



“Fortune indeed favors the prepared mind, but even fortune and the prepared mind needs a favorable environment before they conspire to produce sudden change.” -Elting Morison

In his book, *Men, Machines, and Modern Times*, Elting Morison tells the story of the development of the method of continuous-aim firing aboard Navy ships in the late 19th Century. Before 1900, gunfire at sea was more of an individual art than a science due to the rolling nature of the ship. One specific example cited, said that in 25 minutes 2 hits had been made at a vessel at 1600 yards. After the new method was implemented, a gunner could score 15 hits in 1 minute. The technologies to make this possible were already developed, but it took a young innovative officer to combine them to make continuous-aim firing possible, and it took a group of young officers and a very senior leader to institutionalize it.

For the sake of brevity, I will summarize the key events of this story. Sir Percy Scott, a company-grade officer in the British Navy, came up with the idea of how to increase the effectiveness of his ship’s gunnery. While stationed in the Pacific in 1900, he shared this idea with an American company-grade officer, William S. Sims. The two were drawn together by their passion for the profession and their drive to make things better. Once Sims

experimented with the method and increased his gunnery scores, he in turn wanted to educate the entire Navy about this process. Over the next several years, he battled the bureaucratic inertia of the Navy system to get his idea institutionalized. At first he was ignored, then he was rebutted with illogical claims, and lastly accused of falsifying evidence. Finally, fed up with the process, Sims wrote the President of the United States, Teddy Roosevelt. He informed the President of the remarkable records of Scott's ships, the inadequacy of the current gunnery methods, and the refusal of the Department of the Navy to act. What did Roosevelt do? He assigned Sims as Inspector of Target Practice for the Navy. During the six years that Sims held that assignment he earned the reputation as "the man who taught us how to shoot."

When I read this story, I thought of the powerful potential of DEF 2013. DEF provides the favorable environment required to bring about sudden change. This event is an opportunity for young emerging leaders to bring their various methods of continuous-aimed firing (mine is leader development and education) to the table. This is also a great opportunity for senior leaders to cut-through the bureaucracy, like Teddy Roosevelt, and affect change. I'm looking forward to meeting other Scotts and Sims and sharing innovative ideas that will contribute to the advancement of our military profession.



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