

To: Captain Bisset and CDR Kenyon,

Below is the AAR for the Navy League Dinner on Thursday, February 11, 2016.

V/R
Robert

After Action Report: 2/11/2016 Navy League Dinner
LOCATION: Giovanni's The Waters Edge, Darien, Connecticut

DATE: February 11, 2015

MISSION: Question and Answer session for RDAC Enlisted and Officer Candidates with Rear Admiral Sean Buck, Chief of Staff, J5, Joint Staff, to provide Candidates a more comprehensive understanding of US Navy (USN) culture, the role of Officers within the USN, threats to the United States, global security, and the current and future role of the United States in maintaining global security.

MUSTER:

1. Arliss, James
2. Church, John
3. Kent, Sebastian
4. Moretta, Austin
5. Sherman, Kent
6. Solonick, Robert
7. Thomas, Reid
8. Wachter, Erik

TIMELINE OF EVENTS:

Thursday, February 11

1800-1830 – Arrival and Networking

1900 – Dinner

2000 – Question and Answer session with Read Admiral Sean Buck, Chief of Staff, J5, Joint Staff

2130 – End Question and Answer session, photos, and secure evolution

CONCLUSIONS:

This event proved very informative for Enlisted and Officer Candidates. Rear Admiral (RADM) Sean Buck covered a broad range of topics in depth in a short period of time. Candidates were also able to speak more informally with RADM Buck before the Q&A session regarding the Admiral's personal experiences as a P-3 pilot during the Cold War hunting for Soviet subs and other personal narratives such as flying with his son, also a Navy pilot.

Below are some of the topics of discussion that took place during the Q&A session:

The US is developing "defensive based" cyber capabilities rather than "offensive based" abilities. While the Rear Admiral believes a good offense serves as a better defense than purely defensive measures alone, he explained the very murky legal arena of offensive cyber capabilities at this time making it difficult for the US to develop significant legal offensive cyber capacities. While the US military and government are often at risk of and target of cyberattack, in particular from Russian and Chinese

sources, so, too, are private US firms such as those on Wall Street and other large corporations that hold sensitive financial or technological information. Recently, the US government has worked closely with these large institutions of strategic financial and technological value to enhance cyber security because the loss of data and theft of information to overseas sources can result in the loss of billions of dollars of economic potential for the US economy and significant decreases in the “technological gap” the US currently enjoys between its adversaries.

China has hegemonic goals for the Asian-Pacific Theater. Without a doubt in his mind, RADM Buck believes the Chinese have every intention to force the US out of the Asian-Pacific by any means necessary short of full-scale war with the US. That is to say, duplicitous diplomacy, aggressive expansion, development of anti-access / area-denial weaponry, and bullying of regional partners will be China’s main tools to push the US out of the arena. RADM Buck cited China’s construction of an island at Fiery Cross Reef in the highly contentious Spratly Island Archipelago. Numerous littoral states in the South China Sea (Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippines, China, etc.) claim to have economic access to the hundreds of small islands that make up the Spratly Island Archipelago. China disagrees. In a move of unprecedented expansion, China has built an island where only a few rocks protruding above sea level at high tide previously stood. The Chinese claim the “island” is purely for civilian use and has begun regularly landing civilian planes on the island. However, the island is hundreds of miles south of China’s southernmost point, the island of Hainan, has a deep-water harbor capable of facilitating China’s one-and-only aircraft carrier, and a landing strip capable of landing the US space shuttle, far longer than is necessary for a civilian airliner. These are hardly the actions a peaceful tourist destination for Chinese travelers.

To maintain the balance of power in the Asian-Pacific Theater, the US has adopted a multi-tiered approach. At the tactical level, US forces in the region will remain in constant motion, denying the Chinese anti-access / area-denial capacities the opportunity to lock-on to standing military targets. At the strategic level, the US will work closely with its regional allies (Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, and the Philippines) to reassure them that the US is there to stay. 90% of global trade flows through the Asian-Pacific waters at some point in time. The US will not allow economic strangulation nor military intimidation on behalf of the Chinese to deprive and coerce other nations in the region to submit to Chinese dominance.

Rear-Admiral Buck spoke on the following topics as well:

1. Winning the “Battle of the Narrative” against radical extremist ideology of groups like al-Qaida, ISIS, and Iran. The “Battle of the Narrative” – to alter how others perceive the world and their system of beliefs through propaganda – is equally, if not more important than the physical battlefield against extremist groups operating across North Africa and the Middle East where shots are fired. You can kill as many terrorists and extremists as pop their heads out, but if you cannot stop these groups from recruiting new militants, the fight will never end and will simply become too costly for the US to fight indefinitely.
2. The greatest strength of the US military, particularly the US Navy because of its extensive global reach as the only true remaining “blue water navy”, is its presence. A US presence is both a reassurance to friends and deterrent to potential adversaries. The most effective military in the world is one that does not win a conflict, but deters adversaries from ever starting one.
3. “Hope is not a strategy.” ~ RADM Buck
4. The most important part of who you are as a member of the American armed forces is not your physical strength, but your character. If you are not an upstanding individual, the US military does not want / does not need you.

Candidate Reid Thomas asked, perhaps, the most important question for the RDAC Candidates, and RADM Buck's response should be disseminated to all Officer and Enlisted Candidates in the RDAC group.

Question: "What is the most important thing we as up and coming officers should be concerned with?"

Answer: "Take care of your guys. Know them, help them, protect them." This point cannot be stressed enough.

A good event. Read Admiral Buck has had the opportunity to see the USN at multiple levels and through multiple lenses over the course of his career. He should be lauded not only because of his service to his country, but also because of the breadth and depth of knowledge he carries, his ability to clearly articulate current events, genuine personality, and ability to inspire others. Any opportunity to speak with high ranking US military personnel, whether it be navy or another branch of service, should be highly encouraged.