

STATEMENT OF  
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CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS  
BEFORE THE  
SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE  
ON THE  
STATUS OF THE NAVY  
26 October 1999

## **INTRODUCTION**

Mr. Chairman, Senator Levin, members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you again to discuss the status of the Navy. Thank you also for your continued support in keeping our Navy ready and relevant to future challenges. In particular, the 1999 Kosovo Emergency Supplemental and Fiscal Year 2000 Defense Authorization Bills addressed many of our most pressing needs, and we are grateful.

When I testified before you in January, I stated that my concerns centered on our people, near term readiness, and maintaining our long-term readiness through modernization and recapitalization. While some progress has been made in these areas, my principal concerns today remain attracting and retaining high quality people, improving our near term readiness, and investing in our future readiness.

## **NAVY TODAY**

As we again meet today, nearly half of our Navy's ships are at-sea conducting operations or training in support of our national security strategy. Over one third of our forces are continuously forward deployed promoting regional stability and deterring aggression. USS JOHN F KENNEDY and USS CONSTELLATION Battle Groups, and USS BATAAN Amphibious Ready Group, are currently on station in the Mediterranean Sea and Arabian Gulf ready to directly and decisively influence events ashore from

the sea. Additionally, USS BELLEAU WOOD, with a Special Marine Air-Ground Task Force embarked, and USS PELELIU are maintaining continuous forward presence in support of operations in East Timor. Our ability to defend the nation's interests is powerfully demonstrated and I assure you the Navy's readiness for these missions remains my top priority.

A review of world events during the past few months should dispel any misconception that the demands on our Navy have diminished. The crisis in the Balkans and Iraq's continued defiance of United Nations' sanctions fueled multiple conflicts. During Operation ALLIED FORCE, ENTERPRISE and THEODORE ROOSEVELT Battle Groups launched over 3,000 combat sorties and coordinated multiple Tomahawk strikes that, in conjunction with the other air elements of this NATO force, halted Serbian aggression in Kosovo. At the same time, KITTY HAWK Battle Group quickly swung around from the Pacific for an unscheduled deployment to oversee U.S. interests in the Arabian Gulf.

### **PEOPLE**

Recruiting and retaining quality people are vital to our success and are among our biggest challenges. To that end, your leadership in effecting the 4.8% pay raise, restoration of the 50% retirement system, pay table reform, thrift savings plan, and special pays and bonuses are greatly appreciated. I believe these steps are essential to solving our recruiting and retention problems.

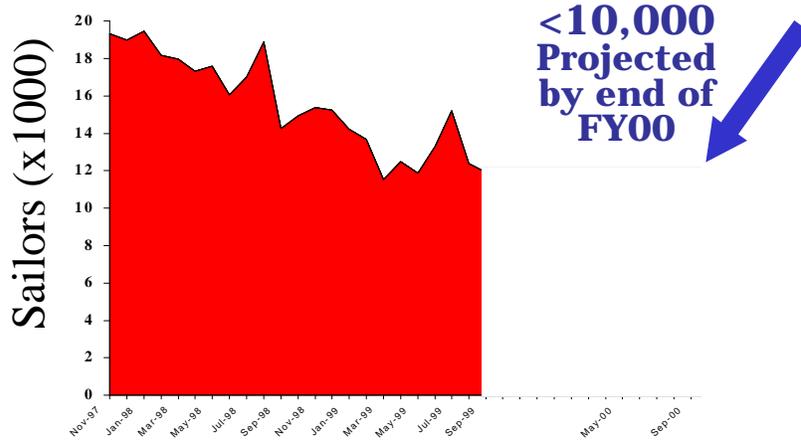
We have also worked hard to improve our Sailors' quality of life through initiatives such as reforming our inter-deployment training cycle, improvements to housing, community and family support, new education programs, transition assistance, and morale and recreation activities.

I am still concerned about recruiting. While we are proud of having met our recruiting goal in FY 99, the FY 00 goal is 4,000 personnel higher than our FY 99 goal and our Beginning of Year Delayed Entry Program (DEP) numbers are much lower than we would like.

Retention is still problematic. Both retention and reenlistment rates remain below our steady state goals. In particular, retention of our mid-grade warfare officers is below what is needed and remains a significant concern.

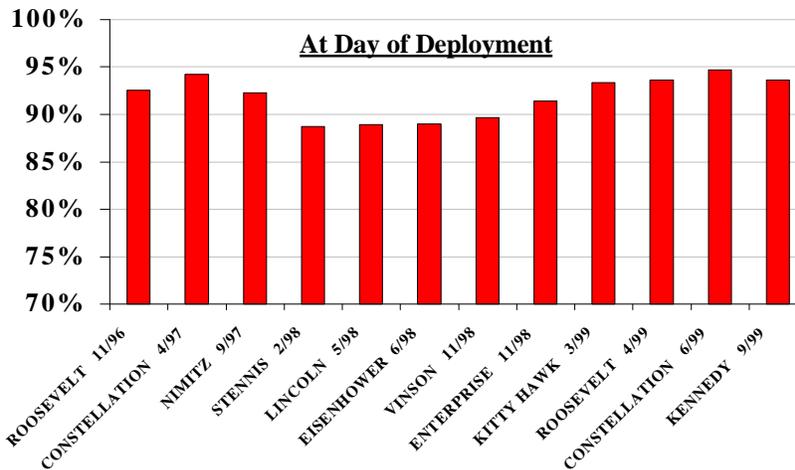
Making our recruiting goal has contributed to an improvement in our at-sea manning. As seen in this first graphic, we have been able to reduce the number of gapped at-sea billets from 18,000 in August 1998 to about 12,300 today. Our goal is to reduce that number to less than 10,000 by the end of fiscal year 2000. A result of this reduction and other at-sea manning initiatives is the improvement in deployed Carrier Battle Group (CVBG) manning shown in the second chart. We are guardedly optimistic that these manning trend levels will continue to improve. The landmark pay and retirement package and continued attention to special pays and bonuses in fiscal year 2001 will send precisely the right signals to our people.

## Sea Duty Shortage



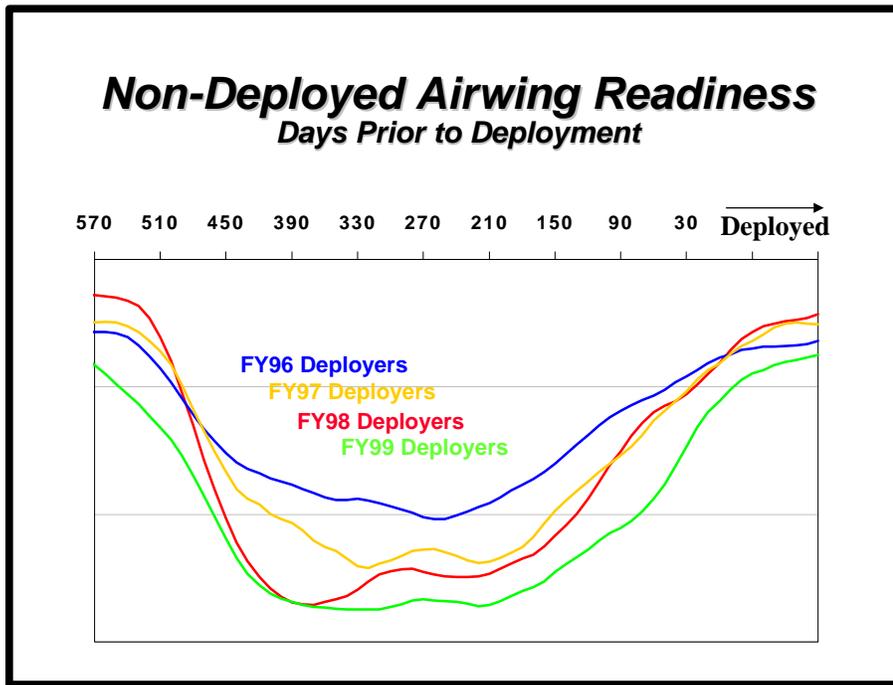
## Deployed Battle Group Manning

### Authorized Manning



**NEAR TERM READINESS**

Last winter, I spoke to this committee of my concerns about the erosion of readiness at home and signs of erosion in our deployed forces. Today, the readiness of our deployed forces continues to be satisfactory as validated by the performance of our forces in Operations ALLIED FORCE and SOUTHERN WATCH. My principal concerns are with our non-deployed forces in the Inter-deployment Training Cycle (IDTC). I believe we are now all familiar with the Navy's cyclical readiness posture as represented by the "Readiness Bathtub" and how the depth and slope effect combat readiness. While the following chart focuses on non-deployed air wing readiness, we believe this data is indicative of the entire force.



You will notice that, compared to previous years, the bathtub has grown deeper and steeper. Depth is best expressed in terms of time. The deeper a unit is, the more time it will take to reach the requisite level of combat readiness. The slope of the readiness curve indicates the level of effort or energy required achieving the required levels of readiness prior to deploying. As I have stated before, this additional burden falls squarely on the backs of our Sailors.

Two fundamental elements are driving the depth of the bathtub: personnel shortfalls and equipment readiness. As I mentioned earlier, we are making steady progress in reducing the shortage of personnel at-sea. Equipment readiness in this case deals with the material condition of our ships and aircraft. We have increased funding for maintenance and improved our metrics to better identify the requirement. We are hopeful that these measures will fully address the maintenance concerns expressed by our Fleet Commanders.

Some of our metrics are showing improvement. We are seeing improvements in the number of aircraft bare firewalls, aircraft cannibalizations, the size of our maintenance backlogs and Percent of Aircraft Available. The net result of this is that 140 more aircraft are available to the fleet than there were at the end of fiscal year 1998. Additionally, we are proactively addressing solutions to our aviation problems through the

Aviation Maintenance-Supply Readiness (AMSR) Study Group. It will take continued emphasis across the full spectrum of AMSR action areas, together with the necessary funding, to continue the recovery.

With the help of the Congress, we have applied considerable resources toward improving the IDTC bathtub. I believe our efforts are making a difference. However, it will take time. The readiness of Battle Groups deploying today is largely shaped by the fiscal environment of 18-24 months ago. As I testified this past January, that fiscal environment was insufficient to meet our needs. This year's budget, authorized but not yet appropriated, promises to be a significant first step in more completely meeting our requirements.

The operations in Kosovo illustrate how fragile our readiness can be. Our QDR-sized force is capable of providing a balanced level of forward presence. However, crises such as in Kosovo, require increased levels of presence, cause gaps in presence elsewhere, and stress our forces.

Nowhere was this stress more evident than with our EA-6B and Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) aircraft. Increased support requirements during Kosovo operations stressed these Low Density/High Demand Units. The EA-6B and ISR squadrons were operating at maximum surge. This surge required the use of personnel and equipment from non-

deployed squadrons, placing added stress on people and resources. We have taken actions to mitigate the EA-6B community's personnel tempo. To meet these expanded requirements and reduce operational stress we are restructuring the EA-6B community to include another squadron. This was made possible due to funding increases and additionally through new efficiencies in depot overhaul production and reserve assets. Again, the extra funding you authorized in these areas was key to this initiative.

Finally, I would again emphasize the significance of the Atlantic Fleet Weapons Training Facility in Vieques, Puerto Rico to near term readiness. Without continued use of this unique live-fire training facility, we can not train, evaluate, or certify Battle Group/Amphibious Ready Group teams ready for integrated combat operations without greatly increasing the risk of combat casualties to our precious men and women.

#### **MODERNIZATION AND RECAPITALIZATION**

Adequate readiness can only be sustained in the future with a modernization and recapitalization program that delivers adequate numbers of technologically superior platforms and systems to the Fleet. I remain concerned that we are falling behind in this effort. Our Battle Force is getting older and there is no shock absorber left. Worse yet, fiscal constraints force us too often to choose between near-term readiness and future modernization and recapitalization. We are

continually pursuing initiatives that will lower our cost of doing business so we can maintain near-term readiness and still invest more in the future. However, these newfound efficiencies are not keeping pace with requirements. As a result we are forced to compensate by shifting resources from modernization and recapitalization accounts to operations and support accounts.

We need to invest now with a focused and expanded program to maintain naval superiority well through the first half of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. With the help of the Administration and the Congress, our shipbuilding and aircraft procurement programs have improved since last year. However, they are still insufficient to sustain the Quadrennial Defense Review size force.

I previously testified that the Navy needed an increase of \$6 billion per year in addition to pay and retirement increases, in order to restore non-deployed readiness to acceptable levels and to recapitalize and modernize to meet future warfighting requirements. This year's budget has provided the pay and retirement increases and, as I have mentioned, we are very grateful. However, we were left with approximately \$17 billion in unfunded requirements across the future years defense plan. These unfunded requirements include modernization programs and critical infrastructure support.

Furthermore, we have encountered additional costs since last year. We have experienced erosion of our purchasing power as the cost of fuel, parts, and repairs have risen. Our aging

fleet of ships and aircraft, combined with the stress of our high operational tempo is driving our costs beyond what we anticipated. Finally, we have identified emergent programmatic requirements including lessons learned from Kosovo.

## **CONCLUSION**

Mr. Chairman, the topline relief we did receive was sincerely welcomed and we are grateful for your support. Additionally, the distribution of the Emergency Supplemental is expected to replenish critical war reserves and fund the increased maintenance requirements as a result of extended operations in support of Kosovo.

While meeting our recruiting goal this past year, I still have personnel concerns. The strong economy will continue to challenge us in attracting and retaining the skilled professionals we need. We must improve our retention of enlisted personnel and warfare qualified officers. While our deployed readiness remains satisfactory, we must continue our efforts to improve the state of our non-deployed forces. As I stated earlier, we are optimistic about some trends in our at-sea manning and aircraft maintenance, but I believe we will have to do more.

My greatest concern remains that we will be forced to continue maintaining near term readiness at the expense of the future. I cannot overstate this--we must increase our efforts to modernize and recapitalize the fleet. This will take considerable resources and we will need your help.

Mr. Chairman, the Navy remains a ready force that is capable of defeating the threats to our national security and interests around the world. However, our future readiness is not as certain. This committee has always been very helpful in addressing Navy readiness and we look forward to continuing that positive relationship.