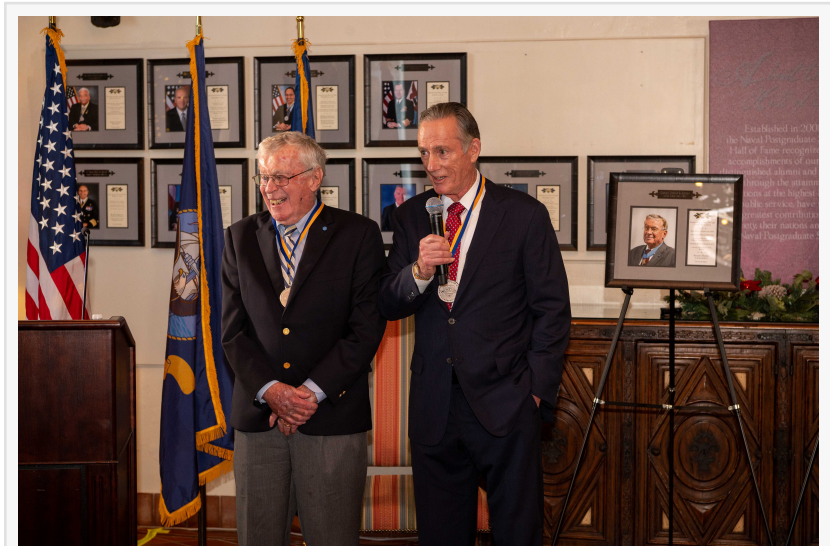


Medal of Honor Awardee, Iconic Leader Highlight Latest Inductions into NPS Hall of Fame

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA, USA, December 6, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) welcomed two new inductees into its prestigious Hall of Fame during a ceremony in Herrmann Hall, Dec. 1.

Retired U.S. Navy Capt. Thomas Kelley, a recipient of the Medal of Honor during the Vietnam War, and retired Adm. Robert Natter, also a decorated Vietnam War veteran who rose to command the U.S. Seventh Fleet, U.S. Atlantic Fleet and U.S. Fleet Forces Command, were recognized by a standing-room-only audience on the Herrmann Hall quarterdeck, honoring their significant contributions to the nation and to national security.



Retired U.S. Navy Capt. Thomas Kelley, left, and retired Adm. Robert Natter address the audience during their induction into the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) Hall of Fame on Dec. 1.

“These extraordinary alumni represent the very best of NPS. They served in active service in war but also were heroes after that,” said retired Vice Adm. Ann E. Rondeau, President of NPS. “They were heroes in the leadership of the fleet and force; they have been and are heroes in how they were exemplars as husbands and fathers and brothers and sons; they are living exemplars at never failing in their duty, their honor and their character.

“We have the honor to recognize them today not only as great leaders, but as warrior-scholars who actively learned new knowledge for future applications and who deeply reflected on how their experiences informed their leadership and their commitments to continued service, both in and out of uniform.” she continued. “That’s part of our NPS mission – to provide the opportunity for personal growth thereby making our Navy stronger and better.”

A day prior to the ceremony, Kelley and Natter participated in a [Secretary of the Navy Guest](#)

[Lecture \(SGL\)](#) at King Hall auditorium, discussing their careers and offering leadership lessons during an hour-long dialogue with NPS students and faculty. In fact, over the course of several days both men said the opportunity to interact with current NPS students in multiple academic and social settings was a highlight of their visit.

Kelley, a 1972 NPS graduate in management, dedicated his professional life to the defense of the United States and to the support of veterans as a civilian leader. He is the first Medal of Honor recipient to be inducted into the NPS Hall of Fame.

"It's kind of overwhelming, but a real honor," said Kelley, who then focused his remarks on attendees in uniform. "You serve this country. You're the best and the brightest we have right now. Keep your ears and your mind open, ask the right questions, and we'll be a much better world for that down the road."

Commissioned in 1960, Kelley served as a Surface Warfare Officer. Following his early assignments, he volunteered to serve in Vietnam as a lieutenant commanding River Assault Division 152.

On June 15, 1969, Kelley was in charge of a column of eight river assault craft which were extracting a U.S. Army infantry company on the Ong Muong Canal in Kien Hoa Province when it was ambushed by enemy forces.

Kelley boldly maneuvered the monitor vessel on which he was embarked directly into the line of fire and commenced firing. Despite being severely wounded by an enemy rocket, Kelley continued to direct the other boats until the enemy attack was silenced and the boats were able to move to an area of safety. His actions that day earned him the Medal of Honor as well as the Purple Heart.

Despite his injuries, Kelley continued his Navy career for another two decades across a variety of command and staff positions. Retiring as a captain in 1990, Kelley continued to serve the Department of Defense and the veteran community in a variety of senior leadership positions, culminating in his service as the Massachusetts Secretary of Veteran Services.

Kelley retired from public service in January 2011. His more than 40 years of naval and state service were recognized in a tribute attended by 500 people which raised \$300,000 for the Massachusetts Soldiers' Legacy Fund, which pays the educational expenses for children of those soldiers who died in the Global War on Terror.

In January 2023, Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro announced that a future Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer, USS Thomas G. Kelley (DDG 140), would be named in his honor.

Natter, who graduated from NPS in 1982 with a master's degree in management, completed a distinguished 41-year Navy career in 2003 having served as the last commander of the U.S.

Atlantic Fleet, the first commander of U.S. Fleet Forces Command, the first commander of all U.S. Navy and Coast Guard homeland defense forces under the newly created U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM), and commander-in-chief of NATO Western Atlantic Command.

“This is a great honor,” said Natter. “The real heroes, however, are those who aren’t here now, who died in combat.”

Natter enlisted in the Naval Reserve at age 17. Following one year of enlisted service and graduation from the U.S. Naval Academy, Natter saw continuous duty in operations in the rivers and coastal waters off Vietnam for three years, after which he became the officer in charge of a SEAL boat support detachment in the lower Mekong Delta.

Three months into Natter’s assignment, his small craft was caught in a Viet Cong ambush and all aboard were killed or wounded. Seriously injured, Natter swam ashore and then back with one other crewman, directing suppressing fire to bring the damaged boat through a hail of enemy fire. For his actions, Natter was awarded the Silver Star and Purple Heart medals.

Following his graduation from NPS, Natter would serve in multiple ashore and afloat assignments, commanding the destroyer USS Chandler (DDG 996) and cruiser USS Antietam (CG 54) before his selection to flag rank.

As Commander, U.S. Atlantic Fleet, on Sept. 11, 2001, Natter quickly ordered Aegis guided missile cruisers up Chesapeake Bay to provide an anti-aircraft shield over Washington, D.C, and USS George Washington (CVN 73) to New York with a hastily sortied complement of fighter aircraft.

Since his retirement from the Navy, Natter has continued to make significant contributions to national defense in the defense industry, serving in executive roles on multiple companies and leading his own consulting service.

He is a staunch supporter of naval education, having graduated from the Naval Academy, Naval War College and NPS, and remains engaged in all three institutions through philanthropic and leadership support on boards and respective foundations. Natter’s leadership and performance in peacetime and war were instrumental in the success of the Navy and outstanding support for naval forces.

Founded in 2001, the NPS Hall of Fame recognizes the accomplishments of its most distinguished alumni who through the attainment of positions at the highest levels of public service have made the greatest contributions to national defense, society, and the world.

Watch the [full ceremony video](#) on the NPS YouTube channel.

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