

History of the National War College

In October 1945 Admiral Harry W. Hill was appointed as the first Commandant of the National War College and tasked with establishing a College for the postwar joint education of the armed forces. According to Lieutenant General Leonard T. Gerow, President of the Board which recommended its formation, "The College is concerned with grand strategy and the utilization of the national resources



Admiral Harry W. Hill

necessary to implement that strategy...its graduates will exercise a great influence on the formulation of national and foreign policy in both peace and war..." This theme was underscored with the participation of the State Department and, eventually, other government agency representatives into the faculty and student body.

The National War College mission is to prepare future leaders of the Armed Forces, State Department, and other civilian agencies for high-level policy, command, and staff responsibilities by conducting a senior-level course of study in national security strategy and national security policy. In furtherance of this mission, the College curriculum focuses on grand strategy – the

integration of all elements of national power – as well as the theory and practice of war, fundamentals of strategic thinking for national security matters, the global security arena, the inter-agency decision-making process, contemporary military strategy, and joint and combined warfare. A fundamental strength of the College is its joint environment and approach. Students and faculty are drawn from all armed services and from civilian departments and agencies concerned with national security policies. The College program stresses "jointness" in military planning and operations and the interrelationship of domestic, foreign, and defense policies.

The National War College has occupied Roosevelt Hall since the founding of the College, except for 1998-99 during the Hall's renovation. The College was incorporated into the National Defense University in 1976 when the latter was created as the country's pre-eminent joint professional military education center.

In commemoration of the 60th anniversary the College is planning a series of important events beginning with a special evening with General Colin Powell on September 19, 2005 and concluding with a program to mark D-Day on June 6, 2006. All the 60th Anniversary events will be open to students and alumni and to guests by special invitation.

The George F. Kennan Lecture Series

The NWC is launching the George F. Kennan Lecture Series in Academic Year 2006 as part of the 60th anniversary of the College. The lecture series is designed to highlight the longstanding relationship between the Department of Defense and the Department of State at the National War College.

The Lecture Series will be comprised of public evening lectures by prominent speakers from government, academia, and the private sector. Speakers will present their vision of the future in the area of foreign affairs and national security.

The Lecture Series is modeled on lectures that George F. Kennan gave at the National War College in 1946-47, when he served as the first Deputy for Foreign Affairs. A grand strategist, George F. Kennan shaped U.S. policy during the Cold War. During his year at the National War College, Kennan wrote an analysis of Soviet foreign policy advocating the containment of Soviet power. Another version of this paper became the famous article, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," published under the pseudonym "X" in the July 1947 issue of Foreign Affairs.

The "Empires" Evening Lecture Series

The purpose of the "Empires" series, which is part of NWC's larger History & Strategy Roundtable program, is simply to take a sophisticated historical look at the experience of past imperial powers, always with an eye towards the United States' current "imperial" issues. Unless the topic is specifically American, our speakers do not address these current issues overtly in their prepared remarks—but they seem to emerge naturally in the open exchange that follows. Events are open to the public. Announcements and invitations, however, are sent only to those who provide their e-mail address.

Previous topics in the series have included: "The Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power," by Niall Ferguson (Stern Business School, NYU, and Jesus College, Oxford University); "American Empire: Past and Future," by Yale historian John Lewis Gaddis; "The Empire of the Roman Republic" by University of Maryland historian Arthur Eckstein; "U.S. Special Operations Forces and the Problem of Imperial Policing," by journalist Robert Kaplan; and "The Ottoman Empire and Its Legacy in the Arab World," by Faruk Birtok (Bogazici University, Istanbul). [Not a complete list]

The National War College Alumni Association

The Alumni Association is an independent, self-supporting association of NWC graduates, faculty, and staff personnel.

It is the only organization that keeps current addresses of all NWC alumni after graduation; it publishes a Directory regularly which is available without charge to members; it puts out a quarterly Newsletter reporting College and Alumni events; and it provides support for various College programs.

In addition, the Alumni Association hosts two timely and stimulating seminars and several social events each year at Fort McNair, as well as two popular regional conferences for the alumni of NWC and other senior service schools at selected cities around the United States.

*Some Distinguished
NWC Graduates*



General Wesley Clark



General Henry Shelton



General T. Michael Moseley



General James Jones



General Colin Powell



General Peter Pace

Roosevelt Hall

In November 1899, Secretary of War Elihu Root proposed a War College for the Army in his first annual report. Plans for the location of such a college were prepared in November 1901 and its site was approved in April 1902. The cornerstone of the building was laid according to Masonic rites on February 21, 1903, utilizing the gavel used by President Washington to lay the cornerstone of the Capitol in 1793. President Theodore Roosevelt and Secretary Root made dedication addresses during the opening ceremony.



Dedication of National War College Building by President Theodore Roosevelt, 1903



Roosevelt Hall (front)

Designed by noted architect Charles F. McKim, the 308 x 104 foot building now known as Roosevelt Hall was completed at a cost of \$700,000, and was first occupied June 30, 1907. There have been few significant modifications since its construction. In 1946 the former Army Map Room was converted to an air-conditioned auditorium and 14 offices. From December 1964 to March 1966 a major interior rehabilitation of 93,000 square feet of existing floor area was accomplished and 10,000 additional square feet were constructed below



Roosevelt Hall (rear)



Former NWC Library - West Wing

and vault areas underwent extensive renovation.

Roosevelt Hall was designated a National Historic Landmark on June 24, 1974, at which time the Roosevelt Medal was also presented.



Rotunda interior

the esplanade for a Visual Aids Branch. This modification included a new front entrance, two stairwells, and lowered ceilings in order to provide air conditioning and new lighting throughout. In the 1970s the building was re-roofed and the dome re-coppered, while in the interior the Guastavino cohesive tile and mortar dome

Fort Lesley J. McNair

Established in 1791, Fort McNair is the third oldest Army installation in continuous use in the United States after West Point and Carlisle Barracks. Located at the confluence of the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers, where Washington designer Pierre L'Enfant envisioned a military garrison, it was first known as Washington Arsenal, and later Washington Barracks. The small installation gradually came to encompass the entire peninsula as it housed first the arsenal, then several artillery commands, the first federal penitentiary, an Army General Hospital, the Army Engineer School, the Army Music School, the Army War College, and other activities.

During its tenure as a federal prison, Fort McNair housed eight inmates who were charged with conspiracy in President Abraham Lincoln's assassination. Four of the eight were convicted and hanged in 1865 in the area where the tennis courts are now located. While the post was an Army Hospital (1898-1909) Maj. Walter Reed, perhaps best known for his contributions to the discovery of the cause of yellow fever, did much of his research there. The post dispensary and the Inter-American Defense College bachelor-officer's quarters now occupy the buildings in which Reed worked and died.



Fort Lesley J. McNair (aerial view)

In 1948, the post was renamed in honor of Lt. General Lesley J. McNair, commander of Army Ground Forces during World War II. McNair oversaw replacement troop training at Washington Barracks during the war and was killed in the invasion of Normandy in 1944.

Fort McNair is now home to the National Defense University, established in 1976, which is the parent organization of three colleges on the post: The National War College, the Industrial College of the Armed Services, and the Information Resources Management College, as well as the Armed Forces Staff College in Norfolk, VA.