

Program Research Project

DEFEND THE APPROACHES!

BY

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USAWC CLASS OF 2008

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Report Documentation Page

*Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188*

Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.

1. REPORT DATE 09 MAY 2008	2. REPORT TYPE Program Research Paper	3. DATES COVERED 00-00-2007 to 00-00-2008			
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Defend the Approaches!		5a. CONTRACT NUMBER			
		5b. GRANT NUMBER			
		5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER			
6. AUTHOR(S) Mark Patterson		5d. PROJECT NUMBER			
		5e. TASK NUMBER			
		5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER			
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army War College ,122 Forbes Ave.,Carlisle,PA,17013-5220		8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER			
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)		10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)			
		11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)			
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT see attached					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT Same as Report (SAR)	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 22	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT unclassified	b. ABSTRACT unclassified	c. THIS PAGE unclassified			

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

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1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 09-05-2008			2. REPORT TYPE Program Research Paper		3. DATES COVERED (From - To)	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Defend the Approaches!					5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
					5b. GRANT NUMBER	
					5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) Captain Mark a. Patterson, USNR					5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
					5e. TASK NUMBER	
					5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army War College 122 Forbes Avenue Carlisle, PA 17013					8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Dr. Jeffrey Groh Department of Distance Education					10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
					11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT DISTRIBUTION A: UNLIMITED						
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES						
14. ABSTRACT A large number of embarkation sites where Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) could be loaded on vessels bound for the United States exits. Unfortunately, there are insufficient US Navy assets to interdict such vessels unless extremely reliable and highly detailed intelligence were available. Consequently, effective defense against ocean borne WMD requires US Navy assets operating closer to the mainland and US territories in order to provide for better discrimination by Maritime Interdiction Operations (MIO). This paper argues that given the nature of the WMD threat, the US will be better defended by operating closer to US shores than by traditionally deployed forward forces. A brief overview of naval strategy since the Cold War and a description of the current threat environment and adversaries is presented. Then, recommendations for effectively responding to the WMD threat are offered, as well as recommendations for maintaining a viable US presence around the world through maritime alliances and Theater Security Cooperation Plans (TSCPs).						
15. SUBJECT TERMS Maritime Strategy, Maritime Domain Awareness, WMD, Personnel Exchange Program, Theatre Security Cooperation Plans						
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UNLIMITED	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 22	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON	
a. REPORT UNCLASSIFIED	b. ABSTRACT UNCLASSIFIED	c. THIS PAGE UNCLASSIFIED			19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (include area code)	

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CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA 17013

ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Captain Mark A. Patterson
TITLE: Defend the Approaches!
FORMAT: Program Research Project
DATE: May 9, 2008 WORD COUNT: 4,187 PAGES: 22
KEY TERMS: Maritime Strategy, Maritime Domain Awareness, WMD, Personnel Exchange Program, Theatre Security Cooperation Plans
CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

A large number of embarkation sites where Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) could be loaded on vessels bound for the United States exists. Unfortunately, there are insufficient US Navy assets to interdict such vessels unless extremely reliable and highly detailed intelligence were available. Consequently, effective defense against ocean borne WMD requires US Navy assets operating closer to the mainland and US territories in order to provide for better discrimination by Maritime Interdiction Operations (MIO).

This paper argues that given the nature of the WMD threat, the US will be better defended by operating closer to US shores than by traditionally deployed forward forces. A brief overview of naval strategy since the Cold War and a description of the current threat environment and adversaries is presented. Then, recommendations for effectively responding to the WMD threat are offered, as well as recommendations for maintaining a viable US presence around the world through maritime alliances and Theater Security Cooperation Plans (TSCPs).

DEFEND THE APPROACHES!

Throughout history, U.S. maritime strategy has evolved in response to the realities of a changing world. As world geo-political dynamics change, US national priorities may change and with it the threats, risks and potential operating environment for the nations' armed forces. In response, the Navy (including the Marine Corps) develops new strategies or modifies existing ones to support US national strategy and priorities. One constant since the end of World War II has been the enduring principle of *forward presence* as a mainstay of US maritime strategy. The term *presence* encompasses many activities from port visits to stationing ships within sight of shore to full scale operations.¹ For this paper, presence is the visible positioning or stationing of ships, aircraft and/or personnel for the purpose of influencing, assuring or engaging other state actors or non-state actors. The scope of this definition includes the full range of traditional and emerging military missions, including port visits, training (personnel and forces), Theater Security Cooperation Programs (TSCP), personnel exchanges, humanitarian assistance and limited or full scale permissive and non-permissive military operations.

During the Cold War, the US Navy trained and developed platforms and systems to defeat the Soviet navy in a grand sea battle. During the Reagan build up of the 1980's and its goal of a 600 ship Navy, the US Navy was the sole world power who had the capability to launch sophisticated amphibious assaults and project air power with the air wings embarked on nuclear aircraft carriers. Additionally, ballistic missile nuclear submarines were one leg of the strategic nuclear triad providing a formidable nuclear deterrent to Soviet nuclear aggression.² The Soviet Union had to consider the US

Navy's ability to project power all the way to the Soviet homeland and devote resources to countering that threat.

With the demise of the Soviet Union and the subsequent end of the Cold War, Admiral Frank Kelso and General Carl Mundy promoted a new maritime strategy that de-emphasized large scale open ocean battles and envisioned a force capable of conducting joint operations in the littoral regions of the world. The new strategy, *From the Sea*, was true to the principle of *forward presence* by projecting power with an expeditionary focus ashore. The Navy and Marine Corps team trained to respond on short notice to crises throughout troubled regions of the world. They would be the nation's first responders and provide an enabling force for follow-on forces, if necessary.³

In September 1994, the Navy refined its strategy with the publication of *Forward...From the Sea*. Building on *From the Sea*, the strategy emphasized the role of expeditionary forces operating forward and recognized the increasing role of maritime forces in regional conflicts, crisis response and peacetime operations such as humanitarian assistance and stability operations. Theater missile defense became a recognized capability that naval forces should develop. *Forward...From the Sea* enumerated five roles for naval forces in support of the National Military Strategy: projection of power from sea to land, sea control and maritime supremacy, strategic deterrence, strategic sealift, and *forward naval presence*.⁴

In January 1996, Commandant of the Marine Corps General Charles Krulak published *Operational Maneuver From the Sea* and began to address the challenges becoming evident in the post bi-polar world. This strategy attempted to address the

dynamic forces causing “chaos in the littorals” (non-state actors, nationalism, religious intolerance and ethnic tensions) and the new realities of information age warfare, increased weapon lethality and battlefield mobility.⁵ As the name implies, the Marines would use the sea as maneuver space to project power ashore and enable simultaneous operations at multiple sites rather than rely on sequential operations that start at the beach and then move inland.

When terrorists attacked the US on September 11, 2001, the complex asymmetric and unconventional threats facing the US were clarified. In the aftermath of 9/11, comprehensive reviews and analysis of national strategy, defense strategy and maritime strategy led to new strategies for ensuring continued US security and prosperity.

The critical role the oceans play in the free-flow of trade and commerce make them an enabler for globalization and prosperity for many developing nations and emerging democracies. Eighty to ninety percent of world commerce flows over the ocean and through the seaports of the world. The vastness of the ocean domain precludes one nation from being able to effectively monitor the seas and provide security for the safe passage of goods and people. The cooperation of many different actors with different priorities is critical to creating a safe and secure maritime environment that provides for the efficient flow of commerce while preventing the use of the seas by terrorists to transport WMD or launch sea-based attacks. In response to the volatile world environment, The National Strategy for Maritime Security (NSMS), published in September 2005, provides a framework for establishing maritime security through national capabilities, international cooperation and private sector involvement.

As stated in the NSMS: “Nations have a common interest in achieving two complementary objectives: to facilitate the vibrant maritime commerce that underpins economic security and to protect against ocean-related terrorist, hostile, criminal and dangerous acts. Since all nations benefit from this collective security, all nations must share in the responsibility for maintaining maritime security by countering the threats in this domain.”⁶

A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower is a collective effort of the Navy, Coast Guard and Marine Corps to provide a broad and integrated strategy that will guide them in a challenging and volatile environment while supporting the NSMS as well as other national strategies. Primary among the six core capabilities of the maritime forces is *forward presence*. The additional capabilities are deterrence, sea control, power projection, maritime security, and humanitarian assistance and disaster response.⁷ This strategy recognizes the complex and interdependent networks that define the nature of the world. These are the same characteristics that led Thomas Friedman to declare “The world is flat” in his book by the same name.⁸

The capability and strategy to fight forward and engage enemy forces far from US shores is an historical and cultural tradition within the US Navy. At various times in our nation’s history, the Navy has provided resources for homeland defense, but the institutional bias is strongly weighted towards forward presence and engagement.⁹ The Navy no longer has 600 ships, 500 ships, 400 ships or even 300 ships. With only 297 ships and commitments ranging far and wide, the Navy must be creative and innovative in maintaining the forward presence that has served the nation well in peace and war. Innovative solutions must break with tradition and cultural bias to consider

changing Navy operations for a defensive posture or defined differently, offensive operations closer to home. Commander John Patch stated it well, “Intellectual integrity demands that strategists look beyond accepted dogma — or even policy guidance — for a way ahead.”¹⁰

Current Threat Environment

During the Cold War, the threat to the US was the capabilities and perceived intentions of the Soviet Union. The bi-polar nature of the Cold War established a stable world order where most countries aligned with either East or West. The US and Soviet Union influenced their respective allies and partner nations to keep conflicts in check that could jeopardize or escalate into a large scale conflict. This led to a very stable environment even though the potential for incredible devastation in event of a US-Soviet war was always present. It was in neither state's interests to confront each other in a large scale conflict. The nature of the Cold War is often simplified when compared to the post-9/11 environment; however, the benefit of having a clearly defined state actor (or opposing social/political system) as the singular threat to counter eases the development of strategy. This is particularly so when the resultant strategy conforms to historical norms. Now that the stabilizing effect of the bi-polar world is gone, defining the characteristics of the global environment and of potential adversary groups provides a better framework to describe the current threat to the US. The global environment is extremely dynamic and influenced by many factors, such as: rapid technological change, unprecedented inter-connectedness between economies, instant and worldwide communication and great economic disparity between and within many societies throughout the world. Globalization and the information age has improved life

for many people and made many others aware of how far they are behind. The resulting disparity is visible via the proliferation of various instant communication mediums, including cell phones, the internet and satellite TV. These same technologies empower terrorist groups, transnational criminal networks, non-state actors and rogue states in their pursuit of de-stabilizing and potentially devastating activities. Crenshaw and Cusimano Love describe modern trends in terrorism as, "...global operations, use of cheap and easily available modern technologies, networked organizational structures and a desire to increase casualties."¹¹

Terrorism is not the only threat facing the US. Due to globalization, transnational crime has increased in its many forms and improved capabilities, resources and sophisticated strategies.¹² Transnational criminal networks can destabilize economies and weak governments through their illicit trade and heavily armed personnel. With the inter-connectedness of the global economy, the destabilizing effects of transnational criminal networks can quickly manifest themselves across states and regions. The transnational criminal networks can thrive and entrench themselves in states without strong governance compounding the difficulty of weak governments to establish confidence and credibility with its citizens. The citizens look to the entity that can provide security and services. If that entity is a criminal network (or terrorist organization), then they will have a safe haven to operate in with the population's acceptance or at least acquiescence.

Compounding an already complex problem, terrorist and transnational criminal networks or rogue states may partner together for mutual benefit leading to even more complicated enforcement challenges. These partnerships of convenience are likely to

be fluid with changing alliances as partners' needs change. In some situations, the only common ground may be a common enemy who could be the United States and her allies. The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) is potentially an ideal situation where criminal networks with access to chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and high yield explosives (CBRNE) could sell components or critical materials to terrorist networks. With sophisticated smuggling operations, criminal networks could provide transportation of these materials to target sites or other locations where terrorists could complete assembly and/or complete final implementation. The Pakistani engineer, Abdul Qadeer Khan, is responsible for master-minding a nuclear black market that Italian authorities discovered when they inspected the vessel *BBC China*.¹³ As Richard Love explains, "... in an environment of technology diffusion, global markets and networks, and open borders, the efforts and ambitions of one individual can make a difference."¹⁴ He explains the threat from WMD proliferators as global, networked and adaptable.¹⁵ Combating the transnational criminal networks and terrorism is problematic due to jurisdictional issues for state actors attempting to conduct law enforcement operations. The crime networks operate without regard to legal structures or state boundaries and when their operations overlap state jurisdictions, effective enforcement is challenging.¹⁶

The rapid advances in technology that empower legitimate businesses and continue to fuel globalization are also providing terrorists and transnational criminal networks new tools for their illegal activities. From sophisticated communication technology to biotechnology, powerful new capabilities enable legitimate activities as well as illegal and potentially devastating attacks. One important aspect of the

technological revolution is that these enabling technologies are readily available to anyone who will pay for them.¹⁷ WMD attacks could originate from off-shore ships or from sites within the US. Unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) launched from off-shore are potential vehicles that could carry some type of radiological dispersal device (RDD) or biological weapon (BW) that could cause diseases in animals and humans. Dispersion of chemical weapons (CW) from an UAV via an aerosol mechanism is another potential weapon. The technology for BW and CW is readily available due to the dual use of the technology for civilian purposes such as pharmaceuticals and other commercial uses.¹⁸

WMD components or complete weapons could also enter the country with legitimate goods. In 2006, there were 19,509 container ship calls in US ports with an average of 3,505 containers per call for a total of 68, 379, 045 containers entering the US. The containers entered through ports throughout the US and originated from many different ports throughout the world.¹⁹ The containers were packed and sealed in even more diverse places before arriving at a port for loading on a ship. The sheer volume of containers and potential sites of embarkation or debarkation make inspection as a means for detecting WMD an unworkable solution. Even if methods existed to handle the volume of ships and containers, the cost of slowing the supply chain would cause economic disruptions that would jeopardize economic, political and business stability. Intelligence and maritime domain awareness (MDA) are the best means to manage the problem of interdicting WMD on the high seas before it reaches a destination where it could wreak havoc with civil society and economic prosperity. With accurate intelligence and adequate MDA, US Navy ships and aircraft could position themselves to interdict suspect vessels. Since there may not be sufficient advance notice to prevent

loading of a WMD or a container with a component or complete WMD, forces must be available to interdict the vessel before it transits close enough for terrorists to attack their target.

National Security Presidential Directive 41, defines Maritime Domain Awareness as:

"... all areas and things of, on, under, relating to, adjacent to, or bordering on a sea, ocean, or other navigable waterway, including all maritime-related activities, infrastructure, people, cargo, and vessels and other conveyances. Due to its complex nature and immense size, the Maritime Domain is particularly susceptible to exploitation and disruption by individuals, organizations, and States. The Maritime Domain facilitates a unique freedom of movement and flow of goods while allowing people, cargo, and conveyances to transit with anonymity not generally available by movement over land or by air. Individuals and organizations hostile to the United States have demonstrated a continuing desire to exploit such vulnerabilities. The United States must deploy the full range of its operational assets and capabilities to prevent the Maritime Domain from being used by terrorists, criminals, and hostile States to commit acts of terrorism and criminal or other unlawful or hostile acts against the United States, its people, economy, property, territory, allies, and friends, while recognizing that maritime security policies are most effective when the strategic importance of international trade, economic cooperation, and the free flow of commerce are considered appropriately."²⁰

Considering this definition in the context of the vast size of the world's oceans and waterways, achieving MDA is a monumental task and achieving it in a holistic sense is not possible. Collaboration and cooperation between agencies and nations can lead to sufficient MDA within small regions or defined areas of responsibilities (AOR's). The intelligence demands for actionable MDA are qualitatively and quantifiably significant. Commanders will make decisions with incomplete information/intelligence and must be comfortable with certain levels of risk. Craig Allen states in the Naval War College Review, "All would likely agree, however, that the magnitude of the threat posed by WMD proliferation demands that the entire spectrum of counter-proliferation measures

and supporting intelligence activities be subject to continuous scrutiny, with a view to improving the accuracy and speed of the processes.”

Forward Presence

Since World War II, *forward presence* has been the dominant principle of navy strategy. Forward deployed forces are in position to react rapidly to deteriorating political and/or military/civil disturbances or to provide humanitarian assistance due to natural disasters. However, the increasing number of states and regions where government stability is tenuous and the potential for conflict is high stretches the capability of the US Navy to have adequate forward deployed forces available to respond when necessary and be able to adequately defend the approaches to the US. Consequently, innovative ideas for force multiplying and achieving a *persistent presence* are necessary. The Global Fleet Station (GFS) (and Africa Partnership Station) is a new initiative that serves to involve partner nations and allies in improving maritime security through training and cooperative exchanges while nurturing relationships with nations in volatile regions and other areas of interest. According to the Naval Operations Concept 2006, the GFS concept provides “...a persistent sea base of operations from which to coordinate and employ adaptive force packages within a regional area of interest.”²¹ The GFS enables joint, inter-agency and non-governmental organizations the ability to cooperate and participate in maritime security operations, humanitarian operations and training for local military and government personnel. The recently completed initial deployment of the GFS with HSV Swift in the SOUTHCOM AOR proved the concept of partnering with other agencies and nations for cooperative exchanges and training. The Swift visited 12 countries and hosted over 1000 military

and civilian guests during its April-September 2007 deployment. The exchanges included training on topics such as leadership, small boat tactics and port security.²² The Africa Partnership Station included the USS Fort McHenry (LSD-43) and the USS Swift (HSV-2). They conducted cooperative exchanges along the Gulf of Guinea with an embarked multi-national staff, government agencies (USAID) and NGO's, such as Project Hope. Within the volatile region of Africa, the APS is an ongoing effort to support local governments with training while improving their sustainability and maritime security.²³ The GFS concept includes many roles other than strictly military training or exchanges. The inter-agency groups and NGO's use the GFS platform and stage operations from there, but provide many services to local inhabitants in country. This work with other government agencies and NGOs is important to challenge the perception that the US is seeking solely military intervention in volatile regions. Using platforms other than a combatant would counter this perception as well. Working with local navies for force protection of the GFS could accomplish capacity building for local forces, small boat training and a partnership approach to solutions rather than creating a perception of US hubris in the area. Seth Crosby advocates extending soft power efforts via navigable rivers. The navy's newly constituted riverine force is able to operate in inland waterways, however, force protection measures could be challenging. Local fears about combat forces moving inland could be challenging to allay and would provide fodder for instilling fear by groups opposed to US engagement.

There are domestic benefits to including other government agencies, representatives from academia and NGOs in soft power missions. In the Armed Forces Journal, Seth Cropsey states:

Of equal, or perhaps greater, potential political value, a maritime strategy whose civil/humanitarian assistance element depends significantly on regional expertise that does not currently exist within the fleet can reach out to the civilian world for its needs. This is an opportunity to forge valuable connections to communities around the nation as the sea services recruit personnel with useful language skills. It is an opportunity to develop strong links with effective, knowledgeable nongovernmental organizations that can advise, guide and perhaps even participate in providing civil/humanitarian assistance. It is a chance to develop substantive lasting relationships with academic communities around the nation whose regional expertise could be marshaled not only to assist the fleet, but to create a reliable base of knowledge within the U.S. government where no such independent source now exists. These connections would materially assist the fleet in its mission as they increased understanding of, and respect for, the sea services throughout a civilian population whose understanding of the military continues to recede.²⁴

The navy's Personnel Exchange Program (PEP) could contribute significantly to improving cooperation and relations with both traditional allies and emerging nations of interest. There are approximately 200 officer and enlisted sailors participating in PEP tours with 18 countries.²⁵ This is a very small contingent of sailors for the world's lone superpower and the only nation with a naval force truly able to conduct operations worldwide. New initiatives underway will potentially more than double the countries participating and the personnel involved in the PEP.²⁶ Increasing the numbers of countries and personnel participating in PEP are justifiable in every aspect from manpower considerations to economic ramifications. A greater challenge is the institutional and cultural changes required for promoting a navy career to encourage PEP tours. PEP tours are an anomaly rather than an integrated component of career progression. It can be difficult to incorporate a PEP tour into navy careers when the competing demands of warfare qualification, advanced education and operational experience are considered. Historically, PEP tours do not provide a competitive advantage on promotion and selection boards. Navy leadership is attempting to begin a

cultural shift to valuing PEP tours as an important career option supporting the US Navy's "Language Skills, Regional Expertise and Cultural Awareness Strategy" (published in January 2008). The Navy should develop procedures and policies that leverage the knowledge and experience of PEP officers and enlisted personnel throughout their career. Initiatives could include preferential detailing for jobs subsequent to PEP tours (such as Combatant Commander staffs) where cultural knowledge and relationships from PEP tours could be immediately reinforced and nurtured. The Navy's efforts to improve the perception of PEP tours within its ranks and restore its Foreign Area Officer (FAO) program is indicative of how the Navy is implementing its strategy to "improve regional and cultural expertise through expanded training, education, and exchange initiatives."²⁷ The FAO program is a single career track to develop officers with the requisite knowledge and skills who will work with state department and embassy personnel. They will be proficient in foreign languages and receive formal education on cultural issues to assist combatant commanders with theater security cooperation initiatives and implementation.²⁸ Officers completing PEP tours who have an affinity for cross-cultural exchanges, proficient language skills and strong performance should consider transitioning to FAO.

Summary of Recommendations

Former CNO ADM Mullen vigorously promotes the concept of a 1000 ship navy. The 1000 ship navy is a metaphor for cooperation and collaboration between the sea-going nations of the world to ensure the seas remain viable for the free flow of commerce, fishing and legal activities. The US is and will remain the world's most

powerful maritime nation. The recommendations described herein and summarized below enable the US presence to be visible and viable.

Recommendations:

- Continue development of robust capability for frequent collaboration with inter-agency and NGOs groups to develop deep ties with partner nations. The GFS, or an alternative platform, should have persistent presence to avoid perceptions that our interest in development assistance is temporary.
- Emphasize PEP and FAO career tracks to develop institutional knowledge and understanding of the importance of cultural differences to effective cooperation and collaboration with partner nations.
- Develop new alliances and opportunities for combined exercises with partner nations where leveraging each nation's capabilities for optimum payoff is a priority.
- Deploy Navy forces in proximity to the US for defense of the homeland against WMD.

Conclusions

Developing an effective strategy to combat WMD requires innovative techniques to limit the vast possibilities available for terrorists and/or transnational criminal networks to transport WMD to the US. The threats can be summarized as "...access to off-the-shelf technology, including anti-ship missiles, extremely quiet submarines, the probability of acquiring weapons of mass destruction and help from the most technologically advanced Muslim states – such as Iran- could threaten shipping in nearby waters."²⁹ When intelligence and surveillance are inadequate to prevent the embarkation of WMD devices on board ocean bound vessels, the means must be

available to interdict suspect vessels on the high seas. The scope of the problem of locating suspect vessels is more manageable when vessels begin transit near the approaches to the US. The suspect vessels can begin their journey from many ports, but the potential ports where they may unload become more probable as they approach their destination. The potential debarkation sites could be limited to a region or coast and improve the potential for interdiction. Maritime Interception Operations requires that US Navy assets be available near the approaches to the US to provide adequate coverage for interdicting suspect vessels. The NSMS states “Preeminent among our national security priorities is to take all necessary steps to prevent WMD from entering the country and to avert an attack on the homeland.”³⁰ Without US Navy assets in close enough proximity to interdict vessels near the approaches to the US, suspect vessels may be able to get within range to launch an off-shore attack or actually pull into a port. New concepts of *forward presence*, like GFS, PEP tours and FAO are low profile high return investments to promote US interests while enabling partner nations to build capacity and improve stability. PEP officers and enlisted are in unique positions to identify capability gaps where US support could have low visibility but high impact results.

Forward presence is an enduring principle of US Navy strategy. Traditionally, forward deployed combatants are the visible manifestation of *forward presence*. Traditions die hard in a culture that has successfully carried the fight to the enemy in our nation’s battles. The threat has changed and will continue to evolve and the need to support the NSMS and provide defense of the nation means navy assets must operate closer to US territory.

Endnotes

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