



ADMIRAL JAMES STAVRIDIS, USN

SUPREME ALLIED COMMANDER OF NATO (RETIRED), CHAIR OF THE BOARD OF THE ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION

Admiral James Stavridis is Vice Chair, Global Affairs, of The Carlyle Group, and Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Rockefeller Foundation, following five years as the 12th Dean of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. A retired four-star officer in the U.S. Navy, he led the NATO Alliance in global operations from 2009 to 2013 as Supreme Allied Commander, with responsibility for Afghanistan, Libya, the Balkans, Syria, counter-piracy, and cyber security. He also served as Commander of the U.S. Southern Command from 2006-2009, with responsibility for all military operations in Latin America. Over the course of his 37-year military career, he earned more than 50 medals, including 28 from foreign nations.

Earlier in his military career, he commanded the top ship in the Atlantic Fleet, winning the Battenberg Cup, as well as a squadron of destroyers and a carrier strike group – all in combat. In 2016, Hilary Clinton vetted him for Vice President. He was later invited to Trump Tower to discuss a cabinet position in the Trump Administration.

Admiral Stavridis earned a Ph.D. in International Relations and has published twelve books and hundreds of articles in leading journals around the world, including the recent novel *2034: A Novel of the Next World War*, which was a New York Times bestseller, and *To Risk It All: Nine Crises and The Crucible Of Decision*. His 2012 TED talk on global security has close to one million views. Admiral Stavridis is a contributing editor to TIME Magazine and is Chief International Security Analyst for NBC News.

God Lives in the Deep Waves

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In his iconic song, "Tiny Dancer," Sir Elton John talks about street people in Los Angeles "handing tickets out for God." Whenever I hear the song, I'm reminded of when I received my own ticket for God, one that I've kept clutched in my spiritual hands for these many decades.

In 1973, I was an 18-year-old midshipman attending the U.S. Naval Academy. I had just completed my "plebe year," the grueling first year of studies at Annapolis, and was assigned to go to sea for a summer training cruise. I reported to the guided missile cruiser USS Jouett in San Diego, and soon headed up to the bridge of the ship for my very first watch.

We got underway on a balmy early summer evening, and my job on the bridge was to be the "helmsman under instruction." I stood behind the big ship's wheel with a seasoned Navy petty officer just over my shoulder and answered the commands of the junior officers driving the ship. Every time I turned the wheel, I had a sense that it wasn't the ship moving, but the dark blue surface of the sea spinning below us. It was my first time out of sight of land. There was a vivid, blood-red sunset and the ship seemed to be riding a ribbon of light toward the western stars. "Red sky at night, Sailor's delight," the petty officer whispered behind me.

Until that moment, I had always imagined that I would graduate from Annapolis and follow in the footsteps of my father, a combat Marine who fought in the Korean and Vietnam Wars. I hadn't given the oceans themselves much thought, regarding them simply as a highway that would provide a means to get me wherever the Marine Corps would need me to go.

But that summer evening, on the bridge of a gray Navy warship cutting through the deep blue waves, I suddenly felt like Saint Paul on the road to Damascus. The scales dropped from my eyes. I knew what I wanted in life, what God intended: a seagoing life. I looked out at the long, long swell of the big rollers, the impossibly deep waves that only increased in size and power as we headed west. The sea filled my vision, and as I gazed at the distant point where the sea met the sky on the far horizon, about to become shrouded in night, I thought, "what am I seeing?"

And I realized that God lived in those big, endless waves on the far horizon. The hand of God was nudging me firmly toward them, and I felt certain and secure in the knowledge that I would sail the oceans, become a sea captain, and spend much of my life looking at that distant horizon; looking at eternity.

That was my ticket to God. I hold that ticket still.