



# WILLIAM ARTHUR OWENS

1 March 1994 — 29 February 1996

William Owens was born 8 May 1940 in Bismarck, North Dakota. His maternal grandfather had served in the Spanish-American War, his father had been a Navy enlisted man during World War I, and the uncle for whom he was named had been a US Naval Academy graduate. Originally planning to attend the University of North Dakota, Owens decided to seek an appointment to the Naval Academy after seeing a movie about life there. He entered the Academy after graduating from Bismarck High School in 1958. In June 1962 he received a bachelor of science degree in naval science and his commission as an ensign.

After almost two years of training, Owens, who had been promoted to lieutenant (junior grade) in December 1963, embarked on a career as a nuclear submariner, eventually spending a total of over six years undersea. His first undersea tour was on the ballistic missile submarine USS *James Monroe* (SSBN 622) from April 1964 until March 1966. During that tour he was promoted to lieutenant.

Following naval guided missile school, Lieutenant Owens served briefly on the USS *Tecumseh* (SSBN 628). From there, he was selected to be Engineering Officer of the nuclear attack submarine USS *Seadragon* (SSN 584). During his time aboard, the *Seadragon* participated in surveillance operations off North Vietnam during 1966 and 1967. Owens remained with the *Seadragon* until June 1971, playing a key role during its almost three-year overhaul. Named Submarine Force Pacific Fleet Officer of the Year in 1969, he was promoted to lieutenant commander in September of that year.

**Admiral William A. Owens**

United States Navy

Owens's first staff assignment was in the Office of the Secretary of the Navy, where from June 1971 until July 1972 he was Assistant Head of the Special Studies and Objectives Division in the Office of Program Appraisal. The recipient of a Chief of Naval Operations Fellows scholarship to study at Oxford University in England, Lieutenant Commander Owens received a B.A. and an M.A. in politics, philosophy, and economics from Oxford in 1974. Following a training assignment with Commander, Submarine Squadron ONE, he served as Executive Officer of the Pacific Fleet's USS *Pogy* (SSN 647) from December 1974 until August 1977. He received an M.B.A. in engineering management from George Washington University in 1975.

After his promotion to commander in July 1977, training at Admiral Hyman Rickover's Division of Naval Reactors at the Department of Energy and the commanding officers' school in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, prepared Owens for the next stage of his career. From July 1978 to August 1980 he commanded the Pacific Fleet's USS *Sam Houston* (SSBN 609). Next he served short assignments as Deputy Commander for Readiness on the squadron staff of Submarine Squadron TEN and then as Commanding Officer of the USS *Corpus Christi* (SSN 705).

After a year with the first Strategic Studies Group at the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island, where he participated in the development of the Navy's maritime strategy, Commander Owens became Executive Assistant to the Director of Naval Warfare in the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations. He served in that position from August 1982 to June 1984, a period during which the directorate's scope expanded to include electronic, arctic, and theater nuclear warfare. During this time Owens also guided the Navy's war gaming effort.

He was promoted to captain in August 1983 and assumed command of Submarine Squadron FOUR in the summer of 1984. As squadron commander supervising the operations of fourteen ships that deployed from the Mediterranean to the North Atlantic, Captain Owens introduced some of the first tactics for the employment of fast attack submarines with other Navy and Air Force systems. He next served as Chief of Staff to the Commander Submarine Force, Atlantic, from June 1985 to March 1986.

There followed a series of increasingly important assignments ashore and afloat. After serving as Executive Assistant and Senior Aide to the Vice Chief of Naval Operations from March 1986 to June 1987 and receiving his promotion to rear admiral (lower half) in May 1987, Owens assumed command of Submarine Group SIX, the Navy's largest submarine group. In that capacity, he exercised operational control of nuclear-powered submarines operating in the Western Atlantic. When the Navy established the Strategic Think Tank in the spring of 1988, Owens received additional responsibilities as its first Director. In June 1988 he returned to the Office of Program Appraisal on the Secretary of the Navy's Staff as Director. After only a month in that position, he became Senior Military Assistant to Secretary of Defense Frank C. Carlucci. Owens continued to serve in that position under Carlucci's successor, Secretary Dick Cheney, and received his second star in August 1990.

In October Rear Admiral Owens assumed command of the SIXTH Fleet and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) Strike Force South, Allied Naval Forces South. He was promoted to vice admiral in February 1991. The first shots of the Persian Gulf War were launched from ships under Vice Admiral Owens's command in the Eastern Mediterranean. During the war, carriers from his



Rear Admiral Owens accompanies Secretary of Defense-designate Dick Cheney, March 1989.

command were deployed to the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. To carry out these additional responsibilities while meeting heightened requirements in the Mediterranean, new force configurations were introduced emphasizing joint capabilities and information warfare. These smaller configurations proved to have greater capability than expected. The Navy's need to modify its operational doctrine during the war greatly influenced Owens's thinking. Concluding that the Gulf War had been "a doctrinal disaster for the U.S. Navy," he

became convinced of the need "to free operational thinking from the assumptions of the past" and to move beyond a maritime strategy that relied almost solely on carrier battle groups for almost all operations.

Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Frank B. Kelso II selected Vice Admiral Owens to be the first Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Resources, Warfare Requirements, and Assessment (N-8). From July 1992 to December 1993 Owens directed the reorganization of the Navy Staff to meet the new challenges of the



Admiral Owens and the other Joint Requirements Oversight Council members at their weekly breakfast meeting, summer 1995. *Left to right:* Rear Admiral Francis W. Lacroix, Director for Force Structure, Resources and Assessment, Joint Staff; Admiral Owens; Admiral Joseph W. Prueher, Vice Chief of Naval Operations; General Thomas S. Moorman, Vice Chief of Staff, USAF; General Richard D. Hearney, Assistant Commandant, USMC; General Ronald H. Griffith, Vice Chief of Staff, USA.

post-Cold War world. He oversaw the radical reduction in the Navy's force structure from almost 600 ships to about 340. To enhance the flexibility and effectiveness of a reduced force, he integrated surface, submarine, and aviation warfare; pressed for increased reliance on high technology; and advocated greater Navy participation in joint warfare. In 1995 the Naval Institute Press published his book *High Seas: The Naval Passage to an Uncharted World*, in which he described the

reforms he had introduced and presented his proposals for a new strategy for the Navy and the nation for the twenty-first century.

Promoted to admiral in December 1993, when he was designated Commander in Chief of the Pacific Fleet, Owens had just arrived to assume his new position when President William J. Clinton nominated him as Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. On 1 March 1994 Admiral Owens became the nation's third Vice Chairman.



Admiral Owens with Secretary of Defense William J. Perry and President William J. Clinton, August 1995.

As Vice Chairman, Admiral Owens used his position as chairman of the Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC) to advance his concept of a joint “system of systems” that would utilize the most recent advances in intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance; communications and information technologies; and precision guided munitions to achieve “dominant battlefield awareness” for the US military in any environment. A vocal and tireless proponent of the need to take advantage of the revolution in technology to enhance military effectiveness in an era of reduced defense spending, Owens strove to end dupli-

cation of weapons systems among the services and to ensure the interoperability of new systems. To accomplish his objectives, he increased the JROC’s analytical capabilities; established the Joint Monthly Readiness Review, which he chaired; and was instrumental in the creation of the National Imagery Agency Senior Steering Group, which he co-chaired.

With the support of the Chairman, General John M. Shalikashvili, Admiral Owens fully exploited the authority that the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act vested in the Chairman of the Joint

Chiefs of Staff and, by extension, the Vice Chairman. Under his direction, the JROC's scope broadened to include programming; the commanders in chief of the unified commands (CINCs) became direct participants in the JROC process; and that process was integrated into the Defense Department's planning, programming, and budgeting system (PPBS). Owens also sought congressional support for his initiatives. As a result, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1996 amended the Goldwater-Nichols Act to give statutory authority to the JROC and designated the JCS Chairman as its chairman, allowing him to delegate the position only to the Vice Chairman.

Admiral Owens chose to retire at the end of one term as Vice Chairman. His tenure had greatly increased both the authority and the visibility of the Vice Chairman's position and expanded the military's role in defense programming. His ideas, especially his advocacy

of greater reliance on high technology, were controversial and inspired considerable debate, which continued beyond his tenure as Vice Chairman.

After his retirement on 29 February 1996 Owens became vice chairman of the board and then president of Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC), the nation's largest employee-owned high-technology company. In late 1998 he was named vice chairman of the board and chief executive officer of Teledesic Holdings, Ltd., part of a new firm founded by corporate leaders in the high-technology field to deploy a network of satellites to provide a range of telecommunications services worldwide. He became co-chief executive officer of the parent company, Teledesic, in April 1999. Owens also wrote a second book, *Lifting the Fog of War*, presenting his ideas on the role of advanced technology in future warfare.

# William Arthur Owens

Admiral, USN

Promotions	Dates	
	Temporary	Permanent
ENS. . . . .		06 Jun 62
LTJG . . . . .		06 Dec 63
LT. . . . .		01 Dec 65
LCDR . . . . .		01 Sep 69
CDR . . . . .		01 Jul 77
CAPT. . . . .		01 Aug 83
RADM (LH). . . . .	May 87 . . . . .	01 Nov 88
RADM . . . . .	13 Aug 90. . . . .	01 Sep 91
VADM . . . . .	01 Feb 91	
ADM. . . . .	02 Dec 93	

Assignments	Dates	
	From	To
Midshipman, US Naval Academy, Annapolis, MD . . . . .	1958 . . . . .	1962
Nuclear Power School, Mare Island, Vallejo, CA . . . . .	1962 . . . . .	1963
Naval Nuclear Power Training Unit, Idaho Falls, ID. . . . .	1963 . . . . .	1963
Naval Submarine School, Groton, CT . . . . .	1963 . . . . .	1964
USS <i>James Monroe</i> . . . . .	1964 . . . . .	1966
Naval Guided Missiles School, Dam Neck, Virginia Beach, VA . . . . .	1966 . . . . .	1966
USS <i>Tecumseh</i> . . . . .	1966 . . . . .	1966
Engineering Officer, USS <i>Seadragon</i> . . . . .	1966 . . . . .	1971
Assistant Head, Special Studies and Objectives Division, Office of Program Appraisal, Office of the Secretary of the Navy, Washington, DC . . . . .	1971 . . . . .	1972
Student, Oxford University, United Kingdom . . . . .	1972 . . . . .	1974
Training, Commander, Submarine Squadron ONE . . . . .	1974 . . . . .	1974
Executive Officer, USS <i>Pogy</i> . . . . .	1974 . . . . .	1977
Training, Division of Naval Reactors, Department of Energy, Washington, DC . . . . .	1977 . . . . .	1977
Student, Commander Submarine School, Pearl Harbor, HI . . . . .	1977 . . . . .	1978

## Assignments

## Dates

	From	To
Commanding Officer, USS <i>Sam Houston</i> . . . . .	1978 . . . . .	1980
Deputy Commander for Readiness, Commander Submarine Squadron TEN . . . . .	1980 . . . . .	1981
Commanding Officer, USS <i>Corpus Christi</i> . . . . .	1981 . . . . .	1981
Research Fellow, Naval War College . . . . .	1981 . . . . .	1982
Executive Assistant to the Director, Naval Warfare, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Washington, DC . . . . .	1982 . . . . .	1984
Commander, Submarine Squadron FOUR . . . . .	1984 . . . . .	1985
Chief of Staff to the Commander Submarine Force, Atlantic . . . . .	1985 . . . . .	1986
Executive Assistant/Senior Aide to the Vice Chief of Naval Operations, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Washington, DC . . . . .	1986 . . . . .	1987
Commander, Submarine Group SIX . . . . .	1987 . . . . .	1988
Director, Office of Program Appraisal, Office of the Secretary of the Navy, Washington, DC . . . . .	1988 . . . . .	1988
Senior Military Assistant to the Secretary of Defense, Washington, DC . . . . .	1988 . . . . .	1990
Commander SIXTH Fleet and Commander, Strike Force South, Allied Naval Forces South . . . . .	1990 . . . . .	1992
Deputy Chief of Naval Operations, Resources, Warfare Requirements, and Assessment, Washington, DC . . . . .	1992 . . . . .	1993
Vice Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Washington, DC . . . . .	1994 . . . . .	1996

## Principal US Military Decorations and Qualifications

Defense Distinguished Service Medal  
Navy Distinguished Service Medal (with 1 gold star)  
Army Distinguished Service Medal  
Defense Superior Service Medal  
Legion of Merit (with 3 gold stars)  
Meritorious Service Medal  
Navy Commendation Medal (with 1 gold star)

Submarine Officer  
Missile Submarine Officer  
Nuclear Power Engineer