

CRS Report for Congress

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Navy Role in Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) — Background and Issues for Congress

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Summary

The Navy is taking several actions to expand its capabilities for participating in the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). The Navy's role in the GWOT raises several potential oversight issues for Congress, including the need for an increased Navy role, and amount of Navy personnel and funding associated with GWOT-related activities. This report will be updated as events warrant.

Introduction and Issue for Congress

The Navy, which has participated for several years in what the Administration refers to as the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT), is taking actions to expand its capabilities for GWOT-related activities.¹ The issue for Congress is: How should the Navy's role in the GWOT be taken into account in assessing the Navy's budget and Navy programs?

Background

Longstanding Navy GWOT-Related Activities. The Navy has carried out certain GWOT-related activities for several years, including the following:

- on-the-ground medical and construction support for Marines in Iraq;
- surveillance by Navy ships and aircraft of suspected terrorists overseas;
- maritime intercept operations (MIO) aimed at identifying and intercepting terrorists or weapons of mass destruction at sea, or potentially threatening ships or aircraft that are in or approaching U.S.

¹ For an overview of the role of U.S. military forces in the GWOT, see CRS Report RL32758, *U.S. Military Operations in the Global War on Terrorism: Afghanistan, Africa, the Philippines, and Colombia*, by Andrew Feickert.

- territorial waters — an activity that includes Navy participation in the multilateral Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI);²
- operations by Navy special operations forces, known as SEALs, that are directed against terrorists;³
 - Tomahawk cruise missile attacks on suspected terrorist training camps and facilities, such as those conducted in response to the 1998 terrorist bombings of U.S. embassies in East Africa;
 - working with the Coast Guard to build and maintain maritime domain awareness (MDA) — a real-time understanding of activities on the world's oceans;⁴
 - assisting the Coast Guard in port-security operations;⁵
 - protection of forward-deployed Navy ships, an activity that was intensified following the terrorist attack on the Navy Aegis destroyer Cole (DDG-67) in October 2000 in the port of Aden, Yemen; and
 - protection of domestic and overseas Navy bases and facilities.

The Navy states that

Winning the Global War on Terrorism is our number one priority. We continue to support the GWOT through naval combat forces that are capable and relevant to the missions assigned. The Department of the Navy has deployed various forces into the Central Command (CENTCOM) area of responsibility (AOR) to support in-theater deployment of Marine Corps combat units (and attached Navy medical personnel and construction battalion) and provide other sustainment support (such as port and cargo handling and supply support, medical support, mail and transportation, [and] explosive ordnance [support].... Because more than 95 percent of the world's commerce moves by sea, it is likely that terrorist networks utilize merchant shipping to move cargo and passengers. The United States naval forces are well trained to carry out the mission of deterring, delaying, and disrupting the movement of terrorists and terrorist-related material at sea.⁶

In February and March 2006, it was reported that there were about 4,000 Navy personnel on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan in early 2006, that the number of Navy

² For more on the PSI, see CRS Report RS21881, *Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI)*, by Sharon Squassoni.

³ SEAL is an acronym that stands for Sea, Air, and Land. For further discussion of the SEALs and of the role of special operations forces in the GWOT, see CRS Report RS21048, *U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF): Background and Issues for Congress*, by Andrew Feickert, and CRS Report RS22017, *Special Operations Forces (SOF) and CIA Paramilitary Operations: Issues for Congress*, by Richard A. Best, Jr. and Andrew Feickert.

⁴ For further discussion of MDA and the Coast Guard, see CRS Report RS21125, *Homeland Security: Coast Guard Operations — Background and Issues for Congress*, by Ronald O'Rourke, and David W. Munis, "Vital Links," *Seapower*, May 2005.

⁵ For more on the Coast Guard and port security, see CRS Report RS21125, *op cit*, and CRS Report RL31733, *Port and Maritime Security: Background and Issues for Congress*, by John F. Frittelli.

⁶ U.S. Department of the Navy, *Highlights of the Department of the Navy FY 2007 Budget*. Washington, 2006.

personnel on the ground in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere in the theater had increased to 10,000 by March, and that it could increase further, to 12,000, by 2007.

Recent Actions To Expand Navy Role in GWOT. Since July 2005, the Navy has been taking a number of actions intended to increase its capabilities for participating in the GWOT. These actions, many of which are to be completed by the end of FY2007, include the following:⁷

- establishing the Navy Expeditionary Combat Command (NECC), a riverine force, a reserve civil affairs battalion, an MIO intelligence exploitation pilot program, an intelligence data-mining capability at the National Maritime Intelligence Center (NMIC), and a Navy Foreign Area Officer (FAO) community consisting of officers with specialized knowledge of foreign countries and regions;
- integrating the active and reserve parts of Helicopter Combat Support (HCS) squadrons 4 and 5, which are used to provide airlift support for GWOT-related activities;
- procuring Automatic Identification Systems (AISs) for surface ships;⁸
- developing adaptive force packages and flexible deployment concepts to include SEALs, U.S. Coast Guard, and coalition partners in support of operations in blue, green, and brown water environments;
- developing concepts for green and brown water operations — including certain types of visit, board, search, and seizure (VBSS) operations and expanded MIO;
- developing expeditionary training team concepts, enhanced combat and force protection capabilities, civil affairs, and Theater Security Cooperation influence activities;
- making better use of existing language, area studies, and technology curricula to enhance and expand FAO officer development, intelligence, information warfare, and cryptologic expertise, and to develop practical cross-cultural skills needed to further relations with emerging partners;
- developing Global Maritime Intelligence Integration (GMII) as part of Joint Force Maritime Component Command (JFMCC) and Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA); and
- engaging with the U.S. Coast Guard to use the National Strategy for Maritime Security to more rapidly develop capabilities for Homeland Security, particularly in the area of MDA.

NECC. The Navy Expeditionary Combat Command (NECC), headquartered at Naval Amphibious Base, Little Creek, VA, was established informally in October 2005 and formally on January 13, 2006. NECC will

⁷ These actions are taken from a July 12, 2005, memorandum from Admiral Vernon Clark, who was Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) until July 22, 2005, and an October 2005 document from Admiral Michael Mullen, who succeeded Admiral Clark as CNO — M. G. Mullen, *CNO Guidance for 2006, Meeting the Challenge of a New Era*. Washington, 2005. pp. 5, 8.

⁸ The AIS is a transponder-like device that transmits a ship's identification, position, course, speed, and other data to other ships and relevant authorities. The International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) requires AIS to be installed on ships with a gross tonnage of more than 300 tons.

consolidate the current missions and functions of the 1st Naval Construction Division, Naval Expeditionary Logistics Support Force and Maritime Force Protection Command. NECC will also serve as functional commander in control of manning, training, equipping and organizing forces that will execute ATFP [anti-terrorism force protection], shore-based logistical support and construction missions across the joint operational spectrum.... Between 40,000 and 50,000 Sailors will join the command in phases over the next two years to ensure current operations are not disrupted. The command will oversee units ranging from bomb-disposal crews, expeditionary logistics specialists, the naval coastal warfare groups and the master-at-arms forces. The NECC will also provide the 5,000 to 7,000 Sailors supporting the Army and Marine Corps in the Middle East with proper training for these non-traditional jobs.⁹

Riverine Force. The riverine force, to be overseen by NECC, is intended to supplement the riverine capabilities of the SEALs and relieve Marines who have been conducting maritime security operations in ports and waterways in Iraq. The force is to consist of three squadrons of 12 boats each, and include a total of about 900 sailors. The Navy established Riverine Group 1 at the Naval Amphibious Base, Little Creek, VA, on May 25, 2006. The first squadron is to be established in FY2006, and could be deployed to Iraq in March 2007. The second and third squadrons are to be established in FY2007, and could be deployed to Iraq in November 2007 and July 2008. The first squadron will initially use 10 boats now being used by the Marines in Iraq. The Navy is proposing to implement the riverine force as a non-acquisition program with no research and development, no milestones, and no Joint Capability and Development System (JCIDS) documentation. The Navy's request for \$69.1 million in FY2006 supplemental procurement funding for the riverine force was almost entirely denied by Congress, and the Navy is now requesting to reprogram \$54.3 million in existing FY2006 funding for the riverine force (see **Legislative Activity** below).

Other Initiatives. Other reported Navy initiatives relating to the GWOT include the following:

- The Navy has commissioned a study from the Naval Studies Board (an arm of the National Academy of Sciences) on the adequacy of the role of naval forces in the GWOT and options for enhancing that role.
- The Navy has announced that it wants to take back five Cyclone (PC-1) patrol craft that it had loaned to the Coast Guard to help support Coast Guard port security operations.
- The Navy has (or will) assume command of a GWOT-related joint task force in the Horn of Africa, the detainee operation at Guantanamo, Cuba, and Fort Suse, a high-security prison in Iraq, and will take the lead in defending the Haditha Dam in Iraq.
- The Navy is developing a GWOT mission module for the Littoral Combat Ship (LCS).

Potential Oversight Issues For Congress

Potential oversight issues for Congress relating to the Navy's role in the GWOT include the following:

⁹ Katrina Scampini, "Navy Expeditionary Combat Command Stands Up," *Navy News Service*, January 14, 2006.

- Is an increased Navy role in the GWOT needed? To what degree can or should increased Navy GWOT-related activities be used to reduce the burden on other services for conducting GWOT-related activities? Are the Navy's actions partly motivated by concerns about its perceived relevance to current threats, or by a desire to secure a portion of GWOT-related funding?
- How many Navy personnel globally are involved in GWOT-related activities, and where are they located? How much funding is the Navy expending each year on GWOT-related activities? How much will the personnel and funding figures grow as the Navy implements its initiatives to expand its capabilities for participating in the GWOT?
- Is the Navy striking an appropriate balance between GWOT-related activities and other Navy concerns, such as preparing for a potential future challenge from improved Chinese maritime military forces?¹⁰
- Aside from the establishment of the riverine force and a reserve civil affairs battalion, what implications might an expanded Navy role in the GWOT have for Navy force-structure requirements (i.e., the required size and composition of the Navy)?
- Is the Navy adequately coordinating its GWOT-related activities and initiatives with other organizations, such as the Special Operations Command (SOCOM) and the Coast Guard?
- Are the Navy's recent GWOT-related organizational changes, such as the establishment of NECC, appropriate? Does NECC include the right collection of Navy organizations? What other Navy organizational changes might be needed?

Legislative Activity

FY2006 Emergency Supplemental Appropriations (H.R. 4939/P.L. 109-234). The House Appropriations Committee, in its report (H.Rept. 109-388 of March 13, 2006) on H.R. 4939, stated:

The Committee recommendation defers the \$69,901,000 [sic: \$69,091,000] requested in Navy procurement accounts for establishment of a new riverine capability. This program is under the administrative control of the Naval Expeditionary Combat Command (NECC). Planning efforts for the program were only initiated last summer, and the NECC was only established in January 2006. The Committee understands that funds for the first riverine squadron will be the subject of a fiscal year 2006 above threshold reprogramming.... Funds requested in this supplemental would finance the second and third squadrons. The Committee intends to review this new capability carefully over the coming months. While endorsed by the recent Quadrennial Defense Review, the concept of operations is still under development, and equipment requirements, including force protection equipment, have not been specified or validated. The Committee defers these funds without prejudice, and will work with the Navy and the Congressional authorization committees in the coming months to validate the mission and funding requirements for the program.

¹⁰ See CRS Report RL33153, *China Naval Modernization: Implications for U.S. Navy Capabilities — Background and Issues for Congress*, by Ronald O'Rourke.

The **Senate Appropriations Committee**, in its report (**S.Rept. 109-230** of April 5, 2006) on H.R. 4939, recommended reducing the Navy's request for FY2006 supplemental procurement funding for the riverine force by at least \$27.825 million.

The **conference report** (**H.Rept. 109-494** of June 8, 2006, page 88) on H.R. 4939 (P.L. 109-234 of June 15, 2006) reduced the Navy's request for FY2006 supplemental funding for NECC, including the riverine force by 99.8%, to \$140,000.

DOD Request To Reprogram FY2006 Funds. On June 30, 2006, about two weeks after the enactment of P.L. 109-234 (see above), the Department of Defense (DOD) submitted to Congress a request to reprogram FY2006 funds that includes, among other things, a request to reprogram \$54.3 million to the proposed riverine force, and \$150.0 million to Navy Construction Battalions (i.e., CBs or Seabees) operating in Iraq.

FY2007 Defense Authorization Bill (H.R. 5122/S. 2766). **Section 345** of H.R. 5122 would prohibit expenditures of funds for any fiscal year after FY2006 for the NECC until the Navy funds 100 percent of the requirements for ship steaming days per quarter and 100 percent of projected ship and air depot maintenance. **Section 1015** would effectively prevent the Navy from taking back the five Cyclone (PC-1) patrol craft that it had loaned to the Coast Guard before September 30, 2012. **The House Armed Services Committee**, in its report (**H.Rept. 109-452** of May 5, 2006) on H.R. 5122, states:

The committee remains concerned with the maturity of the operational concept for the [NECC] and has reservations about the rapid pace with which the Navy is moving ahead with its development. The committee encourages the Navy to fully develop its operational requirements for the NECC mission. However, the committee does believe that the Navy should investigate options for advanced composite hulls for the specialized missions the NECC might be required to perform. (Page 181.)

Regarding Section 345, the report states:

The committee is aware that the Department of Navy has funded ship and air operations and depot maintenance below the operational requirements.... Accordingly, carrier strike groups and expeditionary strike groups will be unable to fully execute missions in their assigned area of responsibility. Against this backdrop, the committee has learned that the Department of Navy has expanded its role and function to ground and river combat missions.... The Navy will deploy Riverine Group 1 to patrol the waterways of Baghdad, Iraq in 2007. At the moment, these sailors have no boats, no manuals, and no past mission to draw experience from before they engage in combat operations. While the committee understands the Department of Navy's desire to expand its role from the sea to the river and land, we have concerns that the traditional role and mission of the Navy is not being adequately funded. (Pages 304-305.)

The Senate Armed Services Committee, in its report (**S.Rept. 109-254** of May 9, 2006) on S. 2766, states: "The 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review Report identified a requirement to provide a Navy riverine capability for river patrol, interdiction, and tactical troop movement on inland waterways. The demand for intelligence on inland waterways in the 'long war' against terrorists worldwide is increasing." (Page 181.)