



CRS Report for Congress

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

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Summary

The Navy for several years has carried out a variety of activities related to what the Administration refers to as the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). The Navy's role in the GWOT raises several potential oversight issues for Congress. This report will be updated as events warrant.

Introduction and Issue for Congress

The Navy has participated for several years in what the Administration refers to as the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT).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 for several years has carried out a variety of GWOT-related activities, including the following:

- on-the-ground medical and construction support for Marines in Iraq;
- surveillance by Navy ships and aircraft of suspected terrorists overseas;
- maritime intercept operations (MIO) aimed at identifying and intercepting terrorists or weapons of mass destruction at sea, or potentially threatening ships or aircraft that are in or approaching U.S.

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.

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 those conducted in response to the 1998 terrorist bombings of U.S. embassies in East Africa;
- working with the Coast Guard to build 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 domestic and overseas Navy bases and facilities.

Recent Initiatives To Expand Navy Role in GWOT. Since July 2005, the Navy has announced a number of initiatives intended to increase its capabilities for participating in the GWOT, including the following:

- establishing a “**1,000 ship Navy**” — a multilateral maritime partnership for ensuring global maritime security;
- establishing sea bases called **Global Fleet Stations (GFSs)** in various regions around the world;
- establishing the **Navy Expeditionary Combat Command (NECC)**;
- reestablishing the Navy’s **riverine force**;
- establishing 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;
- assuming 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 assuming the lead in defending the Haditha Dam in Iraq;

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., CRS Report RL33383, *Terminal Operators and Their Role in U.S. Port and Maritime Security*, by John Frittelli and Jennifer E. Lake; CRS Report RL33787, *Maritime Security: Potential Terrorist Attacks and Protection Priorities*, by Paul W. Parfomak and John Frittelli, and CRS Report RL31733, *Port and Maritime Security: Background and Issues for Congress*, by John F. Frittelli.

- procuring Automatic Identification Systems (AISs) for surface ships;⁶
- developing a GWOT mission module for the Littoral Combat Ship (LCS);⁷
- announcing a plan to take back five Cyclone (PC-1) class patrol craft that the Navy had loaned to the Coast Guard to help support Coast Guard port security operations;
- developing Global Maritime Intelligence Integration (GMII) as part of Joint Force Maritime Component Command (JFMCC) and Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA); and
- engaging with the U.S. Coast Guard to use the National Strategy for Maritime Security to more rapidly develop capabilities for Homeland Security, particularly in the area of MDA.

In discussing its GWOT-related activities, the Department of the Navy, which includes the Navy and the Marine Corps, states that naval forces (the Navy and Marine Corps) provide

an increasing portion of the required support for ground units in Operations Enduring Freedom/Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF).⁸ These operations support our nation's interest by continuing deterrence intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance missions, expanded maritime interception operations, and counter-piracy and counter-drug patrols. There are over 12,000 sailors ashore (including Individual Augmentees supporting ground forces in core mission areas and new capability areas) and 17,000 at sea in the U.S. Central Command region alone engaged in the GWOT.

In the past year, the Navy has taken command of the detainee mission in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba and at Camp Bucca, a high-security prison in Iraq. Additionally, a Navy Admiral has taken command of the GWOT-related Combined Joint Task Force Horn of Africa (CJTF HOA) in Djibouti. Our presence in the Horn of Africa, which is an impoverished part of the world that struggles with disease, drug running, human trafficking, smuggling and pockets of extremism, is a key to ensuring that terrorism doesn't gain a foothold in the region. CJTF HOA was initially formed in November 2002 as a seafaring force aimed at blocking terrorists fleeing Afghanistan from establishing a new safe haven. Soon after, the task force moved ashore and its mission morphed into a blend of military cooperation, military-to-military training and humanitarian assistance over a massive, eight-country region. The Navy is now engaged to help bring stability, security and hope to the region....

The Navy spearheads OEF by providing sovereign deck space from which to launch combat sorties into Afghanistan, continues to support ground operations in Iraq from the sea, in the air and on the land as part of OIF, and conducts deterrence operations in the Persian Gulf. The Navy also responds to humanitarian crisis, patrols for pirates

⁶ 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.

⁷ For more on the LCS, see CRS Report RL33741, *Navy Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) Program: Oversight Issues and Options for Congress*, by Ronald O'Rourke.

⁸ Operation Enduring Freedom is the name for military operations in Afghanistan.

and interacts with the developing navies around the world and supports counter-terrorism operations in the Philippines....

We continue to support the GWOT through naval combat forces that are capable and relevant to the missions assigned. Thousands of Marines and Navy personnel, both ground and shipboard, are engaged in the Central Command (CENTCOM) area of responsibility (AOR) supporting GWOT operations. Marine Corps combat units have taken part in multiple combat operations and are now directly responsible for stability and security in Al Anbar province. Their expeditious and innovative pre-deployment combat skills training program, rapid modifications of combat equipment and their emphasis on cultural and language capabilities contributed to accomplishments in this region. Marines are currently executing multiple missions including: security, urban combat, nation building, counter-insurgency, command and control, and force protection. Hundreds of naval medical personnel are deployed to Iraq in support of Marine forces, as well as active and reserve Navy Seabees responsible for construction support. The Navy and Marine Corps continues to deploy forces into the CENTCOM AOR on a rotational basis. The DON is aggressively adapting our training, forces, and equipment to remain responsive to the changing threat.

Under the National Security Presidential Directive (NSPD-41), we are continuing to cultivate relationships and develop capabilities to maximize the advantage that operating in the maritime domain brings to homeland security. Because more than 95 percent of the world's commerce moves by sea, protection of merchant shipping from potential terrorist networks is critical. 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. However, the United States cannot accomplish this monumental task alone. We are broadening our relationship with the navies of international allies to prosecute the GWOT. We are expanding the Proliferation Security Initiative to other countries and working bilateral boarding initiatives in all hemispheres.

We are also integrating intelligence and command and control systems with other government agencies like the Department of Homeland Security to effectively evaluate the maritime environment and anything that could adversely influence the security, safety or economy of America and our allies. We continue to develop the Navy's role in the Maritime Domain Awareness concept, including ship tracking and surveillance, to identify threats as early and as distant from our borders as possible in order to determine the optimal course of action. We are working with the Department of Homeland Security to develop a comprehensive National Maritime Security Response Plan to address specific security threats and command and control relationships.⁹

1,000-Ship Navy/Global Maritime Partnership. The 1,000-ship Navy concept, also known as the Global Maritime Partnership, is a U.S. Navy initiative to achieve an enhanced degree of cooperation between the U.S. Navy and foreign navies, coast guards, and maritime police forces, for the purpose of ensuring global maritime security against common threats. Since the U.S. Navy is planning to maintain in coming years a fleet of

⁹ U.S. Department of the Navy. *Highlights of the Department of the Navy FY2008 Budget*. Washington, 2007. (February 2007) pp. 2-1 through 2-4.

about 313 ships, the concept implies a notional combined contribution from other participating countries of something like 700 ships.¹⁰

Global Fleet Stations (GFSs). The Navy envisages establishing as many as five GFSs around the world, each of which might be built around a single amphibious ship or high-speed sealift ship. Under Navy plans, GFSs could host or support Marines, Navy LCSs or patrol craft, Coast Guard small boats, and Army and Air Force personnel. GFSs under Navy plans would be capable of conducting or supporting various operations, including some that could be considered GWOT-related.¹¹

NECC. 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. The Department of the Navy states that NECC

will serve as a functional command to organize, man, train, and equip forces that operate in an expeditionary environment. It will be the single advocate for all Navy Expeditionary Forces to include Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD), Naval Construction Force (NCF), Maritime Expeditionary Security Force (MESF, formerly Navy Coastal Warfare) and Navy Expeditionary Logistics Support Group (NAVELSG), and key new capabilities: Expeditionary Training Command (ETC), Expeditionary Combat Readiness Center (ECRC), Maritime Civil Affairs Group (MCAG) and Riverine Force. These forces will conduct Maritime Security Operations and Theater Security Cooperation and are capable of protecting critical infrastructure, securing the area for military operations or commerce, preventing the flow of contraband, enabling power projection operations, joint, bi-lateral or multi-lateral exercises, personnel exchanges, and humanitarian assistance. Whether extending a helping hand or finding, fixing, and finishing our enemies, we are redefining the limits and meaning of Sea Power in the 21st Century.¹²

Riverine Force. The riverine 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. The force is to consist of three squadrons of 12 boats each, and include a total of about 900 sailors. The Navy established Riverine Group 1 at the Naval Amphibious Base, Little Creek, VA, on May 25, 2006. The first squadron is to be established in FY2006, and was deployed to Iraq in March 2007. The second squadron was established in February 2007, and the third is to be established later in FY2007. The second and third squadrons could be deployed to Iraq in November 2007 and July 2008, respectively.

¹⁰ For more on the 1,000-ship Navy/Global Maritime Partnership, see Geoff Fein, “‘Global Maritime Partnership’ Gaining Steam At Home And With International Navies,” *Defense Daily*, Oct. 25, 2006 and Christopher P. Cavas, “Will ‘Thousand-Ship Navy’ Become GMPI?” *DefenseNews.com*, Sept. 25, 2006.

¹¹ For more on GFSs, see CRS Report RL32513, *Corps Amphibious and Maritime Prepositioning Ship Programs: Background and Oversight Issues for Congress*, by Ronald O’Rourke.

¹² U.S. Department of the Navy. *Highlights of the Department of the Navy FY2008 Budget*. Washington, 2007. (February 2007) p. 2-2.

Potential Oversight Issues For Congress

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

- 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? Are the Navy's actions partly motivated by concerns about its perceived relevance to current threats, or by a desire to secure a portion of GWOT-related funding?
- 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 as the Navy implements its initiatives to expand its capabilities for participating in the GWOT?
- 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?¹³
- 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)?
- Is the Navy adequately coordinating its GWOT-related activities and initiatives with other organizations, such as the Special Operations Command (SOCOM) and the Coast Guard?
- 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?

Legislative Activity In 2007

The Navy's proposed FY2008 budget was submitted to Congress in February 2007.

¹³ For additional discussion of this issue, see CRS Report RL33153, *China Naval Modernization: Implications for U.S. Navy Capabilities — Background and Issues for Congress*, by Ronald O'Rourke.