

# ADMIRAL RUEHE SUPPORTING THE FLEET

By Richard H. Wagner

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Admiral Frederic Ruehe is Commander, Navy Region Mid-Atlantic and as such is the person with responsibility for ensuring that all of the Navy bases from Maine to North Carolina are able to support the various constituent commands that utilize them. He spoke at a Council luncheon on 22 February.

Admiral Ruehe was commissioned on 8 June 1973 through the NROTC program at the University of Illinois. In 1974, he was ordered to flight training and was designated a Naval Aviator on 23 January 1976. Subsequently, he received assignments of increasing seniority involving helicopter aviation and anti-submarine warfare. He became Commanding Officer of USS BELLEAU WOOD (LHA 3) in 1996. Two years later, he joined the Staff of the Supreme Allied Commander, Atlantic in Norfolk, Va., as Executive Assistant to the Chief of Staff. He detached from SACLANT in December 1999, to become the Commander, Navy Region Southwest. His next assignment took him to Japan as the Commander, Amphibious Force Seventh Fleet/Amphibious Group One and in September 2003, he assumed duties as Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Japan. Admiral Ruehe became Commander, Navy Region Mid-Atlantic in November of 2005. He also holds a

Master of Science degree from the University of Southern California. His personal awards include the Defense Superior Service Medal, the Legion of Merit (4 awards), the Meritorious Service Medal (five awards) and the Navy Commendation Medal.



*Admiral Ruehe (center) with Captain Mark Ginda, CO, Naval Submarine Base New London (Conn.) and Captain Gary Maynard, CO, Naval Weapons Station Earle (N.J.). (Photo: R.H. Wagner).*

"In 1998, we instituted a process called 'Regionalization.' Until then, the various naval bases were under the command of the officer who was in command of the type of force that used the base. For example, the Commander of the Atlantic Fleet would have been in command of all the bases in the Atlantic area used by the surface navy. "Now,

the base management is all under a single commander, Commander, Naval Installations Command. Essentially, all the bases around the world report through regional commanders to the Commander, Naval Installations Command and that is how the money flows as well."

Excluding the Navy facilities in Naval District Washington, which also manages the Naval Academy, "our region, Navy Region Mid-Atlantic, stretches from North Carolina to Maine." There are 17 bases in the Region but several have connected facilities used by the various sub-tenant commands located on the bases. "Our headquarters is in Norfolk but our focus has been on supporting the installation COs, ensuring that they are well-equipped and ready."

"We have two naval shipyards that we are working. One down in Portsmouth, which is called 'Norfolk Naval Shipyard' and, of course, the one that is called 'Portsmouth' is in Kittery, Maine." The Region also includes Naval Station Newport, Rhode Island, the home of the Naval War College, the Subbase at Groton, Connecticut, Naval Weapons Station Earle, New Jersey, as well as Naval Station Norfolk, the largest naval base in the world.

"Although we have no bases in North Carolina, our ships continue to use Moorehead City as the loading base for support of the Marine Corps. We manage the port operations and contracting to support ship visits there." In addition, there is a proposal to build an outlying airfield in North Carolina that would support NAS Oceana. "It is a process that we certainly hope will end with a well-determined outlying field and support from the city and the people in the area down there."

In October 2006, as a result of the Base Realignment and Closure ("BRAC") process, Navy Region Northeast was consolidated with Navy Region Mid-Atlantic. BRAC also "directed base closings within our region and a cultural change - - joint basing. All of this is supposed to be done by 2011."

"We have two bases within the Mid-Atlantic Region that will be closed - - Naval Air Station Willow Grove in Pennsylvania and Naval Air Station Brunswick [Maine]." The idea behind such closings is to make the military more efficient by consolidating activities as the military declines in size. "It is something that we deal with on a daily basis - - to make the closings, adequate, appropriate, and the impact minimal, particularly if the impact is on operational efforts."

Admiral Ruehe noted that the BRAC process was not simply driven by economics. Indeed, some bases on the West Coast will grow as a result because there appear to be more threats in the Pacific. "A matter of focus is where is the challenge, what is the threat vector, are we there to meet it, how do we do that? One of the solutions is our outreach to the other services. Joint basing, outreach to the other services but also outreach to the services of other nations."

"We have a couple of examples of joint basing mergers that are in progress now. [NAS] Lakehurst is going to be coming under the Air Force and Fort Story, down in the Norfolk area, is going to be coming under the Navy." It is vital to ensure that these transitions do not impact the readiness of any of the services involved. To that end, Admiral Ruehe has directed that his base commanders reach out to their Army and

Air Force counterparts in order to understand the challenges that they face.

"This joint basing in some ways is new territory for us but Fort Story is going to be an easier version because we use it as a special ops training base right now and have plenty of interaction with the Army on that base as it is. There are other examples of that around the world where we have partly connected with other services. We are hoping that some of our work will become a model as the process continues."

"We also support casualty assistance and funeral honors programs. It is a huge effort - - from North Carolina to Maine, the passing of veterans and active duty as well. Our Fleet Family Support is another huge effort that manages everything - - training of individuals, management of child care, housing, medical. It is another opportunity for a big impact that is particularly rewarding. Also, we manage environmental; we manage safety."

In addition, the Region is responsible for Fleet Week in New York. "It is a great opportunity to bring our young sailors into the biggest city, the best city. This is just terrific to be able to open the door to our junior Sailors to let them see what it can be like in a big city. New York City is important to the Navy. We have formed strong relationships within the city and you afford us an opportunity like nowhere else in the country. Fleet Week is a chance for the Navy, Marine and Coast Guard team to display our finest professionalism and esprit de corps while showcasing our best personnel and capabilities. It is really a good opportunity for us to reach out and talk about what we do, when we do it and show you who done it."

"The total workforce for the Region is about 150,000 employees. The total funding is almost \$800 million."

"Our mission is to support the Fleet, support the fighter and support the family. The good news, great news, is that it is working and I think working well. It is working well because we have great folks we can rely on to make this work."