

**STATEMENT OF**  
**VICE ADMIRAL WILLIAM J. FALLON, U.S. NAVY**  
**COMMANDER, U.S. SECOND FLEET**  
**COMMANDER, STRIKING FLEET ATLANTIC**  
**BEFORE THE**  
**SEAPOWER SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE**  
**SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE**  
**WASHINGTON, D.C.**  
**13 OCTOBER 1999**

**Introduction**

Madam Chairwoman and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to share my views of current Naval force structure impacts on fleet operations with you. Your continued appreciation of the men and women who serve in our Navy and your supportive efforts on their behalf has positively affected our ability to respond worldwide. I am keenly aware of your support and sincerely thank you for it.

As Commander, U.S. Second Fleet, I exercise operational control of assigned forces in the Atlantic Fleet area of responsibility (AOR). As well, I am responsible for the training and

NOT FOR PUBLICATION  
RELEASED BY THE  
SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON SEAPOWER

preparation of Atlantic and Gulf Coast based Naval Forces, as directed by the Commander in Chief, U.S. Joint Forces Command and Commander in Chief, U.S. Atlantic Fleet, to support the requirements of all five geographic combatant commanders. In this latter role, my views are shaped by the consistently high demands and resource constraints which impact the training and preparation of Atlantic Fleet Naval forces.

### **Background**

Second Fleet provides forces primarily for the forward-deployed Fifth and Sixth Fleets. We prepare, train and certify these forces for their overseas operational tasks with the top priority goal of deployed combat readiness. Units participate in an Interdeployment Training Cycle (IDTC) which features a building-block approach of basic, intermediate and advanced training, in increasing levels of complexity, to prepare personnel to operate and employ their equipment, aircraft and ships as individual units and ultimately as integral members of fleet and joint forces. During the Interdeployment Training Cycle, units, most of which have returned from previous deployments, are assigned new personnel to replace those departed due to normal rotations, resignations or administrative losses. Equipment upgrades are installed, planned maintenance is accomplished and spare parts are restocked. Readiness, at reduced levels following a deployment, normally begins to increase in preparation for the next deployment as resources are provided and training is accomplished.

In addition to manpower and material resources, training ranges and support (for example, targets, training ammunition, opposition forces, and simulation devices) are required to enable preparation of the units and their crews for deployment. During 1999, we have met the

requirement for forces, principally by providing Aircraft Carrier Battle Groups (typically an aircraft carrier, 6 surface combatants, two submarines and a logistics ship) and Amphibious Ready Groups (typically 3 amphibious ships with about 2000 embarked Marines), to maintain tasked forward presence overseas but find it increasingly difficult to provide required surge forces. The latter are forces which would flow from the Continental United States should forward deployed units require reinforcement in a crisis. Additionally, continuing manpower shortages and the paucity of key equipment combined with closure of the key Atlantic Fleet Training Facility at Vieques, Puerto Rico, have resulted in an inability to provide combat ready forces for deployment at the desired highest level of readiness. The pace of operations has been sustained at high levels, with little flexibility to absorb change to schedules or to increased demand. Simply put, there are not enough resources to meet demands and the cost of doing business is being borne increasingly by our Sailors.

## **Requirements**

The Atlantic Fleet has six aircraft carriers which, when combined with surface forces and submarines are organized into six Carrier Battle Groups. Likewise, there are six East Coast based Amphibious Ready Groups formed around a like number of large deck amphibious ships which are deployed with embarked Marines to provide the two most visible aspects of forward deployed Naval Forces. The Global Naval Force Presence Policy (GNFPP) is the process by

which naval forces are allocated among competing requirements by combatant Commanders-in-Chief. Many of these forces are low density, high demand assets. Currently the GNFP requires one East Coast Carrier Battle Group and Amphibious Ready Group to continuously deploy in 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> Fleet AORs. Since I assumed command of Second Fleet nearly two years ago, we have deployed five combat ready Carrier Battle Groups and five Amphibious Ready Groups. Every deploying group has been busy responding to crises. Two of the Carrier Battle Groups, centered on ENTERPRISE and THEODORE ROOSEVELT, were engaged in combat operations within a few days of their arrival in theater and, as you are aware, distinguished themselves in Iraq and in the Balkans respectively. Likewise, the KEARSARGE ARG/TWO SIX MEU was recently deployed into Kosovo and the Sailors and Marines of that team performed in an exemplary manner.

An important note, however, is that four of these five CVBGs had an accelerated Interdeployment Training Cycle or a short notice, high speed deployment transit, and, in two cases, both a compressed workup and high-speed transit. We are using our forces now more than ever before. These pressures combined with current resource deficiencies, negatively affect Sailor quality of life, retention and the long term sustainability of the Fleet.

Long-standing Chief of Naval Operations' policy is to limit deployments to six months duration and a minimum turnaround ratio (TAR) of 2.0 (a 2.0 TAR means that a unit will not deploy within 12 months after returning from a six month deployment). Fleet schedulers work to provide a minimum 3.0 TAR to accommodate the considerable time away from home involved in pre-deployment training during the Interdeployment Training Cycle. In the past two years, Atlantic Fleet Carrier Battle Groups have averaged about 22 months turnaround for a reasonable and sustainable 3.6 TAR. In other words, our people are deploying once about every two years.

But the current Navy force structure only contains 10 carrier air wings for the 12 carriers. The five Atlantic Fleet carrier airwings, one less than the number of carriers, are experiencing a TAR of only 2.9 or 17 months between deployments. When the time out of homeport during the Interdeployment Training Cycle is factored into the lives of Air Wing personnel, we find a pace of operations which is challenging to sustain and which translates directly into excessive wear and tear on people and equipment. It also is a major factor in the low retention figures with which you are familiar.

The ability to provide surge forces in support of Major Theater War (MTW) contingencies does not match requirements. Atlantic Fleet inputs to the Joint Staff, Joint Monthly Readiness Review (JMRR) document the difficulty in providing Carrier Battle Groups at desired capabilities, a direct result of resource shortfalls. For example, the JOHN F. KENNEDY BATGRU, our most recent deploying Carrier Battle Group, was alerted about six months ago for possible early deployment in support of operations in Kosovo. At that time, I estimated that it would have required almost two times the specified alert posture timeframe to prepare the BATGRU for surge deployment at desired combat readiness levels. Deficiencies in our current force structure have removed the elasticity that once existed in our surge posture. We would not, in my view, be able to surge forces as we did in preparation for Operation DESERT STORM in 1990 because we do not have enough resources beyond those required to sustain today's operations.

## **Readiness**

Readiness is principally a function of personnel, equipment and training. Carrier Battle Group and Amphibious Ready Group deployed readiness, as measured by the percent of time which units report in the two required SORTS readiness categories, has remained consistently high (although there is a trend of decreasing time at the highest readiness level). Non-deployed readiness (the category in which the majority of Second Fleet units operate) has continued the decline of the last several years. Consequently, total fleet readiness has also declined. The aforementioned lack of surge elasticity follows directly from this situation.

Manning shortfalls have been the most significant readiness detractor. The Navy personnel distribution system works hard to provide adequate numbers of people, particularly for those units nearing deployment. But overall fleet manning levels have been consistently below what we need. For example, enlisted manning on Atlantic Fleet aircraft carriers has been holding at about 87% of Basic Allowance (BA) for the last five CVs on deployment. This equates to between 300-400 vacancies per ship. Manning usually begins to fall during deployment and continues to decline until about six months prior to the next deployment. Smaller ships and squadrons typically have been better off - deploying at about 93% of BA. Manning shortfalls invariably mean that the rest of the crew works harder; late arrivals miss training opportunities and readiness lags until new crewmembers acquire training and experience. Critical shortfalls exist in some key enlisted ratings and late aircrew arrivals usually miss strike and weapons training conducted earlier in the Interdeployment Training Cycle. We are not getting a good return on our training investment. Moreover, people in the critical skill areas also end up at sea for longer tours, exacerbating retention problems. Gapped billets mean less flexibility in the Commanding Officer's ability to free Sailors for specialized training, adjust work schedules and perform necessary maintenance. "Just in time" manning does not work for people. It usually

fills critical billets just prior to deployment but not when we really want them aboard – early in the Interdeployment Training Cycle.

Material issues continue to undercut force structure effectiveness. Shortages of spare parts, particularly aviation spares, are reflected in declining Mission Capable and Full Mission Capable rates, increased parts cannibalization rates and an increase in bare firewalls (aircraft without engines) during FY99. Shortages of key equipment including avionics test benches, command, control, communication, computer and intelligence equipment (C4I), aircraft targeting pods and support equipment and several ordnance items, mean that this gear must be cross-decked between ships to bring the units up to desired readiness levels. The lack of a full complement of equipment during the Interdeployment Training Cycle precludes the crews from training like they would fight, with all the equipment they would have to use in combat, thus increasing risk of casualties with our people.

## **Discussion**

We continue to deploy very capable front-line naval forces to sustain overseas presence requirements and these forces have performed magnificently, particularly in the past year. But I am not sure how long we can keep up the pace. Continued high demand and high optempo while deployed and the cost of supporting this fast pace have resulted in very high utilization rates for equipment, increased expenditures of operating funds to sustain the pace and heavy demands on our people. Given the limited resources available, the cost of supporting this forward deployed posture is evident in the loss of surge capability and the lack of elasticity in non-deployed forces. The recent experience of forces proceeding directly into combat operations upon arrival in

overseas operating areas supports a continuation of realistic training to provide forces “ready on arrival.”

The increasing emphasis on use of precision weapons in combat, both to enhance crew survivability and to minimize collateral damage, have placed heavy demands on specialized weapons such as TLAM, LGB’s, JDAM and JSOW. These weapons are in very short supply with minimal quantities available for training. Likewise, the suspension of weapons training at Vieques, Puerto Rico, and the lack of suitable substitute training ranges is severely inhibiting the ability to prepare our people without substantial increase in risk.

Current force structure and high optempo does not allow for additional desired training with our NATO allies in Northern Europe and, except for the annual UNITAS exercise, with our allies in South America. Operations with forces in these areas is desirable both from an engagement standpoint and to enhance interoperability at a time when combined operations with allies (such as recently seen in the Balkans and the Arabian Gulf) are the norm.

Ongoing budget pressures and force structure limitations also are evident in deferred maintenance and combat system upgrades. Modernization and habitability upgrades as well as ammunition stocks are under-funded. Similarly, the combat logistics support force is stretched thin with little to no back-up capability to react to equipment failure or schedule change. I believe that the combat logistics force structure is short of combat stores ships (AFS) and ammunition ships (AE) necessary to retain the flexibility required to sustain our forward deployed and surge forces. We cannot, in my opinion, continue to “lean out” the support force for maximum efficiency under optimum conditions.



As I look ahead to FY 2000, I foresee continued high demand and stress on an already hard working and near capacity force with decreasing flexibility to sustain the current pace of events with the resources in hand.

We have made significant changes to the Interdeployment Training Cycle in an effort to increase efficiency and reduce pressure on our Sailors. The fleet has made some tough decisions to fully fund the flying hour and ship steaming day programs. Thanks to this committee and many others in Congress, significant funds were made available to increase readiness and spare parts accounts in last year's budget. I know that it will take some time before this increase in resources will be fully felt in the fleet but we anxiously await the help and need it to be continued.

### **Conclusion**

The Navy today is thinly stretched. Our people continue to excel in maintaining a robust forward presence and have responded superbly when tested in combat this past year. But our force lacks depth. Beneath the forward deployed force, we lack the necessary flexibility to surge in response to crisis. The cost of doing business today, without adequate manning and material resources, is taking an increasing toll on our people and remaining force structure. I know that you share my desire that our Navy remains ready and capable of deterring conflict; reacting to crisis and winning our Nation's wars should it be necessary to do so. Thank you for your continued strong support and for the opportunity to testify before this panel.