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Implications of the National Security Council Study "U.S. Maritime Strategy and Naval Force Requirements" on the Future Naval Ship Force (Unclassified Digest of a Classified Report). PSAD-78-6; B-163058. December 19, 1977.

Report to the Congress; by Elmer B. Staats, Comptroller General.

Issue Area: Federal Procurement of Goods and Services (1900); Federal Procurement of Goods and Services: Procurement of Only Needed Quantities of Goods (1901); Science and Technology (2000).

Contact: Procurement and Systems Acquisition Div.

Budget Function: National Defense (050); National Defense: Weapon Systems (057).

Organization Concerned: Central Intelligence Agency; Department of the Navy; Department of Defense; National Security Council.

Congressional Relevance: House Committee on Armed Services; Senate Committee on Armed Services; Congress.

Recognizing that the Navy's fiscal year 1977 shipbuilding budget did not fully answer continuing questions about the future size and composition of the naval ship force, the Secretary of Defense requested an indepth study of U.S. maritime strategy and long-term naval requirements. The resultant National Security Council study, completed in January 1977, formed the basis for the 1978 fiscal year 5-Year Shipbuilding Program leading to a 600-ship Navy and centering around 12 large-deck carriers to be operated through the 1990s. Findings/Conclusions: Before any decisions are made on the future naval force size and composition, the following issues should be examined: Should the Navy continue to rely on the carrier for offensive capability? Could and should forward deployment of high-value forces be accomplished with less valuable assets? Why does the study assign a large number of ships to protect naval shipping? Why are general-purpose forces being sized and structured for conventional warfare even though the Soviet Union can, and possibly intends to, conduct a tactical nuclear war? Were the analyses the study used in determining future naval force levels too pessimistic? and Why did the study propose future force levels on the basis of currently programmed forces and not address such issues as whether surface ships may provide direct support mor cost effectively than nuclear attack submarines? Recommendations: The appropriate congressional committees should hold extensive hearings to examine the impact of these issues on the future naval force size and composition. (Author/SC)

COMPTROLLER GENERAL'S
REPORT TO THE CONGRESS

IMPLICATIONS OF THE NATIONAL
SECURITY COUNCIL STUDY, "U.S.
MARITIME STRATEGY AND NAVAL
FORCE REQUIREMENTS" ON THE
FUTURE NAVAL SHIP FORCE

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D I G E S T

Recognizing that the Navy's fiscal year 1977 shipbuilding budget did not fully answer continuing questions about the future size and composition of the naval ship force, the Secretary of Defense requested an indepth study of U.S. maritime strategy and long-term naval requirements. This study, known as the National Security Council study, specifically

--examines future Navy ship requirements on the basis of U.S. defense policies, Navy missions and roles, and Soviet military capabilities and strategies and

---discusses future requirements in light of increasing costs and anticipated breakthroughs in technology.

Completed in January 1977, the study formed the basis for the 1978 fiscal year 5-Year Shipbuilding Program--leading to a 600-ship Navy, and centering around 12 large-deck carriers to be operated through the 1990s.

GAO reviewed the study to clarify those issues that relate to the size of the naval force and to evaluate the recommendations being made. GAO found that the study left unresolved the following important issues.

--Should the Navy continue to rely on the carrier for offensive capability? The Navy may be structuring a carrier-oriented force that would be best suited for power projection and for peacetime and minor conflicts instead of a force built for its major role--protecting sea lines of communication.
(See ch. 4.)

--Could and should forward deployment of high-value forces be accomplished with less

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valuable assets? Forward deployment could expose high-value forces to high-intensity cruise missile and aircraft attacks. (See ch. 5.)

--Why does the study assign a large number of ships to protect naval shipping? There is reason to believe that sea-line interdiction is not a primary Soviet intention and will not be attempted until U.S. carrier and strategic submarine forces are neutralized. (See ch. 5.)

--Why are general-purpose forces being sized and structured for conventional warfare even though the Soviet Union can, and possibly intends to, conduct a tactical nuclear war? (See ch. 5.)

--Were the analyses the study used in determining future naval force levels too pessimistic? (See ch. 5.)

--Why did the study propose future force levels on the basis of currently programmed forces and not address such issues as whether surface ships may provide direct support more cost effectively than nuclear attack submarines? (See ch. 5.)

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

GAO believes that if these issues had been considered in the study, they would have materially effected its outcome. Accordingly, these issues should be examined before any decisions are made on the future naval force size and composition. Without procuring any additional carriers, the Navy could continue to have more than 10 aircraft carriers operational through the 1990s. The study considers this level adequate for basic sea control in a North Atlantic Treaty Organization War.

The appropriate congressional committees should hold extensive exploratory hearings to examine the impact of these issues on the future naval force size and composition. Of particular importance is the question of getting the best force structure for primary threat situations.

AGENCY COMMENTS

In commenting on this report, the National Security Council stated that the questions GAO raised are legitimate and will likely prove valuable, not only to the Congress in its consideration of the fiscal year 1979 (and beyond) presidential budgets, but also to the Department of Defense as it continues its force planning and budget development efforts. The Council also stated that it would be inappropriate to comment in detail because its study was a product of the previous administration, and the current administration is developing a position on defense posture on the basis of a recently completed review of U.S. military strategy and forces.

The Department of Defense provided a partial reply and stated that it is in the process of examining many of the unresolved issues addressed in the report that could significantly influence naval force planning. The results of these efforts are to be considered in future decisions by the current administration. (See apps. VII to IX.)