

> San Antonio (LPD 17)-Class Landing Assault Ship

DISCUSSION

The operational flexibility and capability of the naval expeditionary fleet will be significantly enhanced with the FY 2005 delivery of USS *San Antonio*, the first of 12 new landing assault ships. LPD 17 is the replacement for four classes of older ships – the LKA, LST, LSD 36, and LPD 4 – and is being built with a 40-year expected service life. When construction is complete, the 12 LPD 17-class ships will enable the Department of the Navy to meet the fiscally-constrained programmatic goal of 12 Amphibious Ready Groups (ARGs) capable of lifting 2.5 Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) Assault Echelons (AEs). The LPD 17 class will also eliminate our reliance on the Amphibious Lift Enhancement Plan, a temporary fix meant to fill today's shortfall in active expeditionary lift.

The *San Antonio*-class warships will incorporate advanced characteristics for amphibious warships. Each ship will have 699 enhanced berths for embarked Marines, plus a surge capacity of 101 berths. They also will

have a vehicle stowage capacity of 24,600 square feet, a cargo stowage capacity of over 33,000 cubic feet, and a well deck sized for two LCAC or one LCU. Their flight decks will each be capable of operating with two CH-53E Super Stallions, two MV-22 Osprey tiltrotor aircraft, or four CH-46E Sea Knight helicopters. The ships in the class will be outfitted with two Rolling Airframe Missile launchers for self-defense and will incorporate design features that present a significantly reduced radar cross section compared to previous amphibious ships.

MARINE CORPS POSITION

The Navy expeditionary shipbuilding plan that includes the construction of 12 LPD 17 class ships will lead to a force structure capable of forming 12 ARGs or ESGs and lifting the fiscally constrained 2.5 MEB Assault Echelons. The LPD 17 class represents the Navy's commitment to recapitalization in the form of a modernized expeditionary fleet. The Marine Corps supports the Navy's commitment to expeditiously complete the LPD-17 class.

