

CRS Report for Congress

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Navy Role in Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) — Background and Issues for Congress

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Summary

The Navy is taking several actions to expand its capabilities for participating in the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). The Navy's role in the GWOT raises several potential oversight issues for Congress, including the need for an increased Navy role, and amount of Navy personnel and funding associated with GWOT-related activities. This report will be updated as events warrant.

Introduction and Issue for Congress

The Navy, which has participated for several years in what the Administration refers to as the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT), is taking actions to expand its capabilities for GWOT-related activities.¹ The issue for Congress is: How should the Navy's role in the GWOT be taken into account in assessing the Navy's budget and Navy programs?

Background

Longstanding Navy GWOT-Related Activities. The Navy has carried out certain GWOT-related activities for several years, including the following:

- on-the-ground medical support and construction support for Marine Corps operations in Iraq;
- surveillance by Navy ships and aircraft of suspected terrorists in overseas areas;
- maritime intercept operations (MIO) aimed at identifying and intercepting terrorists or weapons of mass destruction at sea, or

¹ For an overview of the role of U.S. military forces in the GWOT, see CRS Report RL32758, *U.S. Military Operations in the Global War on Terrorism: Afghanistan, Africa, the Philippines, and Colombia*, by Andrew Feickert.

potentially threatening ships or aircraft that are in or approaching U.S. territorial waters — an activity that includes Navy participation in the multilateral Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI);²

- operations by Navy special operations forces, known as SEALs, that are directed against terrorists;³
- Tomahawk cruise missile attacks on suspected terrorist training camps and facilities, such as the attacks carried out against targets in Afghanistan and the Sudan following the 1998 terrorist bombings of U.S. embassies in East Africa;
- working with the Coast Guard to build and maintain maritime domain awareness (MDA) — a real-time understanding of activities on the world’s oceans;⁴
- assisting the Coast Guard in port-security operations;⁵
- protection of forward-deployed Navy ships, an activity that was intensified following the terrorist attack on the Navy Aegis destroyer Cole (DDG-67) in October 2000 in the port of Aden, Yemen; and
- protection of Navy bases and facilities in the United States and elsewhere, an activity that was intensified following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

The Navy states that

Winning the Global War on Terrorism is our number one priority. We continue to support the GWOT through naval combat forces that are capable and relevant to the missions assigned. The Department of the Navy [which includes the Navy and the Marine Corps] has deployed various forces into the Central Command (CENTCOM) area of responsibility (AOR) to support in-theater deployment of Marine Corps combat units (and attached Navy medical personnel and construction battalion) and provide other sustainment support (such as port and cargo handling and supply support, medical support, mail and transportation, [and] explosive ordnance [support]).

Currently, over 28,000 Marines and approximately 19,500 Navy (both ground and shipboard) personnel are engaged in CENTCOM AOR supporting GWOT operations. Hundreds of naval medical personnel were deployed to Iraq in support of Marine forces, as well as over 1,000 active and reserve Navy Seabees responsible for construction support.

² For more on the PSI, see CRS Report RS21881, *Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI)*, by Sharon Squassoni.

³ SEAL is an acronym that stands for Sea, Air, and Land. For further discussion of the SEALs and of the role of special operations forces in the GWOT, see CRS Report RS21048, *U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF): Background and Issues for Congress*, by Andrew Feickert, and CRS Report RS22017, *Special Operations Forces (SOF) and CIA Paramilitary Operations: Issues for Congress*, by Richard A. Best, Jr. and Andrew Feickert.

⁴ For further discussion of MDA and the Coast Guard, see CRS Report RS21125, *Homeland Security: Coast Guard Operations — Background and Issues for Congress*, by Ronald O’Rourke, and David W. Munis, “Vital Links,” *Seapower*, May 2005.

⁵ For more on the Coast Guard and port security, see CRS Report RS21125, *op cit*, and CRS Report RL31733, *Port and Maritime Security: Background and Issues for Congress*, by John F. Frittelli.

A carrier strike group and an expeditionary strike group have continuously been on station in the CENTCOM AOR, providing direct operational and combat support. Naval coastal warfare and explosive detection forces provided security for Iraqi oil terminals and thwarted terrorist forces from disrupting the off-shore energy supply. The Navy has mobilized and provided additional forces to augment Army operations, including medical support; Naval Expeditionary Logistic Support Forces, which have provided port handling and supply support; military police and other security forces....

Because more than 95 percent of the world's commerce moves by sea, it is likely that terrorist networks utilize merchant shipping to move cargo and passengers. The United States naval forces are well trained to carry out the mission of deterring, delaying, and disrupting the movement of terrorists and terrorist-related material at sea.⁶

Recent Actions To Expand Navy Role in GWOT. On July 12, 2005, Admiral Vernon Clark, who was Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) until July 22, 2005, issued a memorandum directing several "actions to expand the Navy's capabilities to prosecute the GWOT,"⁷ to be completed at various points between FY2005 and FY2007, including:

- establishment of a riverine force, a reserve civil affairs battalion, an MIO intelligence exploitation pilot program, an intelligence data-mining capability at the National Maritime Intelligence Center (NMIC), and a Navy Foreign Area Officer (FAO) community consisting of officers with specialized knowledge of foreign countries and regions;
- integration of active and reserve parts of Helicopter Combat Support (HCS) squadrons 4 and 5, which are used to provide airlift support for GWOT-related activities;
- procurement of Automatic Identification Systems (AISs) for surface ships;⁸
- development of a concept for a Navy expeditionary combat battalion that would supplement but not duplicate capabilities in the Marine Corps, and a concept for a Navy expeditionary training team.

The Navy subsequently decided against establishing a Navy expeditionary combat battalion, but is pursuing other items on the list.

In October 2005, Admiral Clark's successor as CNO, Admiral Michael Mullen, issued a guidance statement for the Navy for 2006 that contained follow-on initiatives intended to strengthen the Navy's capabilities for participating in the GWOT, including the following:

⁶ U.S. Department of the Navy, *Highlights of the Department of the Navy FY 2007 Budget*. Washington, 2006.

⁷ This memorandum was an update to a similar memorandum issued by Admiral Clark on July 6, 2005.

⁸ The AIS is a transponder-like device that transmits a ship's identification, position, course, speed, and other data to other ships and relevant authorities. The International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) requires AIS to be installed on ships with a gross tonnage of more than 300 tons.

- “Develop adaptive force packages and flexible deployment concepts to include NSW [naval special warfare — the SEALs], U.S. Coast Guard, and coalition partners in support of operations in blue, green, and brown water environments that are aligned with the National Fleet policy⁹ and the National Strategy for Maritime Security;”
- “Identify requirements to organize, train, maintain, and equip a Navy Expeditionary Combat Command” to coordinate the activities of several Navy organizations performing GWOT-related activities;”
- “Develop concepts for green and brown water operations to include [certain types of visit, board, search, and seizure, or VBSS, operations], Expanded Maritime Interdiction Operations, expeditionary training team concepts, enhanced combat and force protection capabilities, civil affairs, and Theater Security Cooperation influence activities;”
- “Leverage existing language, area studies, and technology curricula to enhance and expand Foreign Area Officer development, intelligence, information warfare, and cryptologic expertise as well as to develop practical cross-cultural skills needed to further relations with emerging partners;”
- “Develop Global Maritime Intelligence Integration (GMII) as part of JFMCC [Joint Force Maritime Component Command] and Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) in support of Joint, Navy, and interagency operations;” and
- “In line with the National Fleet policy, engage with the U.S. Coast Guard to leverage the National Strategy for Maritime Security to more rapidly develop capabilities for Homeland Security, particularly in the area of Maritime Domain Awareness.”¹⁰

The Navy Expeditionary Combat Command (NECC), headquartered at Naval Amphibious Base Little Creek, VA, was established informally in October 2005 and formally on January 13, 2006. NECC will

consolidate the current missions and functions of the 1st Naval Construction Division, Naval Expeditionary Logistics Support Force and Maritime Force Protection Command. NECC will also serve as functional commander in control of manning, training, equipping and organizing forces that will execute ATRF [anti-terrorism force protection], shore-based logistical support and construction missions across the joint operational spectrum.... Between 40,000 and 50,000 Sailors will join the command in phases over the next two years to ensure current operations are not disrupted. The command will oversee units ranging from bomb-disposal crews, expeditionary logistics specialists, the naval coastal warfare groups and the master-at-arms forces. The NECC will also provide the 5,000 to 7,000 Sailors supporting the Army and Marine Corps in the Middle East with proper training for these non-traditional jobs.¹¹

⁹ The National Fleet policy is a joint Navy-Coast Guard statement that commits the two services to achieving closer coordination in a number of areas.

¹⁰ M. G. Mullen, *CNO Guidance for 2006, Meeting the Challenge of a New Era*. Washington, 2005. pp. 5, 8.

¹¹ Katrina Scampini, “Navy Expeditionary Combat Command Stands Up,” *Navy News Service*, January 14, 2006.

NECC will oversee the Navy's riverine force, which is to consist of three squadrons of 12 boats each, with a total of about 700 active-duty and reserve sailors. The force is intended to supplement the riverine capabilities of the SEALs and relieve Marines who have been conducting maritime security operations in ports and waterways in Iraq.¹² Other reported Navy initiatives relating to the GWOT include the following:

- The Navy has commissioned a study from the Naval Studies Board (an arm of the National Academy of Sciences) on the adequacy of the role of naval forces in the GWOT and options for enhancing that role.¹³
- The Navy has announced that it will take back five Cyclone (PC-1) patrol craft that it had loaned to the Coast Guard to help support Coast Guard port security operations.¹⁴
- The Navy will assume command of a GWOT-related joint task force in the Horn of Africa, the detainee operation at Guantanamo, Cuba, and Fort Suse, a high-security prison in Iraq, and will take the lead in defending the Haditha Dam in Iraq.¹⁵
- The Navy is developing a GWOT mission module for the Littoral Combat Ship (LCS).¹⁶

The Navy states that

a number of new joint capabilities, outlined in the 2005 QDR [Quadrennial Defense Review], are funded in the [Department of the Navy's proposed] FY 2007 budget. The Expeditionary Security Force increases the effectiveness of maritime interdiction operations by supporting intercept and boarding capabilities in every strike group. The National Maritime Intelligence Integration Center increases maritime domain awareness through improved integration with interagency and international partners. Riverine capability fills a critical capability gap and provides additional opportunities to enhance partner-nation capabilities and capacity. Finally, the establishment of the Marine Corps component of the Special Operations Command (MARSOC) enhance interoperability and provides greater flexibility and increased capability to fight the war on terrorism.¹⁷

¹² Jason Ma, "As NECC Stands Up, Navy Prepares Riverine Forces For 2007 Iraq Mission," *Inside the Navy*, January 23, 2006; Mark D. Faram and Andrew Scutro, "Back In Brown: Navy Assembling Riverine Unit To Deploy To Iraq Next Year," *Navy Times*, January 23, 2006; James W. Crawley, "'Brown Water' Navy Takes Shape," *Media General News Service*, January 10, 2006; Grace Jean, "Navy Riverine Force to Report for Iraq Duty in 2007," *National Defense*, January 2006; Andrew Scutro, "Greater Riverine Role," *Navy Times*, November 14, 2005.

¹³ Christopher J. Castelli, "Navy Commissions Study On 'Adequacy' Of Naval Role In War On Terror," *Inside the Navy*, July 11, 2005.

¹⁴ Jack Dorsey, "Navy To Get Back Loaned Patrol Ships," *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, December 21, 2005; Andrew Scutro, "Navy Calls On Cyclone Class," *Navy Times*, December 5, 2005.

¹⁵ Jason Ma, "Mullen: Goal Is Not Naval Infantry, But 'Maritime Security Force,'" *Inside the Navy*, October 31, 2005.

¹⁶ Jason Ma, "Navy Developing Global-War-On-Terror Mission Module For LCS," *Inside the Navy*, January 16, 2006. For more on the LCS, see CRS Report RS21305, *Navy Littoral Combat Ship (LCS): Background and Issues for Congress*, by Ronald O'Rourke.

¹⁷ *Highlights of the Department of the Navy FY 2007 Budget*, op cit.

Potential Oversight Issues For Congress

Potential oversight issues for Congress relating to the Navy's role in the GWOT include the following:

- **Need for increased Navy role in GWOT.** Is an increased Navy role in the GWOT needed? To what degree can or should increased Navy GWOT-related activities be used to reduce the burden on other services for conducting GWOT-related activities? Is the Navy proposing to perform GWOT-related functions that might be better performed by other organizations? Are the Navy's actions motivated in part by concerns about its perceived relevance to current threats, or by a desire to secure a portion of GWOT-related funding?
- **Personnel and funding for GWOT.** How many Navy personnel globally are involved in GWOT-related activities, and where are they located? How much funding is the Navy expending each year on GWOT-related activities? How much will the personnel and funding figures grow if the Navy implements its recent initiatives to expand its capabilities for participating in the GWOT?
- **GWOT vs. other Navy priorities.** Is the Navy striking an appropriate balance between GWOT-related activities and other Navy concerns, such as preparing for a potential future challenge from improved Chinese maritime military forces?¹⁸ What other Navy programs have been or might be reduced to support Navy GWOT-related initiatives?
- **Proposed GWOT initiatives.** Are the Navy's planned GWOT-related initiatives appropriate? Do they represent the best potential uses of Navy resources for the GWOT? Should some of these initiatives be dropped, or others added?
- **Force structure requirements.** Aside from the establishment of the riverine force and a reserve civil affairs battalion, what implications might an expanded Navy role in the GWOT have for Navy force-structure requirements (i.e., the required size and composition of the Navy)?
- **Coordination with other organizations.** Is the Navy adequately coordinating its GWOT-related activities and initiatives with other organizations, such as the Special Operations Command (SOCOM)¹⁹ and the Coast Guard?
- **Organizational changes.** Are the Navy's recent GWOT-related organizational changes, such as the establishment of NECC, appropriate? Does NECC include the right collection of Navy organizations? What other Navy organizational changes might be needed?

¹⁸ For more on China's naval modernization and potential implications for required U.S. Navy capabilities, see CRS Report RL33153, *China Naval Modernization: Implications for U.S. Navy Capabilities — Background and Issues for Congress*, by Ronald O'Rourke.

¹⁹ For further discussion about coordination with SOCOM, see Christopher J. Castelli, "Top Navy, SOCOM Leaders Discuss Key Issues, Resources And Roles," *Inside the Navy*, December 5, 2005.