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President's Notes: Challenge!

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CHALLENGE!



The recent decision to retire numerous obsolete U.S. Navy ships has been identified by many analysts as a potential turning point in the historical development of our Navy. This event might indeed signal the opportunity to exchange quantity of units for quality and efficiency; or it could result in the diminution of U.S. seapower.

While the Soviet Union moves to expand its naval capabilities in as many areas as possible and with a broad spectrum of modern and innovative weapons systems, the direction which our Navy will take becomes ever more crucial. If we are to continue to perform our mission, it is imperative that we be sensitive to the processes by which we have obtained and will obtain the ships and hardware we deem essential. In this context, it is enlightening to consider the Navy's program for continued modernization of the attack carrier striking force.

Recently this program was sharply challenged in the Senate. It was proposed that additional funds for the nuclear attack carrier CVAN69 not be appropriated until a comprehensive study and investigation of past and projected costs and effectiveness of attack carrier task forces be completed. This proposal was made in spite of the fact that \$132 million had already been appropriated for CVAN69 as the result of a complete study made only a year ago and that a considerable portion of the \$132 million has already been obligated or expended.

The proposal was defeated. It is expected that construction of CVAN69

will proceed as scheduled. However, the Senate did vote that the results of a comprehensive study and investigation be considered prior to any authorization or appropriation for the production or procurement of the third *Nimitz* class carrier, CVAN70. This study is to be completed before the end of April 1970.

It is clear from the Senate's discussion of this issue that military requests for forces will receive increasingly detailed scrutiny, particularly from the viewpoint of cost effectiveness. It is equally clear that the procedures used in systems analysis in the Department of Defense have been accepted, adapted, and put to use by the Bureau of the Budget and the Congress. Therefore, although considerable strides have been made by the military in justifying forces on the basis of cost effectiveness, the challenge remains to produce yet more cogent reasoning in the interests of still better justification.

This applies particularly to the attack carrier, and with good reason. First, some proponents of land-based airpower consider the increased capabilities of land-based air as a *raison d'être* for fewer carriers. In failing to recognize the complementary nature of sea-based air in assuring overall airpower, they view the attack carrier only as a competitor for the scarce defense dollar. Second, as the most costly of our warships, the

attack carrier is subject to particularly close scrutiny. Reduction of the carrier force may well appear attractive to those looking for an easy way to impressive current dollar savings. Third, there are some who consider the carrier obsolete, primarily because of the Soviet missile and nuclear submarine capability.

Although the recent Senate discussion was primarily concerned with the numbers of attack carriers required, it was clearly indicated that not only unit numbers were being challenged, but the very concept of the attack carrier as well. This is hardly a new challenge. In fact, it is so familiar as to raise the question of where we have failed in making our case.

The basic need for the attack carrier seems to have been irrefutably justified for years and reinforced by experience in Korea, Lebanon, and Vietnam. Moreover, it can be pointed out that we didn't have enough carriers when World War II started nor when Korea started and that we have been stretched during the Vietnam war. And yet this in itself is not justification that we need more today. The fact remains that the attack carrier, our primary man-of-war, is figuratively but continuously under fire. It is not enough that those of us in the Navy understand the tremendous advantage of air supremacy over the oceans and our flexible ability to project this supremacy during conflicts over land areas in support of national objectives. We must convince others, those in the other services, in the Congress, in Washington, and among the American public as a whole.

This is no small task, but it is an exciting one. There are many approaches, but whichever we choose, there are certain questions that must be answered.

First, have we properly emphasized the role of seapower as a whole, the necessity for our being able to control the sealanes of communication, or have

we become too intent on justifying individual phases of seapower, individual force requirements, such as attack carriers, with the result that the overall perspective is lost? Have we expounded a clear policy that defines the role the Navy must assume as a part of overall seapower? Are we adequately aware of the fact that we are no longer a self-sufficient continent but have become a kind of island, to which control of the seas is essential, too, for survival? The attack carrier's role *and that of all our naval forces*, must be justified on the basis of the Navy's strategic goals and policy. It cannot be justified properly in isolation.

Second, are we justifying the carrier too much on its past performance? Have we overstated our case by using worn-out clichés? Do we invite skepticism with undue emphasis on the irrelevant? For example, the fact that no *Essex*-class carrier was sunk during World War II is hardly convincing unless we can relate this fact with the situation as it is today. The enemy has changed; weapons have changed; our carriers have changed. Again, the significance of the fact that no attack carrier has been damaged by enemy action since World War II pales in the light of the consideration that none has been attacked. That none has been attacked is significant: Why have we been allowed this great advantage during both Korea and Vietnam? Again, it is important to point out that carrier-based air, by its flexibility, can avoid concentrations of land-based air, or by its ability to concentrate its air strength can outnumber and suppress land-based air in a local area. There is no argument against certain historically proven principles, but they must be adapted to the present, made relevant. Likewise, it is the fundamental principles that are important, far more than past results achieved by their application.

Finally, it is doubtful whether sufficient emphasis has been placed on the

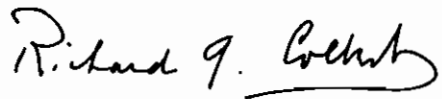
role of the attack carrier vis-a-vis the Soviet sea threat. It is an accepted fact that carrier attack aircraft have more range and firepower than Soviet surface-to-surface missile ships and submarines. If we assume a limited war, restricted to the oceans and with the Soviets, we may ask how many attack carriers would be needed.

Because of their cost, their numbers will always be limited as at present in order to provide for other forces, to give us a balance in our overall naval capabilities. Therefore, in addition to our carriers we will need diverse new offensive and defensive weapons systems to carry out our multiple roles at sea. The needs of ASW to protect our sealanes of communication, in the face of 350 modern Soviet submarines, have high priority. Too, there is a clear need for broadening our offensive capability to supplement our 15 carriers in matching the growing and impressive Soviet inventory of some 60 surface-to-surface missile launching submarines, 20 anti-ship missile cruisers and destroyers, as well as some 150 Styx-armed fast patrol boats. The offensive flexibility provided by these 230 launching platforms—plus long range air-to-surface missiles from Soviet Bear aircraft—must be matched by a broader spectrum of offensive and defensive capability in our forces. And finally, our amphibious, and particularly our mining and mine countermeasure forces, need urgent attention. Here again we must be able to justify the whole range of forces we need to fulfill our mission.

And as we move towards a smaller Navy, stressing quality instead of quantity, we must always remember that one ship cannot be in two places at one time. A balance between sophistication (and cost) of our new ships and adequate numbers on the other hand must be found.

Have we become so involved with Koreas and Vietnams that in developing force requirements we place insufficient emphasis on the broad spectrum of Soviet sea capabilities? Regardless of what we hear of disarmament, detente, and rapprochement, the Soviet fleet is real and it is growing dramatically. It poses an immediate, potent, and diversified threat to our ability to carry out our mission. It is a prime consideration in the justification of our force requirements.

If we are to ensure the maintenance of forces adequate in both quality and quantity to deal with the implications of Soviet expansion on the oceans, we must be prepared to reply to exactly these kinds of issues, not only in the case of naval air, but on the sea and below it.



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