



**2012–2015**

**“Our Flag Was Still There”**

**October 2011**

*"Strategic communication is at the core of effective leadership. Through a leader's use of verbal and written symbols employees are motivated or deflated, informed or confused, productive or apathetic. A leader's ability to carve off the verbal fat and get to the meat of an issue, idea or plan will find success at every turn."*

— Dr. Reed Markham

A recent Gallup Poll commissioned by the U.S. Navy shows that the American public has very little understanding of the mission and relevance of a Navy. Specific poll results indicated that less than 12% of those polled understand why we have a Navy, and some even held the misconception that the Navy's primary responsibility is to transport the Army to the battleground. The fact that less than 1% of the American public serves in the military and less than 25% of the members of Congress are veterans only exacerbates this issue. 1 Despite the fact that most of our economy is heavily dependent on free trade, American consumers and our elected officials do not make the connection between free trade and the Navy's role in protecting it.

Faced with these challenges, Navy leadership decided to use the Bicentennial of the War of 1812 and the Star- Spangled Banner as an opportunity to engage the American public on both achievements of our service in the War of 1812, and why the Navy remains as vital to the nation's well-being today as it was then. To seize this opportunity, an effective strategic communication strategy is essential.

Strategic communications involves the larger effects of what a nation, a people, an organization, or an individual says and does in pursuit of a goal. This may seem overly broad, but it is important to note that the most substantive discussions of strategic communication center on closing what is sometimes called the "say-do gap." That is, aligning the way a body explains, justifies, frames or mitigates its actions relative to the actions themselves in the face of public scrutiny.

**As the execution agent for the Navy's Commemoration of the Bicentennial of the War of 1812 and the Star- Spangled Banner, we consider it an absolute imperative that our actions are fully congruent with the ideas that we promote. There can be no "gap" between what we say and what we do.**

The importance our leaders place on strategic communications places a responsibility on our service to "walk the walk," as well as "talk the talk." as we engage with the American public and the members of our Navy enterprise. Our priorities and values must be displayed in every deed, and reflected in every action of all men and women serving in any capacity in any aspect of the Navy's commemorative activities.

What you will find here is far more than a collection of talking points or a series of taskings for Public Affairs Officers and other public affairs personnel. This plan is not simply a plan to engage the media. Rather, **this plan places the emphasis on the conduct of the individual service member to demonstrate who we are, what we do, and what we stand for – and to make the connection between those tenets and the American public.**

What will make the plan succeed in action is comprehensive command involvement. Sailors and officers cannot be expected to spontaneously embrace this plan when little of their training has prepared them for outreach and engagement with the public. Consequently, I am making the execution of the COMWAR1812 Strategic Communication Plan a command priority, and its stewardship the duty of every commander in the task force, as well as all U.S. Navy military and civilian personnel who work in or support the COMWAR1812 mission.

This plan is in effect from FY2012 through 2015. The plan will adjust dynamically in response to its effect and to best implement intent. Flexibility and attention to new rudder orders will keep us on course.