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## **“Back to basics to maintain the art of warfighting”**

**This is a précis of longer article aimed at bringing war fighters back to basics.**

***Lieutenant Commander Ryan Ramsey is a command qualified submarine warfare officer who has 18 years service in the Royal Navy of which 15 have been within submarines. He has served in 4 diesel submarines and 4 nuclear submarines, completing submarine command course in 2000. In addition to the standard submarine warfare career, he has served on exchange with the Royal Netherlands Navy at sea, been a Command rider for Flag Officer Sea Training (providing warfare and operational training to both SSN crews and SSK crews) and most recently with the United States Navy at Submarine Development Squadron 12.***

*“Those who command can be divided into two those who control and those who delegate; the minority who trust their subordinates reap the rewards.”<sup>1</sup>*

Modern navies are increasingly hierarchical because Command and Control (C2) is becoming all consuming. It has evolved from its origins of providing direction and guidance in addition to support to those intellectuals leading at the front line to a self consuming process continually pushing the decision making process up the chain of command.

Unfortunately our enemy, in some cases years behind us technologically is demonstrating the traits we once believed made us far superior in the art of warfare.

We are striving to find a technological solution to this, using science to deal with the issue as opposed to concentrating on enabling our leaders and men to use the art to dominate warfare. Technology is driving warfare rather than warfare driving technical requirements.

The submarine was almost the last bastion of leaders being allowed to conduct warfare with autonomy. Other spheres had already been provided with constant reach-back and with this continual supervision. Submarine commanders were charged with making decisions capitalizing on extensive training and warfare knowledge. However with the increase of bandwidth, the higher echelons wish to remove this autonomy by achieving constant communications in the false belief that technology will ultimately win all future wars against a potential enemy.

Technology has its place within warfare, particularly in the provision of information for decision making, however the enabler for success at warfare is decision making and leadership itself.

In the US submarine service there is a drive to find a technical solution to aid decision making based on the premise that warfare is now more complicated. Tools to aid situational awareness are almost at an optimum now and despite this they continue to progress. The amount of information being provided is

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<sup>1</sup> “The pursuit of victory” – The life and achievements of Horatio Nelson by Roger Knight

having the exact opposite effect it was intended to; it is overloading the decision maker because technology and those that provide it decide what is necessary.

Decision making involves **judgment** and no machine has yet to achieve this core skill to the level required to engage in the art of warfighting. Nelson's ability to be successful in battle was based on the ability to understand the information provided to him. No matter how many options for solution a computer can achieve, it is unlikely that it will be able to deal with every single potential enemy's personality, preferences, variation in training, experience, emotional value, personal value and potential response. In fact, the enemy may be in a better position because of automation; they will be able to work out the computer's response. Add a sprinkling of "Cyber War" into the equation and there is yet another issue to deal with when the Commander exerts direct command and control as he deploys his unmanned warriors into battle.

Previous engagements in Afghanistan provide by far the best example of technology being outsmarted by locals with local knowledge and the **drive to win**. In this century, we have struggled to deal with asymmetric warfare from the outset and will continue to do so unless we learn from the lessons of success – outsmarting the enemy using the human brain, the most complex of all computers.