
The 30th Annual Supply Management Course for Senior Foreign Officers

By

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During May and June 1989, NAVSUP Headquarters conducted the 30th Annual Supply Management Course for Senior Foreign Officers. I had the privilege of serving as the Escort Officer for this year's class, on a eight-week temporary duty assignment away from my job in NAVSUP's Fleet Support Division (Code 033). The course is offered to international officers in the grades Commander through Rear Admiral, and is designed to accomplish the following:

- Provide an understanding of the mission and organization of the U.S. Navy Supply System, the management techniques we employ, and the on-going projects which harness new technologies;
- Provide an opportunity to discuss logistics problems and initiatives with their counterparts from other countries; and
- Familiarize the officers with life in the United States.

The thirteen officers in this year's class were a particularly diverse group. They represented 11 countries, spoke 10 languages, and practiced 4 religions—Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and Buddhism. Some had previously travelled in the United States, but most were here for a once-in-a-lifetime visit. Each had extensive experience with naval logistics, but their professional backgrounds varied widely. Most of them serve in navies which do not have a distinct supply corps, so the "line community" was well represented in the class. Their earlier assignments included various engineering, combat systems, and repair department head tours, as well as command of fast patrol boats and a corvette, plus all phases of supply management.

The course itself was a perfect mix of business and pleasure. We quickly mastered the art of group travel, as we visited the following organizations:

- Navy Supply Corps School (NSCS), Athens, GA;
- Navy Training Systems Center, Orlando, FL;
- Navy International Logistics Control Office (NAVILCO) and the Aviation Supply Office (ASO), Philadelphia, PA;
- Ships Parts Control Center (SPCC) and Fleet Material Support Office (FMSO), Mechanicsburg, PA;
- Naval Supply Center, Charleston, SC;
- Canadian National Defense Headquarters, Ottawa; and
- Canadian Forces Base, Halifax, Nova Scotia.



Rear Admiral McKinnon, Commander, Naval Supply Systems Command, welcomes the class and Senior Officer Captain Prasithi Boontharm, Thailand.

At each activity, we were treated to briefings, tours, and demonstrations of the Supply Corps' "latest and greatest." The curriculum covered SPAR, SPLICE, LOGMARS, BOSS, APADE, and MISIL, to name only a few of the topics.* We managed to avoid any serious cases of acronymitis, thanks to the thoughtful assistance of the briefing officers. Of course, we did not spend two months in the classroom. We also visited NAVSEA's Combat Engineering Development (AEGIS) Site, the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant, the David Taylor Research Center, the U.S. Naval Academy, and the Pentagon.

NSC Charleston was proud to demonstrate how the Navy translates "fleet support" from theory into practice in the fast-paced waterfront environment. We saw it all—automated warehouses, pierside procurement, fuel facilities, and the Regional Contracting Department. We were also hosted by the Supply officers of USS SIERRA, Charleston Naval Shipyard, and SIMA Charleston.

Since "all work and no play makes Jack (and Juan and Guiseppa) a dull boy," we never missed a chance to unwind. It will be hard to forget EPCOT Center and the Magic Kingdom in Orlando, Stone Mountain, the Gettysburg Battlefield, or the carriage ride through Old Town Charleston. Armed Forces Day in Winder, Georgia, has become a perennial favorite of the Seniors. They get to see Small Town, USA, at its best and ride in sports car convertibles at the head of a parade. Like each of our stops, the week we spent in Philadelphia was a memorable one. We stayed in a hotel within walking distance of Independence Hall, the Liberty Bell, and "Rocky's Steps" leading to the Philadelphia Art Museum; we drove to Atlantic City for an evening of casinos and boardwalk arcades; and we spent the weekend in New York City, seeing the Statue of Liberty, the Empire State Building, and the play, "Anything Goes," in the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts.

* Stock Point ADP Replacement, Stock Point Logistics Integrated Communications Environment, Logistics Application of Automated Marking and Reading Symbols, Buy Our Spares Smart, Automation of Procurement and Accounting Data Entry, and Management Information System International Logistics



Rear Admiral Filipiak, Commanding Officer, Ships Parts Control Center, with the class at Three Mile Island Nuclear Power Plant

Eight weeks of fine dining can make a set of uniforms shrink in a hurry, so we were lucky to find great running country at each stop. We dodged coeds in Athens, rabbits in Mechanicsburg, and “road apples” in Intercourse, PA., where some of us ran in a 10 kilometer jaunt through Amish country.

It is no secret that the glamor of life on the road can fade quickly. The entire group stayed in good spirits throughout the trip, mainly because of the hospitality we enjoyed in each city. Our first night away from Washington was a perfect example, as Captain and Mrs. Sopera were our host at an evening reception on the beautiful grounds of Quarters A, NSCS, Athens, GA. We were also invited into the homes of Captain Hekman (CO, NSC Charleston), Captain Freiburg (NAVSUP 07), Commander Fronabarger (XO, NAVILCO), Mrs. Linda Sutphin (NAVSUP 074A), Mrs. Alma Gray of Orlando, Florida, and Mr. Clint Lane of Athens, Georgia. The officers particularly enjoyed the evenings they spent in the homes of individual sponsors seeing American family life as it really is.

Not as visible, perhaps, but just as important were the International Military Student Officers (IMSOs) at each activity. Each year, these U.S. civilians and naval officers take time out from their regular jobs to plan every detail of the course—from briefing schedules, to informal “nights on the town,” to the all-important laundry service. And once the officers arrive, the ITMOs truly move mountains to handle all of the last minute requests and personal conferences.

As the course came to an end, everyone was anxious to return to their families, but none of us were in a hurry to say good-bye to so many good friends—both from the U.S. and from around the world. Eight weeks is not a long time to know someone, but eight weeks on the road together, helping each other to make the most of so many opportunities, is long enough to become very good friends indeed.



Senior officers and other U.S. Navy representatives meet with the Honorable Mark Singel, Lieutenant Governor of Pennsylvania, while in training at the Ships Parts Control Center.

The goal of the Seniors' Course during each of the past 30 years has been to show others how we work and live and play, and in meeting that goal, we have met the higher goal of fostering understanding and friendship around the world, one friend at a time.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Commander Bill Quinn is the SNAP II coordinator in NAVSUP's Fleet Support Division. Prior to reporting to NAVSUP in January 1989, he served as Cargo Officer/Assistant Supply Officer aboard USS SEATTLE (AOE-3). He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Economics from the University of Notre Dame and a Master's Degree in Business Administration from Golden Gate University.