

Fleet Tactics Author Wayne Hughes, Who Influenced Generations of Naval Officers, Dies at Age 89



Retired Navy Capt. Wayne Hughes, dean emeritus at the Naval Postgraduate School, died on Dec. 3. Naval Postgraduate School Retired Navy Capt. Wayne Hughes, dean emeritus at the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS), died on Dec. 3 in Monterey, Calif. He was 89.

Hughes was professor of practice, military operations research, a fellow of the Military Operations Research Society and perhaps best known for his influential books on tactics. His most recent book, "Fleet Tactics and Naval Operations," Third Edition, written with Rear Adm. Robert Girrier, was published by the Naval Institute Press in 2018.

Hughes was also author of numerous articles on tactics and operations research and the importance of understanding calculations such as weapon type, capacity and range, combined with platform quantity, maneuverability and employment of both friendly and adversary ships that ultimately determine the outcome of naval conflicts.

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Retired Capt. Jeff Kline

He was a 1952 graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy. Among his numerous assignments afloat and ashore, Hughes commanded minesweeper USS Hummingbird and destroyer USS Morton and was the Chief of Naval Education and Training Support, Deputy Director of the Systems Analysis Division in the Office of the CNO (OP-96), and Executive Assistant to the Undersecretary of the Navy.

He was a huge proponent of military education and cautioned sea service leaders from emphasizing policy and strategy at the expense of tactics to fight and win future battles at sea.

Hughes was just recently featured in a six-part series of YouTube videos produced by NPS as part of the school's "Seapower Conversations" series, which features informal conversations with university faculty experts on the trends, technologies and tactics that shape modern seapower.

Hughes from an episode of "Seapower Conversations."
"Our community of NPS faculty represents deep expertise in a broad range of topics relevant to naval power and national security ... machine learning, cyberwarfare, autonomy and unmanned systems, quantum mechanics and national strategy, for example. Our hope with 'Seapower Conversations' is to share some of that expertise," said NPS' president, retired Vice Adm. Ann Rondeau. "Wayne Hughes is a national treasure, a man who was dedicated to service, to scholarship, and to educating naval officers and future leaders. Who better to begin this series of conversations on naval power than with our own Wayne Hughes."

Jeff Cares, chairman of Alidade Inc., was one of Hughes' operations research students at NPS, said, "Wayne was and always will be my teacher. There have been more than a few 'snatch-the-pebble-from-my-hand' occasions, in which I thought myself no longer his student. He would patiently allow me to talk excitedly about my discovery, genuinely proud, I think, of my work, and then gently refer me to a page in Fleet Tactics where, if I had been a more thoughtful reader, I would have found that he already arrived at that conclusion many years earlier."

Hughes was selected to receive the Surface Navy Association's Special Recognition Award, the association's highest honor. It will be presented posthumously next month at the SNA's Annual Symposium in Arlington, Virginia.

"Wayne shaped the thinking of generations of naval officers from many navies as a writer, a professor and a Sailor," said retired Capt. Jeff Kline, who served on the faculty at NPS with Hughes. "He will be missed by us all."