Wednesday, July 13, 2011
Navy, Offshore Balancing, and The National Interest

Here's an interesting post on The National Interest blog. Benjamin Friedman is a Cato guy, so the CONCEPT of offshore balancing is obviously of interest to him. Many libertarians see offshore balancing as THE answer to our nation's foreign policy challenges, though a precise and agreed upon definition of the term is problematic. Some offshore balancers wish to remain engaged in the world--albeit with a much more shallow land-based footprint. Some are flat out neo-isolationists. The devil is in the details, and CNO's adoption of the terminology "offshore option" is a wise one given the muddled meaning of offshore balancing. My sense is that in the strictly academic community, there is a relative consensus on what OB is as a grand strategy, and its maritime instantiation is close to what CNO espouses. When the DC thinktank community attempts to apply OB, it starts to become more isolationist.

Be that as it may, despite Mr. Friedman's factual error (reference to the "…recently retired Chief Naval Officer..") his link-fueled assessment of the politics of service advocacy is worth reading.

Bryan McGrath

Posted by The Conservative Wahoo at 8:57 AM
0 Comments and 0 Reactions

Tuesday, July 12, 2011
The Navy's Information Dissemination Crisis

No, I'm not talking about strategic communications. I'm referring to the exponentially growing requirements for rapidly processing, disseminating and analyzing vast quantities of networked information and intelligence. National Defense has an enlightening article on the coming Navy ship-wreck in bandwidth, linked

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Twitter Feed

RT @cencio4: Picture taken near Benghazi raise question: is the Libyan No-Fly Zone active? http://t.co/CeNBWHo 39 minutes ago

Haha RT @StephanieCarvin: Breaking: Lord Carlyle, 'UK gov't terrorism expert' is bat-shit insane. about an hour ago

Piracy conspiracy theory. This kind of speculation drives the regional narrative for piracy due to lack of transparency http://t.co/oCh7GcB about 9 hours ago

sensors, and networks.

VADM Cebrowski may have been the conceptual father of network-centric warfare, but MG Flynn and GEN Stan McChrystal operationalized the theory on the battlefield. Maximizing the leverage of interagency capabilities and authorities, counter-terrorism has recently evolved into a highly refined art form. Frankly, very few naval folks working outside the special operations community understand the impact of this new war-fighting paradigm. The limitations of the current naval environment are quite evident when one considers that a couple of SOF guys can carry around more bandwidth in a suitcase in the middle of a desert than 200-something Sailors share on the newest DDG. Broadly speaking, the decentralized, adaptive, and highly-networked style of warfare pioneered by counter-terrorism forces in Iraq and Afghanistan will become the American military's competitive edge over future adversaries. As networking technology and precision-guided weapons proliferate to both state and non-state actors, only the integration of these capabilities into coherent fighting architectures combined with US logistics, creativity, and freedom of thought will enable us maintain a combat advantage.

Viewed in a naval context, network-centric warfare is the difference between a singular combatant such as an LCS (or even much smaller vessels) being able to find, fix, and engage targets within a few miles of the ship and the same platform being a node in a widely-distributed strike force able to destroy targets identified by non-organic sensors and national intelligence systems while calling in fires from over the horizon on locally-identified targets.

As the NDIA article notes, the proliferation of sensors and bandwidth-hogging data such as full motion video (from both manned and unmanned platforms) is an unstoppable trend. The vulnerability of these networks to jamming and disruption is an issue, but redundancy and robust designs can overcome those challenges. Contrary to some of the opinions expressed in the article, multiple networks add resiliency and any consolidation should be approached thoughtfully. (If you've used NMCI the past several years, you know exactly what I mean). Processing and analyzing data is as critical moving this data over the network. Off-board analysis, reach-back support, and automation are good ways to handle this issue, but embarked analysts closer to the fight can increase the speed and quality of decisions. Despite advances in automation, onboard intelligence analysis and operational C2 afloat is manpower intensive. Consequently, trends in minimal manning and designing ships with inadequate surge berthing must stop.

The Navy prides itself among the services on the independence of commanders at sea, but the reality is that much of this independence disappeared with the advent of radio. Rather than fighting the trend, we need to embrace networked warfare and

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exploit it to our advantage. This doesn't mean micromanaging commanders in the field, the air, or afloat; quite the opposite is true. Flattened C2 allows individual units to contribute to the fight at the operational level while increasing the speed and quality of decisions across organizations and from the tactical to the strategic level. Furthermore, agility and speed of decision making are two of the most important principles to fighting irregular enemies who are not handicapped by a large bureaucracies and cumbersome chains of command.

Getting this networking and bandwidth problem right over the next few years is just as important for the Navy as formulating and executing an achievable shipbuilding plan. Moreover, properly networking naval forces will enable lower end (read more numerous and affordable) ships and aircraft to realize operational synergies and combat power way beyond what individual units are capable of achieving.

The opinions and views expressed in this post are those of the author alone and are presented in his personal capacity. They do not necessarily represent the views of U.S. Department of Defense, the US Navy, or any other agency.

Posted by Chris Rawley at 6:46 PM 6 Comments and 10 Reactions

Labels: Data and Dissemination, Irregular Warfare, Navy Infrastructure, SOF

The Must Reads of the Day

If you are unable to read past a few paragraphs before being distracted, these three articles are not for you. If you want to read three of the most interesting and informative articles published in the last few days, then these articles are for you.

How Digital Detectives Deciphered Stuxnet, the Most Menacing Malware in History By Kim Zetter and published by *Wired Magazine* is one of the most comprehensive stories of STUXNET I have seen. This is the story how researchers tracked down a cyber nuke.

The CIA's Secret Sites in Somalia by Jeremy Scahill and published by *The Nation* represents a much needed addition to the discussion regarding policy options the US exercises to fight terrorism. Regular readers of this blog will note that almost all of the stories being told have been covered in parts on ID, but the article gives much needed background and context to those stories. The reactions by some people to this article about it sharing secrets is remarkably silly, I think, because this base is the worst kept secret in Mogadishu. If you don't believe me, Google Mogadishu airport base or prison or whatever and look for yourself how "secret" this base really is... or better yet, subscribe to a private intelligence service that covers Somalia. This is a great article though.

Piracy | Floating Wrecks by Gayatri Jayaraman at *LiveMint* is a another great example of an article describing the ugly in Somalia. Unlike the very comprehensive Jeremy Scahill article, this is a story about real life prisons and the brutality of torture taking place to the over 500 hostages being held by pirates today.

Posted by Galrahn at 3:00 PM 2 Comments and 2 Reactions

Labels: Good Reads

"He's a Procurement Officer"

On models of civil-military interaction:

> **CJCS Admiral Thomas Moorer**: The flow shifts back and forth. And it's very difficult, almost impossible, to run that from Washington. And so far as the reports to you are concerned, let me tell you right now, that if I am directed to give the reports you will get them precisely when you ask. But I am not running this reporting business. And I am passing the information up to the Secretary of Defense and it's being run from up there, but it's—
> **President Richard Nixon:** Right. I am directing you—
> **Moorer**: If you want me to do it, I can do it—
> **Nixon**: I am directing you, and if the Secretary of Defense raises the questions, I am directing you. I have to have them directly, and they must be unsanitized. And also when an order goes, it's got to go from me. The Secretary of Defense is not Commander in Chief. The Secretary of Defense does not make decisions on these kinds of things—
> **Moorer**: I understand that, Mr. President—
> **Nixon**: He's a procurement officer. That's what he is and not another goddamn thing. And from now on this has got to be done this way. So under these circumstances we can go. Now, getting back to this thing, let's see what kind of an excuse is being developed here.

Hat tip to Carl Prine. My initial thought regarding this snippet is that Nixon is acting entirely appropriately by exercising his authority, but that he's inviting some danger by undermining the authority of the Secretary of Defense. Of course, the relationship between SecDef, President, and CJCS was different before Goldwater-Nichols. Thoughts?

Posted by Robert Farley at 11:40 AM 3 Comments and 2 Reactions

Labels: Civil-Military Relations, Vietnam

Today's Hearings on the Hill

There are two House Armed Services Hearings today that might

interest folks. I know I'll be watching both of them online.

> Jul 12 2011 1:30 PM
> The Evolution of Strategic Communication and Information
> Operations Since 9/11
> Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities
> Rayburn House Office Building - 2118
>
> Witness Panel
>
> Ms. Rosa Brooks
> Professor
> Georgetown University Law Center
>
> Dr. Christopher Paul
> Social Scientist
> RAND Corporation
>
> Dr. Tawfik Hamid
> Senior Fellow and Chair for the Study of Islamic Radicalism
> Potomac Institute for Policy Studies

This panel will either be fantastic or terrible, and there won't be room for much middle ground. US STRATCOM is in the dumps right now, as evidenced by the complete absence of STRATCOM for Libya, Somalia, Yemen, Pakistan, and more importantly - the general image of the United States globally. For example, when the German crowd started cheering for the US womens soccer team in the world cup game Sunday, it marked the first time in my living memory a foreign crowd cheered for the US during an international sporting event. We have an image problem.

IO is a very interesting topic, and a conversation I think Congress should jump into. Is it successful IO when the CIA runs a vaccination program to obtain Usama bin Laden's DNA? It might be, but hopefully the extent to which our nation can run Information Operations extends beyond our ability to scam foreign populations. Can IO be used to shape the movements of the bad guys? Our greatest fear is that information quality cannot be assured, but I often wonder how effective we are in placing doubt into the minds of our adversaries regarding the quality of their information.

> Jul 12 2011 3:00 PM
> How Does the Navy Get Ready, and Where are We Today?
> Subcommittee on Readiness
> Rayburn House Office Building - 2112
>
> Witness Panel
>
> Vice Admiral William Burke USN
> Deputy Chief of Naval Operations
> Fleet Readiness and Logistics (N4)

Vice Admiral Kevin McCoy USN
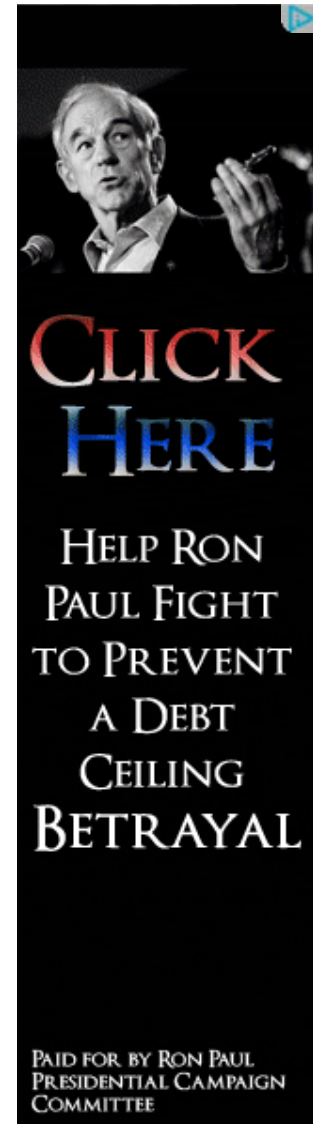Commander
Naval Sea Systems Command

It would be a wasted opportunity for Congress if they throw softball questions at this panel today.

Why are INSURVs classified? While it might be fair to classify some details, the idea that a result must be classified is a load of bull. Speaking of INSURVs, why does the Navy conduct INSURVs on $220 million ships but not conduct INSURVs on aircraft that cost almost as much? Does Congress even realize that the material of a P-8 squadron is probably going to cost more than the material of a Littoral Combat Ship Squadron? BAMS is going to be expensive too. Does the concept of Capital Asset need to be revisited in the 21st century?

Why isn't the Navy talking about the need for LCS tenders or more oilers for a growing fleet? Tell me why the Navy 313 plan added more quantity of ships but decreased the quantity of logistics ships? Oh, and in the process, the LCS consumes more fuel than the ships it replaces. The logistics of forward deployed LCS operations doesn't add up without adding more logistics ships, but the Navy isn't even discussing the potential need yet. Someone needs to raise the red flag, because the absence of even a generic logistics discussion for supporting LCS operations raises questions whether the Navy is being serious about LCS operations.

13 of the 31 currently overmanned ratings are in the aviation community. 6 of the 31 are in the Sea Bees. Roughead testified about reducing shore based infrastructure, is this what he was talking about? Ten years ago optimal ship manning and the disestablishment of the shore based maintenance activities for ships became the cost saving approach for the Navy. We have seen the results to the surface fleet as a result. It appears now it is naval aviation's turn under the axe. These are tough choices, and may be the best of the bad choices, but the Navy needs to explain it.

It is possible the LCS-2 issue will get some attention in this hearing. This really isn't a big issue as people suggest. Known problems with known solutions aren't the challenge for LCS, known or unknown problems with unknown solutions will be the LCS challenge. Those problems are coming, and may already exist. For example, a lot of people have made noise about the material condition of LCS-1 based on pictures. Stupid. They saved money primarily due to a late FY11 federal budget and decided these things will be addressed during the upcoming dock period. Good decision, I think. External corrosion isn't the challenge LCS has - the treatments plus shore maintenance support will prevent that from being a problem. The LCS corrosion issue is internal to the ship, including engine spaces. How does the Navy address corrosion inside the LCS hulls when most of that surface isn't treated for prevention and the crew simply doesn't number

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enough to deal with the issue while underway? The LCS is such a strange discussion, because my impression is people on the outside are always complaining about the wrong problems.

It would be a tragedy if the COBRA JUDY replacement didn't get some attention. The COBRA JUDY replacement encountered the same problems on sea trials that were identified on builders trials, and the government accepted almost all the spaces of a ship that failed acceptance. VADM McCoy told the Senate earlier this year these types of shipbuilding problems were solved, but the COBRA JUDY problems were announced the DAY AFTER THE HEARING he testified to the Senate the problems were solved. In other words, the Navy hides the ugly before giving testimony. It begs the question what news we will learn tomorrow that sure would have been useful for Congress in the hearing discussion today.

Posted by Galrahn at 10:00 AM 8 Comments and 4 Reactions

Labels: Congress

Monday, July 11, 2011
The Necessity of US Naval Power

Gordon England, Jim Jones and Vern Clark take to the Op-Ed page of the Wall Street Journal to influence the debate. This is good stuff, but I remain concerned that such placements are serendipitous, and not the result of a well-managed information campaign. I believe we are in an absolutely crucial four to six month period, one in which a new SECDEF, a new CNO, a new CJCS, a debt ceiling debate and draw-downs from two counterinsurgencies create a witches brew of uncertainty and opportunity. Sitting back and comforting ourselves that "we've done really well in the last few budget cycles" is a recipe for a smaller, less influential, less global and less important Navy and Marine Corps. OSD, the Congress, and the Executive are all subject to influence, and that influence should come from as many sources as possible--academia, think tanks, defense intellectuals, former Navy officials, members of Congress--whomever, wherever. It is time for a true debate on strategy and resources, one in which the Services are permitted--no, encouraged--to make their best case. Only a multiplicity of voices calling for such a debate will bring it about, and I am confident American Seapower will emerge with reinforced prominence.

Bryan McGrath

Posted by The Conservative Wahoo at 7:37 AM
16 Comments and 4 Reactions

Friday, July 8, 2011
Israeli Soft Power Crushing Free Gaza

Blog Archive

Blog Archive

Movement

Have you heard from the Gaza flotilla much lately? Probably not, unless you are looking for information. Gaza is 1.5 million people denied legitimacy for self-governance who are basically caged in by what can be described as prison walls on all sides. One would think this is one group of people that could find sympathy, particularly when the oppressor is Israel.

Nope! Not with friends like the Free Gaza Movement. Israel is putting on a soft power clinic in dealing with non-governmental organizations attempting to make political splashes from the shadow zones, and the whole world would be wise to learn from the approach Israel has taken against the second flotilla. Israel has turned the Gaza flotilla into a flotilla flop in a remarkably systematic way. This summary of events posted by Melanie Phillips on June 29th is a MUST READ.

Already, the number of flotillistas has been whittled down from 1500 to 350, and the number of boats from 15 to ten. Most of the credit should surely go to the Israeli activist law firm Shurat haDin which believes in bankrupting terrorism through a creative use of the law. Here are some of the legal challenges to the flotilla which Shurat HaDin has initiated with seismic effect.

- It sent letters to all the maritime insurance companies in Europe and Turkey, warning them that if they provided the flotilla boats with insurance (a necessary component in the effort to smuggle contraband to the terrorists) that they themselves would be legally liable for any future terrorist attacks perpetrated by Hamas.
- It filed an unprecedented lawsuit to seize the flotilla boats. The lawsuit was filed on behalf of an American terror victim injured by a Palestinian suicide bomber.
- It sent warning letters to a French insurance company warning it not to insure a boat that was to be launched from Marseilles. The company accordingly decided not to provide the French boat with insurance.
- After the main Turkish boat the Mavi Marmara pulled out of the flotilla, the New York Times reported that one reason (along with political pressure) was the boat's inability to obtain maritime insurance.
- It sent warning letters to the UK and US based global

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satellite company INMARSAT, stating that it might be liable for massive damages and criminal prosecution if it provided communication services to ships used by suspected terror organizations in the flotilla. Then a resident of the southern Israeli town of Sderot filed a legal suit asserting that, under US law, Inmarsat was aiding and abetting terrorism by providing satellite services to the flotilla vessels.

- This week the New York Times reported that Greek authorities had detained two of the ships docked in Greece, including an American vessel, after Shurat haDin complained to the Greek Coast Guard suggesting that seven of the ships might be lacking insurance or were improperly registered.

Since that post it has only steadily got worse for the flotilla as ship after ship has dropped out, including the US flagged *Audacity of Hope* which tried to leave port without permission and ended up with the vessels American Captain thrown into jail temporarily. Not surprisingly, the US State Department didn't help the flotilla folks when they ran into trouble in Greece.

Last year, on the same day that Israel took on the first flotilla directly with their hard power approach that ended in spectacular public political failure, LCDR Claude Berube published an article on the Small Wars Journal titled The Ship is the Visual, Even in the Shadow Zones. While the SWJ article focused on other non-governmental organizations like Sea Shepherd and Women on Waves (WoW), the article suggested a series of recommendations on how nations can confront non-state actors in the maritime domain to stay ahead of NGO political activities at sea. The article recommended an approach of Adapting, Adopting, and Adeptness.

First, opposition to these entities must mean adapting faster than them in operations and tactics. This will mean, in part, establishing ROEs that permit effective responses rather than restrict operations from achieving success… WoW, for example, encountered Dutch law when the government found that the license to carry the A-Portable did not mean that the organization had a license to convey abortion pills on a sailboat. Finding similar avenues for pirates or other entities might be as beneficial as remembering that the gangster Al Capone was not imprisoned for murder or violating prohibition laws – he was jailed for tax evasion.

Second, although U.S. interest groups may be averse to doing so, the Navy should adopt a more flexible and innovative force structure that, in addition to traditional warship might include less obvious commercial platforms…

Third, it must be adept in public relations at countering potential propaganda or challenges early and clearly. The battle plan, even in the maritime environment, must include

the airwaves, or the 21st century equivalent. Winning the war of ideas will be as important for maritime incidents or potentially prolonged engagements in the littorals to get the message out.

Israel appears to have operationalized the Adapting, Adopting, and Adeptness model with the latest Gaza flotilla. As Melanie Phillips laid out, by targeting INMARSAT and maritime insurance companies with advisory letters ahead of the flotilla, Israel set the bar very high on the issue of compliance to law. Israel has essentially leveraged a lawfare model often effectively leveraged by NGOs against states back against the Free Gaza Movement. The media has frequently discussed the behind the scenes pressure by the United States and Israel, but they have been short on details regarding the pressure points. You see, the Israeli's and US are pressuring Europeans to rigidly enforce their own laws. That puts a lot of pressure on organizations like the Greek Coast Guard not to make any mistakes, and the resulting red tape is burying the flotilla every time a vessel makes port. Pardon me while I laugh that the most leveraged weapon by Israel against the flotilla so far is European government bureaucracy.

If you have been following the progress of the flotilla, you will note that every vessel in the flotilla has a tail. The Gaza flotilla folks are very smart to call those vessels "commando ships" and other usefully inciting terms, but in several cases they are glorified small yacht type vessels with Israeli monitors tracking the progress of each Free Gaza flotilla vessel. The US Navy could learn a lot from Israel in how to adopt a different force structure quickly to address low intensity threats to maritime security, like piracy. The international coalition can't afford enough warships to track all the pirate motherships while staying focused on other regional commitments, but the international coalition can afford much less expensive vessels that can perform the role of tracking motherships. Security forces that included Navy, Marines, and a CG representative could be spread around to provide defense for the many smaller vessels and would be more than sufficient security against pirates. The key point here is that Israel was willing to adopt a new force structure to meet the Free Gaza flotilla challenge. The US Navy has not, at any point in the 21st century that I can tell, demonstrated such nimble flexibility to make those kind of tactical adjustments to maritime security threats. Attention Congress - that IS a red flag.

Israel adeptness in the information domain is remarkable. On the diplomatic front, Israel has successfully made the case that at this time, there is no humanitarian "crisis" in Gaza - and this point has been reported in many media articles discussing the flotilla. Furthermore, Israel has publicly made clear that anyone who wants to provide supplies to Gaza can do so through Israeli and Egyptian land routes. Israel has emphasized the changes to the blockade policy made last year following the first flotilla, which is actually a clever approach because it suggests a public diplomacy message that Israel has already conceded to international

demands on the blockade issue. Israel has also successfully framed the second flotilla as a provocation thanks to broad distribution of comments made by Adam Shapiro, co-founder of the International Solidarity Movement and a board member of the Free Gaza Movement. In the same article by Melanie Phillips quoted above, the video later in the article shows Mr. Shapiro saying this followed by applause.

> Free Gaza is but one tactic of a larger strategy, to transform this conflict from one between Israel and the Palestinians, or Israel and the Arab world...to one between the rest of the world and Israel.

Adam Shapiro is clearly an idiot, because his comments have cleverly been used by those sympathetic to Israel to frame the perception of the second Gaza Flotilla as nothing more than a scam with alternative objectives to the stated objective of delivering humanitarian aid to Gaza. The Free Gaza flotilla isn't finding public sympathy except by people who are already sympathetic to Gaza, and only with new people actively engaged and sympathetic to the flotilla cause can the Free Gaza Movement win the media. Without gaining public support and sympathy high ground in the media, the Gaza flotilla is a failure.

The media coverage of the flotilla has been remarkably good in my opinion. As events unfolded, the media have been reporting on the activities of the Free Gaza movement, and because all of those activities have been setbacks to their objectives, there are no successes for the media to report. From the beginning, the objective of the flotilla as an action was the political message, and every message to date has made the Free Gaza movement look like clowns in a circus, and I think some of the frustration that is being posted online suggests that even people sympathetic to Gaza and opposed to the Israel blockade see the Free Gaza movement as clowns. The control by Israel of the information domain has been thoroughly demoralizing for the Free Gaza Movement, hitting their supporters harder and harder with each consecutive setback.

Consider how thoroughly Israel has whipped the Free Gaza movement… when the flotilla became a flop, many activists attempted a "Flytilla", which itself has been ineffective due to blocks by airline companies in Europe. What are the odds those airline companies have threatening letters from Israeli lawyers in hand? The "Flytilla" is such a flop on it's own that very few major newspapers have even bothered to report the stunt. Israel has so thoroughly dominated the Free Gaza Movements messaging that Israel now drives the narrative, and when Israel controls the narrative, that often means no broad media coverage for those competing in the information domain against Israel.

As information wars go, the humiliation of the Free Gaza movement by Israel has been a masterpiece of soft power strategic communications. There is a lot to learn here.

Posted by Galrahn at 2:00 PM 35 Comments and 34 Reactions

Labels: Irregular Warfare, Israel, Strategic Communications

Defence IQ: Top 10 Defence Blogs 2011

Information Dissemination has been voted one of Defence IQ's Top Defence Blogs of 2011 by Defence IQ readers. You can read a write-up at this link of the top ten blogs chosen by Defence IQ readers. Other blogs making the cut include Danger Room, Abu Muqawama, Ares Blog, Small Wars Journal, Kings of War, Michael Yon, War is Boring, The Best Defense, and RAF Airman's Blog. Congratulations to everyone!

You know they actually read the blog when they write us up like this.

> Information Dissemination defines itself as the 'intersection of maritime strategy and strategic communications'. Driven by a handful of passionate contributors, you'll be hard pressed to find more intelligent, opinionated, and occasionally angry, analysis on piracy, naval developments and maritime strategy. Definitely worth adding to your bookmarks.

For the record, I'm the "angry" while the rest of the fantastic group of contributors here on ID make up the "intelligent" contributions being praised. Thank you to Feng, Bryan McGrath, Robert Farley, GvG, Chris Rawley, Primoris Era, and other unnamed past and present contributors and guest authors.

And yep - drinks are on me, all you have to do is come to Albany and look me up! Hopefully that condition will keep the offer affordable.

Posted by Galrahn at 10:15 AM 16 Comments and 5 Reactions

Labels: Blogging

Top Ten!

Congratulations to Raymond and everyone else associated with this blog. The folks I deal with everyday have this blog on their scan, and those who don't are getting it forwarded to them in

cut/paste emails.   Drinks are on Raymond!

Posted by The Conservative Wahoo at 9:53 AM
0 Comments and 0 Reactions

The Slow but Steady Development of a Navy Influence Enterprise

This is Captain David Werner, the smartest sailor I know when it comes to social media. Also mentioned in this video is the wizard behind the scenes for Navy social media (Twitter and Facebook), LT Lesley Lykins. Hopefully as people watch this, they recognize the Navy is learning and adapting while moving rapidly. Social media wasn't even on the Navy map just 2.5 years ago, when for example, they invited me on USS Freedom.

By the way, note he mentions others by name (Spencer Ackerman, for example) when presenting Navy social media. It is a technique that can be described as public social networking. I honestly believe Captain Werner is the right man, in the right place, at the right time - because he is constantly networking. I believe the way networking is part of his personality is not only why he is good with social media, but why he is good at teaching social media.

The video is worth listening all the way to the very last question, which I think is a great question. I had to turn the volume up to hear the question, but the question deals with the process of turning classified information (operational information) into declassified information (operational information released by the Navy) presented to the public.

Watching the movie will you help understand the rest of this post…

Captain Werner gives the Navy answer, but I think the question carries with it a lot of depth for thinking about information flows

and information uses in the modern information domain. It really is one of the most important questions facing the Navy today, and is not a question specific to social media. Stated another way, the question is:

How does the Navy align information with operations in a way where actions and information are congruent so that the message is delivered in context and the reader is informed as intended?

The question is about strategic communication, and the exposes the currently missing operational doctrine in the Navy where information is leveraged as part of an *influence enterprise* that tells the story of naval affairs, rather than simply informing the audience of *a* Navy action. The original question asked in the video could have also substituted the word "network" for "process" and hit the nail on the head.

I've often said that it isn't that the Navy doesn't have a credible story to tell, rather it is that the Navy doesn't know how to tell a credible story. Navy information today is always specific to a Navy action, and what happens is information crosses the classified-unclassifed bridge on any subject, from operations to acquisition etc., becoming a piece of Navy information that fits easily into a category:

strategy - operational - tactical - doctrine - acquisition - training - development

A lot of folks often wonder where the Navy narrative is. Well, an organization like the Navy requires many pieces of information to build a narrative from - and right now a lot of things the Navy is doing does not have an information component that makes the transition from classified to unclassified. It is also important to note that the Navy also has a lot of information that does make that transition, and those pieces do fit into a category.

Should any piece of information in those categories not align with the narrative, then the problem is the narrative itself, the activity described in the information, or the absence of information that feeds the narrative.

But right now problems with the narrative doesn't actually matter, because the narrative doesn't exist. Worse, the Navy doesn't have anyone even trying to articulate a narrative for the Navy, *yet*. For example, on any day someone can find articles on navy.mil, Facebook, or any number of other official locations that are well written pieces of information and easily fit into the categories above. What you will not find is a network crafting the individual pieces of information the Navy puts out into a coherent and articulated narrative that tells the story of the US Navy today.

It has been suggested that the role of using pieces of information in a network is the responsibility of the Unified Combatant

Commanders, or N3/N5, or maybe N2 should do it, or the role should be the CNOs to do. The answer, of course, is YES.

In order for a global organization like the Navy to 'operationalize' information at all levels into a narrative, the Navy is going to need to organize the pieces of information and assemble those pieces into a network that form a narrative. The Navy isn't there yet.

Like I said, when I look where the Navy is today from just 2.5 years ago, I am stunned by the rapid pace of progress, because impressive strides have been made in very a short time. Listen to Captain Werner describe what they are learning along the way with experience. There is a learning curve that directly impacts existing organizations, and fortunately the Navy is steady in making progress.
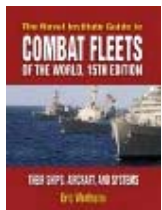
Change in an organization the size of the Navy will take time. I believe the next big change to watch for is when the Navy transitions from teaching processes and how to leverage various tools for organizing information in pieces; and begins to develop a global operational information network that takes all these various pieces and networks those pieces of information into an influence enterprise delivering a coherent narrative that tells the US Navy's story.

Posted by Galrahn at 2:00 AM 6 Comments and 15 Reactions

Labels: Information, Social Media, Strategic Communications

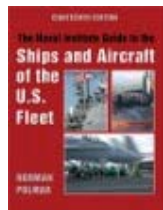Older Posts

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