

Forward From The Sea

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FORWARD.... FROM THE SEA

The Navy and Marine Corps White Paper in September 1992 titled "... From the Sea," defined a strategic concept intended to carry the Department of the Navy beyond the Cold War and into the 21st Century. It signaled a change in focus and, therefore, in priorities for the Naval Services towards power projection and the employment of naval forces to influence events in littoral regions of the world.

The purpose of U.S. Naval forces remains to project the power and influence of the Nation across the seas to foreign waters and shores in both peace and war. This White Paper updates and expands the strategic concept to address specifically the unique contributions of Naval expeditionary forces in peacetime operations, responding to crises, and in regional conflicts. In short, this latest edition amplifies the scope of our strategic concept, while confirming the course and speed for the Naval Services as defined in the original document.

INTRODUCTION

With the publication of "...From the Sea" in September 1992, the Naval Services announced a landmark shift in operational focus and a reordering of coordinated Navy and Marine Corps Service priorities. This fundamental shift was a direct result of the changing strategic landscape; away from having to deal with a global maritime threat and toward projecting power and influence across the seas in response to regional challenges.

In the two years since "...From the Sea" became our strategic concept, the administration provided expanded guidance on the role of the military in national defense contained in a major review of strategy and force requirements. This review included a shift in DOD's focus to new dangers, chief among which is aggression by regional powers, and the necessity for our military forces to be able to rapidly project decisive military power to defend friends and Allies. In defining our national strategy for responding to these new dangers, the review emphasized the importance of maintaining forward-deployed Naval forces and recognized the impact of peacetime operational tempo on the size of Navy and Marine Corps force structure. In addition to contributions in the areas of power projection and forward presence from both the Navy and Marine Corps, it restated the need for the Navy to support the national strategic objectives through our enduring contributions in strategic deterrence, sea control and maritime supremacy, and strategic sealift.

This updated White Paper addresses all five of these Naval contributions to our national security. Naval forces are designed to fight and win wars. Our most recent experiences, however, underscore the premise that the most

important role of Naval forces in situations short of war is to be engaged forward with a view to preventing conflicts and controlling crises.

Naval forces are the foundation of peacetime forward presence operations, overseas response to crisis, and they contribute heavily during the transitions from crisis to conflict and to ensuring compliance with the terms of peace. At the same time, the unique capabilities inherent in Naval expeditionary forces have never been in higher demand from the Combatant Commanders as evidenced by operations in Somalia, the Caribbean (both Haiti and Cuba), Bosnia, as well as our continuing contribution to the enforcement of United Nation sanctions against Iraq.

THE STRATEGIC IMPERATIVE

Our vital economic and security interests are dispersed around the globe. Those interests are located across broad oceans and, to a great extent they intersect those of current and emergent regional powers in littoral regions of the world. It is here, in the littorals, where we can influence events ashore from our sea bases operating in international waters.

Because we are a maritime nation, our strategy is necessarily a transoceanic one. Our vital interests -- those interests for which our Nation is willing to fight -- are at the endpoint of highways of the seas or lines of strategic approach that stretch from the United States. Not surprisingly, these strategic lines and their endpoints coincide with the places to which we routinely deploy Naval expeditionary forces: the Atlantic and Mediterranean, the Pacific, the Indian Ocean, Red Sea and Persian Gulf, and the Caribbean Sea. However, reductions in resources dictate that we focus more limited Naval assets on the highest priorities and the most immediate challenges, even within these areas of historic and vital interest to our Nation.

Naval forces are particularly well suited to the entire range of operations in support of our national strategy. They continue the historic role of Naval forces engaged in preventive diplomacy and otherwise supporting our policies overseas. Moreover, forward-deployed Naval forces, manned, equipped, and trained for combat, play a unique role in demonstrating both the intention and the capability to join our NATO and other Allies as well as other friendly powers in defending shared interests. Finally, if deterrence fails during a crisis, and conflict erupts, Naval forces provide the means for sea-based reaction, to include forcible entry and providing the protective cover essential to enabling the flow of follow-on forces which will be deployed, supported, and sustained from the continental United States.

In short, deployed Naval forces will provide the critical operational linkages between peacetime operations and the initial requirements of a developing crisis or major regional contingency.

PEACETIME FORWARD PRESENCE OPERATIONS

Naval forces are an indispensable and unique instrument of American foreign policy. From conducting routine port visits to nations and regions deserving emphasis, to sustaining larger demonstrations of support to long-standing regional security interests, such as with UNITAS exercises in South America, Naval forces contribute to the advancement of U.S. diplomatic initiatives overseas. The importance of a credible overseas presence is emphasized in the most recent National Security Strategy (NSS): "...presence demonstrates our commitment to allies and friends, underwrites regional stability, gains U.S. familiarity with overseas operating environments, promotes combined training among the forces of friendly countries, and provides timely initial response capabilities."

In peacetime Naval forces build interoperability with friendly and Allied forces so that we can participate fully as part of a multinational response or as part of 'ad hoc' coalitions forced to respond to short-notice crisis situations.

Participation in both NATO Standing Naval Forces and in a variety of exercises -- with the navies, air forces, and land forces of coalition partners around the Pacific rim, the Norwegian Sea, the Arabian Gulf, and the Mediterranean basin -- provide solid foundations for sustaining interoperability with our friends and Allies. Additionally, the outreach to the former Warsaw Pact countries in the Partnership for Peace program will build solidarity and interoperability. We have already made solid progress in expanding and intensifying our cooperation with the navies in Eastern Europe with exercises such as BALTOPS 94 and BREEZE 94, which included units from Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Russia and Poland. Our forward-deployed Naval forces have contributed to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief efforts with similar, very positive, results.

Although Naval presence includes a wide range of forward-deployed Navy and Marine Corps units -- both afloat and ashore in friendly nations -- our basic presence building blocks remain Carrier Battle Groups with versatile, multipurpose, naval tactical aviation wings, and Amphibious Ready Groups with embarked, special operations capable, Marine Expeditionary Units. These flexible Naval formations are valued by the Combatant Commanders precisely because they provide the necessary capabilities forward; ready and positioned to respond to the wide range of contingencies and available to participate in Allied exercises which are the bedrock of interoperability.

We have also turned our attention to examining the Naval capabilities which could contribute to extending our conventional deterrence. In this regard, forward-deployed surface combatants with upper and lower tier theater ballistic missile defense capabilities will play an increasingly important role in discouraging the proliferation of ballistic missiles by intending credible defenses to friendly and Allied countries. By maintaining the means to enhance their security and safety we may reduce the likelihood that some of these nations will develop their own offensive capabilities. Our efforts will thereby slow proliferation and enhance regional stability.

In addition, even as we have shifted our emphasis to forward presence and power projection from sea to land, the Navy continues to provide a robust strategic deterrent by maintaining strategic ballistic submarines at sea. As long as it is our policy to ensure an adequate and ready strategic nuclear deterrent, our highly survivable strategic ballistic missile submarines will remain critical to national security.

CRISIS RESPONSE

Naval forces are designed to fight and win wars -- as are all elements of our military arsenal. To successfully deter aggressors, we must be capable of responding quickly and successfully in support of our Combatant Commanders. Forces deployed for routine exercises and activities associated with forward presence are also the forces most likely to be called upon to respond rapidly to an emerging crisis. The potential for escalation dictates that presence forces must be shaped for missions they may encounter. This provides Combatant Commanders with credible crisis response capabilities in the event normal conditions or outcomes do not turn out as we expect. Building on normally deployed forces, we can mass, if the situation requires, multiple Carrier Battle Groups into Carrier Battle Forces, Amphibious Task Forces, and as needed extend our Naval expeditionary force ashore using the afloat Maritime Prepositioning Force. This massing of Naval units can be complemented by the deployment of Army and Air Force elements to provide a joint force capable of the full range of combat operations that the Combatant Commander may require.

We must keep in mind however, that the sovereign quality of Naval forces, operating from highly mobile "sea bases" in forward areas, allows them to be employed free of the political encumbrances which may inhibit and otherwise limit the scope of land-based operations in forward theaters. The latter consideration is a unique advantage of forward-deployed Naval forces. In many critical situations we alone provide the Combatant Commanders with a variety of flexible options -- including precise measures to control escalation -- to respond quickly and appropriately to fast-breaking developments at the operational and tactical levels.

Whether surging from adjacent theaters or from CONUS deployment bases, Naval forces are uniquely positioned, configured, and trained to provide a variety of responses in the event of fast-breaking international

crisis. Their flexibility is a matter of record. The most recent examples of crisis response measures are summarized in the table below.

Sharing of major forces between theaters/operations

REGIONAL CONFLICT

Naval forces make a critical contribution in a major regional contingency during the transition from crisis to conflict. Forward Naval forces deployed for presence and reinforced in response to an emerging crisis can serve as the transition force as land-based forces are brought forward into theater.

Using a building block approach, our expeditionary Naval forces can be tailored with specific capabilities. The resulting Naval expeditionary force -- conceptually built around a numbered fleet and with a globally sourced Marine Expeditionary Force -- can provide a highly flexible force for a wide range of missions to include strike operations, and early forcible entry to facilitate or enable the arrival of follow-on forces.

Focusing on the littoral area, the Navy and Marine Corps force can seize and defend advanced bases (e.g. ports and airheads) to enable the flow of land-based air and ground forces, while providing the requisite command and control for the arriving joint forces. The power projection capabilities of specifically tailored Naval expeditionary forces can contribute to blunting an initial attack and, ultimately, assuring victory. The keys to our enabling mission are effective means in place to dominate and exploit littoral battlespace during the earliest phases of hostilities.

In addition, the unique capabilities inherent in Naval tactical aviation operating from our sea bases or expeditionary airfields, as well as the capability to contribute to sustained land combat operations, provide the Combatant Commander with flexibility in the conduct of littoral operations. Throughout the 20th century, Marine Air-Ground task forces, placed ashore initially as an enabling force, have fought and contributed decisively in every major ground conflict. Similarly, Naval tactical aviation has made pivotal contributions when the nation's air power was needed in combat.

In the event of a future regional conflict, Naval forces will assume critical roles in the protection of vital sealift along the strategic lines of approach to the theater of conflict including the air-and sea-ports of debarkation. Our success in a major regional contingency will be dependent upon the delivery of heavy equipment and the resupply of major ground and air elements engaged forward. Sealift is the key to force sustainment for joint operations and we are committed to a strong national capability.

JOINT AND COMBINED OPERATIONS

No single Service embodies all of the military capabilities needed to respond to every situation and threat. Our national strategy calls for the individual Services to operate jointly to ensure both that we can operate successfully in all warfare areas and that we can apply our military power across the spectrum of foreseeable situations -- in peace, crisis, regional conflict, and the subsequent restoration of peace.

The enhanced combat power produced by the integration of all supporting arms, which we seek to attain through joint operations, is inherent in Naval expeditionary forces. For example, the carrier battle group integrates and focuses diverse technologies and combat capabilities to assure the dominance of the air, surface, and sub-surface battle space necessary for the prosecution of subsequent campaigns. Further, Marine expeditionary forces, employing Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) combined arms doctrine are the most versatile expeditionary force in existence. Formed by law as "forces of combined arms, together with supporting air

components, " MAGTFs are expeditionary, rapidly expandable air-ground formations, capable of operating from sea bases, ashore, or both, simultaneously. They are the model for the Joint air-ground task forces evolving as conflicts grow smaller and the forces available, fewer.

Naval expeditionary forces have long operated as an integral element of joint forces acting with other joint or Allied sea, land air, and space forces. Just as the complementary capabilities of Navy and Marine Corps forces adds to our overall strength, combining the capabilities and resources of other Services and those of our Allies will yield decisive military power.

MAINTAINING OUR NEW DIRECTION

Our new direction remains focused on our ability to project power from the sea in the critical littoral regions of the world. We remain committed to structuring our Naval expeditionary forces so that they are inherently shaped for joint operations, with the emphasis on operations forward from the sea, tailored for national needs. Recent DON budget decisions -- which resulted in a real increase in spending on littoral warfare and the means for power projection-- are illustrative of the shift in priorities we have undertaken since the publication of "...From the Sea" (figure 1). As we continue to improve our readiness to project power in the littoral, we need to proceed cautiously so as not to jeopardize our readiness for the full gamut of missions and functions for which we are responsible.

In the two years since "...From the Sea" was published, we have expanded on and capitalized upon its traditional expeditionary focus.

"Expeditionary" implies a mind set, a culture, and a commitment to forces that are designed to be designed to be deployed forward and to respond swiftly. Our new direction provides the nation:

- Naval expeditionary forces
 - Tailored for National Needs
 - Shaped for Joint Operations
 - Operating Forward...From the Sea
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CONCLUSION

"...From the Sea" was the initial step to show how the Navy and Marine Corps responded to the challenges of a new security environment. Our strategy and policies continue to evolve as we learn from our recent experiences and prepare for the new challenges and new opportunities of this highly dynamic world. Naval forces have five prevailing roles: projection of power from sea to land, sea control and maritime supremacy, strategic deterrence, strategic sealift, and forward naval presence. We will continue each of these roles in support of the National Security Strategy.

The Cold War may be over, but the need for American leadership and commensurate military power endures. Many of our most vital interests remain overseas where the Navy and the Marine Corps are prepared for new challenges -- forward deployed, ready for combat, and engaged.
