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SECRETARY OF THE NAVY
CURRENT STRATEGY FORUM, NAVAL WAR COLLEGE
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EXPECTED ABOUT 1:15 P.M.

It is a great privilege and pleasure for me to be here at the Current Strategy Forum again this year. In my year as Secretary of the Navy, I have developed a very solid appreciation of the truly important work that goes on all year in Newport. It is here that the Navy trains its leaders of the future. This Forum is a key part of their learning process. Just as important, the Forum seeks to inform visiting civilian leaders about major policy issues facing the naval service. We seek your opinions in our three days of discussions because we know that an informed, active, participating citizenry is this country's greatest reservoir of military strength.

Since I took office after a thirty year absence from the Navy, I've had a chance to visit our sailors, aviators, submariners and marines at various ships and installations around the world. It has truly been an inspiring experience. The men and women who are the heart of the naval service are a dedicated, professional collection of Americans -- people with whom I am proud to serve. I have found that a sense of doing an important job and doing it well exists across the fleet -- from the flight deck of the NIMITZ in the Mediterranean to Marine Corps desert maneuvers at 29 Palms, California.

I can report at the outset of this Forum that our Navy-Marine Corps team is in good shape. You can be proud of it.

Yet, being a part of this team today is an extremely challenging assignment for me. That the Current Strategy Forum has chosen the theme "The Navy and National Strategy" is consistent with our concerns for the important problems facing not only the Navy but the United States as a whole. Our theme touches the two guiding precepts of the War College -- advancing the professionalism of the naval officer community, and assessing the broader issues of naval strategy as it relates to national policy.

Much of your individual and collective work over the next several days will be centered around two recent studies. I hope these studies will have a major, long-term impact on American military posture.

The first of these, the Sea-Based Air Platform Study, was requested by Congress and was forwarded to Capitol Hill last month.

Its objective was to provide a thorough evaluation of the costs and combat effectiveness of aircraft capable ships at sea both in the near and the long terms. A highly technical analysis, it looks at a number of platforms: from the nuclear powered aircraft carriers -- designated CVN -- to the prospective smaller Vertical/Short Take-Off and Landing (V/STOL) support ship -- VSS -- to the existing surface ships that might be modified to take V/STOL aircraft.

The key finding of the Sea-Based Air Platform Assessment is that sea based tactical aviation will continue to play a major role in virtually all military scenarios. The study found that no single platform -- from the recently commissioned CVN EISENHOWER, down to an air capable modification of the SPRUANCE class destroyer -- is likely to be the best system in all cases. It did verify the potential advantages of increased numbers of less costly and less capable platforms. Furthermore, the study determined that while development of V/STOL aircraft will be costly and time consuming, they have potential advantages at sea due to their increased flight deck efficiency and dispersal capability.

My judgment is that the Sea-Based Air Platform Study provides a sound basis for the selection of additional sea-based air platforms. Simply put, we need to start building another carrier of some kind in the near future.

What kind to build is a matter of judgment. My personal view has been expressed many times to Congress. It is that we need multiple platforms for sea-based aviation in the future. We already have operating or building four nuclear powered carriers. With the budget we see for Navy shipbuilding in the future. I think the next carrier authorized should be a medium sized carrier, conventionally powered, that could operate all the aircraft in our current inventory. The Sea-Based Air Study indicates that we could build about 3 of these for about the same cost as two NIMITZ class CVNs; the saving of a billion dollars in our very tight shipbuilding budget seems compelling as a practical matter.

Admiral Holloway, our Chief of Naval Operations, has testified before Congress that he would prefer to have one more nuclear powered carrier.

To me, the difference is not a critical one; the key point to remember is that we need sea-based aviation in the future if we are to maintain maritime supremacy. As Secretary of the Navy, I will build with enthusiasm any kind of aircraft carrier authorized and directed to be built by law. I hope your discussions at this Forum will address the question of the future of sea-based aviation.

In step with technical evaluation of the Sea-Based Air Study, a second more wide ranging work was carried out: The Naval Force Planning Study. This Study, which is the most important single project I have been associated with as Secretary of the Navy, had significant inputs from the Naval War College, and was directed by Professor Bing West of the Naval War College faculty. Therefore, it is very appropriate that I am able to discuss the genesis, objectives, methodology and results of this Study -- called SEAPLAN 2000 -- in detail for the first time in public here today.

Early in the current administration, President Carter chartered a major study to assess the posture of military forces in this country.

While this was a "thinking effort" on the part of the various military staffs and not intended to be a policy making study, it became apparent as the effort progressed that there were serious differences of

opinion about naval strategy. The most crucial differences arose over the perceived utility and requirement for sea-based air forces. To some of us, it appeared clear that any significant decrease in the strength of our aircraft carrier battle groups and other surface forces would seriously reduce the flexibility of America's leaders. It has been this country's experience that naval forces afloat provide the most immediate and direct response possible in the majority of situations likely to occur. Furthermore, naval forces have the ability to remain on station for extended periods of time, ready to take instant action with virtually no requirement for supporting forces. This inherent capability is simply not available through other measures.

Yet studies have a way of setting things in concrete, especially in large organizations. Staffs grow defensive about programs and tend to resist change after the problems have been thought through as of the moment. Thus I felt that the very real possibility that our Navy might be called upon to maintain control of critical sea lanes over an extended time period needed further analysis. I personally was concerned that we not create the naval equivalent of the Maginot Line -- in effect sizing our naval strength against a single scenario without regard for the uncertainty of the world in the years ahead.

Many of us in the Navy Department considered that a major naval force structure assessment was imperative. Last August Secretary of Defense Brown authorized the Navy Department to take the lead in a joint Navy-Marine Corps-Department of Defense Study.

This Naval Force Planning Study was completed and forwarded to the Secretary of Defense last Tuesday, 20 March. The Study had two objectives. The first was to examine what the most probably range of tasks for naval forces is liable to be for the balance of this century. The second was to determine how well we would be able to perform these tasks with naval forces of different sizes.

The Study aimed at a top-down approach. To produce a credible report it was agreed that the methodology would center around determining the linkages between national interests and national policies, on the one hand, and U.S. naval force structures on the other. From there it could be determined which combination of naval forces, force deployments and strategies best supports U.S. policy. The Study concludes with an analysis of options that the Secretary of Defense, the National Security Council, and the President can consider in making crucial decisions about the future of the Navy.

The study involved extensive and thorough analytical work, the results of which appear in numerous graphs, tables and summaries. To the uninitiated, these can appear both more definite and more conclusive than is really the case. One of the most frustrating things I have encountered in this job has been a tendency on the part of some staff people to use systems analysis as a cover for what is really subjective judgment. It is easy to argue against a personal opinion, but if it can be hidden behind hard numbers, an unsophisticated opponent can be overwhelmed. I am determined not to let what is essentially a helpful tool become an overriding force in driving decisions.

Professor West has included this caveat in the Study, and it is so well stated -- and so important -- that I would like to quote it to you. In discussing the Study's results and conclusions, he said:

"... it is important to understand what they are and what they are not. Numbers have the unfortunate property of specificity, which in turn inflates the credibility of guesses. Like other studies, this report is replete with tables summarizing the results of hypothetical warfighting engagements. Based on these naval engagements, conclusions about naval programs are reached and some options developed. The models used are basically deterministic conditional probability sequences, using expected value inputs. While they have been checked by respected authorities, in the end these analyses are judgments. We have not fought the wars we are talking about."

Now, building a framework for programs extending into the twenty-first century is not a trivial task. Before becoming Secretary of the Navy, I gave very little thought to the year 2000 and beyond. But we must think about that time frame now, or our citizens of that era will judge us harshly, and with good reason. We cannot be the "now" generation or the "me" generation. We must, as Americans did in the past, make some tough decisions and some sacrifices to benefit those who follow us.

SEAPLAN 2000 tells me that planning naval forces is far more like getting ready for the Lewis and Clark expedition than it is like planning a Cook's Tour. In recent years it has become fashionable to try to design naval forces for one or two set-piece scenarios or specific missions, such as World War II's battle of the Atlantic revisited, or Vietnam, and to assume that if these scenarios can be met, everything else of interest can automatically be taken care of. This is Cook's Tour: tomorrow is Tuesday, so I'll be in Belgium. But the ships of the Navy we authorize today will deliver in the early or mid 1980's and spend nearly -- or in some cases, more than -- half their service life in the twenty-first century. We must plan a balanced force that is capable of a full range of possible naval missions -- we intend to follow one very old U.S. Navy tradition, and that is to go in harm's way. We must plan as Lewis and Clark did -- to take along whatever we might need for a whole range of unforeseen contingencies. We can't do otherwise because we just don't understand the wars we haven't fought yet, especially the ones in the twenty-first century.

Rather than comparing force structures and capabilities with the conventional set of scenarios, the study group took a different tack and examined national policies with regard to geographic areas -- for example, the Atlantic/Mediterranean/European area, and the Pacific/Indian Ocean Basin. The logic used in the examination was straightforward for any given region:

- Examine our national security interests in the region.
- Qualitatively set forth the contributions that naval forces make.
- Establish a measure of these contributions and the trends in naval participation.

- Assign a dollar cost and a likelihood of success in meeting the policy with a certain force structure.

Using this approach, we felt that we could determine why one does or does not want certain kinds of forces. A reasonable force mix -- and by this I mean an affordable and effective naval force structure -- should be maintained under the only guidelines that really matter: national policy, the threat to be faced, and the contribution that the Navy can make to national policy in the face of that threat.

Addressing the broad spectrum of the overall maritime defense structure as it does, SEAPLAN 2000 provides a clear and compelling rationale for naval forces in terms of their contribution to our nation's defense. I derived a number of other valuable insights from the Study. Specifically,

- The ability of our naval forces to carry out their mission now and in the next 30 years is far more constrained than it has been for the past 30 years. The Navy faces a capable opponent at sea in the Soviet Navy. The Navy and Marine Corps will have to face these forces, as well as those of third countries, when they are called upon -- not the forces of the past.
- Also, it is evident that surface ships will become more survivable through the 1980's largely through the introduction of the AEGIS anti-missile defense system and other new anti-ship missile and anti-submarine warfare systems that are the fruits of earlier developmental investments. Yet the Study also indicates that we must pursue actions now to counter the impressive potential air threat that will likely beset us in the 1990's.
- In addition, the Study illustrates well the importance of having naval forces that are flexible and in balance for a wide range of demands. The value of maintaining an offensive option against the Soviets is evident, for it retains for the nation at least one means short of a nuclear exchange of carrying the war to them. An effective offensive threat will also help protect U.S. and allied sea lanes against an offensive directed at them, or against our friends and even our neighbors.
- Finally, and of no less importance, the Study shows that naval forces permit the President to respond to crises with flexibility to the degree appropriate to our aims and policies. In coping with crisis situations around the world -- which are deemed more likely than major war with the Soviets -- the graduated presence or application of carrier and amphibious task forces is the best reassurance for our friends and deterrence for would-be enemies. Weakness on our part may well invite aggression in the future, as it has in the case of other nations throughout history.