

# Vice Chief, Distinguished Alumnus Adm. James Kilby Celebrates NPS' Fall Quarter Graduates

*The U.S. Navy's second highest ranking officer addressed the December graduating class of the Naval Postgraduate School, and issued a strong 'call to action.'*

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EINPresswire.com/ -- The [Naval Postgraduate School](#) (NPS) celebrated its 2025 Fall Quarter graduates during a commencement ceremony, Dec. 19 in King Hall auditorium. Advanced degrees in defense-focused disciplines were awarded to 295 graduates, among them 19 international military officers representing U.S. allies and partners worldwide.

NPS President retired U.S. Navy Vice Adm. Ann E. Rondeau opened the ceremony by welcoming distinguished guests, families and friends of the graduating class to the ceremony.

"This class is nearly 300 graduates strong, with six of you earning dual degrees, and more than 30 academic leadership awards," Rondeau said. "We have a number who have earned another degree, a certificate in Joint Professional Military Education through the Naval War College ... And we have students and faculty who, over the past two months, have been approved for 10 patents.

"We even have a group of students who went with their professor to Poland to bring their analytical work to the Black Sea," she continued. "We have so much good going on here that is real, and is relevant. And it is growing, each pace and step that we take forward is remarkable."

Before turning the podium over to commencement speaker, Vice Chief of Naval Operations U.S.



Vice Chief of Naval Operations U.S. Navy Adm. James W. Kilby addresses graduates during the Naval Postgraduate (NPS) School's Fall Quarter graduation ceremony, Friday, Dec 19. Kilby, a '93 NPS IT Management graduate, celebrated the achievements of the class.

Navy Adm. James W. Kilby, Rondeau recognized NPS' own "rocket man," former NASA astronaut and Acting Provost Jim Newman, who retires at the end of this year. Newman formally passed the responsibility of Acting Provost to Dr. Matt Carlyle, who has stepped forward to serve in this critical role.

Rondeau also had a surprise for the VCNO, presenting Kilby with the NPS Distinguished Alumnus Award, an honor presented to select NPS graduates for significant contributions to national security and professional achievements reflecting great credit on the recipient and the institution.

"Every single leader matters, and this leader has made sure that his life in the Navy has been committed to others, committed to mission, committed to treating everybody with dignity and that we're doing our best," said Rondeau. "This is not only a terrific naval officer, he is one of the finest human beings and gentlemen I've ever had the opportunity to meet."

In his address, Kilby underscored the pivotal role NPS plays as a foundry for warfighting advantage, not of ships or bullets, but of people ... NPS graduates who will lead in service not only to the U.S. Navy and Joint Force, but also the nation, and countless allied and partner nations across the world.

"Combat readiness encompasses both the platforms we bring to the fight and, more importantly, the people who use those tools. NPS is unique in that it develops both sides of the readiness coin," Kilby said. "Our platforms and operations benefit from the research and innovation conducted here, and our people benefit from the relevant education, technology applications,



Vice Chief of Naval Operations U.S. Navy Adm. James W. Kilby, a Naval Postgraduate School alumnus, congratulates a new alum during the Fall Quarter Graduation Ceremony, Friday, Dec 19.



Naval Postgraduate School Fall Quarter graduation ceremony, Friday, Dec 19 with commencement speaker Vice Chief of Naval Operations Adm. James W. Kilby, celebrated the award of advanced degrees in defense-focused disciplines to 295 graduates.

wargaming concepts, and hands-on problem-solving that make NPS graduates impactful, sought-after leaders.”

Throughout his remarks, Kilby emphasized the Navy’s need for intellectual warfighters who think, act and operate differently— and how with hard work and dedication, NPS can help leaders make decisive contributions across every domain. He praised NPS for cultivating officers who fuse academic rigor even with the demands of service.

“In this exciting and dangerous time, we need your critical thinking, rigorous problem-solving, and subject matter expertise more than ever,” Kilby said.

“Your education here has prepared you for this, and now it is time to put it to work.”

Kilby also discussed his own experiences at NPS as a student in the information technology management program, and how his time at the school helped guide him through problems with no clear solutions.

“The value of your education isn’t just in what you’ve learned, it’s in the skills you’ve developed here – to read deeply, to think critically, to solve complex problems with discipline. Those skills are invaluable,” Kilby said.

He emphasized that the value of the education extends beyond the knowledge gained to include the people you meet and the network created at NPS with the students’ classmates, colleagues and professors.

In closing, he left the class with a “call to action.”

“Whether you are in the Navy, Marine Corps, Joint Forces, or an allied partner — lead with courage and confidence,” he said. “Accelerate change. Challenge the status quo. Attack problems others believe are unsolvable. This is what NPS graduates do!”

The integration of research and joint operational impact was evident in the work of many graduating students, including [U.S. Air Force Capt. Drew Switzer](#). Graduating with a master’s degree in security studies focused on Europe/Eurasia, his thesis — winner of the Foreign Area



U.S. Navy Adm. James W. Kilby, vice chief of naval operations and a Naval Postgraduate School alumnus, receives the NPS Distinguished Alumnus Award from university president, retired U.S. Navy Vice Adm. Ann Rondeau.

Officer Association Award for Excellence in International Affairs — explores how a nation's intelligence culture shapes its counterintelligence effectiveness against hybrid threats.

"Although my research deals with Western European nations, specifically, I think it's something that can be applied to all Western nations and can definitely be a fit with the U.S. military as well as our allies," Switzer said.

Switzer will depart NPS to join the Air Force Office of Special Investigations supporting USAF forces in Europe and Africa. He says his experience at the institution has been instrumental in preparing him for future assignments.

"I would say the biggest professional experience I'm taking away from NPS is just the breadth of knowledge that you get from the faculty here ... true subject matter experts in their fields," he said.

"It's one thing to go through training in the U.S. military and understand your job, but it's another thing to study it through an academic lens, understanding the broad stroke, strategic effects the work we do has," Switzer added. "I'm excited to take that work back to the field and hopefully enhance others' experiences as well."

For many graduates, the ceremony marked the culmination of a challenging academic journey, in addition to an opportunity to make a difference in the fleet. [U.S. Navy Lt. Cmdr. Margaret Graves](#) is graduating from the school's cyber systems and operations program. She utilized her NPS thesis to take on a longtime challenge with shipboard cybersecurity inspections, and the remediation processes required to meet strict guidelines detailed in the Security Technical Implementation Guide (STIG).

"NPS provided the academic freedom so that I could address a problem that I had lived as an enlisted (Information Systems Technician), and see my Sailors live as a shipboard communications and information systems officer, translating a frustrating challenge into a real-world solution."

Graves developed a framework for an automated state readiness tool for STIG compliance, greatly reducing the manual workload and improving compliance rates in shipboard cybersecurity inspections. She received the Fall Quarter's Fleet Cyber Command Award for Academic Achievement in Cyber Operations for her work.

"The biggest takeaway for me from NPS is that technology alone never solves organizational problems," she said. "NPS taught me to think systematically to identify not just technical solutions, but the organizational changes that need to be made in order to get those solutions to stick.

"The systems thinking approach will shape how I approach every challenge going forward,

whether I'm implementing new capabilities or improving existing processes," Graves added.

The ceremony honored the personal achievements and professional readiness of nearly 300 new NPS alumni, marking another milestone in the institution's long history of strengthening the warfighting advantage of the United States naval services, the Joint Force, and our allies and partners.

Learn more about the 2025 Fall Quarter graduating class: <https://nps.edu/2025-fall-graduation>

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Naval Postgraduate School (NPS), located in Monterey, California, provides defense-focused graduate education, including classified studies and interdisciplinary research, to advance the operational effectiveness, technological leadership, and warfighting advantage of the naval service. Established in 1909, NPS offers master's and doctorate programs to Department of War military and civilians, along with international partners, to deliver transformative solutions and innovative leaders through advanced education and research.

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