FLOATING OCEAN PLATFORM

By

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(*The views in this report are solely those of the author and do not represent the views of the Department of the Navy or any of its components*)

ABSTRACT

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Based on this broad charter of evaluating **sea bases**, an examination of the floating ocean platform concept was included in the study. The floating ocean platform is a generic description of a large, relatively stationary or slowly mobile, platform that can be positioned in most areas of the ocean, and can serve a variety of purposes.

The present report was the author's input to the study. It was based on technical analyses, literature reviews and surveys, and discussions/ visits with the main groups and organizations involved in developing the floating ocean platform. All discussion material was unclassified, as are the contents of this report. All the external inputs and discussions, too numerous to mention, made this report possible, and are greatly appreciated.

The first part of this report is the summary narrative that was submitted by the author to the Technology Group of the study. The second part is the vugraphs that were presented to the Technology Group by the author on 12 February 1991. The third part is a selected bibliography of studies on the floating ocean platform over the past two decades, with over three thousand references identified.

KEYWORDS: Floating Ocean Platform; Floating Platform; Mobile Offshore Base; Spar Platform; Offshore Platform; Megafloat; Floating Structure; VLFS; Foreign Bases; Floating Airport; MOBS.

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BACKGROUND

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The first part of this report is the summary narrative that was submitted by the author to the Technology Group of the study. The second part is the vugraphs that were presented to the Technology Group by the author on 12 February 1991. The third part is a selected bibliography of studies on the floating ocean platform, with over three thousand references identified.

For the present study, an offshore air base is examined with a surface area of (9,000 ft X 900 ft). Although this structure has about twice the area of the floating airfield designed by Bechtel in the mid-1980s, its ability to support a full forward base depends upon as yet undefined specific mission and design requirements. If it is used to store substantial numbers of large aircraft, as well as large amounts of material and personnel, the size requirements could easily double.

This ocean complex (hereafter termed the FB, or floating base) is viewed as an alternative to, or replacement for, foreign land bases, an application that is important for two reasons. There are a number of foreign bases that the U.S. may have to surrender to the host countries in the forseeable future. This will greatly degrade the capability to support logistics and operational missions. In particular, it will be far more difficult in the Strategic Lanes of Communication and geographical regions now dependent on existing bases.

Second, as recent military operations have shown, even where the U.S. has foreign basing rights, there may be many restrictions on the types of military operations the U.S. can execute from these bases, which greatly limit options and effectiveness. Therefore, it would be desirable for these and many other reasons to have large bases under complete U.S. control that can be deployed in response to developing threats in important geographical areas.

The FB is **not** an alternative to the conventional aircraft carrier but is intended as a major component of a carrier overseas basing system, and as such the design must take into account system as well as component considerations. The main purpose of the FB is to serve as a logistics and forward deployment node with the capability of handling aircraft that are beyond the capacity of the conventional carrier (i.e., large aircraft such as B-52, C-5A, Condor, etc.) and are now supported from fixed bases. For some missions, the FB could serve as a logistic backup for the pre-deployed forces, for an Over-The-Horizon assault task force, or as a home base for large surveillance aircraft. The benefits of an FB as described above will accrue to all the military services, and **the responsibility for FB development should be tri-service**, not restricted to Navy. There are potential spinoffs to commercial activities, such as energy production, mining, and fishing support, and organizations that may eventually realize benefits from some of these spinoffs are candidates for contributing to FB development as well.

The requirements for this FB are vertical motion constraints that would allow large aircraft to land safely in weather conditions that would not otherwise inhibit tactical operations, location control, rotation control for wind direction orientation, cost effectiveness relative to alternatives, and adequate mobility to allow for relocation if desired. Additional features that could be of major tactical and strategic significance would be modularization for mission flexibility, and the ability to assemble modules on the high seas.

Specific technological issues, and recommendations for further examination of this concept, follow.

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

Specific requirements are mission dependent, and detailed system requirements await a more detailed mission and operational analysis. Some requirements can be estimated at this time.

-Size

In the mid-1980s, Bechtel examined a floating airport concept for coastal waters under sponsorship of the Japanese company Kumagai Gumi Co., Ltd. The largest concept examined was 472 ft x 8005 ft. For present estimates, a system of twice this size will be assumed. A number of studies of floating platform concepts (e.g., University of Hawaii floating city and the Bechtel floating airfield) have employed modular construction, with modules having dimensions of approximately 300 ft x 300 ft. Therefore, a 900 ft. x 9,000 ft. platform consisting of 30 elements having dimensions of 300 ft x 900 ft. (i.e., each element is 3 modules wide) will be assumed, with the understanding that modules of other dimensions could be used if shown to be more advantageous by detailed system designs.

-Capabilities

For handling large aircraft, a large, flat, stable top deck is required. For storing and handling substantial resources, a lower deck (as proposed by the Bechtel and other studies) is assumed. Most floating airport studies have concluded that the volumes that are required for buoyancy result in very large load-carrying capabilities. The displacement of the assumed FB, for example, will be approximately 5,000,000 tons.

However, when the flotation volume is used for storing materiel, the carrying capacity of the column is decreased, and the draft is increased. Therefore, only a small fraction of the weight reservation will be available for different uses, such as
aircraft repair facilities, ship repair facilities, spare parts, shops and tender facilities, fuel storage, bulk commodities, ammunition, etc. Substantial self-defensive facilities will be required, but far less than that required for land based facilities. In fact, the original Mobile Ocean Basing System study, authorized by the Under Secretary of the Navy for R & D in 1969 and conducted by the Naval Underseas Center in San Diego (now NOSC) and the Naval Civil Engineering Laboratory in Port Hueneme, was proposed to cope with the problem of black market and enemy theft of military supplies in Vietnam.

If surface ships are the main vehicles used to transfer resources to and from the platform, berthing capabilities for large and small vessels will be required. This may pose severe problems. The relative motion between small ships and platforms even in moderate seas will make transfer difficult and in some cases impossible.

Because of momentum and energy conservation, the greater the absorption and reflection of waves by the structure, the less is the transmission of waves to the lee of the structure, but the greater are the forces and subsequent motions on the structure. One method of reducing wave impact on ship motion while minimizing wave interaction with the total FB is to construct a locally protected area where ships would berth and transfer resources to the FB. Ships that will operate with the platform may themselves require modifications to facilitate the mating process, although, because of the large number of ships relative to the small number of FBs, modification of the FB would be far preferable to any significant ship modifications. Dynamic motion compensation during the resource transfer process between ships, such as motion compensating cranes or use of helicopters, offers a possible solution. Some combination of motion compensation equipment and locally protected berthing may be the most cost-effective solution from a systems viewpoint.

Other supply options, such as aircraft or undersea vehicles, would alleviate this relative motion problem. However, most transport of materiel in bulk is by sealift; replacement by airlift would tend to increase logistics costs substantially. Use of undersea freighters would require a different merchant marine than configured presently.

Design for survival under severe storms is necessary. Once again the designer will be faced with the alternative of designing a structure that absorbs or reflects the full energy of the free surface disturbances or that minimizes the sea surface structure interaction by the utilization of the smallest waterplane area. A similar dilemma will be presented with respect to station keeping during a storm. While the small waterplane area structure would minimize the effects of waves on the FB, and may prove to be the most advantageous configuration for an FB application, by design the small waterplane restricts communication between the decks and the regions of the FB underwater. Transfer of materiel from underwater to the decks becomes more difficult in theory. However, waterplane area (the area through which material would be transferred from the subsurface regions to the decks) is small relative to total plane area, but is probably large relative to the size of most pieces of material that would be transferred through the waterplane. Therefore, in practice, material transferred to the decks would not be limited by the size of the support structures that cross the waterplane.

The Aquapolis (demonstration floating city in Okinawa) is located and moored at a location such that prevailing storms and hurricanes will carry the platform out to sea. It was planned to slip the moor in the presence of severe storms and to dynamically return to the original position after the storm subsided. This has never been required although it is a necessary feature of design. To date almost all of the designs for major floating complexes have rejected the notion of anchoring in favor of surrender of precise location during severe storms.

HULL DESIGN CONSTRUCTION AND SYSTEM ASSEMBLY

There appear to be a number of material and construction options (all steel, all concrete, concrete and steel hybrid, etc.). All previous studies have recommended a modular approach, with large mass and buoyancy region well below the water line and minimum water plane area to minimize response to wave motions. As discussed previously, the stability benefits of this small waterplane area design for the FB application probably offset its negative aspects of reduced speed, greater structural requirements, and reduced load-carrying capacity. Because of experience with large structures whose dimensions are comparable to those of the FB modules, no major module construction research issues appear as obstacles, and development and construction of the modules would be feasible but complex.

As of this date (1991), actual experience in hull design and construction has been almost exclusively in the oil industry, in science facilities related to deep sea drilling, or in large scale models. The diversity of concepts in use presently can be traced initially to structures that were based on the barge or displacement hull concept (Large waterplane area). The fixed platforms (known as "Old Shakeys") were joined by mammoth 'jack up' rigs, some taller than the Sears tower in Chicago. These have been supplemented by the dynamically positioned or tension moored semi-submersible with small waterplane area.

In addition to actual experience, there have been a number of "floating city studies". Architects have produced many concept designs based on displacement hulls. These concept designs have inevitably proved impractical in terms of structural forces and motions. Most detailed designs have been based on semi-submerged modules and most of these have been further optimized for stability by such techniques as "added mass anti-resonance" at resonant frequencies.

For the floating airport requirement, maintenance of vertical position and trim of the landing deck is crucial. If a modular design is employed for the FB, then the components of the modules (substructure, deck, linkages between substructure and deck) must be arranged relative to each other such that the total deck surface remains sufficiently flat for aircraft landing. Because of the large number of degrees of freedom, there are many ways of configuring the modules and their components to achieve the desired goal of a flat landing surface.

At one extreme of module configuration are connections between modules that are as rigid as the modules themselves, as well as rigid connections between the substructure and the deck. This class of intermodule connections includes post-tensioning the modules together (stringing strong cables through holes in the modules and tightening the cables to form an essentially rigid structure) and, to a lesser extent in terms of rigidity, hinging the modules together. Connections that are as rigid as the modules themselves will result in a structure that is to all intents and purposes a continuous flexible beam. The linear distribution of buoyancy forces will be related to sea conditions and the loads on the 'beam' will be highly dependent on distribution of load and ballast throughout the structure. At this rigid connection end of the spectrum, the interconnecting forces and moments for a rigid structure will be large and highly cyclic.

At the other extreme of module configuration are connections in which the modules are coupled to each other less rigidly and the substructure is coupled to the deck less rigidly (analogous to shock absorbers and springs in a car). To keep all the components in the overall desired configuration, modern control theory and active 3-D positioning are utilized. Structural and environmental information is employed to continually adjust ballast in each module and adjust the flight deck dynamically (analogous to active suspensions in modern cars) such that vertical position and trim of each module are maintained within precise limits. Much of the stress on the module boundaries in the rigid body configuration is replaced by externally supplied forces in the actively controlled configuration.

However, the actively controlled system is more complex, would probably require more maintenance, would probably be more expensive, would probably be less reliable because of all the adjustable components, and its robustness to component failure is unknown at this time. Whether the tradeoffs of independent module control (and the potential for easier assembly/ disassembly) for greater complexity are cost effective is an open question at this time, and obtaining a credible answer would require more detailed design and technology development than exists presently. Other technical disciplines use active control and adjustments to produce 'smart' buildings, 'smart' aerospace structures, 'smart' suspensions, with the same potential for additional complexity and its attendant problems, but for some applications the benefits of 'smart' systems outweigh the costs. Whether the benefits (or even the feasibility at this stage) of 'smart' platforms outweigh the costs remains to be seen.

The coupling design will also determine the weather conditions under which assembly could be performed. For example, the 190 ton SWATH ship Kaimalino is able to support helicopter landings in a state 5 sea, whereas a large waterplane hull of similar displacement would have major difficulty with supporting helicopter landings in a state 3 sea. The coupling to the free surface will thus determine where the modules could be assembled, the assembly method, and possibly the operating location.

Finally, some hydrodynamicists believe that the accurate modeling of the response of the large assembled structure to the forcing functions of the wave field is an issue. There appears to be disagreement as to how accurately the full-scale assembled structure can be modeled using present techniques, with respect to 1) non-linear forcing that could occur due to combinations of currents, mean drift, and rough sea states as well as 2) relatively rare but finite probability very low frequency waves.

Present theory, and physical model testing capabilities, are addressing all the loading, linear and non-linear. The University of Hawaii, for example, is advancing from the hydroelastic analysis of single large modules to the motions and hydroelastic stresses of systems composed of 2 and 3 such modules in an NSF-sponsored study. Until these models are verified against at least two or three assembled modules in real-world environments, the validity of their extension to full-scale assembled platforms remains uncertain.

This uncertainty in the predictability of assembly configuration in rough seas could translate into uncertainty of predicting the effects of different assembly methods, and therefore would impact the selection of the best assembly methods. In addition, design experts will disagree sharply, depending on their perspectives and training as surface ship architects, submarine architects, and air and space system architects. Some developmental work, or at least technical feasibility demonstration, would probably be required in the area of system assembly and system topology modeling.

TRANSPORT TO ASSEMBLY SITE

Potential construction sites range from one to many domestic sites, and could include many international sites. The number and location of sites would significantly impact the construction time for the total system, and the sites should be selected only after a realistic system assembly and strategic deployment plan has been generated.

There appear to be many options for gathering the modules at an assembly site. The higher speed options range from transport of shallow draft designs by heavy lift semi-submersible ships to towing of modules in component form by tugs. These barges could eventually become integral elements of the modules during on-site assembly.

If the FP is modular, one type of desirable military system would consist of self-propelled modules that could self-position on the high seas and couple relatively rapidly and easily. Unfortunately, these autonomous modules would have greater complexity and cost due to the requirement for integrated propulsion systems, and these propulsion units would probably be very much underutilized once all the modules have been assembled. The cost-benefit of self-propelled modules should be examined in the feasibility study recommended at the end of this paper.

The most probable speed of a self-propelled option is about 4 knots (100 miles per day). Thus, transport times will be large relative to ship times when distances are measured in thousands of miles. For example, deployment times from Diego Garcia (7.2 S 72.25 E) to the Persian Gulf would be about 18 days. To reduce transport times, other options should be considered. These range from towing of some or all of the individual modules to the assembly site and doing final assembly in situ, to towing clusters of modules that have been assembled near the construction sites and assembling the clusters at the assembly site. In such instances, it is conceivable that towing vessels could achieve higher speeds, although speeds in the range of eight knots under tow are typically achieved by very large tugs with ship shaped barges, not by blunt shapes with deep drafts in a train.

In this instance, the resources (tugs, perhaps use of on-board power plants with additional steering capability, etc.) required for this towing and assembly operation are substantial. Careful, and probably time consuming, planning and sequencing of the assembly infrastructure would be required beforehand. While the operations involved here are large, time consuming, and complex, and while the design decisions are crucial, there appear to be no major research issues involved in any of the concepts.

STATIONKEEPING

Two major issues here are location control and direction control. The type of location control utilized depends somewhat on whether FB operation is in coastal water or deep water.

In coastal water, if some degree of permanence is projected, mooring (anchoring) would probably be utilized. Because of the massiveness of the total system, significant scaling up from present day anchors would be required. Preliminary studies suggest that the costs will be substantial and some approach such as that adopted in the Okinawa demonstration may be required. No new physics appears obvious, and scaling would probably be straightforward. If the platform is moored within the 200 mile limit of a country, the political issue of sovereignty may become very important.

Drag anchors could be used to about 2-3 million pounds. Beyond this, their efficiency would be very low and the ability to build them is questionable. Caisson-type anchors that are weighted after installation are a reasonable choice for very large mooring loads. If a dynamic penetration technique is desired, substantial development work will be required. Rock regions covered by heavy sediments would compound the difficulty substantially of this dynamic penetration operation.

If more mobility is required in coastal water, or if operation in very deep water (that would probably make mooring infeasible due to cable length and weight) is required, some type of 'dynamic positioning' (DP) would be necessary. This would involve the application of forces to the FB to counteract the effects of currents and other disturbing forces, and to keep the FB in a reasonably fixed area.

Unfortunately, the main method proposed to make the FB relatively insensitive to wave motion, namely, placing large mass and buoyant regions well below the waterline to minimize the water plane area, tends to increase the area exposed to current drag. In turn, this current drag disturbs the location of the FB, and must be countered by the DP system.

Since DP has been used for oil platforms 300 ft x 500 ft., there exists a substantial technology base on which to build. DP's application to multi-module systems remains to be demonstrated. However, depending on the specific platform design, the currents and winds in the region of interest, and the precision of FB location desired, fuel costs for DP could be problemmatical. Some studies have been conducted examining the use of vanes and shape of the underwater structure so that the platform could 'sail' into the current. This appears feasible as does some hybrid form of thrust and environmental configuration assist.

The purpose of direction control is to align the FB runways with the wind to insure optimal landing conditions for aircraft. Direction control was considered in the Bechtel study, where the structure was required to 'weathervane' at a rate of 3 degrees per minute, but was single point moored in relatively shallow coastal waters. Again, breakthroughs in control theory or engines are not required to address this problem. Rather, an engineering study of control system requirements based on the chosen FB configuration is necessary to identify the severity of the DP fuel requirements.

VULNERABILITY TO ATTACK

As is the case with any permanent base, the FB would probably be more vulnerable to attack than a highly mobile base. In terms of an airborne attack, the FB would have roughly equal vulnerability to a non-stealthy ship, since both the FB and the ship are essentially stationary from the attacker's perspective. In terms of an undersea attack, the FB would be more vulnerable than a ship, since from the attacker's perspective the FB is stationary, but the ship is moving at comparable speeds to the attacker. The FB would not be subject to land-based infiltration and attack.

A key issue is the robustness of the FB to damage. Due to the sheer massiveness and construction (steel/ concrete) of the structure, it would be more damage resistant than a ship. Generally speaking, it should be relatively invulnerable to small missile attack. Because of the large number of buoyancy chambers in the total system, destruction of a few chambers would probably be manageable, but here again, this would depend on specific designs, and the degree of redundancy designed into the system. Depending on the ease of module assembly and disassembly and the number of spare modules near the FB, damaged modules could possibly be replaced by the spares. A substantial defense against both air and sea attack would be required, but substantial space would be available for defense systems.

TOTAL SYSTEM COSTS

Estimation of costs in the absence of a detailed system design is extremely difficult and uncertain, and any numbers presented are questionable. However, for an order of magnitude estimate, results from past studies will be extrapolated to the present FB system. Four studies (MOLI, Bechtel, MOBS, OSP) that examined large offshore platforms produced unit capital costs based on top deck surface area that ranged from $400-500 per square foot in FY 89 $. If the upper range of these costs is used for estimating the present FB system (900 ft x 9,000 ft) cost, then a capital cost of $4B results. Operating and maintenance costs would have to be added to the above capital costs. A decade ago, the use of knowledge-based systems would have added to the cost of the structure. Today, knowledge-based hardware is trivial in cost and potential savings in the structure as a result of knowledge-based hardware are available.

In addition, because the bulk of the mass and empty volume of the FB are used for flotation and stability purposes, it would probably be possible to use a small fraction of the load carrying capacity of the huge flotation empty volume to satisfy other requirements, either military or commercial. Depending on the other uses made of this empty volume, the costs could be allocated over the different applications, and the effective cost of the airfield could be reduced.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

The FB could play a unique role in the U.S. defense capability by providing an alternative to foreign land bases. This role may be important in the early next century, when the tenure of the remaining foreign U.S. land bases may be uncertain. These FBs would be of value for logistics and large strike (and surveillance) aircraft operations.

However, there are many unknowns with respect to FB assembly and operation that raise questions as to its economic feasibility and with respect to the choice of design concept. Before any decisions can be made responsibly as to the feasibility of proceeding with construction of the FB, data has to be obtained to provide answers to the above questions. The following step-by-step approach is recommended for obtaining this technical and economic data.

1) **Convene a workshop of operational and technical experts for the purpose of identifying mission requirements and the key technological issues to be pursued in a feasibility study**. While ideally the workshop should be convened by the Defense Sciences Board to emphasize the tri-service importance of the FB concept, from a practical standpoint the workshop could be convened by the Naval Studies Board. Potential users and operators of the platform would play a key role in defining missions and requirements.

It is highly recommended that the Marine Board have strong participation in the workshop agenda and in the selection of the attendees and participants in the workshop, since the Board's close ties to the industrial state of the art in ocean engineering will enhance the credibility and objectivity of the workshop results. Since one option discussed in this paper for the FB was a 'smart' platform, with actively 3-D positioned modules and/ or an actively adjusted deck, it is imperative to have representatives from other technical communities who have experience in designing and operating 'smart' systems (buildings, space stations, etc.).

2) Based on the workshop results, **initiate a study to further define the specific missions of the FB, and to examine the key technology uncertainties for predicting performance and costs of the FB**. The study would probably be in the $3-4 M range, and should be sponsored by DoD to emphasize the tri-service aspects of the FB. One of the outputs of the study would be the design of an experimental program that would reduce the uncertainties in projecting system technical and economic performance.

3) Assuming no fatal flaws for the FB concept are identified in the study, and assuming that a high payoff potential is shown on paper, **initiate a step-by-step experimental program**. Because the FB is projected to consist of a number of similar modules, it naturally lends itself to an orderly step-by-step experimental and developmental approach through the initially sequential (and perhaps eventually parallel) addition of modules if positive results are obtained in previous steps.

The first step would be construction of one of the modules. Because working at full scale always provides uncertainties for systems of this magnitude, probably a full scale module would be most useful. This experimental step would yield useful information on construction materials and processes, handling of large structures, mooring and dynamic positioning, and vertical motion prediction and control in high sea states. If a 'smart' deck is still a viable option at this stage, then landing of an STOL vehicle on a prototype 'smart' deck would provide initial feasibility tests of the concept.

The second step would be construction of a second module, and the mating of the two modules. In this step, one of the major uncertainties of the FB concept, the assembly technique, would be examined. It may be desirable to construct the faces of the modules such that a variety of assembly and dis-assembly approaches can be tested. Also, data would be obtained for this two body problem on some of the issues examined in the first step, one body problem, namely, mooring and dynamic positioning, robotic handling of two large structures, vertical motion prediction and control in high sea states, and further feasibility tests of 'smart' deck alignment for two adjacent modules.

Later experimental steps would involve adding new modules to further constrain boundary conditions and simulate more realistically the multi-module FB. Success or failure in the module development program would provide the justification for acceleration or deferral of the program.

It should be noted, however, that the MOBS program was initiated during the Vietnam War. At the conclusion of that war, the mission requirement for floating bases was no longer valid. With the addition of Diego Garcia, the securing of Granada, and the stabilization of Panama, the Strategic Lanes of Communication were fully covered. It is now clear that these logistic support bases may not be available, or will be inappropriately located, in the near future. If the technological and economic feasibility of the FB are borne out by the experimental program, then the FB could become an important component in maintaining the security of the United States.

PRESENTATION - FLOATING OCEAN PLATFORM EVALUATION

TECHNOLOGY GROUP - CARRIER 21 STUDY - FEBRUARY 12, 1991

I) **STATUS**

*FIRST DRAFT PRESENTED AT LAST MEETING (4 REVIEWERS)

*FINAL DRAFT PRESENTED TODAY

-INCORPORATES SOME OF DR. CRAVEN'S COMMENTS

-INCORPORATES COMMENTS OF NINE EXTERNAL REVIEWERS

II) **FLOATING PLATFORM CHARACTERISTICS**

*LONG (~1 1/2 - 2 MILES)

*LARGE SURFACE AREA (~10 MILLION SQUARE FEET)

*FLAT DECK FOR AIRCRAFT LANDING

*SLOWLY RELOCATABLE

III) **POTENTIAL MISSIONS**

*ALTERNATIVE TO LAND BASES

*NOT ALTERNATIVE TO CARRIER

*SUPPLEMENTS CARRIER

-LARGE BOMBERS (B-52 SIZE)

-LARGE LOGISTICS TRANSPORTS (C-5A SIZE)

-LARGE SURVEILLANCE PLATFORMS (CONDOR SIZE)

-STAGING REGION FOR FORCES

IV) **TECHNICAL ISSUES**

*HOW ARE MODULES CONNECTED (IF MODULAR)

-RIGID (INTERNAL STRESS; LOW TECH; SLOW DISCONNECT)
-FLEXIBLE (EXTERNAL FORCES; COMPLEX; RELIABLE?; FAST DISCONNECT)

*HOW IS DECK KEPT FLAT FOR RUNWAY

-RIGID CONNECTIONS; NO DISCONTINUITIES
-FLEXIBLE COUPLINGS
--ACTIVE BALLASTING OF MODULE FOR VERTICAL CONTROL
--ACTIVE POSITIONING OF DECK WITH SPRINGS, SHOCK ABSORBERS, ETC.

*HULL DESIGN OPTIONS

-SMALL WATERPLANE AREA
--STABLE
--REDUCED SPEED
--REDUCED LOAD CARRYING CAPACITY
--GREATER STRUCTURAL REQUIREMENTS
--MOST FB DESIGNS TEND TO BE SMALL WATERPLANE AREA

-MONOHULL
--MORE SENSITIVE TO WAVE MOTION

*MATERIAL TRANSFER TO FLOATING PLATFORM

-SHIPS
--SWATH (EXPENSIVE; COST-EFFECTIVE FOR FB APPLICATION???)
--STABLE LEE
--MOTION-COMPENSATING CRANES
--HYBRID OF STABLE LEE/ CRANES

-AIRCRAFT
-HELICOPTERS
-UNDERSEA TANKERS

*HOW IS LOCATION CONTROLLED
-ANCHORING (SHALLOW WATER)
-DYNAMIC POSITIONING

*0PTIMAL ASSEMBLY
-ON-SITE
--SENSITIVE TO SEA CONDITIONS
--LARGE NUMBER OF TRIPS (ESPECIALLY IF COMPONENTS ASSEMBLED)
--LOGISTICS PROBLEMS
--RELATIVELY RAPID TRANSPORT PER TRIP
--TOWING SPEED DETERMINED BY TRANSPORTER CHARACTERISTICS

-OFF-SITE
--MORE CONTROLLED ASSEMBLY
--SLOW SPEED TOWING OF LARGE ASSEMBLIES
--TOWING SPEED DETERMINED BY MODULE CHARACTERISTICS

*VULNERABILITY TO ATTACK

-AIRCRAFT
--ESSENTIALLY ZERO FB SPEED; SIMILAR TO CARRIER, BUT LARGER TARGET

-SUBMARINES
--ESSENTIALLY ZERO FB SPEED; MORE VULNERABLE THAN CARRIER

-MISSILES
--RELATIVELY INVULNERABLE TO SMALL MISSILE ATTACK

-GROUND TROOPS
--UNLIKE LAND BASE, NO TROOP INFILTRATION

-ROBUSTNESS
--DEPENDS ON DESIGN

V) **RECOMMENDATIONS**

*CONVENE WORKSHOP TO DEFINE ISSUES FOR FEASIBILITY STUDY
-INVITE USERS, OPERATORS
-DEFINE MISSIONS AND REQUIREMENTS
-INCLUDE MARINE BOARD
-INVITE BUILDERS OF 'SMART' SYSTEMS FROM OTHER FIELDS
--AEROSPACE, AUTOMOTIVE, BUILDINGS

*PERFORM FEASIBILITY STUDY
-IDENTIFY TECHNOLOGY UNCERTAINTIES
-ASSESS FEASIBILITY
-ESTIMATE COSTS
-IF FEASIBLE, OUTLINE EXPERIMENTAL PROGRAM

*CONDUCT EXPERIMENTAL PROGRAM
-ONE MODULE
--CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS/ PROCESSES
--HANDLING OF LARGE STRUCTURES
--MOORING AND DYNAMIC POSITIONING
--VERTICAL MOTION PREDICTION/ CONTROL
--TEST OF 'SMART' DECK (IF FEASIBLE)

-TWO MODULES
--ADD FEASIBILITY OF 'SMART' DECK ALIGNMENT BETWEEN TWO MODULES

-THREE MODULES, ETC.

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Five sources of information were examined. These were the following.

1) Science Citation Index
This database accesses over 5600 journals in all areas of science, focusing on the premier fundamental science journals. Some meeting Abstracts are included.

2) Engineering Compendex
This database accesses over 2400 journals in all areas of science and technology, focusing on applied research and technology journals. Includes some conference proceedings.

3) DTIC Technical Reports
This database includes reports of research sponsored by the U. S. government. Contains almost two million reports.

4) VLFS Database
A targeted database containing over 500 documents.

5) NFESC MOB Page
A targeted database.

In searching the more general databases, the following query was used.

Floating platform* OR Mobile offshore base* OR Spar platform* OR Offshore platform* OR Megafloat OR Floating airport* OR Floating structure* OR VLFS

This is a platform-oriented query, and excludes the large non-platform-specific technology literature that forms the basis for platform development and improvement. To access and extract further information from this underlying technology literature, the reader is encouraged to use the main bibliography in this report as a starting point, then use the iterative relevance feedback information retrieval and analysis technique developed by the author and described in the following references.

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