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ANNUAL REPORT to the PRESIDENT and the CONGRESS



Dick Cheney
Secretary of Defense

may not always be as accessible as they were in the Persian Gulf, and the United States could well have to rely on carriers to project the bulk of tactical air power in some future contingencies. Thus, while the Department will reduce the aircraft carrier force to 13 carriers by the end of FY 1997, it will continue to take steps to improve the power projection capabilities that the force provides.

Complementing aircraft carriers in the power projection role are MEFs. Marine amphibious assault forces are an integral part of naval power projection forces. They provide an important sea-based capability for responding to contingencies and for augmenting naval battle groups in combined arms operations. While upcoming retirements of older amphibious ships will reduce lift capability to 2.5 MEBs, the Department will continue procurement of selected assault ships in order to maintain a 2.5-MEB lift capability into the next century. These ships will support forward deployments of amphibious ready groups/Marine expeditionary units for crisis response and humanitarian and special operations, sustaining these unique capabilities as an integral part of naval power projection forces.

Surface combatants can project significant power with Tomahawk cruise missiles, providing a versatile supplement to carrier air wings and amphibious forces. Equipped with a vast array of defensive systems, modern surface combatants also protect aircraft carriers and amphibious and support ships from air and submarine threats. The vital DDG-51 program will provide highly capable surface combatants to meet near-term mission requirements.

The attack submarine force will be reduced by 15 percent by 1997. This reduction can be safely accomplished because of the dramatic changes that have taken place in the Soviet threat and world situation. As part of our response to these changes, the SSN-21 Seawolf program has been canceled. The lead ship, SSN-21, is now under construction. Notwithstanding the decision to terminate the program, the Department's intent is to complete this ship. The contract for the second ship is currently the subject of litigation. Recoverable funds for this unit and a third FY 1992 ship will be included as a rescission proposal in the amended FY 1993 budget. In the near term, the nuclear submarine industrial base will be maintained at a reduced level by completing the SSN-688-class and Trident submarines already under construction, and through refueling and overhauling

existing submarines. The United States must maintain the capability to carry out antisubmarine warfare (ASW), strike warfare, mining, and special operations in the context of future threats and contingencies. Accordingly, the Department is looking at options for a new lower-cost attack submarine that could provide these capabilities, in light of other forces that will be available. Plans for specific new systems have not yet been fully defined, however.

Of all the lessons learned in Operation DESERT STORM, the most important for naval forces may have been in the area of mine countermeasures. The employment of amphibious forces in future operations may well depend on the adoption of more effective countermeasures against enemy mines, including shallow-water mines. This remains a major concern for the Department. The FY 1993 defense program continues procurement of glass-reinforced plastic (GRP) coastal mine hunters (MHCs). The value of these ships was amply demonstrated in the Persian Gulf, where the greater magnetic signatures of current U.S. wooden ships made them less effective in mine clearance operations than their European counterparts. The signature of the new MHC-class ships is expected to be comparable to that of the vessels employed by our Coalition partners. The Navy also is investigating the feasibility of lowering the magnetic signature of its new MCM-1 mine countermeasures ships, the first of which was employed in Operation DESERT STORM.

Based on needs identified in reviewing Operation DESERT SHIELD/STORM, the Navy and Marine Corps have begun a program to examine technologies and provide countermeasures against the full range of naval mines. Further improvements in mine warfare will come through the consolidation of command structures, acquisition of improved systems, and the adoption of more rigorous training programs.

Freedom of Navigation Operational Assertions

The President's United States Oceans Policy Statement of March 10, 1983, states "The United States will exercise and assert its navigation and overflight rights and freedoms in a worldwide basis in a manner that is consistent with the balance of interests reflected in the 1982 Law of the Sea Convention. The United States will not, however, acquiesce in unilateral acts of other states designed to restrict the rights and freedoms of the international community in

navigation and overflight and other related high seas uses.”

When nations appear to acquiesce in excessive maritime claims and fail to exercise their rights actively in the face of constraints on international navigation and overflight, those claims and constraints may, over time, come to be considered to have been accepted by the international community as reflecting the practice of nations and as binding upon all users of the seas and superjacent airspace. Consequently, it is incumbent upon maritime nations, such as the United States, to protest through diplomatic channels all excessive claims of coastal or island nations, and to exercise their navigation and overflight rights in the face of such claims. The United States has accepted this responsibility as an element of its national policy, and the Department of Defense conducts an active program of Freedom of Navigation operational assertions.

Freedom of Navigation assertions were conducted against the following countries for the listed excessive maritime claims during the year from October 1, 1990, to September 30, 1991. Countries are listed alphabetically.

Country	Excessive Claim Challenged
Angola	20 nautical miles (nm) territorial sea.
Benin	200 nm territorial sea.

Burma	Prior permission for warships to enter 12 nm territorial sea.
Cameroon	50 nm territorial sea.
Denmark	Excessive straight baselines.
Dominican Republic	Excessive straight baselines.
Ecuador	200 nm territorial sea.
Haiti	Excessive straight baselines.
Liberia	200 nm territorial sea.
Nicaragua	200 nm territorial sea. 25 nm security zone. Clearance required for overflight of 200 nm territorial sea.
Peru	200 nm territorial sea.
Sierra Leone	200 nm territorial sea.
Syria	35 nm territorial sea.

Summary

The changes envisioned for our naval forces in the years ahead respond to the requirements of an evolving international security environment. Qualitative upgrades of these forces are vital if they are to retain essential capabilities as their overall numbers are reduced. Strong U.S. maritime forces have been a constant element of this nation's defense posture, and the amended FY 1993 budget and defense program ensure that they will remain so in the future.