



# Lessons Not learned: The U.S. Navy's Status Quo Culture

*Roger Thompson*

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Despite its reputation as the most impressive naval force in the world, the U.S. Navy is in trouble, according to the author of this book, and systemic weaknesses could be its undoing. Here, military sociologist Roger Thompson provides a compelling, often scathing, assessment of the U.S. Navy and its learning disabilities and then presents a convincing argument for reform. Thompson points to the U.S. Navy's "up or out" promotion system, massive personnel turnover, inexperienced crews, and drug and alcohol abuse as problems that make it difficult for the Navy to build cohesive, well-trained fighting units. In a review of the Navy's recent history, he finds that its ships, submarines, and aircraft are often outperformed in competitions and exercises with other navies?and its failures are either denied altogether or perfunctorily excused. Diesel submarines?so quiet that they are rarely detected until it's too late to prevent an attack?routinely surpass expensive U.S. nuclear subs and put U.S. aircraft carriers in danger. American naval pilots, whose weapons are often improperly tested, are frequently bested by military pilots from other countries. Because the U.S. Navy doesn't have enough surface ships to protect its capital ships, American carrier strike groups now use Canadian ships as escorts. Shortcomings like these, Thompson argues, undermine the Navy's potential and should be cause for national concern. In presenting a side of the U.S. Navy that's rarely discussed, this book spells out lessons the Navy must learn if it is going to succeed in an era of asymmetrical warfare?of David-versus-Goliath conflicts. In his conclusion, the author puts forth a twelve-step program that calls on the U.S. Navy to rethink its naval strategy, to lose some weight, and to focus on the fundamentals.

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