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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

“Hot Dogs” and a “Great” War: The First World War, Admiral William S. Sims, and Baseball, 1917-1918

Newport, RI – December, 2017 – On Thursday, January 18 at 5:30 pm, the Newport Historical Society will host David Kohlen of the Naval War College as he discusses the importance of baseball in WWI. A century ago, as American forces mobilized to the European front in the First World War, the President of the Naval War College, Rear Admiral William S. Sims, sailed incognito on a secret mission to London. Through a series of accidents, Sims became the first senior American commander to arrive on the European front in April of 1917.

With the arrival of the first U.S. Naval forces in European waters, relations among the European allies proved tenuous. To enhance morale among the American Expeditionary Forces in Europe, Sims formed the Anglo-American Baseball League on the European front. He also shrewdly used baseball to demonstrate the uniqueness of American culture and soothe tensions among allied forces in Europe. Baseball became so popular that, on 4 July 1918, British King George V attended a ballgame between Army and Navy in London – signing a baseball for the winning Navy team.

For the first time in a century, the baseball signed by King George V will be on display at the Naval War College Museum. Kohlen’s presentation will explore how Sims was able to use baseball as a means to pioneer the Anglo-American “special relationship” which defined U.S. Naval strategy in two world wars and a “cold” war in the twentieth century.

David Kohlen, Director of the John B. Hattendorf Center for Maritime Historical Research at the U.S. Naval War College, earned the PhD with the Laughton Professor of Naval History in the War Studies Department at the University of London (King’s College London). As a maritime historian, he concentrates on naval strategy, operations, and questions of intelligence in examining organizational group dynamics, doctrinal orthodoxy, and issues bureaucracy. Outside of his scholarly work, Kohlen contributed to the award winning historic warship exhibits and remains involved with historic preservation efforts surrounding the former German submarine *U-505* in Chicago and the battleship USS *Wisconsin* (BB-64) in Norfolk, Virginia. Kohlen presently serves as the Officer in Charge of the Reserve Faculty supporting the Executive Programs at the National Intelligence University in Washington, D.C.

“*Hot Dogs’ and a ‘Great’ War*” takes place at the NHS Resource Center, 82 Touro Street, Newport, RI, and costs \$5 per person, \$1 for NHS members, active and retired military with ID. Please RSVP online at NewportHistory.org or call 401-841-8770.

About the Newport Historical Society

Since 1854, the Newport Historical Society has collected and preserved the artifacts, photographs, documents, publications, and genealogical records that relate to the history of Newport County, to make these materials readily available for both research and enjoyment, and to act as a resource center for the education of the public about the history of Newport County, so that knowledge of the past may contribute to a fuller understanding of the present. For more information please visit www.NewportHistory.org.

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