confronted on and under the seas by the increasingly modern and efficient ships of the Soviet Navy. Our strategic retaliatory capability is challenged by a growing Soviet arsenal.

The Naval War College, as the Navy's senior establishment for training officers for high command, must train leaders who have the awareness and the ability to inspire and lead our youth to meet this challenge. Nor is it only the Soviet challenge they must meet.

Seldom has our nation been so sick of war. Anything military is unpopular. We as a nation must beware, lest the distasteful war undermines our will and determination to preserve our freedom. These are perilous times and the Naval War College has a continuing contribution to our security and to peace.

For Prue and Dick Colbert, I know that I join all presence here in admiration and gratitude for your great accomplishments in bringing the Naval War College to new eminence. And we hope for you more success, satisfaction, and happiness in the new duty on which you're about to embark.

Fair winds. Following seas.

00:43:11 Emcee

The Guardian commander call the battalion to attention.

Will the guests please rise with benediction and remain standing for the national anthem?

00:43:27 Chaplain Duncan

Let us pray.

And now may the spirit of our Lord go before us to illumine the goals that we should see. May He go behind us to cover our mistakes and heal our wounds. May He underguard us to support us in our efforts to do and maintain the right. May He surround us to protect us from our enemies. May He be above us, always with His blessing.

In the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Amen.

00:44:19 Emcee

Ladies and gentlemen, our national anthem.

[Band plays the Star Spangled Banner]

00:45:35 Emcee

Ladies and gentlemen, this completes the ceremony.