

## Purpose

Think Tanks exert great influence, both directly and indirectly, on government policy, but they are often little known or understood by Coast Guard members. This white paper will provide a general explanation of the role of think tanks, and the impact that they could provide on the Coast Guard.

## The Role of Think Tanks

In the same way that a front page New York Times article can have a large influence on public opinion, think tank efforts can have a large influence on political decisions made within the beltway.

Think tanks exert their influence in a number of ways:

- Publications: academically rigorous reports, journals, books
- Traditional media: OPEDs, articles, expert opinions on radio and TV news
- Informal Messaging: blogs, emails, web site, social networking
- Meetings: conferences, panels, off the record discussions with high level decision makers

Depending on whether their views align with the Administration's politics of the day, think tank contributors often bounce back and forth between filling positions within the federal government as political appointees and as think tank scholars. This process allows personnel to remain relevant when not serving in government and affords them the time to reflect, research, and formulate policy decisions. It prepares them for their next opportunity to lead. It also ensures that think tanks are not simply filled with academics without experience in implementing the policies they espouse.

## Think Tank Funding

Think tanks gather funds to conduct research in a variety of ways. Often set up as 501.C(3)s, operations are often financed by donations from corporations, foundations, and individuals and by investment earnings from internal endowments. This money is used to conduct research and shape debate within specific areas of interest and expertise of think tank scholars. Commercial or government entities also contract think tanks to conduct specific research topics. Some think tanks are pre-designated as Federally Funded Research and Development Centers (FFRDCs) and conduct research under contract with the federal government, primarily the DoD. Depending on the think tank policy, research funded in this way can be either publically released or held in confidence between the think tank and the client.

## Coast Guard Think Tank Fellows

Currently, the Coast Guard sends five O-5/O-6s to participate in one year military think tank fellowships, working with resident academics and officers from the DoD services.

- Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)
- Center for New American Security (CNAS)
- Council on Foreign Relations (CFR)
- RAND
- Brookings

Fellows spend each day attending internal/external meetings and conferences and are expected to contribute to published works and look for opportunities for think tanks to engage with the CG. CG-0951 links fellowship work back to the Coast Guard by providing an online library of completed papers and connecting fellows to specific CG HQ offices who choose to sponsor research topics.



**Think Tanks You Should Be Aware Of**

Think Tank	Focus
CSIS, DC	The Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) provides strategic insights and policy solutions to decision makers in government, international institutions, the private sector, and civil society. CSIS is focused on defense and security, regional stability, and transnational challenges ranging from energy and climate to global development and economic integration.
CNAS, DC	The Center for a New American Security (CNAS) develops strong, pragmatic and principled national security and defense policies that promote and protect American interests and values. Building on the deep expertise and broad experience of its staff and advisors, CNAS engages policymakers, experts and the public with innovative fact-based research, ideas and analysis to shape and elevate the national security debate.
RAND*, VA & CA	The RAND Corporation helps improve policy and decision-making through research and analysis. RAND focuses on the issues that matter most such as health, education, national security, international affairs, law and business, the environment, and more. With a research staff consisting of some of the world's preeminent minds, RAND has been expanding the boundaries of human knowledge for more than 60 years.
Brookings, DC	The Brookings Institution mission is to conduct high-quality, independent research and, based on that research, to provide innovative, practical recommendations that advance three broad goals: Strengthen American democracy; foster the economic and social welfare, security and opportunity of all Americans; and secure a more open, safe, prosperous and cooperative international system. Brookings is proud to be consistently ranked as the most influential, most quoted and most trusted think tank.
CFR, NYC	The Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) is a membership organization, think tank, and publisher dedicated to being a resource for its members, government officials, business executives, journalists, educators and students, civic and religious leaders, and other interested citizens in order to help them better understand the world and the foreign policy choices facing the United States and other countries.
CNA*, VA	CNA's objective, empirical research and analysis helps decision makers develop sound policies, make better-informed decisions, and manage programs more effectively. We take a multi-disciplinary, field-based "real world" approach to our work, and provide public-sector organizations with the tools they need to tackle the complex challenges of making government more efficient and keeping our country safe and strong.
HSI*, VA	Analytic Services Inc. operates the Homeland Security studies and analysis Institute (HSI) as an FFRDC for DHS via S&T.

\*Think Tank is also an FFRDC (Federally Funded Research and Development Center)



Think Tanks with specific geographic or ideological agenda:

<b>Think Tank</b>	<b>Focus</b>
Atlantic Council, DC	The Atlantic Council promotes constructive U.S. leadership and engagement in international affairs based on the central role of the Atlantic community in meeting the international challenges of the 21st century.
AEI, DC	The American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research is dedicated to research and education on issues of government, politics, economics, and social welfare. The Institute's community of scholars is committed to expanding liberty, increasing individual opportunity, and strengthening free enterprise.
CAP, DC	The Center for American Progress Action Fund is a progressive think-tank dedicated to improving the lives of Americans through ideas and action. We are creating a long-term, progressive vision for America—a vision that policy makers, thought-leaders and activists can use to shape the national debate and pass laws that make a difference.
Heritage, DC	The Heritage Foundation is a research and educational institution—a think tank—whose mission is to formulate and promote conservative public policies based on the principles of free enterprise, limited government, individual freedom, traditional American values, and a strong national defense.
Hudson, DC	Hudson Institute is a policy research organization dedicated to innovative research and analysis that promotes global security, prosperity, and freedom.

