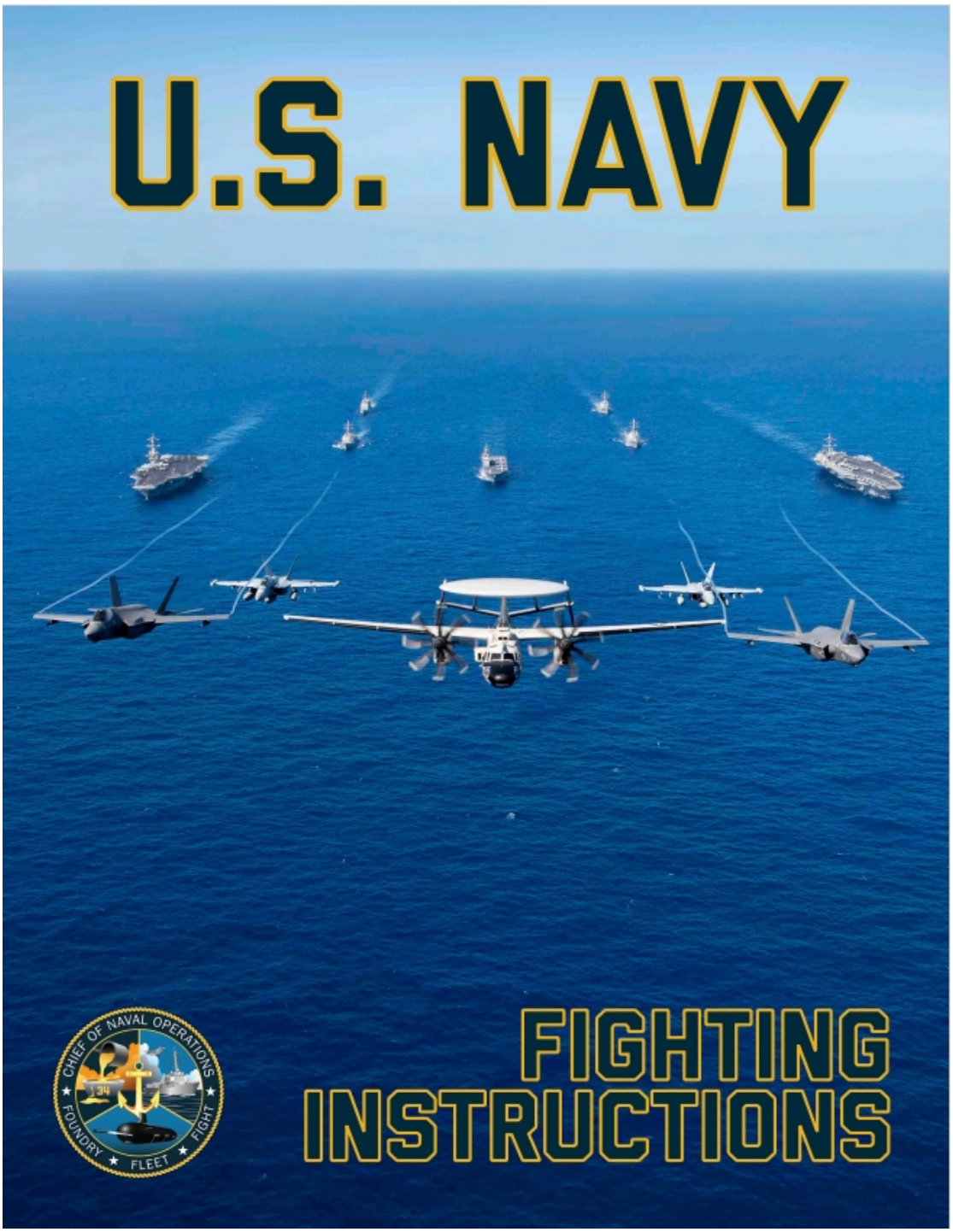
Chief of Naval Operations Unveils ‘Fighting Instructions’ at U.S. Naval War College



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The Navy's 34th Chief of Naval Operations, Adm. Daryl Caudle, today released the United States Navy Fighting Instructions, a comprehensive framework to guide how the Navy organizes, trains, equips, and fights in an increasingly contested global security environment.

Caudle unveiled the document during remarks at the U.S. Naval War College, calling the institution the Navy's "home of thought" and emphasizing the importance of introducing the guidance to future operational and strategic leaders. The Fighting Instructions introduce the Navy's "Hedge Strategy" to build repeatable and tailorable processes that produce a Navy that is agile, lethal, and responsive to changes in the global security environment.

Caudle framed the document as the Navy's answer to a defining challenge of the era: "How do we ensure we can fight and win across the spectrum of conflict, under conditions we cannot entirely predict, against adversaries who are increasingly capable, innovative, and aggressive – at near parity levels – simultaneously in key areas of vital national interest around the world?"

Adapting to a New Strategic Era

In his remarks, Caudle underscored that today's Navy operates in an era of great power competition marked by rapid technological change, sophisticated adversaries, and mounting strain on the defense industrial base.

"We find ourselves operating in an era with other great powers, an era in which the speed of decision ruthlessly punishes delay," he said. "The requirement for a strong, resilient, and globally present Navy has never been more important to our Nation's defense."

The Hedge Strategy balances high-end warfighting capability

with scalable, cost-effective forces able to respond across a wide range of crises and conflicts. Central to this approach are Tailored Forces and Tailored Offsets — scalable, mission-focused combinations of platforms, systems, and capabilities designed to address high-consequence scenarios without constraining overall fleet design. Together, they expand combat mass, improve flexibility, and preserve the Navy's ability to deliver decisive effects at acceptable levels of risk.

"Our Navy's approach to combat can no longer be based on capability overmatch and winning by mass dominance alone," Caudle said. "The Nation needs a Navy that can hedge lethal effects aggressively, innovate continuously, fight distributivity, and command with clarity across a global network of battlespaces."

Caudle also noted that the strategy complements national efforts to grow and modernize the Fleet, including the president's Golden Fleet initiative, which underscores the importance of a larger, more capable Navy supported by a resilient maritime industrial base.

Sailors at the Center

Throughout the guidance, Caudle emphasized that Sailors remain the Navy's decisive advantage.

"At the center of this vision will always be the United States Navy Sailor," he said. "They are our most enduring strategic advantage, our primary weapon system, and the heartbeat of our world-class Navy."

Quoting the late Adm. Hyman G. Rickover, the Father of the Nuclear Navy, Caudle closed by reinforcing the need for action over rhetoric.

“The great end of life is not knowledge, but action,” he said. “Through disciplined execution and a clear-eyed approach, we will defend our country, deter our adversaries, and preserve our place as the most formidable fighting force the world has ever known.”

The full text of the U.S. Navy Fighting Instructions can be downloaded at the following link: https://www.navy.mil/Leadership/Chief-of-Naval-Operations/